SAY CHEESE!
2014 was a milestone year for TGS: we traveled with all four grades for the first time, we completed our “12 countries in 12 terms” travel cycle, we graduated our inaugural class, and yet it's only just the beginning!

Graduation, otherwise known as commencement, reminds us that every achievement brings to life a new opportunity to grow, evolve, succeed, and, perhaps, fail. But most importantly, it’s a new opportunity to learn. In 2009, as a founding member of TGS, I committed 100% of my energy to creating the best learning environment for our potential students, but what happened in 2010, when TGS opened its doors in Stockholm, was blindsiding. Fifteen endlessly curious and eager students entered the school and my life, instantly becoming my greatest teachers. I no longer saw myself solely as an administrator, but rather a student; I frequently found myself at the receiving end of youthful wisdom, learning more about myself and the world with each interaction.

Each year, a new class brought in a different and delightful energy, and after four years of infinite life lessons from you, my teenage senseis (Japanese teachers and mentors) I must share my gratitude:

Thank you for challenging me at every moment and continually asking me why!
Thank you for reminding me to play and enjoy the present moment.
Thank you for inspiring me to be a better person and to live with purpose and passion.
Thank you for teaching me that it’s okay to be vulnerable.
Thank you for showing me how to dream and see the world through a more imaginative lens.
Thank you for exhibiting the deepest degree of empathy and humility.
Thank you for teaching me about friendship and what it means to be truly bonded like family.
Thank you for opening my eyes to each of your unique cultures and perspectives.
Thank you for sharing your profound little nuggets of insight.
Thank you for showing me the true meaning of grit and resilience.
Thank you for demonstrating openness and adaptability.
Thank you for giving me the strength to live with uncertainty.
Thank you for encouraging me to take risks and see past fear.
Thank you for contributing to my ever-changing view of the world.
Thank you for exposing me to new ways of thinking.
Thank you for believing in me and always showering me with gratitude.

Last, but not least, thank you for being my heroes!

Sometimes it’s the effect one person has on another that leads to the greatest change. And since that first year, I’ve grown into a different person – one with bigger dreams and grander aspirations because you have all crossed my path.

I am indebted to each of you for making waves of change in my life, and it is my hope that the TGS community and experience has done the same for you. You are all incredibly special, and I know this because you wouldn’t be part of TGS if you weren’t! So now that you have made an indelible mark on my heart and my mind, I look forward to seeing all of you graduate over the next few years and share your brilliance with the rest of the world.

With absolute gratitude and admiration.
What role do you play on campus?
I’m the person who wants to change the world, kind of the go-getter (I think?).

What was your biggest accomplishment?
Getting over my fear of public speaking and converting the fear and dark thoughts my childhood of bullying had brought me, into something (Light Footsteps Dance) beautiful.

What does the future hold for you?
In the near future, I hope to collaborate with the UN and find ways to get involved in the UN’s philanthropic sector. I hope to start a business with a few of my friends in college. The far future’s kind of fuzzy, but one thing’s for sure, I’ll keep on starting things, instead of following others.

Which of the three countries was your favorite?
Japan. Delicious, healthy food, culture, amazing air, nature everywhere, and the ultimate convenience stores. What more can one ask for?

What event had the biggest impact on you?
The graduation ceremony and reception. It was very beautiful to see everyone’s families gathering around to celebrate this great occasion. Although it can be looked at as an end, it was at the same time the start of a journey for the senior to the world outside of TGS community.

What role do you play on campus?
I consider myself as a friend, brother and a peer. I would usually find myself talking about our experiences at TGS and some of the challenges we all face, mostly social.

Which of the three countries was your favorite?
Japan. My favorite country of all the places we’ve been.

Which weXplore trip was your favorite?
Senior trip in Africa. I think it was a fantastic way to end our journey at TGS. Everyone tried to prepare one another for the climb up Kilimanjaro, supporting each other physically and mentally. I think it showed very much the type of individuals TGS students have become.

What does the future hold for you?
I am off to university this upcoming fall. I will be doing my undergraduate studies at Connecticut College, planning to focus on economics and international relations as my majors with a minor in either Arabic or Spanish.

What was your biggest accomplishment?
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What was your biggest challenge this year?
I think it's fair to say the extended essay posed quite a bit of a challenge. I don't think I had ever consumed such copious amounts of caffeinated drinks at such late hours!

What event had the biggest impact on you?
Looking at TGS and realizing that we come from so many different backgrounds, yet are such a tight-knit group of people is quite remarkable. Whenever anyone asks me what the best part about TGS is, I always say the people – both within TGS and the ones we meet along the way. People teach you about themselves and their cultures, but they teach you more about yourself.

What role do you play on campus?
Eek. I guess I'd classify myself as the short, quiet and generally happy munchkin who occasionally made peanut butter cups!

What was your biggest accomplishment?
Can I say graduation? I am so happy the IB didn't get the best of me!

What does the future hold for you?
I'm still trying to figure out what the crystal ball has in store for me, but I'm thinking sustainable design sounds pretty exciting.

What was the highlight of your TGS experience?
I remember my first day, feeling hot, sticky and a little lost in the new Sydney environment, with so many faces that had become familiar through the TGS website. It was daunting, but it was a dream come true and I don't know if anything can top that feeling. To this day I still get excited when I read my acceptance letter.

What was your favorite song this school year?
"Wake Me Up" by Aviici that the girls would always dance to on Fridays at Indus.

What was your favorite book this year?
From TGS: "The Great Gatsby" by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Outside of TGS: "Let the Great World Spin" by Colum McCann.

What would you spend $100 on in India?
Most definitely camel riding in Rajasthan.

What would you spend $100 on in Japan?
I never got to go on the huge ferris wheel in Osaka, so I'd love to go back and do that. Also, Laura and I planned on getting mani-pedis together, so Laura, when you read this, let's go do that sometime!
What was your biggest challenge this year?
Saying goodbye to my closest friends.

What was your biggest accomplishment?
Doing a year and a half’s worth of economics, learning in 4 days. Or the whole EE in a night.

Which of the three countries was your favorite?
Japan was my favorite country as I just fell in love with the culture and its people. It was a beautiful place and I want to go back to it.

Which weXplore trip was your favorite?
The trip around Japan after exams as there was no stress and it was just a fun time where I had the opportunity to explore my favorite country.

What event had the biggest impact on you?
Graduation. As someone who doesn’t want to grow up, it was a big shock.

Which guest speaker resonated with you the most?
Tsher ing Tobgay.

What role do you play on campus?
If we were the seven dwarfs: Grumpy.

What was your favorite song this school year?
“Gooey” by Glass Animals. I listened to it throughout Japan.

What is the best prank this year?
The shaving cream incident and Mark Surnin.

What was your favorite book this year?
It’s a kids book: “Where the Wild Things Are” by Maurice Sendak.

Which student has the most school spirit?
A close tie between Chams and benny.

What was your favorite food this year?
The meat grill in Japan where you cooked your own food. All of the Japanese cuisine was delicious.

What was the highlight of your overall TGS experience?
Meeting the people I met and getting to see as much of the world as I did at this age.

How have you changed throughout high school?
I don’t know, probably for everyone else around me to decide. I’d say I matured, but I still have the emotional age of a 14 year old.
What was your biggest challenge this year?

My biggest challenge was saying no to things like the welfare role, requests from friends and opportunities to go on trips. I really learned to be myself and the end result was summiting Kilimanjaro for no other reason than for myself.

Which of the three countries was your favorite?

INDIA ALL THE WAY! I made many new friends in India and I found the country very interesting. A year with the IB had given me deeper lenses of disciplines to look at the country, and so I was essentially looking at India with new eyes. I made an effort to learn about India by reading a book about its democracy and history. Then in English class, we had Midnight’s Children, which aided my imagination to see India “magically.” I thought a lot about how a place is “magical” when its people believe in it. I felt a magic in India that I didn’t feel in Boston or Hiroshima.

What does the future hold for you? (seniors)

For this coming year, I’ll be spending my freshman year in Clark with Pemi. I’m trying out courses on environmental studies, urban planning, entrepreneurship and music. The future includes traveling around Thailand just to get to know my own country better and creating more green spaces in Bangkok.

What was the highlight of your TGS experience?

Meeting the people that I did. Writing this now, as I’m sitting at home in Bangkok, everything seems unbelievable and people seem just too distant. Traveling wouldn’t have been as magical as it was without the people that I got to know. I’ve treasured every moment with my class since ninth grade, and I’m glad I did because the little moments are the highlights of this whole experience.

Favorite movie quote?

“But home is behind you, the world is ahead.” - The Hobbit

What was the best prank this year?

Well, some of us had a lot of good ideas that would have easily made this category but unfortunately that didn’t turn into reality. I think we were pretty lacking in the prank department, and seniors ’15 you better do this better!

What can you not live without at TGS?

Favorite movie quote?

“TRENDY!” That means spinach, which Sejour Fujita cooks with butter and egg. Mix with Japanese rice, soy sauce, and red chili.

What was your favorite food this year?

Okonomiyaki all the way!

What was your favorite book this year?

“The Alchemist” by Paulo Coelho.

Favorite movie quote?


What was your favorite song of this school year?

“Happy” by Pharrell Williams. I woke up to it every day during the three weeks of exams.

What event had the biggest impact on you?

The few seconds of earth shaking in Hiroshima made me really re-think and appreciate the gift of life that we’ve all been given, as well as the gift of traveling and learning from our experiences, thanks to TGS.

What role do you play on campus?

Crêpe chef.

Which of the three countries was your favorite?

Certainly Japan, because we lived in a city. In a city full of rich history and deep spirit unifying all locals and visitors. It is a city with which we shared snow, sun and sushi, hardcore exams, hardcore parties, morning runs, midnight picnics, a little bit of love and peace.

Which weXplore trip was your favorite?

Africa. Because it was the unknown. Whereas India and Japan had some resemblance to Bhutan, China or Thailand, Africa was the unknown to me. There were flashbacks to the first year, with lots of laughs and late-night conversations, Lion King songs on the way up Kilimanjaro and Mike’s blasting speakers on the way down. There was the final push to the Uhuru Peak and then an even harder one to the airport, with tears, smiles, 15-second bear hugs, selfies and heavy bags full of dirty clothes. Africa tested us. Somewhat close to Shantaram... We had each other.

What does the future hold for you?

Paying it forward. Exploring ways to do so through technology, gathering ideas and bringing them to life in Abu Dhabi and beyond. Perhaps also some triathlon, crêpes, guitar, traveling, coffee and photography.

What was the highlight of your TGS experience?

TGS was the highlight of my life. It is next to impossible to pick out a single experience from countless memories over the years at TGS, but I am certain that the journey to the top of Africa will stay vivid in my head for a long time. As all of us know very well, it is about the journey, not the destination, and even though I am delighted to have climbed all the way to the top, I am even more proud of how incredibly supportive everyone was.

What was your favorite song of this school year?

“Happy” by Pharrell Williams. I woke up to it every day during the three weeks of exams.

What can you not live without at TGS?

Hugs.

What was your favorite book this year?

“The Alchemist” by Paulo Coelho.

Which of the three countries was your favorite?

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What student has the most school spirit?

Charis.
What was your biggest challenge this year?
Trying to get to bed as early as possible and waking up as late as possible.

What event had the biggest impact on you?
The earthquake that we experienced in Japan. Having experienced that made me realize how much of a global citizen we all have become at TGS.

Which weXplore trip was your favorite?
MY favorite weXplore trip this year would probably be Goa, India. It was a great stress reliever but the trip was aimed to looking at how tourism and tourism industries affect the area and the locals, which is something that interested me.

What does the future hold for you?
More travel, university and studying for a degree in OutdoorEd.

What was the highlight of your TGS experience?
Moving to a new country not knowing what to expect and making the best out of each location.

What was your favorite song this school year?
"Cups" by Anna Kendrick.

What is your favorite movie quote?
From "The Hobbit."
Bilbo Baggins: “Good morning.”
Gandalf: “What do you mean? Do you mean to wish me a good morning or do you mean that it is a good morning whether I want it or not? Or perhaps you mean to say that you feel good on this particular morning. Or are you simply stating that this is a morning to be good on?”
Bilbo Baggins: “All of them at once, I suppose.”

What was your favorite book this year?
“The Hollow Chocolate Bunnies of the Apocalypse” by Robert Rankin.

What was your favorite food this year?
Snicker bars and the coffee from Japan’s vending machines.

What would you spend $100 on in India?
As much boneless chicken I could possibly get.

What would you spend $100 on in Japan?
Honestly I can’t think of anything useful I could buy in Japan that’d be worth 100 bucks, so I’d probably get an outrageous haircut so that I would blend in with the people there.

Which student has the most school spirit?
Mark, he is always pumped about everything, but he makes sure to remind us that we are in TGS and everything amazing that we are experiencing is due to TGS. Every day, he reminds us to be in the moment and that “this is TGS.”

What would you spend $100 on in Japan?
A katana signed by Steven Seagal or a private aikido lesson from him, depends on what $100 can get me.

What was the best prank this year?
The best one was done by my friends and me on Alex. We had to make presentations together that would help prepare the 11th grade write their extended essays. Alex was in charge of taking photos of everyone doing goofy things, but when he emailed me all the photos he left out the ones where he looked goofy. So we decided to throw in extra slides into the presentation that had ridiculous questions and were all directed to Alex. At the presentation everyone looked and sounded really prepared, but when Alex’s slides came up it wasn’t what he prepared for. The questions we put up also made him look pretty ridiculous which, apart from the look he gave us when his slides came up, was the best part.

What would you spend $100 on in India?
As much boneless chicken I could possibly get.
What was your biggest challenge?
My two biggest challenges this year were finishing the IB and climbing Mount Kilimanjaro. I don’t know how I did it, but I did!

Which guest speaker resonated with you the most?
Ray Zahab! His speech was very funny but also very thought-provoking. I thought it was incredible how he completely changed his life. He went from being a couch potato who smoked a packet of cigarettes every day to a runner who ran across the Sahara Desert. He changed his life and I find that kind of faith, motivation and determination inspiring.

What does the future hold for you?
For now, I’ll be studying psychology at the university. One of the most important lessons I’ve learned this year is to live in the moment and take everything one step at a time. I don’t know where I’ll be in the future but hopefully there’s lots of love and happiness ahead!

What was the highlight of your TGS experience?
The people! I don’t even need to think twice about this. The best part about TGS is the community and the people. There are so many intelligent, wise, thoughtful people at this school. I’ve had the best conversations at this school. Travelling is really amazing but it’s the people at this school that made it what it was.

What was your favorite song this school year?
"Pompeii" by Bastille always reminds me of the Hampi trip.

What is your favorite movie quote?
"From that day on, if I was going somewhere… I was running!" - Forest Gump.

What was the best prank this year?
TGS senior pranks! When we filled the grade 11 homeroom with balloons.

What can you not live without at TGS?
A journal.

What was your favorite book this year?
"Harry Potter Forever."
What was your biggest challenge this year?
Balancing responsibilities such as friends, family, hobbies and schoolwork.

What event had the biggest impact on you?
Haha, I should probably start with at least one serious response. It was probably one that arose partway through our stay at Indus. Liam and I were asked to deal with it one night. As a result of that request and what we’d learned, I spent a long time standing and listening to a number of friends I’d respected lying — acting like I thought they weren’t. It was probably the most disappointed I’d ever been in the school. Then, later that night, an insecure “superior” who felt their toes were being stepped on took their anger for their colleagues out on me — loudly. It was the first time I really felt the weight of optimism. It’s hard, it takes courage. Pessimism and cynicism are for the weak.

What role do you play on campus?
I’ve been called Harry Potter. I’m ambivalent about the honorific, but hey — it’s better than being the comedy relief.

What was your biggest accomplishment during this school year?
Absolutely nothing — and I’d be the best principal ever.

What would you spend $100 on in Japan?
A flight out of India.

What was your favorite song this school year?
The number one song in my ‘Top 25 Most Played’ playlist on iTunes is “Shaolin Monk Motherfunk.” I’ve never even heard the song before. I think I fell asleep on my iPod again.

What is your favorite book?
“The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari” by Robin Sharma.

Which student has the most school spirit?
If we define spirit as love for the community it might be Charis. However, if it’s defined as the willingness to defend the school with life and limb, I’d say Anat (Habibti!)... or maybe Berry (Co Blue Team! Yeah, you.) We have a lot of spirited girls here. They’ll protect me.

What role have you played on campus?
Whatever roles I had weren’t. It was probably the most disappointed I’d ever been in the school. Then, later that night, an insecure “superior” who felt their toes were being stepped on took their anger for their colleagues out on me — loudly. It was the first time I really felt the weight of optimism. It’s hard, it takes courage. Pessimism and cynicism are for the weak.

What can you not live without at TGS?
Egg (by preference)

What is you favorite movie quote?
“Are we there yet? Where are they? Oh, on the beach? Do I wanna go? Hell yeah I do!”

What was your biggest challenge this year?
It was India, of course; what could possibly beat four months of prison showers, lito, and yard time? I mean, where else can you find that killer combo?

Which of the three countries was your favorite?
It was India, of course; what could possibly beat four months of prison showers, lito, and yard time? I mean, where else can you find that killer combo?

Which weXplore trip was your favorite?
The trip to Kerala was probably the best weXplore ever. As students we gained a number profound insights into the contemporary somberness of the issue manifested themselves in a small area, we were able to give the conclusions we drew on the future of greater India's presence.

Was that right, guys? I think that’s how it was written here on the printout… Wait, where’s the printout? The others weren’t. It was probably the most disappointed I’d ever been in the school. Then, later that night, an insecure “superior” who felt their toes were being stepped on took their anger for their colleagues out on me — loudly. It was the first time I really felt the weight of optimism. It’s hard, it takes courage. Pessimism and cynicism are for the weak.

What do you miss most about being at TGS?
Balancing responsibilities such as friends, family, hobbies and schoolwork.

What is your favorite color?
It was India, of course; what could possibly beat four months of prison showers, lito, and yard time? I mean, where else can you find that killer combo?

What was the best prank this year?
Stand up comedy that no one got.

How have you changed throughout high school?
If I’ve learned one thing over the past four years it’s that absolutely nothing — and I’d be the best principal ever.

What was the highlight of your TGS experience?
“The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari” by Robin Sharma.

Which student has the most school spirit?
If we define spirit as love for the community it might be Charis. However, if it’s defined as the willingness to defend the school with life and limb, I’d say Anat (Habibti!)... or maybe Berry (Co Blue Team! Yeah, you.) We have a lot of spirited girls here. They’ll protect me.

What would you spend $100 on in India?
A flight out of India.

What would you spend $100 on in Japan?
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What was the highlight of your TGS experience?
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What is your favorite color?
It was India, of course; what could possibly beat four months of prison showers, lito, and yard time? I mean, where else can you find that killer combo?
What was your biggest challenge this year?
My father taught me to never see problems as problems but rather as an opportunity to show your skills in coming up with a solution. The 2013-2014 year was a great opportunity to find balance. With the IB and traveling hand in hand, it wasn’t possible not to find balance, it was. It only took some talking, positivity and open-mindedness. I lacked all three, unfortunately. But with time, I was able to find the juncture to do the things I enjoy doing whilst still trying to give my utmost performance in IB. The only reason I was able to do so was because I had an amazing advisor, teachers and peers. Looking back at those moments now, I realize that there are no challenges at TGS. Anything you do that may be difficult or easy are merely experiences that will bring one and all together, to be something greater. TGS may give you “challenges” or opportunities, but they are there to only make you a better person. Remember to never lose yourself.

What event had the biggest impact on you?
I think the India semester as a whole had the greatest impact on me. I don’t mean to sound cliché but the term really made me appreciate the little things like warm showers, a clean loo or a handkerchief.

What role do you play on campus?
I see TGS as a pillar rather than a play or a set. There is no particular role as such because we need one another to be together to support.

What was your biggest accomplishment?
Having successfully completed the IB could constitute as my biggest accomplishment but if you look at the statistics, nearly 80% of the students are awarded their diploma. 80% of those students, however, may not be able to say that they graduated from an international travel boarding school with an IB diploma. Being from Bhutan where there aren’t many exposures, TGS opened the door for me. All of a sudden, I was seeing textbooks come to life, my classmates were no longer my nextdoor neighbors; they were from Palestine, Afghanistan and so on. I was living the dream of many, it’s something to be extremely grateful about. In the end, my greatest accomplishment is not letting a grand opportunity slip through my fingers. TGS is going to get you educated, not just make you literate.

What is your favorite book?
For me, picking a favorite class is like choosing or ranking my senses. I can’t. I needed Spanish to make me able to think thrice (converting pictures to English then to Spanish). English taught me to understand who or what we choose to be or do. Math taught me patience and balance. ESS made me want to jump off my seat and do something good in the world. History made me comprehend the human experience, the past leads to our progress. Psychology aided me in understanding people a little bit more. How do I pick a favorite?

What is your favorite food this year?
Chickens katsu in Japan. That wasn’t it. It had to be eaten with Cash and from one particular restaurant.

What would you spend $100 on in Japan?
I would probably take a trip to Taiji and work to save the dolphins. I would use the money to build something that would convince people to put an end to dolphin hunting.
Remember year one?
What was your biggest challenge this year?
India as a whole. It was the culture shock of a lifetime for me – never have I experienced something so different to my daily life than I did in that country. Although, the most difficult experiences, I find, are the times when I learned the most. I’m so glad we all went through such a challenging semester together, because I think it made us all realize how grateful we should be for the amazing opportunities that are given to us when they do present themselves.

What was your biggest accomplishment?
I guess it’s more of a long-term accomplishment, but I love seeing the ways I’ve changed since being at TGS. Even if I just look at the work I do; I was barely even able to write a proper paper before coming here. Not only that, but I’m able to navigate myself through international airports and on trains and subways with such ease. Being in a community where everyone urges and inspires you to do your best is such a healthy and productive environment to be in.

What was your favorite class?
I’d have to say Anthropology has been my favorite class. People fascinate me, and learning about different cultures and societies around the world and how they function intrigues me.

Which country was your favorite this year?
Each country was incredibly different. India and Japan are actually complete opposites. The culture, the people, the freedoms, our accommodations, everything. When other people ask me this question, I guess I usually say that the weXplores we took during our semester in India really stood out, but the semester as a whole in Japan was my favorite. Although, all three were extremely fascinating countries that are definitely on my list to go back to, especially India.

Which weXplore trip was your favorite?
The Kashmir weXplore was incredible; still, to this day, I’m incapable of putting words together to explain to others how much those three days impacted me. Those who went on my trip were very special people, and getting to know them in a smaller group and bonding with them was actually almost quite as magical as the place we were in.

Which guest speaker resonated with you the most?
Prime Minister of Bhutan!

What was your favorite song this school year?
"Collard Greens" by SchoolBoy Q.

What was your biggest challenge this year?
India as a whole. It was the culture shock of a lifetime for me – never have I experienced something so different to my daily life than I did in that country. Although, the most difficult experiences, I find, are the times when I learned the most. I’m so glad we all went through such a challenging semester together, because I think it made us all realize how grateful we should be for the amazing opportunities that are given to us when they do present themselves.

What was your biggest accomplishment?
I guess it’s more of a long-term accomplishment, but I love seeing the ways I’ve changed since being at TGS. Even if I just look at the work I do; I was barely even able to write a proper paper before coming here. Not only that, but I’m able to navigate myself through international airports and on trains and subways with such ease. Being in a community where everyone urges and inspires you to do your best is such a healthy and productive environment to be in.

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Which guest speaker resonated with you the most?
Prime Minister of Bhutan!

What was your favorite song this school year?
"Collard Greens" by SchoolBoy Q.
WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS YEAR?

My biggest challenge was trying not to get overwhelmed by everything. With the travelling and schoolwork and new things we learned every day about the countries we were in, it’s difficult to wrap my head around it all and not get freaked out a little bit. Whenever I felt disconnected to reality, I liked to go find a quiet space in nature to ground myself and remind myself of how vast the world really is compared to my own little bubble.

WHAT EVENT HAD THE BIGGEST IMPACT ON YOU?

Visiting a clinic for the victims of the 1984 gas tragedy in Bhopal, India. Meeting the people who were working tirelessly without thanks to help the suffering people of Bhopal really gave me a new perspective on kindness.

WHAT ROLE DO YOU PLAY ON CAMPUS?

Probably the cynical comedian who is there to remind everyone that the real world is cruel and unfair, but let’s just enjoy it while it lasts.

WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT?

Running for StuCo treasurer and won. Also not being a complete social recluse.

WHICH OF THE THREE COUNTRIES WAS YOUR FAVORITE?

India was vibrant and colorful and more alive than any place I’ve ever been to. The unique blend of old and new, traditions and innovations really characterizes the country, and Indian society has many distinctive aspects, such as women’s rights, poverty, urbanization, etc., that had sparked some interesting conversations in the school.

WHICH weXpLORE TRIP WAS YOUR FAVORITE?

North India. The eight days of just travelling, exploring historical and novel sites, meeting new people, and eating new food was just what I needed to feel truly connected to our host country.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MOVIE QUOTE?

“Your mother was a hamster and your father smelt of elderberries!” - Monty Python and the Holy Grail.

IF YOU WERE THE HEAD OF SCHOOL, WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE?

School really should start at 11am.

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE BOOK THIS YEAR?

“Cloud Atlas” by David Mitchell.

WHAT WOULD YOU SPEND $100 ON IN INDIA?

All the scarves!

WHAT WOULD YOU SPEND $100 ON IN JAPAN?

Ramen. And Kit-Kat. And figurines.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE SONG THIS SCHOOL YEAR?

“A Little Party Never Killed Nobody” (My bus rides to HIS were never dull!).

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MOVIE QUOTE?

“It’s amazing how he fell perfectly into the drawing on the floor.” (The Pink Panther, 2006).

WHAT CAN YOU NOT LIVE WITHOUT AT TGS?

Facebook (to help me procrastinate and keep in touch with friends and family all over the world).

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE FOOD THIS YEAR?

Ramen, ramen, ramen.

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE BOOK THIS YEAR?

“The Alchemist” by Paulo Coelho.

WHICH STUDENT HAS THE MOST SCHOOL SPIRIT?

Charis, Pema and Hannah.

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE FOOD THIS YEAR?

Cheeslings in India. Bought some every Sunday we went to Inorbit mall!
What was your biggest challenge this year?
Being friends with the IB.

What event had the biggest impact on you?
Playing with the children in the village we did service projects at in India.

What role do you play on campus?
To put it simply, I'm the Bill Murray of this school. Call me Chill Murray.

What was your favorite class?
Whichever one will give me extra credit for saying it's my favorite.

Which of the three countries was your favorite?
Japan. The complexity and simultaneous simplicity of the culture was extremely interesting.

Which Wexplore trip was your favorite?
Goa was the coolest trip in India for the relaxing beach time and exhilarating adventure trips (cliff jumping, kayaking, etc.) and Kobe was the best of Japan because it had great Math and Science learning components, an interesting day in a cat cafe, and mouthwatering Kobe beef.

What was your biggest accomplishment?
First year of IB, are ya kidding?

What was your favorite class?
Always art.

Which Wexplore trip was your favorite?
Naoshima. Some art, some longboarding. Feels good.

Which guest speaker resonated with you the most?
The bomb survivor in Hiroshima.

What was your favorite song this school year?
"Unwritten" by Natasha Bedingfield.

What is your favorite movie quote?
"Of all the gin joints, in all the towns, in all the world, she walks into mine." From Casablanca.

If you were the head of school, what would you change?
Free access to all the bread at Indus.

What can you not live without at TGS?
Music.

What was your favorite food this year?
The soggy cake at Indus.

What would you spend $100 on in India?
Various cheap clothes and textiles, which I could sell in America with a massive profit margin.

What would you spend $100 on in Japan?
In all honesty, the corn dogs at 7-Eleven. Judge me.

Fun

What is your favorite movie quote?
"I'm a mog - half man, half dog. I'm my own best friend." From Spaceballs.

What was your biggest challenge this year?
First year of IB, are ya kidding?

What was your biggest accomplishment?
First year of IB, are ya kidding?

What was your favorite class?
Always art.

Which of the three countries was your favorite?
Longboarding in Japan.

Which Wexplore trip was your favorite?
Naoshima. Some art, some longboarding. Feels good.
"Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all." Helen Keller. For myself, accepting that I was living the biggest adventure of my life thus far was the real challenge.

**What was your biggest challenge this year?**

Accepting that I was living the biggest adventure of my life thus far.

If I could be head of school for one day, I would give the seniors “me” time. To bring back the unstructured part of everyone’s life, including staff. The “me” time should be an adaptive part of everyone’s life, including staff. The “me” time should be an adaptive part of everyone’s life, including staff. The “me” time should be an adaptive part of everyone’s life, including staff. The “me” time should be an adaptive part of everyone’s life, including staff.

Sometimes my speaking filter fails, and if you are lucky, you’ll probably hear me spurt out the inner working of my mind. John Prentice had that chance while we were smushed in the most crowded place I had ever seen: the Golden Temple. With a toddler pressed to his behind, he was already uncomfortable as anyone would be in that type of situation. I topped it off by curiosity: “I wonder how many people here will not be alive tomorrow?” Some may argue that it was an inappropriate comment at the time, but, in my opinion, it is one of the one thing that is certain in life: death. By seeing so much life in that crowded space, each individual with a separate life from mine, I couldn’t help but wonder. As the year went by, John never forgot what I said, so I guess one can say curiosity counted for something.

Pakistan. Never in my life would I have guessed that I would have seen it with my very eyes. Sitting in the stands on the Indian side of the border, I grew frustrated that something so exotic to me was right there. Men, women and children of Pakistan were there and I could hear and see Pakistan. Never in my life would I have guessed I would have seen it with my very eyes. Sitting in the stands on the Indian side of the border, I grew frustrated that something so exotic to me was right there. Men, women and children of Pakistan were there and I could hear and see

**What is your favorite movie quote?**

"Gentlemen, you had my curiosity, but now you have my attention." — Leonardo DiCaprio as Calvin Candie, *Django Unchained*.

"Big Yellow Taxi" by Counting Crows & Vanessa Carlton.

**What was your favorite food this year?**

7-Eleven hot dog. No shame.

**What was your favorite book this year?**

"The Photographer" by Emmanuel Guibert, Didier Lefèvre and Frederic Lemercier.

**What was your favorite movie this school year?**

The extended essay.

**What can you not live without at TGS?**

My Olympus OM10.

**What was the highlight of your TGS experience?**

More confident? Less arrogance. (I hope). One of the biggest changes has been that my interests and focusses have broadened.

**What event had the biggest impact on you?**

The extended essay.

"The Photographer" by Emmanuel Guibert, Didier Lefèvre and Frederic Lemercier.

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"Big Yellow Taxi" by Counting Crows & Vanessa Carlton.
WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS YEAR?

I'm not exaggerating when I say Indus nearly made me switch school this year. Indian boarding school without functioning washing facilities, restricted Wi-Fi, and tasteless curry? Never again, thanks!

WHAT EVENT HAD THE BIGGEST IMPACT ON YOU?

Dirty India. The night when we observed hundreds of fireworks over the Golden Temple from a stranger's balcony was one of the most magic things that I have seen and never could have envisioned taking part of.

WHAT ROLE DO YOU PLAY ON CAMPUS?

On most days: the goofy and (admittedly a bit too much) sissified Swede.

WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT?

Being featured on the "Photographers Spotlight" at Flickr felt like a personal milestone, along with being accepted to my summer programs. Though, most importantly working hard on not letting the IB steal quality time from spending time with my friends – hopefully successfully!

OUT OF THE THREE COUNTRIES YOU VISITED, WHICH WAS YOUR FAVORITE?

I am more of a city gal, the freedom of Japan suited me better.

WHICH OF THE WEXPLORE TRIPS WAS YOUR FAVORITE?

Hiking in the Himalayas of Kashmir was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I was given the opportunity to immerse myself in a small piece of the culture in Kashmir. We ate Kashmiri food, slept in Kashmiri houseboats and sang late into the night with Kashmiri guides. Most of all, the fact that we were lucky enough to be in such a beautiful but unstable place was just breathtaking. It was also the first place that I ever saw snow.

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE FOOD DISH OR SNACK THIS YEAR?


WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS YEAR?

The balance between self-discipline and flexibility. As a TGS student it is essential that you grow a certain amount of flexibility. Because the school is always moving around and trying new things, one has to be open to changes in schedule, in food, in all manner of things, quite frankly. Coming from a slightly more regimented background, it was difficult, at first, for me to grasp that this was up to me, and not the school. I had so much more freedom to explore and try new things that I didn't know where to start. I didn't know what parts of my old life I should hang on to and keep alive and what I should swap for a new exhilarating activity.

WHICH WEXPLORE TRIP WAS YOUR FAVORITE?

My biggest accomplishment this year was finding the courage to start and maintain my blog. I have always wanted to have a way to share my writing, but I was always afraid that I had nothing interesting to say. TGS gave me the courage to share a little bit of myself with the world.

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE CLASS?

History and Anthropology. They were both my favorite for the same reason: because we were able to utilize place-based learning. Learning about WW2 in Japan was so fascinating. Being in Hiroshima, it made the suffering that was caused by the war so much more vivid and easier to comprehend. Anthropology is a wonderful subject because it is so flexible. We can have firsthand experience with culture in any country or any place.

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE FOOD DISH OR SNACK THIS YEAR?


WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE MOVIE QUOTE?

"Is there some reason my coffee isn’t here? Has she gone to Rwanda for the beans?" - Miranda Priestly in The Devil Wears Prada.

WHAT CAN YOU NOT LIVE WITHOUT AT TGS?

Good friends and Wi-Fi.

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE MOVIE QUOTE?

Actor one: "I have no idea what I’m doing here.”
Actor two: "I don’t think anybody does, at least you admit it.” - The Art of Getting By.

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE BOOK THIS YEAR?

"SchoolBoy Q" by Collard Greens.

WHAT WOULD YOU SPEND $100 ON IN JAPAN?

Heaps and heaps of crazy socks and some good sushi.

WHAT CAN YOU NOT LIVE WITHOUT AT TGS?

Beny and Charis.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MOVIE QUOTE?

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WHAT CAN YOU NOT LIVE WITHOUT AT TGS?

Beny and Charis.
Which of the Wexplore trips was your favorite?
Nagasaki, Japan. The trip was great as it was in a smaller group where we were allowed a lot of freedom. Also visiting Nagasaki allowed me to make connections with what happened in Hiroshima. I lived four years in Nagasaki so the city brought back memories for me as well.

What was your favorite class?
IB Language and Literature were great classes to have in India and we spent a large amount of time covering gender inequality in different cultures, which was interesting to me.

Which of the three countries was your favorite?
In Japan, we were granted a lot of freedom and able to really immerse in the culture. The customs were sometimes difficult to adjust to but they were interesting all the same.

What was your biggest challenge this year?
Joining a new school, which meant leaving friends and family back home, and also starting the IB.

Which guest speaker resonated with you the most?
Urmi Basu. She wrote a book called “Half The Sky” that we read in IBLL and also has an organization by the same name. The aim of the organization resonated with me and the way the presentation was set up was a good way to engage everybody.

What event had the biggest impact on you?
Visiting the a-bomb memorial museum in the Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima. I have never been in favor of the atomic bombs being used in Japan but seeing the impact of one act that still affects the residences today, it really stuck with me.

What can you not live without at TGS?
PEPE! (My white teddy bear).

What is your favorite movie quote?
Donnie: “Why are you wearing that stupid bunny suit?”
Frank: “Why are you wearing that stupid man suit?” - Donnie Darko.

What was your favorite song this school year?
“Space Is The Only Noise You Can See” by Nicolas Jaar.

What was your favorite food this year?
Mochi with red bean paste from Japan.

What was the best prank this year?
Year 12 prank with the balloons in Japan.
Cameron

What was your biggest challenge this year?
Getting past the mental block I put on myself, and trying to stay positive.

What event had the biggest impact on you?
I think not running for welfare gave me some time to pay more attention to myself, and helped me get myself back on track with life.

What role do you play on campus?
I consider myself a sister, a little one when you need someone to make you laugh, and a big one when you need to have someone’s shoulder to cry on or need some advice.

What was your favorite class?
PE. Hands down.

Which of the three countries was your favorite?
I really liked India as a country. I thrived a bit in the chaos and colors.

Which WEXCRO trip was your favorite?
I had some of the best food I ever had on the Tokyo trip.

Which guest speaker resonated with you the most?
The advice the two keynote speakers at graduation gave us will stick with me forever.

What was your favorite song this school year?
"Riptide" by Vance Joy (calling out those grade 9s!)

What is your favorite movie quote?
"My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die."
- The Princess Bride.

What was the best prank this year?
Grade 10 smack cam for sure!

If you were the head of school, what would you change?
Improve the Wi-Fi.

What can you not live without at TGS?
Data on my phone.

Favorite book?

What would you spend $100 on in Japan?
I would go on a Daiso and coco rampage.
What was your biggest challenge this year?
The trip to Kashmir was the best 4 days of my life… so far! Kashmir is a beautiful, beautiful land, but it’s not just surface beauty that makes Kashmir wonderful. Kashmir has a type of soul beauty that lies within its people, and the strength, kindness, and wisdom they all seem to exude. This may be because we had truly spectacular guides who became great friends, but I’d like to believe it all applied to everyone we met. That trip was full of belly laughs, good music, and even better food. I can’t remember a time that I’ve ever been more content, or more in awe of my surroundings, or more comfortable in a group of people.

What was your biggest accomplishment?
Leading my house. Coming from a very difficult semester in India, it was great to see how Joseph and I managed to bring the house back together and form a supportive and, most of all, very enjoyable and enthusiastic community.

What was your favorite class?
Global Studies. I really enjoyed the very independent and free project work with World Wide Walkers. Every piece I created in Martino’s class is something I’d definitely put in my résumé.

Which WeXplore trip was your favorite?
The trip to Kashmir was the best 4 days of my life… so far! Kashmir is a beautiful, beautiful land, but it’s not just surface beauty that makes Kashmir wonderful. Kashmir has a type of soul beauty that lies within its people, and the strength, kindness, and wisdom they all seem to exude. This may be because we had truly spectacular guides who became great friends, but I’d like to believe it all applied to everyone we met. That trip was full of belly laughs, good music, and even better food. I can’t remember a time that I’ve ever been more content, or more in awe of my surroundings, or more comfortable in a group of people.

What was your biggest challenge this year?
Learning adaptability. Before TGS, I thought I had it down, but, wow, did that first semester prove me wrong! My adaptability has grown in multitudes, and I can predict that it will continue to do so over the next two years.

What event had the biggest impact on you?
Living in India showed me how much there is to be grateful for in this world. Also, the trip to Tohoku to film the mini-documentary affected me in many ways. I learned how to work in a team through difficult situations, and I learned the widespread and terrible effects that natural disasters have on communities.

What was your favorite class?
I had a very hard time choosing this one, but I have to say Global Studies, especially with the discussions we held at the end of the year. So many good ideas were thrown around the room this year, and we also created a cool website (it’s called World Wide Walkers, check it out!)

What was your biggest challenge this year?
Coming from a very liberal family, I’m quite opposed to any kind of regulations, segregations and, especially, uniforms. Living at Indus and coping with their very traditional boarding school rules was very difficult for me. In the end, instead of coping with the regulations, I rather found ways to avoid them. I’m still not sure whether to consider that a victory or a failure.

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What was your favorite song this school year?
“Riptide” by Vance Joy.

If you were the head of school, what would you change?
Make it entirely “liberal.” No mandatory events, no rules, no schedules. Just giving everybody the opportunity to make the best use of their time possible.

What was the best prank this year?
Jonah smacking Jon with shaving cream on his hand. Luckily, Jon’s of quite a tolerant nature.

What can you not live without at TGS?
Dairy products and fruit. Also, device chargers and hugs.

What was your favorite book this year?
My favorite book that I read this year is “Into The Wild.”

What was your favorite food this year?
Kashmiri food is the way to my heart, forever and always, but Pocky will be my way to a coma.

If you were the head of school, what would you change?
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What was your favorite food this year?
Japanese 100-yen baked goods.

What was your favorite book this year?
“Alles was man wissen muss” by Dietrich Schwanzit, also known as “The green book.”

Which WeXplore trip was your favorite?
Kashmir. First of all, I got a break from Indus. Secondly, it was very interesting to visit a territory of such political significance and get the perspective of the inhabitants on the issue. Last but not least, I just really enjoyed hiking.

Which guest speaker resonated with you the most?
Ray Zahab, the founder of Impossible2Possible, who spoke to us in the morning prior to graduation. Being a passionate runner myself, his stories and projects really fascinated me and motivated me to do more.
Fatima

What was your biggest challenge this year?
Mmmm... I would say living at Indus.

What event had the biggest impact on you?
Graduation!

What was your biggest accomplishment?
Our tea project victory! YAY!

What was your favorite class?
Global Studies.

Which of the three countries was your favorite?
I really can’t say, each of the countries had something really special that made me fall in love and want to go back. I loved all three of them!

Which WExplore trip was your favorite?
The safari! It was my dream to see a lion, and I got really close to one in Tanzania. Oh, and it was my birthday!

Which guest speaker resonated with you the most?
Ray Zahab, founder of Impossible2Possible.

What was your favorite song this school year?
"Single Ladies" by Queen B. Always!

Favorite movie quote?
"Al Capone always said that you can get more with a nice word and gun than you can with a nice word." - John Manzoni while beating up the plumber, the family.

What was the best prank this year?
Grade 10 smack cam for sure!

Which student has the most school spirit?
Charis, without any doubts!

What was your favorite food this year?
I would say the noodles that they used to make every day for us at dinner in Japan. Oh, they were so good!

What would you spend $100 on in Japan?
I would buy a kimono.

Fun

What was your favorite song this school year?
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Is your favorite movie quote?
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What would you spend $100 on in Japan?
I would buy a kimono.

Fun

What was your biggest challenge this year?
Filling in questionnaires like this one.

What event had the biggest impact on you?
In Tanzania, my classmates and I were playing in the mud as rain poured down on us. It was after a hot day of trying our best to help build a school (although each of the professional workers did the work of about five of us combined). The rain came as a haven from the heat of the sun. So we danced and threw mud at each other. By the time we had to leave we were chocolate-coated in mud. We tried to get the mud off with not-so-muddy rainwater. After trying and trying, the village children came out and started pouring water on us. They laughed and giggled as they helped us. They were the face of kindness and I took it as a sign of a beautiful culture. This is one of many, and if not the strongest, signs of society character that I noticed. I didn’t expect such kindness and openness.

What was your biggest accomplishment?
I was, and am, happy.

What was your favorite class?
Every class had its ups and downs. I don’t think I could pick a favorite but I enjoyed Science and Art very much.

Which WExplore trip was your favorite?
The north trip in India was my favorite. I loved seeing the Golden Temple and its rich philosophy. I loved learning about India’s rich culture and heritage.

What would you spend $100 on in India?
Gifts for everyone I encounter.

What would you spend $100 on in Japan?
I would spend it on Daiso, Polar Bear, clear umbrellas for people who get stuck in the rain, bikes for Sejour Fujita (since we broke a couple of their bikes) and ramen noodles.
The first three months in Japan I searched for content, read online articles, rummaged through Spot, learned new online programs, met with the team, and sent various emails pleading for ‘stuff’ created about India. I can’t even begin to count the hours I spent working on the Y-Mag, but I must admit I loved every minute of it. The task at hand wasn’t easy, but I had a platform for creativity and could venture in any direction. But I didn’t do it alone; the Y team (Hannah, Jawed, Luisa, Bailey, and Yada) and the numerous people who sent in their lovely works all contributed to the creation of the Y-Mag. After many layout positioning and color changes, I had before me the India edition of the Y-Mag and I knew the hours spent on it were hours well spent.

**WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS YEAR?**

I do fine with change, but I think the lack of it is what drives me a little crazy. I honestly think that is why the time spent on the Indus campus was so difficult. The first couple weeks I followed through with the schedule and got myself in the routine, but I blame myself for not making each day count a little more than being ‘just another day.’ Some of the students seemed to be doing well and productively living in this fashion, but I couldn’t keep my eyes off the calendar; waiting and waiting for the next change in itinerary. I started to turn small good things into goals I would work towards: Running five kilometers after school and faster each time. Take a new way back to the hostel after school or talking with a different person every day. I also stopped watching the calendar and that did change the way time flew.

**WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE COUNTRY THIS YEAR?**

Tanzania is so different from anywhere I have been before, and in those two weeks I have never been exposed to so many new experiences. Helping to build the school was amazing. I loved seeing how a structure is actually made, and the lack of huge machines made the whole experience even better. Visiting the orphanage with all the adorable children was incredible. It was great fun playing with the smiley kids! And I cannot leave out hiking or safari, seeing the animals in their natural habitat was amazing.

**WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT?**

The Tea Project: Designing a business model with full financials of huge machines made the whole experience even better. Helping to build the school was amazing; I think Tanzania is so different from anywhere I have been before, and I still think about that tank often along the hike as I looked up at the mountains and the glaciers and the valley. Even beauty has flaws. It seems like an awfully sad lesson to relearn, but I think it proves the opposite is true as well: even flaws have beauty. Overall, the memories of the mountains and climbing and walking side by side with some of the best friends I’ll ever have, make Srinagar one of the best places I’ve ever been on with TGS.

**WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE CLASS?**

Spanish was my favorite class this last year. Studying the roots, the conjugations, the language as a whole is extremely interesting, but I liked the way our class worked together in Spanish. Ana is a sweet woman who led us to interact with each other, learn from one another, and created an environment that we could comfortably share stories in order to improve our Spanish skills. We had the necessary book time to memorize, but the moments that mattered most were the ones where we laughed and shared and had conversations in Spanish with each other. It was good for our Spanish and great for our class as a whole.

**WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE TRIP?**

Srinagar, Kashmir. I have never seen a more gorgeous place in my life. One of the first experiences in this mountainous land involved long boats filled with warm blankets a friendly tour guide who led us across a lake reflecting the red trees and the golden hue from the grasses. It was absolutely freezing, so we spent a lot of time close together as we rode across the lake. The next day half of us made our way to the mountains to begin our hike. Along the way an army tank crossed our path and we discussed the conflict between India and Pakistan. I thought about that tank often along the hike as I looked up at the mountains and the glaciers and the valley. Even beauty has flaws. It seems like an awfully sad lesson to relearn, but I think it proves the opposite is true as well: even flaws have beauty. Overall, the memories of the mountains and climbing and walking side by side with some of the best friends I’ll ever have, make Srinagar one of the best places I’ve ever been on with TGS.

**WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE BOOK THIS YEAR?**

The Hobbit is about a journey, and that pessimistic hobbit, although he complains a great lot, does not regret leaving The Shire enough to return. Somewhere along the adventure he learns it is about the journey there and back again, rather than the ‘there’ or the place to go ‘back again.’ It is about putting trust in others and yourself and deciding what is important when everything seems to be a priority. Yes, I am comparing each of us to Bilbo the hobbit now when I say the thoughts of home and of better times run through our heads, when we are bored or lonely. Companionship is the easy way out and an excuse for not being our best, but it is a normal reaction to occur throughout the journey. It changes us along the way, and I feel like that is what TGS represents. We aren’t a group of tourists going to ‘there’ and then ‘back again.’ We truly are the band of travelers, like that of elves and dwarves and hobbits, all bringing unique skills to the table to make the journey matter more than the ‘there.’ And if I didn’t learn anything else, I learned there really is no such thing as fully going ‘back again.’ Once you have gone, the journey stays within you and changes how you think and act. We can’t always choose the journey we take, and like Bilbo we will naturally fight it at times, but it is about how we change and develop during the journey. It’s about turning a “it was better then because” to a “it is great now because.” It’s about asking “how did this journey change us?” rather than “why can’t we relive the last one?”

**WHAT CAN YOU NOT LIVE WITHOUT AT TGS?**

The friendships we create here will never be broken because these are the people you go through some of the most insane experiences with. Traveling brings us together, but the bonds we build along the way keep us together.

**WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE SONG THIS SCHOOL YEAR?**

I wouldn’t say it is my favorite book, but I read it at least once a semester. “The Hobbit” is about a journey, and that pessimistic hobbit, although he complains a great lot, does not regret leaving The Shire enough to return. Somewhere along the adventure he learns it is about the journey there and back again, rather than the ‘there’ or the place to go ‘back again.’ It is about putting trust in others and yourself and deciding what is important when everything seems to be a priority. Yes, I am comparing each of us to Bilbo the hobbit now when I say the thoughts of home and of better times run through our heads, when we are bored or lonely. Companionship is the easy way out and an excuse for not being our best, but it is a normal reaction to occur throughout the journey. It changes us along the way, and I feel like that is what TGS represents. We aren’t a group of tourists going to ‘there’ and then ‘back again.’ We truly are the band of travelers, like that of elves and dwarves and hobbits, all bringing unique skills to the table to make the journey matter more than the ‘there.’ And if I didn’t learn anything else, I learned there really is no such thing as fully going ‘back again.’ Once you have gone, the journey stays within you and changes how you think and act. We can’t always choose the journey we take, and like Bilbo we will naturally fight it at times, but it is about how we change and develop during the journey. It’s about turning a “it was better then because” to a “it is great now because.” It’s about asking “how did this journey change us?” rather than “why can’t we relive the last one?”
I have to say the people. The students of TGS are amazingly weird and I felt the most like I was really connecting with the Kashmiris and being point) Kashmiri toast, but also in it's being the weXplore during which I itself from the others not only due to the delicious (and famous by this edible and not spicy in India; milo in Tanzania; and Trail Mix in Japan. Egg masala. All the way ;) No seriously: Nutella/Oreo/PB combo/anything of our own topic. This understanding paved the way for the greater com- an overall understanding of the country's history but also an in-depth one around Japan all the more interesting because it provided us with not only which we were able to study things that interested us from a specific weirdness in some of my friends as well in addition to them bringing out I am the weird one. The one who's up for a dare so long as it doesn't involve spicy food and who is not exactly the most graceful winner (yes Cash, I beat you at Foosball, deal with it :)). I like to think that I bring out the in the way. 

WHAT ROLE DO YOU PLAY ON CAMPUS?

I am the weird one. The one who's up for a dare so long as it doesn't involve spicy food and who is not exactly the most graceful winner (yes Cash, I beat you at Foosball, deal with it :)). I like to think that I bring out the in the way.

WHAT WERE YOUR FAVORITE EXPLORATION TRIPS?

In Global Studies in Japan, our teacher, Mr. Martino, set up a system in which we were able to study things that interested us from a specific weirdness in me.

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE CLASS?

In Global Studies in Japan, our teacher, Mr. Martino, set up a system in which we were able to study things that interested us from a specific weirdness in me.

WHAT CAN YOU NOT LIVE WITHOUT AT TGS?

I am telling you, one day we will get you back for it.

WHAT'S THE BEST PRANK THIS YEAR?

I am only going to say this once. The guys who plotted to throw water balloons at us during the Golden Week trip might have been slightly intelligent. Maybe. But I am telling you, one day we will get you back for it.

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE FOOD THIS YEAR?

Egg masala. All the way ;) No seriously: Nutella/Oreo/PB combo/anything edible and not spicy in India, milo in Tanzania; and Trail Mix in Japan. Wait, I forgot, Kashmiri toast!!
**Kiana Froese**

**Grade Nine**

> SINCE 1998 <

**What was your biggest challenge this year?**
My biggest challenge this year was overcoming the unrealistic expectation of perfection I set for myself.

**What was your biggest accomplishment?**
When I got elected the welfare representative for both terms in grade nine and I organized many events for the school. It was a self-accomplishment because I realized I am a valuable part of the student body.

**What was your favorite class?**
My favorite class is Spanish because learning another language opens up so many opportunities.

**Which of the three countries was your favorite?**
Tanzania because we got to make a difference when building the school. When we worked together as a community it sparked a passion inside of me for constructing.

**Which weXplore trip was your favorite?**
Golden Week in Japan. We stayed in cabins and cooked all our own meals. We went walking and kayaking. We had campfires and water-balloon fights. We went strawberry picking, sun tanning and chopstick carving. It was an awesome couple of days to bond as a community and really get to know each other. We got to see the countryside of Japan, which is not a usual scene when you think of the country.

**If you were the head of school, what would you change?**
I would provide snacks for the students throughout the day! When a brain is hungry it doesn’t focus, plus if it is local snacks we get to learn a little about the countries local cuisine.

**What can you not live without at TGS?**
A sense of adventure.

**What’s your favorite book this year?**
"Slaughterhouse-Five" by Kurt Vonnegut.

**Which student has the most school spirit?**
Charis.

**What was your favorite food this year?**
Masala dosa.

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**Jonah Dollery**

**Grade Nine**

> SINCE 1999 <

**What was your biggest challenge this year?**
My biggest challenge this year was self-discipline. I often found myself out and about, basking in the freedom that TGS had given us. With the busy TGS life we were living, organization plays a huge part of our lives and is a vital skill. After recognizing this problem, I managed to develop a sense of occasion, learning when it’s the right time for seriousness, work or play.

**What event had the biggest impact on you?**
The Eid al Adha experience in Hyderabad definitely had one of the largest impacts on me. Not only was this my first time experiencing the sacrifice of an animal for religious purposes, it also was my first time experiencing and learning in depth the incredible practices of Islam. The best way to classify the experience is as extreme sensual exposure.

**What role do you play on campus?**
I try to be a positive influence to everyone on campus. I try to be as friendly as possible as well as tell jokes and be happy, as happiness is contagious. I also add a lot to the school’s sporting culture. I am always willing to engage in extra curricular activities and sporting events.

**What was your biggest accomplishment?**
Making close bonds with people who I will probably stay in contact with for the rest of my life.

**Which weXplore trip was your favorite?**
The weXplores I took part in were all incredible and extremely enjoyable. Yet four trips stick out in my mind: Goa, Kimano Kodo, Kobe and the camping trip. Goa was beautiful, cluttered with the sea, the sand, the jungle and the good times we shared together. Kimano Kodo was exceptional; the cold weather and scenic hikes were fantastic experiences. Kobe was vibrant. Some examples of its vibrancy are as follows: the massive suspension bridge, sub-metro markets, Chinatown and cat cafes. Finally the camping trips was filled with sunshine, relaxed vibes, stories and water balloon fights. One of my favorite parts of TGS are the weXplores.

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**FUN**

**What was your favorite song this school year?**
"Lonely Boy" by The Black Keys, "Africa Rising" by Black Coffee.

**What can you not live without at TGS?**
A sense of adventure.

**What’s your favorite book?**
My favorite book is "The Diary of a Young Girl" by Anne Frank.

**What was your favorite food this year?**
Masala dosa.

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**SOUTH AFRICA**

**JONAH DOLLERY**

**GRADE NINE**

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**CANADA**

**KIANA FROESE**

**GRADE NINE**

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46 47
GILLIAN
AFTANAS
GRADE NINE
UNITED STATES

GRANT
STENGER
GRADE NINE
UNITED STATES

VARIYA
TANNIRANDORM
GRADE NINE
THAILAND

GALEK
YANGZOM
GRADE NINE
BHUTAN
This unique historic megacity served as our home for the first semester. And from the get-go, it would constantly be introducing us to new sensory experiences at a rapid-fire pace. We traded personal space for knee-to-knee rides in auto rickshaws and swapped air conditioning for spices so hot the room would spin. Our surroundings weren’t always easy, but they were always colorful and enlightening.

Henna tattoos and portraits of teacher Russell Cailey proved to be a hot commodity at the Shilparamam night bazaar, and our more street-wise students learned the subtleties of haggling from the experts who hawk their trinkets under the iconic minarets of the Charminar. The best views of the city? With your bare feet dangling from the cliffs of the Golconda Fort, of course.

It was here in the world’s largest democracy that we studied how one frail, bespectacled man changed the world by bringing a mighty empire to its knees, but also saw firsthand the damaging effects that the caste system inflicts on those with so little to begin with. Even with the odds stacked against them, Hyderabad’s destitute always greeted us with infectious smiles and taught us the value of being friendly.

Our time in Hyderabad was, in short, truly incredible, and the indefatigable spirit of the city will be remembered by us all for years to come.
TEA PROJECT
IN KERALA

by Sydney

The Tea Project: design a business model with full financials and marketing plans, make a copy in Spanish, and oh, we have a week. The four teams of grades 9 and 10 hit the rolling tea fields of Munnar and collected footage and let ideas blossom. First, wow. I have never ever seen so much of one crop in one place, and I live in cornfield central of the States. It was absolutely gorgeous to see the fields of green and smell the tea and as we climbed the mountain, to feel the coolness of the clouds we had surpassed. Second, does tea really have all those benefits? Third, okay now we have to order the supplies - so one year, x amount of people, this many cups of tea, that comes to, oh my gosh. Where am I supposed to order that many cups? You said what? We need how many pounds of butter for the store? Fourth, "begins Spanish portion of presentation, and thinks this is nerve-wrecking enough in English." Fifth, okay we are done... can we do it again? Yes, we are serious. Now Grade 10 is going to start a company, and we sort of actually know how to now.
This weekend, my advisory and I went out into the city of Hyderabad from Saturday to Sunday. The five of us, four students and one teacher, knew from the beginning that planning out a trip in India would be impossible. However, we had a general overview of what we wanted to do: to visit a bazaar, a mosque, a palace, a lake and a river.

Our first day started with a long, quiet uncomfortable, but amazing rickshaw ride into the city. After about an hour of having other people sitting on your lap and being shook around, we finally arrived at the Hussain Sagar Lake in the center of Hyderabad. After a small wander around the highly polluted and smelly lake, we took another rickshaw down to the Charminar, a giant monument in the middle of an even bigger bazaar, and the Makkah Masjid, an impressively beautiful mosque. Unfortunately, or rather, fortunately, I was wearing shorts that day and was therefore at first not permitted to enter the mosque. Lee Ann, our teacher, however, had a brilliant idea. She dragged me to the traditional Indian clothing store right next door and we bought a pair of big, white “Indian pants” for approximately US$1.50. After quickly shuffling them over my shorts, we were finally able to enter the beautiful mosque.

Inside, something very typically Indian happened to us. A random guy just started talking to us and telling us everything about the Makkah Masjid. After a tiny little tour, he obviously demanded some money. We gave him a hundred rupees, which is about US$1.50 and he took off happy as a clam. We also had to pay the lady in front of mosque, who had been kind enough to watch out for our shoes, another 100 rupees.

On the next morning, after having an amazing Italian dinner, we went back on a rickshaw, which brought us to the magnificent Chowmahalla Palace, where the “royal family” of Hyderabad lived until the mid 20th century. Other than weapons, paintings and an impressive throne room, we also had the opportunity to look at some British vintage cars.

An ice cream and a long rickshaw ride later, we were back at the hotel, ready to depart back to the TGS campus. Interesting and very intense 24-plus hours. Typical TGS.
While enrolled at TGS, students are encouraged to be creative during the course of their studies and travels. When the students document these thoughts, we are often delighted with the results. In “Back and forth to the Ajanta and Ellora Caves,” 10th grade German student Paul Schmidt uses travel writing to document his journey to Aurangabad, where he and his fellow classmates visited Jain, Buddhist and Hindu caves.

Thirty-seven hours on a bus. Staring for 37 hours. Some might think that 37 hours on a bus are wasted; however, I believe it’s really your decision what to make out of it. You can either let it ruin your entire journey and make all that time worth absolutely nothing, or you can read, sleep, eat, talk, listen, watch, surf, compete, observe, and, most importantly, enjoy. I can proudly say that I achieved every single one of these on our most recent trip. I read about 300 pages of “Der Schwarm” by Frank Schätzing; I caught up on a lot of sleep (and also lost some again). I ate several delicious Bhutanese apples and also tried roti, an Indian flatbread made with chapathi and spices. I listened, or rather we listened, using speakers and a 5-plug headphone connector; I discovered a new TV series for myself and managed to be awarded last place in the first official TGS bus surfing tournament. And for a very long time, I just stared out of the window, watching and observing people, their homes and their land. More than anything else, I repeatedly saw one thing: crops. Usually large areas of crops speak of a flourishing agricultural sector, increasing the wealth of both farmers and their employees. However, these massive fields of crops stood in stark contrast to the poor infrastructure around them; most homes I saw were hardly recognizable as buildings. This speaks of a problem many developed and developing countries are experiencing right now: big agricultural companies keep buying more and more land, taking away the main source of income from traditional farmers.

After about 13 hours on a bus, crossing three different states and many, many roads and highways, we arrived in Aurangabad at 3:30am. My roommate Jonah went straight to our rooms, exhausted, and after quickly unpacking our bags, we quickly fell asleep. Four hours later the next day started exactly like the previous one ended – on a bus to the Ajanta Caves.
For the entire afternoon, our guide led us through several Buddhist caves, all of them carved monolithically out of the cliff. Some of them were simply places of worship and meditation while others were complete monasteries containing bedrooms, meditation rooms and a stairway down to the river. These caves were one of the most impressive things I have ever seen, especially due to the fact that they were caused by one thing: religion. For me, religion is one of the most fascinating, yet hardest things to comprehend in life. I really wish that I could understand how someone could dedicate their entire life to worshipping something that’s not necessarily physical. After a short meal in a restaurant at the foot of the mountain, we finally drove back to the hotel and after a nice swim eventually fell into bed as exhausted as the day before.

Although I was still very impressed by what I had seen in Ajanta, the next day managed to completely blow my mind. The Ellora Caves were unlike anything I had seen before. We visited three different caves; a Jain, a Buddhist and a Hindu.

At first, the Jain cave looked much like the Buddhist ones we had seen the day before; however, the moment our guide led us up the stairs and through several well-hidden paths, it changed. Instead of feeling like being in a small cave, it felt much more like being inside a massive complex within the mountain. And even though the Buddhist cave had the exact same structure as the ones we had visited the day before, it was much more quiet and peaceful. It really was a place for us to just sit, wander and think.

However, one place I definitely won’t forget is the Hindu cave, or rather, the Hindu complex or temple. The Hindu complex was a massive monolithic structure cut out of the cliff from top to bottom, including a wall, several massive pillars, five small temples, and one big one in the center. It took the people of Ellora over 200 hundred years and eight generations to build this structure. All of the walls showed carvings of Hindu gods and deities, including the three main gods Shiva, Brahma and Vishnu.

To be honest, I think that this was the most incredible and unimaginable thing that I’ve seen so far in my life, and I definitely won’t be able to forget it.
Besides the bumpy bus ride, I found this past weXplore trip to be an enjoyable learning experience. I loved being able to cycle in the morning to the ruins of Hampi, float down a river in a boat that slightly resembled a coconut and, well honestly, just being able to escape campus life for a couple of days. Along with the fun times there were many moments I found myself thinking about where I am and what this whole thing really meant. Thinking about how perception really is reality – and thinking about where I come from and where I have been. All of these came together when we had a group discussion at the end of our trip. Led by Jarret and Cailey, we did a few exercises to get us thinking further about what we had experienced as travelers rather than tourists. They wanted us to think like locals, but still be able to question whether or not we will ever really be able to fully immerse ourselves in India and other destinations.

Then I began thinking about life in India, and how the people here spend their daily lives. We had the chance to walk around the area outside of our hotel, and it was an actual culture shock. I had never seen anything similar to the neighborhoods that we walked through. The shops were small and in large abundance, all of them selling the same brands of sweets, soda pop, chips, etc. I wondered, “why so many?” but I was too distracted by a cow that ran into me to ask aloud. Quickly walking away from the moody cows and toward the river where so many people were washing their clothes – and taking a swim. This was also new to me and so were the small, open houses along the muddy road where people were riding by, all fitting on one motorbike. Yes, there are many differences in comparison to my culture and theirs, but when it comes down to it, the people I met walking down the road all seemed to be happy. In fact, I probably saw more smiling faces walking down a small road in Hampi than I ever did walking down the streets of St. Louis, NYC, Chicago, Buenos Aires, or anywhere else I have been.

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I’m riding my motorbike and at a crossroad I ask for directions. “Indus School?” A man points in the direction I suspected to be right, and repeats my words, with a mixture of certainty and doubt. I say thanks and get ready to take off as he gets on the back of my bike. I guess he needed a ride.

I drive off with a smile, glad to be of service.

The music teacher of Indus, known as Crazy David, volunteers to help me with my new bike, spending the whole day taking me to the mechanic, and showing me around the city, barely knowing me. He had to cancel private lessons he has scheduled for that day. Not a common generosity in the places I have lived before.

The mechanic spends three hours working on my motorbike and didn’t charge for the service, only for the parts. David’s influence, I suspect. A different mechanic refused my tiny tip of 60 rupees after spending 40 minutes on fixing my tire, and charging me 40 rupees for the service.

Nine people on a rickshaw, they don’t look squashed, or uncomfortable. The driver barely has space to turn his steering stick thing.

Five on a motorbike. One kid on the front sleeping, leaning over the gas tank.

Guy gets off a fast moving bus, runs across three lanes of incoming traffic diagonally, makes it safe to the sidewalk, then continues to walk normally. Nobody gets even slightly stressed.

Trains go by with so many people that some hang out from the doors. Sometimes a few are on the roof too.

**ON CUEING AND TRAFFIC**

Often, the generosity of Indians will seem to be challenged by their seemingly rude habit of jumping cues. I don’t think they understand cues as we do in the West. I am still trying to figure out if it is OK to ask them to stand in line, or if I’m the one being silly here.

Driving rules are: Do what you have to do. Everyone will understand. Want to go in the opposite direction to traffic, around a few cows, and then cross a four “lane” intersection forcing everyone to break? Just do it. But don’t think about it, hesitate, ask for permission, or doubt. Otherwise, you cause chaos. Just get out there and do it!

People walk in front of fast-moving traffic, holding their hand out, expecting to be stopped for. I ain’t going to stop walking, so you should really break right about now.
Translation of the QR Code:

On September 3, 2013, THINK Global School received the great honor of a visit from the Prime Minister (Lyonchen) of Bhutan, Tshering Tobgay. His visit to our host school of Indus International School, Hyderabad provided great context for our students to absorb Lyonchen Tobgay’s stated connections between India and Bhutan, a country many TGS members visited in January 2013 on the first school intersession.
As our semester and time in India draw to a close, it is important to stop for a moment, take stock and share all the beautiful things that we have created in the past three and a half months. This past Tuesday afternoon saw TGS and Indus celebrate through a collaborative art exhibition showcasing our students’ recent work.

The walls (and doors) of an open space were filled with drawings, paintings, photographs, video projections and sculptures of a high standard. Our honored guest, Avani Rao Gandhara, owner and curator of Hyderabad’s Icon Art gallery commented on how pleasantly surprised she was by the conceptual and visual maturity and quality of the work displayed. As an art teacher it is always a joy to see students’ reactions to their work on display and the realization that they made this beautiful thing; but by far and away, my favorite part of an art show is observing my students talking about their artwork with their peers and others.

Art students from TGS and Indus should all be proud of the particularly lovely artwork they have recently created. I am grateful to my colleague at Indus, Ranjita Chakraborty, for her support and collaboration throughout the semester and I look forward to sharing more amazing student artwork in the future.

“Standing in a pseudo underground art exhibition at school today made me value the influence that images hold to the viewer. Seeing the expressions on people’s faces while closely looking at other students work and my own awoke an aspect of art that I believe is essential: communication.” – Alejandro (TGS)

“It felt nice to have work I was proud of up on the wall and see it. I am not very confident about my work, and it boosted my confidence to see it up there. It was interesting to see everyone’s artwork, especially the older kids because it showed me my potential as an artist.” – Kiana (TGS)

“I learned about how different individuals connected with art in dissimilar ways. I witnessed a lot of dynamic, creative art as I intermingled with the other presenters. I understood that through examining art, you understand the mind of the artist and the deeper you go, the more you understand that you yourself possess a perception that is unique, yet somehow correlated to the artist’s.” – Prajim (Indus)

“Presenting my work in the exhibition furthered my concepts on my own creations. With pieces that I felt iffy about at the beginning, ended up being something that I was proud of.” – Isaac (TGS)

“It was helpful to see the response from other people besides my art classmates because they do not know my thoughts behind it. Seeing work from different people inspired me to explore different mediums.” – Melissa (TGS)

“I came fully expecting to see a level of technical excellence. What surprised me, though, was the variety of media and the amount of thought and imagination which must have gone into the work on display.” – Mr. Jenkinson (TGS)

Special mention goes to TGS Grade 11 student, Hannah Cho who won the “Our Girls, Our Pride” photography competition for her image which captured the theme.
Our time in Amritsar offered lessons on dissent and mindfulness. A visit to the bullet-pocked gardens of Jallianwala Bagh, where over 370 peacefully demonstrating Indians were massacred by British colonial forces in 1919, reinforced that the path to freedom is often one soaked in blood. And that peaceful resistance can inspire and spark proactivity for generations to come.

We also visited the Harmandar Sahib (Golden Temple) during our time in Amritsar, a holy site revered by followers of Sikhism. Over 100,000 people are drawn to the Golden Temple each day, a testament to its strong allure for locals, Sikh pilgrims, curious travelers, and nomadic high school students alike. The early risers in our group had the option of attending a pre-dawn visit to the Golden Temple for morning prayers, an incredible opportunity to find oneself through meditation — and perhaps even Nirvana itself — surrounded by white marble, gold leaf, and serenity.

One of the more electrifying spectacles in the world is on display at the Pakistani/India border, just outside of Amritsar. Here at Wagah we witnessed the daily military exercise that has been performed to perfection since 1959. India’s and Pakistan’s finest soldiers take turns meticulously goose-stepping, each display of pageantry demonstrating why broad shoulders, clockwork footsteps, and the ability to pull off a peacock hat are all necessities for the job.
If our male students didn’t want a macho beard after visiting Wagah, the display of Gatka, a Sikh martial art, the following day at the Central Khalsa Orphanage must surely have put them over the top. Gatka combines acrobatic displays with weaponry, resulting in a martial art that has been performed across Asia for centuries. The display we saw included intense sparring sessions and a unique way of slicing fruit involving a blindfold and very sharp sword. Not for the timid, but few things are in India!

ANOTHER TYPICAL DAY AT TGS

BLINDFOLDED, DANCING SWORD FIGHTERS WEARING BATHROBES AND STRIPED SOCKS!
Lunch break tgs style
The experience in Hyderabad definitely had one of the largest impacts on me. Not only was this my first time experiencing the sacrifice of an animal for religious purposes, it also was my first time experiencing and learning in depth the incredible practices of Islam. The best way to classify the experience is as extreme sensual exposure. - Jonah

The animal is supposed to be killed with a clean cut through its throat for it to suffer as least as possible in order for it to be “halal.” However, this may vary from country to country. After slaughtering the animal, it is left on the ground too bleed out before it is skinned and finally chopped into pieces. The meat of the slaughtered animal is then distributed amongst the poor as well as shared with your own family. The fur of the animal is sold and the money usually given to charity. The question whether sacrificing a goat is ethically justifiable was raised several already days in advance. Personally, since all the meat is being eaten, I believe that there is no difference to animals getting killed for industry. I might even say that it is more ethical than goats getting slaughtered for industry since some of the meat as well as the money gained from selling the fur is given to charity. - Paul

I cannot even begin to tell you how my shoes were assembled, nor my hairbrush or my pencil. Everything is so removed from its original form; you begin to forget that there was an original form to begin with. Today, I remembered. I cannot say it was a lovely experience, nor one that I would be particularly interested in going through again. But I am thankful for it. I have forgotten that the meat I eat was not just conferred out of thin air; I have completely disassociated a living animal from the chunk of food I put into my mouth. It is a cultural phenomenon, really. Understandable though, as no compassionate person would like to sit around and contemplate the death of their food. However, I feel it is necessary to realize the deep hypocrisy that permeates our everyday lives when it comes to consumerism. I was incredibly disturbed today, taken aback by the death that surrounded me. But I should not have been. If I was in touch, if I had lived up to my non-hypocritical standards, I would have acknowledged that every animal goes through this process before it arrives on my plate. But until that point, I did not. I refused. Today was a wake-up call, one I desperately needed. - River
those who have disabilities to a staggering 500,000 people! Yet what is even more frightening than these figures is the lack of an appropriate response from government as well as from the company itself.

I thought that the company would have quickly accepted its accountability and have sought to redress the situation with compensation payments equivalent to those that could have been claimed if such an accident had happened in mainland USA (such as the compensation that was demanded from BP by a posturing President Obama for the oil spillage in the Gulf of Mexico). Wrong. The original settlement that was agreed upon by Union Carbide in February 1989, five years after the tragedy, for a payment of US$470 million, has been challenged by the survivors who have pressed the Indian government for a more substantial sum based upon the increased number of dead and those with disabilities.

To date there has been no final settlement even though activists have attempted to press the Indian legislature and the Supreme Court for a just solution. Indeed, it appears that the actual system in India is conspiring to work against the very people that it ought to be protecting. As late as last Friday, November 29, 2013, it was announced that no hearing took place in the Supreme Court on a curative petition that had been filed to review the settlement of 1989 and that no date has been fixed for any possible hearing in the future. This chronic lack of support from the legal system is inexplicable to many and gives rise to the notion that perhaps there is pressure from the world of the multinational companies (Union Carbide is now owned by Dow Chemicals) on the Indian government to avoid any court case that would prove injurious to the profit margins of the very companies that may wish to invest in India.

Certainly there is room to consider the point of view of the activist N.D. Jaiprakash when he is quoted as saying that “perhaps the government is purposely allowing the matter to drag on” and wonders why if such is indeed the case. The Supreme Court does not exert its power to bring this matter to conclusion.

I am not suitably versed in the Indian legal system, but I have listened to the people who work in the Bhopal Memorial Hospital and Research Centre and it appears to be clear that there has been an incredible degree of lethargy in responding to the needs of the survivors. An insufficient number of those affected have been issued with health books that will allow them access to free treatment, there is still much work to be completed with the promised digitalization of medical records and treatment is still needing to be delivered systematically to all. Thus there seems to be a degree of largesse toward the company that now owns Union Carbide, Dow Chemical, instead of a more determined approach to a legal restitution.

I would hope that before not too long, the survivors are able to receive their justifiable compensation and that Dow Chemical will have cleaned the Union Carbide site where there is still approximately some 1.1 million tons of toxic waste that needs to be adequately treated if it is not to pose a real threat for the future. However, there is nothing that can take away the sheer frustration of the survivors or the activists that work with them. Their anguish is real and their feelings of helplessness must be accounted for when somebody is brave enough to stand judgment on this accident that has become a tragedy as well as an indictment of those who ought to have been disposed to help those who were in the most need – the survivors.

When we were in Bhopal earlier this semester, we visited the derelict Union Carbide factory and walked among the storage tanks and processing units that are now so famous around the world. The fame of this plant is not based upon its chemical research nor on productivity but rather for the infamous eruption of poisonous gases that broke from the Union Carbide pesticide plant on the night of December 2-3, 1984. As people slept these deadly gases rose into the night sky and were blown by the silent winds across the poorer sections of the town; ironically where many of the workers in the Union Carbide plant lived. Many never woke from their sleep; others who had been wakened ran in fear directly into the path of the invisible terror. Many people died instantly and others lingered on to die from the cocktail of poisons that had affected their bodies. The lives of many of the “survivors” changed dramatically as ill health, wasting diseases and the detrition of their living standards impacted negatively, while the world looked elsewhere after the television crews had left.

In the last 29 years since the world’s worst industrial accident, the number of deaths directly related to the escape of the poisonous gases has risen from the originally estimated 3,000 to nearer 20,000 and
As I walk into an alley with rundown houses, moldy walls and the smell of sewage and feces,
looking at the puddles, cow dung and god-know-what-else on the ground to avoid dirtying my sneakers, next to
A group of people sitting on the back of a decorated truck, craning their necks to get a better look of us, next to
A little boy and a little girl jumping back and forth over a black puddle.
  The boy slipped and got his left foot wet, next to
  An empty yellow rickshaw, next to
A cow leisurely lying in the shade of a tin roof, next to
A woman in a bright pink sari making chai, next to
A girl in a frilly gold dress with no shoes on, next to
  A car honking incessantly, next to
A stray dog nosing through a pile of trash, next to
A baby sleeping in his mother’s lap, sweating from the afternoon heat, next to
A woman shouting “Hi!” and waving at us, next to
A boy with a birthmark that takes up a little less than half his face running out and tried to shake my hand, next to
  A pump pumping out water contaminated with toxic chemicals, next to
    A girl getting water, next to
  A clinic treating hundreds of people every day for free, next to
    A man who came to help and never left, next to
A woman quietly grinding herbs to treat people whose bodies have been torn apart by synthetic chemicals, next to
  A village where hundreds of people died twenty-nine years ago, next to
A man waking up in the middle of the night coughing his lungs out, next to
A family whose children are being born with deformities, next to
A government powerless to fight for their people, next to
A group of pranksters trying to fix the world, next to
A corporation refusing to even acknowledge what is still happening.
And I wonder,
In this rundown, smelly, cruel, insufferable, ignorant world, What will happen next to me?
It is all easy until you are on there, then it hits you. It is no longer a figure on a paper or an image in your mind. Something you can flip over, think about, and then forget. The destruction is in your face and close enough to touch. Every person I passed on the street became a possible gas-exposure sufferer. Every pool of water and random drip was potentially contaminated. Every abandoned shoe and dirty corner was a tale of disaster and suffering.

The area we walked through was poor and deteriorated, suffering from years of neglect from a high population, so when we came to the small, safe haven of Sambhavna Clinic, it seemed like a sparkling castle in the midst of a field of ruins. It was made of brick: a warm red color with green ivy creeping its way up and twirling around anything that it could get its green fingers around. The structure was one of the only stable and well-built buildings around. It stuck out like an oasis in a desert.

Entering the clinic was like entering a home. “Clinic” brings to mind the thought of antiseptic white walls and empty halls, but Sambhavna was not a clinic – it was welcoming and light with plants popping out of every corner. The building itself was open with many courtyards and balconies. On the backside there was a garden planted thick with trees and flowers that I can not name. Men, women and children walked around freely, the majority of them smiling.

Someone asked a little boy flying a kite why he was at the hospital, assuming that he was one of the 30,000 patients who are registered at the clinic for gas exposure and water contamination related problems. He replied that he was not a patient, but came to the hospital to play because they had the best playground and were very welcoming.

...continues
The ink is not permanent but the memories are.

This tiny clinic, in the middle of one of Bhopal's most grief-stricken areas, makes almost all of the Ayurvedic medicine that its patients require. The medicine, which is extracted, mixed and put together by Sambhavna, came from the 120 different plants crammed into the one-acre plot that was the clinic's back garden. Up to 76 different types of medicine were created in this very room.

The pharmacy focuses on purely organic medical treatment, projecting the idea that the patients of this horrific disaster had put enough chemicals into their bodies. Ayurvedic medicine is beneficial to the entire body. It is not a symptom-based treatment and works on the person's well-being as a whole. In addition, Rajna, an inspiring women who talked to us about the clinic and its purposes and problems, explained to us that Sambhavna was attempting to "break the circle of poison." This concept is based on the fact that most companies that are the cause of many terrible chemical disasters are also the sponsors of chemically-made medicines for various diseases. In the case of the Bhopal disaster, the company that owned the factory at the time of the disaster — Union Carbide — were also sponsoring a large cancer research organization. Medicines made by a lot of companies are coming from the money given by the very cause of the disaster itself.

All of this inspiration from a tiny, almost unknown, self-sufficient clinic. Thank you to Sambhavna for everything you're doing.
Travel begets travel; it’s like a gambling habit with both immediately apparent and dormant benefits for the mind and spirit. As I’ve explained to many friends and family members, these experiences do not satiate some hungry beast that can eventually become full. Travel doesn’t get out of your system. Each experience can inspire a realization of the possibility of infinitely more experiences.

We clutch our wallets and apologize, pinch our passports and determine the need for more pages, and assure our parents that with experience comes the considerable strength to handle what the world bowls our way. Travel begets travel, sometimes begrudgingly and often with too much enthusiasm to weather as a mere human being. I know this to be true after being semi-nomadic for the better part of six years. Upon my first study abroad in Italy and a concurrent fascination with photographing trash cans, I realized I was in this for the long haul and that it wasn’t going to taper off.

I moved on from photographing the beautifully mundane to being obsessed with travel narratives and the firsthand experiences of people in other parts of the world. That was my predominant reading material throughout junior and senior year of university. With Into Thin Air by Jon Krakauer, a seed was planted to visit a spectacular mountain range atop a country I had only briefly encountered. Those 304 pages predetermined a winding road through 19 countries (13 in Europe and nine in Africa), all leading toward the disputed region of Kashmir, where I got my fix of the rooftop of the world.

HOW I ARRIVED IN KASHMIR

In October 2008, I was a fresh graduate of higher education and five months into a solo trip around the world. The previous location of Lusaka, Zambia, treated me harshly, and I approached India with a visible distrust in others and the misguided need to micromanage my trip with a day-to-day itinerary.

After two days of being in hot and sticky Delhi, I booked a bus ticket to Manali to escape the uncomfortable chaos. The following is a journal excerpt from the morning before my 18-hour bus ride; I was purchasing food for the journey:

During the rainy season, from June to September, the sky sheds tears. This four-month window is known as the monsoon. While exploring Hampi, we witnessed the consequence of the huge amount of water coming down. Flooding has proven to be a significant problem in the historic city of Hampi. As a result, floods leave buildings submerged in water, allowing mold and fungi to grow and erode their surroundings. Perhaps this flooding would not be as destructive if senseless treasure hunters did not dig holes looking for hidden artifacts. Such holes destroy the foundation and provide a space for pests, destroying ancient monuments. Though this is devastating, not much that can be done to further preserve the sites.

Not only has this water damaged historical sites, it has affected roads and the ability to get from A to B. A 12-hour drive from Hyderabad to Hampi is like a rollercoaster. Potholes and uneven surfaces make this rollercoaster ride anything but fun.

Sadly, even with the World Bank’s loan of US$350 million to the Government of India to improve the highways in Andhra Pradesh, the improvement is not truly effective. The goal is quite ambitious, but manageable. “The project will help relieve traffic congestion and reduce travel times by widening and upgrading priority roads, enhancing road maintenance, and strengthening the state road agency’s ability to manage its road programs and assets,” states web.worldbank.org in the article “India State Highway Project to Overhaul Andhra Pradesh’s Road Network.” Climate is not something that should be manipulated, but proper measures need to be taken so that the neglect of roads are not a result of hundreds or thousands of car accidents and uncomfortable 12-hour rides.

The monsoon creates a delicate balance between the people and their environment. When walking toward the Virupaksha Temple, street vendors called out from all sides. They call out, “10 rupees, I give you 10 rupees!” for products such as bananas, corn, and coconuts. Without the monsoon, all of these farmers would have no products to sell. On the other hand, if a monsoon is too vicious, crops may become submerged in water and ruined—leaving that year’s income and food supply nonexistent. Yet, without water, the agricultural industry would be nonexistent.

The monsoon is an important part of Hampi and its culture. Not only does it dictate how people live their lives, it affects essential resources such as water and food. Although monsoons can damage ancient monuments and roads, they are a fundamental to Hampi and India as a whole.
Thinking of both my health (mainly avoiding Delhi belly) and the astoundingly low cost of eats, I stopped and stood, confused, in front of an ash-covered bread stand, hoping to score some tasty goods with the nine rupees jingling in my board shorts. A stranger hailed me out of a ‘Lost in Translation’ moment (three rupees a chapati, three chapatis for the road) and then surprised me with his hold on the English language. Thinking I was ordering my lunch, my new friend Mudi invited me to join him for chow at his shop and inquired about my India plans. Thanks to a warning box in a Lonely Planet book, I thought that this was one of those moments I was read up on and prepared for: he mentioned Kashmir. ALERT! ALERT! A SCAM! The nerve of these Kashmiri poachers… why let him in far enough to start the spiel… wasting my last hours in Delhi.

His kindness and ease made me reflect mild interest and appreciation on the outside, but on the inside I was working on an escape route that would match the suave of his approach. And then he took me to a travel agent, his roommate and lifelong buddy, where the pitch continued. Ashika, the agent, made his case by pointing at the numerous pictures and newspaper articles on the wall, claiming not only his company’s legitimacy, but also their sky-high level of satisfaction from previous travelers. And then they proceeded to call one happy customer after another, one being an American woman of 24 who was traveling alone and currently at the family houseboat… nice hand, my friends. Each reference affirmed my hopes that these Delhi bookooans weren’t crooks by any stretch of the imagination. My Lonely Planet lay open on my lap to the page quoting Bill Clinton in 2000: “Kashmir is probably the most dangerous place in the world.” Comforting.

_"IF YOU THINK TOO MUCH, NOTHING WILL HAPPEN"

The minutes disintegrated, and my bus departure time tested me to make the right decision for my safety: to cut the right wire, to choose the right pill. There was something about these guys and their effortless charisma, not to mention the addicitive humor; it seemed like they didn’t really care if you think too much, nothing will happen,” a travel tip I once shared with TGS students at a special ceremony. Its first utterance caused my immediate surrender to the adventure ahead.

A couple weeks after my Srinagar trip was carved out, I received an email that ten eager students were ready to join my trip, along with an even more enthusiastic Guillermo.

Finding a moment in the students’ schedules to squeeze in a pre-trip session for mental preparation was a near impossible feat, only feasible by a magician. So I settled with a 20-minute tea time on the quad, where I gave them time to write, my spiel on the religious curfew going on at the time, and a relevant mess of articles to have on hand in the location. I knew they wouldn’t be able to understand the complexity of the conflict in Kashmir. Heck, most of them haven’t heard the Led Zeppelin song, let alone anything about the state/territory. Instead of bombarding them with articles, I experimented with requiring them to read only enough background information to get started, and then I encouraged them to keep the rest on their iPad to reference when necessary. I gave them a vague packing list, a butt-crack-of-dawn departure, and a BBC documentary to watch on the flight. When they stepped foot off the plane, their energy was palpable. So was mine.

We now venture five years forward to the present. Three months into living in India, we decided to offer another opportunity for the students to see just how diverse our host country is. This being impossible in a meager four months, the faculty pitched six different ideas for travel from which the students could choose to explore their own interests.

Prior to this opportunity, I had talked my students’ ears off about my previous trip up north, especially those kids who were not convinced that India was a country they could enjoy. This was disheartening, and I made it my mission to plant in each of them a confusing, hypnotic allure of the subcontinent.

Have you ever been on a trip that you knew was so special: every detail seemed divinely delivered, every moment one to journal about, every vision worthy of an Instagram? This was the sentiment possessed by all involved in our trip. Lazy nights spent huddled around the fire were coupled with songs or thoughtful talks about travel. Morning breakfasts of toast and eggs were savored as if they were completely new foods. Even in moments where the students were out of their element, up before dawn, freezing, or pushed to their physical limits on hikes, they were still so engaged. The usual shyness of students in need of filtering the usual shyness of students in need of filtering questions through their teachers to the guides dissolved after a half-hour on the ground. The students loved Ashika.

I was thrilled to book the trip with the family I had traveled with previously. Ashika, my travel agent on the first trip, helped me craft an itinerary that offered the perfect balance of breadth and depth, flexibility and activity, learning and reflection. He knew the main purpose of our trip was not to be pampered and take photos (though most of the kids were photographers), but to better understand through experience what Kashmir has been dealing with since Partition.

One morning in the mountains, I was sitting next to Ashika and having breakfast by the fire. Students were playing guitar, toasting bread on the ash stove, and trying their tea with a spoonful of corn meal (like the mountain men do). I tried to wrap my head around the difference between the curfew I experienced in 2008 and the curfew the kids almost witnessed for Muharram. As Ashika unfolded the two situations, I grew to realize just how dangerous my curfew experience was versus the more recent one of a purely crowd-limiting motivation.

Midway through the conversation, the room silenced, and all ears perked to absorb the political realities of their current environment. I saw one girl get her iPad out to reference one of my required readings and read up on the articles about curfew over the years. Other students grabbed their notebooks to jot down notes, and soon I had to fight for Ashika’s attention along with the kids. He revealed stunning insight that allowed us to grasp just how complex the conflict is (and how difficult it will be to resolve). Breakfast stretched two hours long.

I didn’t come for the India of urine stains and city smog. Kashmir was the answer to my big travel dreams. It’s true: I was immediately desperate to make a trip happen in Srinagar. This being impossible in a meager four months, the faculty could choose to explore their own interests. The students loved Ashika. Have you ever been on a trip that you knew was so special: every detail seemed divinely delivered, every moment one to journal about, every vision worthy of an Instagram? This was the sentiment possessed by all involved in our trip. Lazy nights spent huddled around the fire were coupled with songs or thoughtful talks about travel. Morning breakfasts of toast and eggs were savored as if they were completely new foods. Even in moments where the students were out of their element, up before dawn, freezing, or pushed to their physical limits on hikes, they were still so engaged. The usual shyness of students in need of filtering questions through their teachers to the guides dissolved after a half-hour on the ground. The students loved Ashika.

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Guillermo was an excellent partner to help co-lead this trip, as his primary interest seems to be understanding humans and pursuing greater truths. He helped me sculpt the conversations and reflections in order to facilitate a progression of understanding. He announced in the middle of the trip that everyone was going to take part in a roundtable discussion, and they would attend representing one of the major groups involved in the conflict: India, Pakistan, the separatists, and China.

On the morning that we prepared to leave, we surrounded the fire in Moonshine Houseboat and proceeded with the discussion, which we recorded to share with the rest of the school. What started as a consideration of land ownership in Kashmir expanded to include cultural identity, religion and economics in a forum akin to a Model United Nations committee hearing. Halfway through the conversation, breakfast arrived and the sounds of toast crunches and Kashmiri tea pours can be heard lingering in the background of the audio. It was one of those not-so-rare moments at TGS when I listen to my kids saying amazing things and engaging far more than a typical teen would.

We returned late in the evening, exhausted from travel and constant elation. We didn’t want the trip to end, nor the unique bond we forged between students and staff. The 6D cinema at the airport terminal certainly extended our mental vacation up until departure, but upon returning to campus, we knew we had left behind a great experience that was still being processed.

Midweek, we called a couple of tea times to savor the flavors we remembered and share those moments with others. Through the mouths of my students, I heard further assurance that travel does beget travel, for all of them expressed not only interest in visiting Kashmir yet again but were determined to arrive a mere beat after their high school graduation. And the students who had previously expressed disinterest in India as a whole had changed their tune. Kashmir has a culture and a spirit they couldn’t have anticipated loving, and this rocked their idea of the subcontinent to the core.

Two wonderful things about my traveling students being exquisite photographers: First, we came away with an incredible pool of images that encapsulate the beauty and joy of the trip; and second, I was able to step out from behind the lens and just be present in the place that called me back five years later.

During our trekking in the Himalayas, we hiked through snowy mountains, learned about glaciers, bouldered, had a mini-snowball fight, continuously put on and took off layers of clothes, had “caterpillar” fights in our sleeping bags, played with hot water bottles, drank apple-cinnamon tea, and watched the sunrise over the Himalayas.

It was an amazing weekend. A truly great place to spend time with amazingly great people.

Hiking in the Himalayas

From the moment I looked out the window, flying through the snowy tipped mountains of Kashmir, I knew this would be different from any of our previous winter trips. Srinagar had a vibe that was so different from the rest of India – at least the parts I have seen.

My group (Garett, Yosefa, Paul, Cameron, Isaac, Joseph, Emma, Pema, Alexis, and myself) came to Srinagar to trek and learn about the environment. The first day we were there we took these long, beautiful boats across a lake and were given a map with a goal to keep track of our path. It was quite chilly on the water, but we all cuddled under a big blanket and tucked our ears into beanies/toques as we floated across the clear water topped with wilted lotus flowers. Eventually we arrived on a small island with trees covered in gorgeous colored leaves and a slight wind that tasted of late autumn.

Later that evening we settled down in a cozy houseboat where we joked and put our feet around a stove burning fire, preparing for a weekend of trekking.

With hiking shoes tied and plenty of dried apricots, we began our hike. As we climbed in altitude, it felt like we were floating. We happily hiked for twenty-five miles, learning about glaciers, bouldered, had a mini-snowball fight, continuously put on and took off layers of clothes, had “caterpillar” fights in our sleeping bags, played with hot water bottles, drank apple-cinnamon tea, and watched the sunrise over the Himalayas.

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Srinagar, India

Srinagar is the summer capital of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. It lies in the Kashmir Valley, on the banks of the Jhelum River, a tributary of the Indus. The city is famous for its gardens, lakes and houseboats.
Despite the large amount of time I have spent on a bicycle, I have never figured out exactly what makes me equate the experience with freedom. My first answer would be that it is due to the increased mobility that I suddenly acquire, but with further thought, I think that it’s more likely to be the open air rushing past my ears, filling the gaps in between thoughts. It’s different everywhere, and I love it everywhere. In India, the crash of the wind is intertwined with the noisy honks of tuk-tuks and the countless calls of the coconut vendors. In Cape Cod, the honks of tuk-tuks are more likely to be the screeches of seagulls; in New York, the rumble of the subways.

I felt as if I came alive for the first time this weekend in Hampi when we set off through the streets on our multicolored bicycles. My bulky fuchsia bike did not seem to be suited to the task, but again and again, with a lot of careful maneuvering, we made it up the intimidating hills and coasted down into the oncoming traffic and through the zigzagging routes of the tuk-tuks and the goats until we arrived at the next monument.

The monuments were mostly temples that could no longer be worshipped at because parts of the statues had been broken off. However, it was still possible to feel the mystical atmosphere that once enveloped the temples due to the sweet smell of burning incense and the detailed carvings covering the walls. At the same time, the mystique of the Hindu temples held a distinctly human feel, which was very different from the feelings I have had in Christian cathedrals. To give you a little context, I am not religious at all, so, for the most part, visiting religious sites is an objective experience for me. The architecture in cathedrals and basilicas is astounding and very detailed, similar to that of the Hindu temples. There is something about the architecture in cathedrals that makes me feel awe and intimidation; as if the cathedral could have only been built by a higher power. To me, that is representative of the aim of the religion. In the same way, I feel as if the Hindu temples tie together humanity and godliness instead of turning the gods into something to fear. The gods in the Hindu stories have their flaws, just as humans do, making them more accessible. Although the architecture in the Hindu temples is astonishingly intricate, my first thoughts go to the humans that spent time creating such beauty, not to a god or multiple gods. I don’t know if I can really say whether that is the aim of the religion or not, as Hinduism is extremely complex. What I can say with conviction is that the aura of the temples was very different from that of the cathedrals I had been to before.

Toward the end of the day, we climbed aboard coconut-shaped boats and floated down the Tungabhadra River, surrounded by craggy rock formations framed by a tranquil blue-grey sky. For one moment, everything seemed perfect. I couldn’t remember ever being as happy as I was then, and I couldn’t imagine ever being happier. It felt as if this was exactly what I had been looking for this whole time in terms of adventure and just what I felt I was missing in general. Of course the moment was fleeting, but if we pretend to see time the way Kurt Vonnegut’s Tralfamadorian aliens do—as an expanse somewhat like a range of mountains—, the moment still exists in its perfection and always will.
Swirling orange, white, and green flags danced with the overpowering music in the air above hundreds of proud and painted faces. The proud and painted faces opened their mouths and yelled in unison, at the cue of the man in the white suit, “Long live Hindustan!” From the minute I sat down at the Wagah Border, I felt the electric air crackling and the hearts pounding. The ceremony occurs daily, and with as much fervor and passion each time.

I come from a country where national pride is supposed to ring true in every heart of each citizen, and the stars and stripes can be seen from every street corner. Crowds of people chant, “U-S-A” and paint their faces in our colors on the Fourth of July, but the air is most definitely not electric. In the city I love, the air smells of candied nuts and pee. The atmosphere of the crowd at the border was much more volatile, and there was a disturbing sense that it could erupt in any moment.

Perhaps this was because of the proximity to proud Pakistanis. The two countries held what they could over the other, the most bizarre of these being the dancing of the Indian women in the arena. In any part of India, this is frowned upon. Women cannot dance in the streets for men to look at. However, the dancing at the border was a way to show the Pakistanis just how free the women of India are, and aren’t they jealous? Just look at how much fun the women have! It was a bit frustrating that we could barely see the Pakistani side of the events, but from quick glimpses, the women and men were segregated, and there were chants heard of “Allah Hu Akbar.”

The atmosphere of the crowd intrigued me more than anything else. Individually, people would not be inclined to act this way. The atmosphere only becomes so volatile when a group of people joins together. What is it that causes us to change our normal ways of being when among a huge crowd? This sort of experience is called a “rite of unification” and a “rite of intensification” in anthropology. When we, as humans, all go through an experience together, it brings us closer and makes us more likely to go along with the crowd. It intensifies our feelings and our perception.

A very common example of this is the Nuremberg Rally in Nazi Germany, the annual rally of the Nazi Party. Over half a million Germans participated in these rallies, and many films were made to commemorate them. These rallies were mostly in order to strengthen the personality cult around Adolf Hitler. People became more and more enraptured with him, and, caught up in the fervor, swore allegiance to him. They believed they were meant to be part of a new, more perfect race. The volatility and the fervor of the crowd could be compared quite easily to the scene at the Wagah Border. The type of nationalism was also quite similar; one that is centered on having might and wanting to show that off to the world.

To make a final remark on the bizarreness of the scene, Gandhi’s photo hung above the whole thing. A man who preached nonviolence and who didn’t want Partition to begin with, and who would have hated the ceremony with a burning passion. The Indians respect Gandhi more than anyone else. So why do they not follow his ideals? I understand that he had high expectations, but why does the country seem to be heading in the opposite direction? This simply baffles me. But then again, the more time I spend here, the more I think that India would not be India without the endless contradictions, that, when they are unraveled, seem to actually make sense.
TAJ MAHAL

No visit to India would be complete without a trip to the Taj Mahal, and our students had the opportunity to snap some very cool selfies in front of its highly recognizable reflecting pool. Prior to the trip, we had spent time in the classroom studying the history and architecture of the Mughal marvel, but some things just have to be seen in person. And the Taj Mahal definitely ranks high on that list. Scratch this one off our high school bucket list!

HISTORICAL FACTS

The Taj Mahal is a white marble mausoleum located on the southern bank of Yamuna River in the Indian city of Agra. It was commissioned in 1632 by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (reigned 1628–1658) to house the tomb of his favorite wife of three, Mumtaz Mahal who was a Persian princess and died during the birth of their fourteenth child. Construction was completed in 1653 and employed around 20,000 artisans. The domed marble tomb is part of an integrated complex consisting of gardens and two red-sandstone buildings surrounded by a crenellated wall on three sides.

The Taj Mahal is regarded by many as the best example of Mughal architecture and is recognized as “the jewel of Muslim art in India.” It is one of the world’s most celebrated structures and a symbol of India’s rich history. Designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983, the Taj Mahal attracts some three million visitors a year.
After a long six-hour train ride from Amritsar, our students found themselves in India’s capital city of New Delhi. Contrary to its name, one of our objectives in Delhi was to explore the old walled city and learn about the centuries-old professions that are slowly starting to die out.

We visited the Qutb Minar, a tapering tower that stands at 73 meters tall. The imposing Muslim tower is controversial by design, constructed in 1193 following the defeat of Delhi’s last Hindu kingdom. An inscription over its gate proudly proclaims that it was built from the remnants of 27 demolished Hindu temples. What’s not controversial is the impressive architecture, which is why it has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
Both groups of students sat down for a conversation with noted author and labor historian Dilip Simeon during their time in Delhi. Mr. Simeon spoke at length about Gandhi and his rise to the forefront of the Indian independence movement, going into depth about Gandhi’s place in history, loyalist hatred toward Gandhi, and how Gandhi managed to bring the Indian peasantry into the national movement. It was an evocative afternoon, and coupled with their visit to Gandhi Smriti, a museum dedicated to the Mahâtmâ, our students left Delhi with a newfound appreciation for the meager man with a grand vision.
THE SUCCESS OF THE POTTERY CLASS DEPENDS ON WHETHER THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN BEFORE OR AFTER?

HMM, MAYBE THE BEARD DOESN'T FOOL THEM AFTER ALL.

PHYSICS EQUATION: PEOPLE WATCHING + FULL BLADDER + 4 MILES WALK TO BATHROOM EQUALS...???

SIX-CUPS-OF-COFFEE FACE

THE LAST PHOTO TAKEN OF MEGAN AND GIJS BEFORE THEIR MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE.

INDIAN BUBBLES

THE KEY TO TRAVELING IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY IS TO BLEND IN...

YOU GOT ROOM FOR ONE MORE?

JONAH, THE OTHER LEFT...!

DARN... THIS IS THE I.B. OF DANCING

100
TANZANIA

WILD LIFE SAFARI, SCHOOL BUILDING, ORPHANAGE VISIT
AND STRETCHING ONE’S SELF TO THE LIMITS OF YOUR MENTAL AND
PHYSICAL CAPACITY ON MOUNT KILIMANJARO.

The graduating class heading for the top of the world.
Tanzania was the location of our 2013 Intersession and 2014 Senior Trip. After four years of jetting around the world, we finally arrived on the one habitable continent that had eluded us. Our ninth, tenth, and eleventh graders visited Tanzania in December of 2013, and our twelfth graders visited in June of 2014.

2013 INTERSESSION

Our ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade students’ time in Tanzania was highlighted by elbow grease, new friends, and a chance to see some of Africa’s majestic beasts while peering out from the top of a Toyota 4Runner. The intersession began in the town of Moshi, where our students spent four days blasting their favorite nostalgic songs from a Boombox as they constructed the foundation of a new classroom, and subsequently the foundation of better opportunities for many young boys and girls in the years to come. The project was in partnership with Gokili Visiting Schools Programme, whose focus is to provide an outstanding cultural experience for visiting international students.

The next leg of our African journey took us to a local orphanage, where we spent an afternoon delighting the 30 children who call it home with games of tag and raucous piggyback rides. This particular excursion struck a chord with tenth grader Joseph Hartley, and you can read more about it on the following pages.

After spending an evening reflecting on their time in Africa at Chala Crater Lake, which sits evenly between Tanzania and Kenya, we headed off to Tarangire National Park for the chance to get up close and personal with Africa’s “Big Five:” lions, African elephants, Cape buffalos, leopards, and rhinoceroses.

2014 SENIOR TRIP

After acing their IB exams and celebrating their graduation under a fireworks-filled Hiroshima sky, our newly-minted graduates steeled themselves for one last weXplore challenge, the big daddy of them all: climbing Mount Kilimanjaro.

Schedules were jam-packed in the months leading up to the climb, and our seniors prepped the best they could in the limited time they had. Chaney Harrison, a special operations pararescue in the United States Air Force Reserve, joined us in Hiroshima for a week to help the seniors prepare, running them through training sessions, going over all of the gear essential for the climb, and leading practice hikes up Mount Misen in Miyajima. Exercise regimens were put in place, some were followed... others not so much. At the end of the day it was going to be us against the mountain, just the kind of challenge our seniors live for.

The goal of the climb was to make it to Gilman’s Point — a three-day climb that required elevating to a dizzying 18,638 feet.

There is a reason why very few senior trips are held on Mount Kilimanjaro: stretching one’s self to the limits of your mental and physical capacity isn’t a relaxing way to reflect; it is, however, an amazing way to work as a team. Our seniors willed each other up the mountain, shouting encouragements the higher up they went. Altitude sickness inevitably halted the climb for a couple of our warriors, but at the end of the third day, 13 students proudly stood atop Gilman’s Point.

Kilimanjaro would turn out to be the crowning achievement of 15 high school careers marked by incredible achievements. Four years after their arrival in Sweden, these students had morphed from eager, impressionable youngsters into the living embodiment of our core values, capable of accomplishing anything they set their minds to.
I have only been to Africa once before. At the age of 14 I visited my family in South Africa for two weeks. On the foot of a mountain I woke up every morning to the smell of the Katjie Piering bush. Stealing an orange from my Oupa's orange tree I would begin the day marveling at the beauty of the surrounding African bush, as I peeled my stolen fruit. When my time in South Africa was over I vowed that I would once again step foot upon African soil.

While I do not consider myself to be African, granted I am the only one of my entire family not born on African soil, but I can't help feeling a connection to its lands. Perhaps it is some sort of second-generation familiarity from growing up, listening to my parents tell me stories of their country of origin. Or maybe I am just one of those people who are destined to fall in love with Africa, but when I stepped foot in Tanzania I did feel something of a comfort being back on these lands. And so began my Tanzanian adventure.
With the great Mount Kilimanjaro, not only on the horizon but taking up our entire view, we left the small airport and drove toward our lodge. Countless miles of bush, cultivated land and wilderness sped by as I drifted in and out of consciousness after two days of travel with little or no sleep. Waking up dazed and confused we arrived in our simple lodge that would be our base for the days to come. The rest of that day was a bit of a blur, as we settled into our temporary homes and eventually passed out from exhaustion. Excited but with not a great deal of knowledge of the upcoming days, all I knew was that it would involve a great deal of service work.

In the morning I woke up with a smile, as I remembered that I was at the foot of Kilimanjaro. After a hearty breakfast of not one, not two but three Weetabix, we set off to start our service work! When we arrived at the site we were met with an apparently empty field within a school. The organizers of the project quickly got us to work as we began to dig the foundations of what would be a brand-new classroom. The following four days kind of rolled into one as we worked, sweated profusely and battled against the heat of the African summer’s sun, only stopping for water and hallowed lunch breaks. We dug foundations, transported bricks and passed cement down human conveyor belts, dodging rogue spits of cement as the bowls were frisbeed between individuals. Nostalgic teen rock music played out loud for hours to keep spirits high, but the camaraderie had already sky-rocketed. And at the end of each day we returned to our lodge, heavy limbed with a sense of accomplishment. When finishing the classroom construction, we felt a sense of pride – we had achieved far more than we had hoped to in the short time we were there.
The day after we finished our service work we visited an orphanage. My first feelings were filled with apprehension and slight cynicism on the nature of our visit. Why were we visiting these children? Have they been turned into some sort of volunteer tourist attraction? Trying not to be influenced on my first assumptions I continued with an open mind. We waited in the orphanage courtyard, slightly nervous and not entirely sure what to expect, as the gate opened and 20 or 30 little human beings came toward us with somewhat shy looks on their faces – not entirely sure whether to approach or be approached. Slowly we started to introduce our selves, crouching down, smiling, waving and saying “hello” in the friendliest voices we had.

It was not too long before the quiet slightly awkward encounter in the courtyard had turned into a scene of joyous chaos as the little children, and we the big children, ran around and played. Chasing and piggybacks ensued as balls were thrown and kicked. Most of the children were giddy with excitement, screams and laughter echoed through the orphanage. As the visit continued it became apparent to me that yes, we were visitors and that we would eventually leave them to go back to our hotel, never to see them again, but they most certainly got a hell of a lot more out of our visit than we did. They got an afternoon full of fun and games with people other than the nuns and nurses who care for them, and that’s got to be a good thing, right?

In reflection on the time spent with these kids I now feel quite the opposite. For these children, people like us will come and go. They will play with them like we did; the kids will have fun and in similar fashion they will leave. That will happen over and over again. But for us, or at least me, that opportunity to meet these children will stay with me forever. I feel it taught me something, whether I have realized it yet is a different question, but encounters like these are the sources of inspiration that will drive people to think differently, act differently and hopefully encourage people to act and help children like the ones we met. When we had to leave, there was a sense of sadness. We waved goodbyes and I certainly felt something for those 30 children.
If there is one thing that is always an iconic part of an African holiday, it is the safari trip. Leaving the Kilimanjaro region our group headed toward Arusha and eventually the Tarangire National Park. It was a four-hour drive which, for most, was spent watching the countryside go by. Towns turned into wilderness. Hills rose and fell. Masai villages flew by as we passed pastures and livestock. It was easy to tell we were approaching the national park, as the roads continued to decrease steadily in quality.

There is something slightly peculiar about a game drive. Being among nature’s creations. Aweing and oohing at these creatures’ majestic nature, their beauty, their sense of peace, but all the while shut away inside a moving box that acts as a bubble from the outside world. Like a constant reminder that these are wild lands and no longer where we are from. But all that philosophical talk aside, it’s still pretty cool to watch elephants walk by just meters away.

Saying goodbye to Tanzania was certainly bittersweet. It is an incredible land, one I would like to one day return to, perhaps to reach the summit of the mighty Mount Kilimanjaro. But leaving meant returning to my family after four long months, which was much welcomed.
Shoving 100 wet wipes into a skinny bag with three liters of water, rainproof pants and the day’s lunch, isn’t easy. Though my photographer “uniform” often calls for a back-bending pack of gear, I felt like a fumbling mess trying to make this little daypack of mine close. Tucked under the awning from the misty rain, I tried to pull myself together, baggage- and emotion-wise, to start mobilizing a group of teenagers toward a mountain.

The state of Indiana does not typically breed the world’s most daring adventurers, and I never had realistic expectations of mountain climbing growing up.

My technique as a supervisor of international adolescents is to be utterly silly, and then somehow they listen to me, probably in pity. In the hours leading up to our ascent of Kilimanjaro, I pulled the kids into a circle to do some stretching. Behind us, somewhere past the mist and foliage, sat a gargantuan mountain that was going to drain us of our egos; sitting in her shadow, our circle felt miniscule in comparison, but we had to do something to calm our mounting nerves. We had to muster up all the courage in our reserves.

We stood back up from our stretches before the spitting rain could dampen the ground and our bums. Fifty-five Tanzanian men assembled into a line and stepped out to introduce themselves, followed by a quick utterance of “...morning.” If they were apprehensive in the least, it was unbeknownst to us.

The porters, all local men from Moshi, topped with baseball caps and anchored with sneakers, were busy weighing bags and steel boxes of kitchen supplies, careful to limit their load to nothing greater than 20 kilos (44 pounds). Our climbing task seemed meager in comparison to their job of lugging our gear to high altitude. Feeling guilty for engaging in a task that required a personal porter, I was glad that I’d triple-checked my bag earlier for any superfluous items. My reverence for Clinton, my porter, grew ever greater on a daily basis; reverence that I tried to show with many double handshakes through a debilitating language barrier.

I tossed on my tiny daypack and headed to the national park gate for registration and launching. Our assault on the summit was within sniffing distance, no longer a hypothetical challenge. It was time to test a lot of things, most of which remained unknown.

**5,681 METERS**

**OXYGEN DEPRIVED MEMORIES FROM THE KILIMANJARO HIKE**

**BY LINDSAY CLARK**

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I tossed on my tiny daypack and headed to the national park gate for registration and launching. Our assault on the summit was within sniffing distance, no longer a hypothetical challenge. It was time to test a lot of things, most of which remained unknown.
I could already feel my stomach respond to being 2,000 meters above sea level, and I craned my neck around every bend, yearning for a secluded spot to seek relief. The physical toll from the start had everything to do with the effects of high altitude – headaches, stomachaches, and other maladies ranging from the annoying to the life-threatening. Throughout the forest and the moorland, I popped pills as nonchalantly as I would a handful of almonds. Downing so many pills certainly didn’t feel healthy, but it felt quite necessary to sustain myself. Regardless of water intake, I had a headache, reminding me of the magnitude of our challenge.

Surprisingly, the walking was easy, always beautiful, and challenge.

On the evening of day two, against my strongest wishes, my head was throbbing. The lasagne on my plate seemed to be one of nature that surrounded them. It probably helped that they had two photographers trekking with them.

The ascent presented quite a few debilitating challenges: sun exposure, wind exposure, high altitude, blisters, dehydration, but their effects were hardly visible in these teens. I witnessed incredible grit in those 15 (former) students, none of whom had adequate sleep for the two months prior. They looked out for each other and pushed through the monotony to savor the specialness of the opportunity.

I pretended to be absolutely thrilled for the adventure ahead, trying my best to be a support system. I believe I went with the latter, exaggerating my eagerness to the point of clear posing and then immediately went to bed with some melatonin and an inception-like dream that had me fake-waking up every 20 minutes with anxiety.

Many students refrained completely from technology or taking pictures, preferring instead to connect completely to the power of nature that surrounded them. It probably helped that they had two photographers trekking with them.

The adventure became real. I watched my ego drop and roll down the volcanic scree. Within five minutes, we stopped. Man down. Man recovered. A few minutes later, another fell out of line. Some felt dizzy. Others felt nauseous. All I could do was stare at Charis’ backpack and hope that I had it in me to follow each footstep with another until the earth finally leveled. My dizziness felt mild enough to ignore, but it felt like a thick film around a functioning mind.

We were taking longer than was anticipated with all our stops and starts, so the group decided to split up into a “Steady” group and a “Pole, pole” group. I shuffled over to the slower group, since each pause in our ascent afforded me time to ward off the dizziness.

We were finally in the “extreme high altitude.” I saw our mental switches go from “I got this” to utter reverence of our planet.

One student in the back of the line raised his hand for the “Steady” group and then proceeded to fall to the ground. A nearby headlamp illuminated his face to show us like the stars on an Indiana flag, awaiting any visible signs of high altitude sickness. They loomed like protective “superhumans,” seemingly unaffected by the altitude or cold.

We were expected to eat dinner, attempt to get some hours of (disorienting) sleep, and arise before midnight to brave the final stretch. The peak’s looming presence was daunting to say the very least, and it was at this time, after dizzying bathroom stops and an early dinner, that many strong-willed students finally voiced the unspoken as of yet: they were scared.

Lined up like a Gore-Tex covered centipede, 15 students and six staff members assembled outside the hut to begin what was supposed to be a six-hour trek to the summit by sunset. Sixteen guides surrounded us like the stars on an Indiana flag, awaiting any visible signs of high altitude sickness. They loomed like protective “superhumans,” seemingly unaffected by the altitude or cold.

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One student in the back of the line raised his hand for the “Steady” group and then proceeded to fall to the ground. A nearby headlamp illuminated his face to show unfocused eyes, and emergency oxygen quickly came into view.

The adventure became real. I watched my ego drop and roll down the volcanic scree. Here, in the full moonlight on the roof of Africa, we were humans with the same unpredictable chances of falling ill from the pressures of this extreme environment. It was equal parts scary, surreal, beautiful, insane, and special. I suddenly craved pot roast.
The student and one staff member scrambled back down the mountain face with a couple of guides before we could even wrap our heads around that reality. The TGS 22 became 20.

After seeing one student descend, some in the “Pole, pole” group started to see that fate as their inevitable fate. With the distance downward ever growing and the summit nowhere in sight, doubt became the predominant emotion, to which I responded with lies: “Guys, it’s closer to the top now than it is to the bottom. If you summit, not only is it the shorter walk now, but you can go back down in the daylight, which will be faster and safer.”

I looked at Pema, and she looked at me. Both of us knew this was a big ol’ lie. Not only did I have no authority with which to say such things, but clearly summiting at this point was the tougher route. Oddly enough, I don’t think I would have gone any further from this point if I were just a regular climber, if I didn’t have a role to fill.

With these white lies, it became clear to me that climbing Kilimanjaro is completely mental. My leg muscles didn’t burn the way I thought they would. Other than my head and belly, as I was asleep sitting up and holding full teacups.

The tea break offered a chance to warm up and reboot, as well as a chance to learn we were capable of being so tired we could fall asleep. The time I spent sitting up and drinking my grasping hand. Once I was back on my feet, my body felt strong and fine. But an able body was not the most important asset for continuing up that huge, dark, daunting incline. I turned off my mind to simply put one foot in front of the other and to encourage others to do the same. Before we even hit the halfway mark of the ascent, another student showed signs of high altitude sickness and descended, which will be faster and safer.

Kili Guide Alex didn’t let go. With every switchback, we switched hands and tightened the grip that kept me upright and moving on the mountain face. At first, this assistance made me feel like a weakling, assistance I would have kissed in my childhood for fear of being mocked by the neighbor kids. But since my ego had left me at 5,000 meters, I turned back to Charis behind me and winked, pretending like this was a lovely excuse to hold a fella’s hand.

My memory of the final switchbacks is fuzzy. Had I been mentally engaged and thinking about this experience, I would have face planted in the gravel at the start. I wasn’t truly there to feel the discomfort. I heard voices from above and craned my head to see the end of the “Steady” group. Without conscious effort, our two groups converged, clearly demonstrating to us that acclimatization was successful at one rate, and that wasn’t a rate anyone could rush.

Kili Guide Alex, my knight in puffy red armor, released my hand only when both of my feet were firm and level at Gilman’s Point, an access point to the crater rim. I heard the hoots and hollers of chilly, accomplished teens, but I couldn’t see them. I had to hang lifelessly for five minutes on my walking stick to simply smile, pose, pee, and head back down the slope. And after no more than twenty minutes of descent, one that took us from God-like heights above the clouds through the moorlands and into the jungle. Blisters grew like sixth toes, but we didn’t care. A little limping at greater speeds meant relief was that much closer. As I was running through the jungle and using two walking sticks to pole vault over tree roots, I found myself alone with my mind. This body enabled the adventure for me, and my mind held up in spite of the pill-popping and hostile environments. I managed to survive AND support, against quite strong though unsaid self-doubts.

A monkey squeaked in the trees. I gasped and stopped in my tracks. A couple minutes later, I spotted a woman in a clearing. I slowed down, blinked, and waved. It was difficult to accept being back in society all of a sudden, but her wave in response felt like victory.
Freshly scrubbed and clothed like a lady, I sat on a porch at the Hotel Marangu writing postcards to the young adults with whom I had just shared a summit. A large bee swooped toward a flower at my side and nuzzled its stamen while still afloat. I watched it with full interest. It looked more like a small hummingbird than an insect. Murmurs from nearby conversations were muted by the sound of its buzz. Another huge insect darted to my left. I only had eyes and ears for nature.

I think technology is great, even though I know that distance from it (and modern society) gives me super senses and less anxiety. Five days with nothing but a camera, fellow trekkers, and nature managed to scrub the grime off my windows to the world. Of course, I don’t know to what extent exhaustion skewed my focus toward the little or the natural things. I was absolutely knackered, as the Kiwi says.

If you’re lucky, many of the stories you live through will feel so powerful that the task of retelling them feels too great. This story was one I couldn’t detach myself from. I couldn’t see the adventure through the students’ eyes, because it was already too consuming through my own, too challenging and new, and I felt like a student myself.

We all left feeling a great sense of accomplishment, a knowledge of our limits, an awareness of our raw humanity, and a strengthened sense of Ubuntu, to be quite specific. These lessons will inspire different steps for each of us toward new challenges – new charities opened, personal goals never before considered, physical feats previously considered just for those fit people or those from Colorado, and I’m really excited to see where those steps lead to in the years to come.
Bamboo forest, Kyoto.
Welcome to Japan

Hiroshima was our home for Semester 2. In many ways, Hiroshima proved to be the yin to Hyderabad’s yang: whereas life in Hyderabad can be described as chaotic – trash lining its packed streets and rides in its taxis providing a nervous thrill on par with the most death-defying roller coasters, Hiroshima’s streets, by contrast, are immaculate and quiet – the rattle of the city’s iconic tram cars on their tracks are often the only sound. Everything had its place, and we truly felt like we had found ours.

After weathering the initial culture shock, we found ourselves in awe of Japan’s many traditions. It is a country that blends modernity and the ancient with ease. Our students accepted their role of Gaijin as a spirited challenge, producing videos that explained to one another the proper etiquette for routine tasks such as bowing, eating with chopsticks, and ordering and eating sushi. Friendly reminders of the Western world, like 7-Eleven’s on seemingly every corner and seventh-inning stretches during Hiroshima Carp games, provided a nice counterbalance to the many things that are oh-so-Japanese (we have a feeling that octopus ice cream won’t be taking the rest of the world by storm anytime soon).

Hiroshima’s unique and somber history factored heavily into our lesson plans, with manga titles such as Barefoot Gen telling the tales of the city’s survivors. Inspired by what they had read, our ninth and tenth graders collaborated with students from our partner school, Hiroshima International School, on an interdisciplinary graphic novel project entitled “Graphic novels for change.” This project provided students from both schools with the artistic freedom to create their own characters, settings, and plotlines in an attempt to bring attention to real issues. The graphic novels can be found on THINK Global School’s Issuu account (and not surprisingly, they hold up!).

By the time our term in Hiroshima wrapped up, our students knew the city and its side streets by heart. Looking for gelato? That’s easy – definitely head to Polar Bear in Tatemuchi. Like shirts, bags, and skirts in bold colors? Tenth grader Alexis highly recommends checking out Marimekko in the city center. It was a city that none of us were ready to leave, and one that we hope to return to one day very soon.
The kimono is an universal symbol of Japan – a symbol of traditional beauty with a sense of timelessness and endurance.

The word ‘kimono’ literally means ‘the thing worn,’ which, to the Japanese people, means as much as ‘clothing.’ Kimonos are traditionally only available in a single size and are adjusted at the waist through a band. They are made from full width lengths of cloth by being cut and sewn flat. Additionally, they are usually made of expensive silk; however, “for less formal wear, kimonos may also be made of wool, cotton, linen, or synthetic fabrics.” Especially the ‘yukata,’ the summer kimono, is often made out of quality cotton. Furthermore, in contrast to a common misconception, kimonos are “traditionally worn by [both] men and women.” However, kimonos have started to be widely recognized as a “marked female custom.”

History

“Prior to the Heian period (C.E. 794-1192) the arts of Japan, including textile design, were heavily influenced by China. The original form of the kimono (kosode) was similar to the official costume of the Chinese nobility and scholar.” As much of its cultural heritage, such as its characters, Japan originally adopted the kosode, the ‘ancient kimono,’ from the Chinese Empire. In the 8th century already, this “plain and undecorated kimono-like garment was worn by men and women” at court. Originally, the kimono was not decorated due the Buddhist conservatism, which was widespread in the Japanese nobility. With the Renaissance of Japanese arts, including the art of kimono painting, during the Momoyama period (1568-1603), however, this conservatism began to decline. Additionally, the kimono first started to become popular over all classes during this period, opposed to only being worn by the nobility as it was the custom in the centuries prior. “By the sixteenth century, this garment had made its way to an everyday outer garment worn by all classes because it was light and practical.

The kimono during contemporary times

Like several other ancient traditions, the kimono has moved from being a casual item of clothing to being an exquisite antiquity since the beginning of globalization. It is widely associated with Japan’s culture, although mostly worn on special occasions nowadays, such as New Year’s. As such it had to be reinvented as “a national attire.”

The decline of the kimono as a casual garment began with Japan’s forced opening to the West in 1854, after Matthew C. Perry, a U.S. Navy commodore, entered the harbor of Tokyo, formerly Edo, and forced Japan to open its borders. Soon later, the Tokugawa shogunate and its policy of Japan’s total seclusion from foreign influences collapsed and Japan officially opened its doors to the West for the first time in over 250 years.
Japan’s new government soon found it necessary to prove themselves ‘civilized’ to the Western powers. Even “the empress of Japan shifted from Japanese dress to Western clothing for public appearances in 1886.” Additionally, “the government sponsored Western-style social events,” to spread Western civilization and customs throughout the country. “Japanese styles of dress lost their dominance in the Meiji period due to the growing availability of Western attire, which not only was cheaper but also was much more convenient as work apparel.” Although nationalist movements soon started to develop everywhere in the country, the popularity of the kimono has decreased ever since. Currently, kimonos are generally worn on special occasions only. “Once the garment of choice for samurai, aristocrats and workers alike, kimonos are rarely worn by today’s young Japanese, who prefer to wear Western clothes. Even if a formal occasion does demand a kimono, they are likely to put on machine-made version – much cheaper than a traditional handmade kimono which costs between 180,000 and 1 million yen (US$1,500 – US$8,300).” Kimonos have even moved from being a unisex garment to “a marked feminine costume.” While men wear rational, ‘active’ Western suits, women are encouraged to put on kimonos.

Furthermore, since the beginning of the 20th century, the kimono industry itself has changed magnificently. While “the generation of women who grew up before the war sewed kimono for the entire family,” kimonos are currently almost entirely machine-made. The traditional way of making kimonos consists of over a thousand different steps, each of which has to be performed by different craftsmen. Due to the lack of suitable successors, many of these crafts are nearly extinct. Soichi Sajiki, whose family has made the garments for 200 years, stated, “Japan’s kimono industry is at a critical stage. We are seriously struggling to find ways of passing on our precious craftsmanship to the next generation.” For instance, The Telegraph reports, “In his workshop in Tokyo, Mr. Komiya is the only artisan still able to undertake a delicate form of hand-painting kimono silk in pure gold.” Mr. Komiya has actually been recognized by the Japanese government as a ‘Living National Treasure,’ because with his death, the skill would die out as well.

From being the dominating garment of the Japanese market less than 200 years ago, to many of the Japanese people, the traditional kimono has become not much more than an over-expensive formal wear. Due to the lack of popularity, kimono renting has become a popular business since many don’t see the necessity of owning one themselves. Furthermore, not only are the handmade kimonos dying out, the industry itself is close to extinction as well.

Over the last 30 years, the number of companies making kimonos in Tokyo has decreased from 217 to 24. The kimono is a dying yet preserved Japanese tradition. Although being deeply associated with Japan, the kimono is not much more than a shadow of its original existence.

The students of TGS and Hiroshima International School played host to noted historian and author Dr. Robert Jacobs for a discussion on the grave realities surrounding nuclear fallout in Japan and the rest of the world. The lecture supplemented a unit of study called "Graphic Novels for Change," which was a collaboration across TGS and HIS to help students utilize their storytelling abilities to be agents of change against atrocities all over the world. On top of his work as a historian and author, Dr. Jacobs is also an associate professor at the Hiroshima City University’s Hiroshima Peace Institute, a research institute which aims to contribute toward nuclear abolition and the realization of sustainable global peace. He is also the leader of The Global Hibakusha Project, the work of which will be discussed below.

Close to 70 years have passed since the “Little Boy” atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, and while the city has been able to recover physically and quintuple its population, lingering social scarring is still evident. The Japanese have a term for the survivors of atomic bombings, hibakusha, and much of Dr. Jacob’s work now focuses on linking these communities around the world. For many of the Hiroshima survivors, the trauma of the attack has proven inescapable; not knowing when and if you will die from exposure to radiation and the social burden of not being able to marry or have children are both legitimate ongoing consequences stemming from America’s actions during World War II.

Dr. Jacob’s work with the hibakusha also extends well outside of Japan. Since the bombings of Nagasaki and Hiroshima occurred in 1941, there have been over 2,000 nuclear tests conducted around the world – 541 of which took place above ground. These tests are often carried out by developed countries in areas under their colonial control: England in Australia; Russia in Kazakhstan; and France in Polynesia. They are all examples of nuclear tests which have carried catastrophic results for the indigenous populations. Many of these tests have resulted in entire communities being displaced and forced to live as refugees in foreign lands – hibakusha discarded like unwanted trash.

It isn’t just planned nuclear blasts that result in hibakusha, however; the limitations in nuclear safety have been demonstrated multiple times over the last 30 years, with notable meltdowns occurring at Three Mile Island, Chernobyl and more recently, the failure at the Fukushima I Nuclear Power Plant in 2011, which resulted in the evacuation of over 300,000 residents. The true extent of this contamination will not be known for years, but the cry of “No more hibakusha” is now more prominent than ever. Hiroshima, in particular, has a very vocal anti-nuclear movement, of which Dr. Jacobs is very much a part.
President Harry S. Truman, the 33rd President of the United States of America, was put into one of the most arduous positions to ever exist – it was almost exclusively his word that would dictate the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Although nearly every citizen of the world knows how the situation concluded, it’s still almost impossible to imagine being in such a situation. With the aid of retrospection, I give my opinion as to another possible solution had I been in his position.

There are three things to keep in mind before I present my proposed solution.

Although Japan was facing an extreme lack of raw materials, it continued to put up valiant defensive attempts, often causing great casualties on the American side. Many of the resources used to replace the military losses came from the recently annexed Japanese territories in the Southern Pacific.

The Americans tested the first nuclear bomb on July 16, 1945. Although a certain level of destruction was expected, it exceeded even the estimates of the scientists working on the bomb.

This is shortly after the Battle of Okinawa, arguably the bloodiest of all battles that took place in the Pacific Theater in WWII. The battle started on April 1, 1945, and lasted 81 days. Over 240,000 people died, both civilians and military.

I like to think I would have performed very differently than Harry S. Truman if I was in this particular situation, but it may be retrospect that allows me to think so clearly. Being the President, and therefore aware of all top-secret tests, I would know that the Americans were exceedingly close to creating a functional atom bomb. Within months, the United States would be in possession of a weapon more destructive than any other on earth. A weapon such as that is quite obviously a means to an end.

The battles the U.S. had been fighting as they neared the Japanese mainland were getting progressively more volatile and bloody. Body counts went up the further the U.S. progressed. Noticing this trend, combined with the knowledge that an atomic weapon was soon to be procured, I would have stopped any island-hopping offensives in the Pacific Theater. Instead, I would have moved my naval fleets down to the South of Asia – Japan’s newly acquired empire. The military would be weaker there, and the people more likely to welcome the presence of the United States. From the south, I would start an offensive, forcing Japan to relinquish its annexed territories.

This, however, would just be a way of stalling until the nuclear weapon was functional. Within just a few months of the Southern Offensive, I would have called the Navy back, and reinforced my military on all islands under the control of the United States. By now, a nuclear weapon would be available for use. At this point, I would have offered Japan a contract of unconditional surrender, which it would promptly refuse. They would be in much the same situation that occurred in real life, but without the bloody disturbance that was Okinawa.

Under my command, the United States would have never touched Okinawa. Though it’s the last island in the island-hopping offensive, I would have refused to make a move. Once Japan refused to sign the treaty, however, I would have dropped the bomb on the island. Considering the amount of civilians living there, this isn’t exactly ideal. However, there was a much larger military presence in Okinawa than Hiroshima. And it would send the message that the United States had the power to crush Japan, had they chosen to do so. However, dropping the bomb onto an island would cause less people to be exposed to conditions that cause long-term health problems. The island also had a much smaller population than Hiroshima and Nagasaki, so fewer civilian deaths would have occurred.

Harry S. Truman was put into one of the most difficult positions to ever be reached by a single human being. Maybe he made the right decision, maybe he did not. The past can’t be changed, but we must try to learn from the mistakes.


Hiroshima, a blooming city anno 2014, but still healing.
I woke up to a deformed sky doused with the sunrise the warmth lingered on my skin the cold flame chilled me to the bone.

I looked out the window to see a blinding red coming closer I wondered what the divine wind saw coming closer cherry blossom farewell send the sinners home to mothers when the white crane was shot out of the endless blue sky.

We were afraid of red afraid of the mongrel banner they carried afraid of the dishonor of fallen Berlin of eternal winter that will cut us down like a hysterical, incumbent plague but we didn’t know another red possessor of indescribable beauty unfathomable destruction if only we knew.

I saw fragments of people hovering between life and death I saw human canvas painted with black glistening bits and pieces of the charred human suit fell to the burning ground revealing everything underneath every thought every hope every dream every love every loss every hurt no longer protected by the melting mask enveloped by the never-ending fire it was beautiful like a distant star dying like cancer under a microscope a dance of red, grey and flesh.

I closed my eyes and saw nothing but felt the screams of skeletons reduced to dust felt the skin ripping off callous working hands felt the radiation stabbing unborn fetus felt the future wrested out of helpless grip I felt everything turned to nothing.

I searched for my father for my mother for my little brother for my school for my sky for the tree in our backyard where the nightingale hid but all I could find among the flame of hell among wandering lost souls among the ruins of our holy war only ashes scattered by the gentle wind into the unending rivers of Hiroshima into the scalding earth of our home into the mushroom cloud in the red sky I wondered how long she waited.

Now I’m breathing in these ashes of homes, of schools, of streets, of these ashes of flesh, of blood, of bones these ashes of the cruel bomb tearing my lungs to shreds slice me open and display me like a war trophy put my head on a stake and leave me eyes wide open I’m breathing in these ashes of death undetected brutal awaiting.

I’m with you in our search in our loss in our grief I’m with you in our agony in our pain in our wounds that rip the body apart like claws of a beast kept growing no matter how much we tried to forget I’m with you in our ignorance in our isolation when the scars felt too real and the voices became too loud I’m with you in the tear-stained bandages in the handful of pills in the endless halls of hospitals after hospitals where we were convicted of a crime we didn’t commit but the jury was merciless and we were given a slip of paper sentencing us to death and there was no appeal but a thousand cranes little Sadako was innocent.

I hate America I hate America but the loved ones are lost.

In the office of D.C. under the stars and stripes under the pressure to bring the boys home under the insatiable thirst for revenge under the adrenaline of plutonium bombs under the intense gaze of the USSR Truman had started the journey to imminent desolation with that 50-kiloton blast he can’t turn back can’t give back what is gone.

The things I kept Mother’s hair a left shoe with a mended hole a book burnt brown a picture of a happier past that won’t come back a hatred a regret a sorrow.

Now the pain is nothing but a dull ache the scars are nothing but a reminder the voices are nothing but quiet whispers the war is nothing but history the red sky is nothing but sunshine.

Still the fire burns cold beautifully I wondered how long I waited.


AUTHOR’S NOTE: A little experimentation with stream of consciousness, and putting everything I have learned throughout the last three months living in Hiroshima into words. I came to this city with naive opinions and assumptions, and they have been turned upside down and right side up again. Did my moral values change? Maybe. I am still confused, but it’s all a learning curve.
The Shinkansen, a bus, a ferry, and bikes are how we got to Naoshima, the island of art. It was cloudy and lightly raining the entire weekend, but considering how many hills we trudged up, the cool weather was nice. The minuscule island is easily accessible by bike, and even though the map makes the land look as big as Hiroshima, we were able to bike everywhere in just a few minutes. As we biked through the gorgeous trees and along the seaside, we passed art museums and bits of artistic creativity everywhere. Some of my favorite artworks were the ones we found along the way:

- The rustic red box on the brown wall
- The turquoise bike against the aging bricks
- The perfectly sculpted trees and flower gardens

The museums were amazing too. The first day I visited all of the Art House Projects (old houses renovated to become art installations). One of them really stood out from the others, Go’o Shrine. Leaving the bike behind in an alleyway and hiking up a set of stone stairs sounds like an adventure on its own, but once I reached the top I was impressed. I always find shrines beautiful and fascinating, and as we reached the top of the hill it appeared to be just another intricate shrine. However, walking to the front I realized it was much more. A set of glass stairs rose up from the ground and into the shrine. The way the glass reflected the gray sky made the stairs appear icy and mystical.

After staring in awe for a few moments at the shrine, we walked along the trees and came across a narrow tunnel, leading us underneath the shrine. The stairs not only rose up to the shrine, they grew into the ground and reflected in a pool of water with only a sliver of cloudy light sliding into the foggy tunnel.

Day two of our Naoshima trip I visited Chichu (an art museum built for the work of three artists only: Monet, Walter de Maria, and James Turrel). The entire museum was specifically designed for the artworks, and everything in the room, down to the tiles on the floors, was matching the vibe of the artwork. I drew the above sketch of the Claude Monet display on the Shinkansen back to Hiroshima. I pulled off my boots and pulled on a pair of white slippers before I stepped on the tiny, cloudy-white tiles on the floor. Following a darkened and warm hallway, I felt as if I was walking through a cloud, and suddenly I had reached a bit of sun. Natural light lit the white room, but I was not blinded by this lack of color. It was misty and light. The walls were curved, so there were no sharp edges in the room besides the edges of the massive Monet paintings. I had seen prints of Monet’s water lilies before, but I had no clue they were so large and magnificent. From a few steps back I saw the scene, but closer up I saw the detail – the texture, the long strokes, the layers of color. It was absolutely gorgeous. The paintings, and the way they looked so profound in white, cloudy room.
The flowering of cherry blossom trees is a telltale sign that winter’s misery is coming to an end in Japan, but it isn’t just the cherry blossoms that are undergoing change: springtime in Japan is characteristically marked by change in many facets of life. April 1, in particular, signals a new start to the government’s fiscal year; a new start to the Japanese school year; a new start to many real estate leases; and many employees begin a new job on this day. Certain things, though, hold their appeal by being impervious to change. This is certainly the case when it comes to the Kumano Kodó, one of only two UNESCO World Heritage pilgrimage routes in the world and the destination for a recent weXplore outing focused on hiking, trail preservation and experiential learning.

WHAT IS THE KUMANO KODÓ? The Kumano Kodó is a series of pilgrimage routes that wind through the mountains and cedar-filled forests of the Kii Peninsula’s Kumano region. Since ancient times the followers of Japan’s Buddhist and Shinto religions have believed the Kumano region to be inhabited by gods, associating its mountains, trees and waters with serenity and healing. These natural landmarks are marked along the trails by “oji” – small Shinto shrines where pilgrims can stop and offer prayers.

At the center of the pilgrimage are the three Grand Shrines of Kumano (Sóhonsha), collectively known as the Kumano Sanzan: Kumano Hongu Taisha, Kumano Hayatama Taisha and Kumano Nachi Taisha. At one time, each of these shrines embodied its own form of nature worship; as time went on and the influence of Buddhism set in, the three shrines became associated with Buddhist gods, and eventually collectively worshipped as the three deities of Kumano.

KUMANO KODÓ ORIGINS. The origins of the pilgrimage trails themselves date back over 1,000 years, when Japan’s imperial family and aristocrats would make the journey on foot to worship at the Sóhonsha. As time went on and the influence of Buddhism set in, the three shrines became associated with Buddhist gods, and eventually collectively worshipped as the three deities of Kumano.

Traversing the entirety of the Kumano Kodó in ancient times probably took weeks if not months, but luckily for us, bullet trains and other modern forms of travel have significantly cut down on the time needed to enjoy the trails. Our time spent on the Kumano Kodó included a visit to the Kumano Hongó Taisha shrine, as well as a visit to its former location (flooding destroyed the original shrine in 1889), better known as Oyunohara. In front of the Oyunohara stands the world’s tallest torii gate – a colossal structure that took six months to build and an additional six months to erect. Our students were given the option of a moderate walk or a challenging hike to get between the locations, and most had the opportunity to also visit the Hosshinmon-Oji (gate of awakening of the aspiration to enlightenment) during their visit.

On the day following our visit to the Kumano Kodó our students returned with gloves in hand to volunteer in the pilgrimage route maintenance program. For several hours, each student aided in carrying bags of dirt up and down the trail and pounding it into place where rain had previously washed it away. Human energy has been the driving force in maintaining the Kumano Kodó since its inception, and our students were eager to play their part in sustaining it for future generations.

All in all, it was a fascinating trip and a wonderful opportunity to experience and maintain Japan’s natural beauty. If you are ever in Japan, we’d highly recommend taking a day or two to experience the Kumano Kodó for yourself. Photos from our trip can be found below. Until the next trip, sayonara!
Guest speakers who inspired and motivated us during our stay in Japan.

MORLEY KAMEN
Morley, a New York native, is a singer-songwriter and activist. Her artistic work has been a voice for women in troubled areas of the world such as Sudan. Morley engages in resolution work for teens in conflict zones, and has performed for renowned world leaders such as the Dalai Lama, the late Nelson Mandela and Ban Ki-moon. The graduate class of 2014 had the interesting opportunity to compose and perform an original song at the graduation ceremony in Hiroshima.

ARThUR BINARD
Born in Michigan in the United States, he came to Japan in 1990 upon graduation from university, and began writing poetry and prose in Japanese. His poetry collection “Catch and Release” won the Nakahara Chuya Prize, and his essay anthology Nihongo pokori-pokori the Kodansha Essay Award. He also writes and translates picture books.

JAY RUBIN
American born academic Jay Rubin is a teacher, translator and writer of Japanese literature. While living and studying in Japan, we decided to do a “writer’s workshop” unit using Lucy Calkins’s “A Guide to the Writing Workshop” as inspiration for the writing process and selections from Jay Rubin’s translations of Murakami’s two collections of short stories, “The Elephant Vanishes,” and “After the Quake” as inspiration for the writing itself. We were honored to have a chance to speak with Jay Rubin himself who answered student’s questions about the translation process and Murakami’s writing.

RAY ZAHAB
Ray Zahab is a Canadian long-distance runner and motivational speaker. After working hard to change his previous unhealthy lifestyle, Ray led an on-foot expedition across the Sahara Desert. The journey was followed by National Geographic, and had its own documentary produced by Matt Damon. These efforts helped raise awareness for the drinking water crisis in Africa. Mr. Zahab spoke to TGS in Hiroshima about using grit to excel and achieve your best.

AN IMPROMPTU DANCE BREAK DURING TAIKO DRUMMING AT ALICE GARDENS

Some boys walked by our Taiko drumming session in the city center and started dancing to the beat (sort of). Some of us joined in for the merriment. Scan the QR code and enjoy some of these priceless dance moves in this video.

https://spot.thinkglobalschool.com/videos/view/140156/
Years of practice. That is the one thing I have read continuously and seen firsthand. Hours of practice, years of dedication. Every single movement is so precise, every movement has a reason, even down to how you wipe the spoon. It reminded me of something I have been thinking about since I have arrived here in Japan, bushidó (samurai code, the way of the warrior). A samurai is the true example of living each day like it is your last, and not in the way media has portrayed this idea to be. There were not a group of idiotic people doing crazy and unnecessary activities to “live life to its fullest” – they were a group of loyal warriors who knew they could be called to battle at any moment. A samurai knew that each conversation may be his last; each night of sleep may be his last; each cup of tea could very well be the last liquid he sips before dying with honor. Therefore, they lived in the mindset to be the absolute best they could be. Be kind, caring, precise, do the right thing, be a good person, be someone who you would be proud to die as, and the tea ceremony is a great example of making every moment count.

Yesterday afternoon, when I made a cup of tea, I nonchalantly poured boiling water in a plain mug and dunked a tea bag in and thought, “Boom! Tea created!” and then drank up.

That, however, is a very pathetic way to create tea after witnessing a tea ceremony. Tea is so much more than another drink; it is an important cultural aspect. Normally, the extensive process of the tea ceremony takes quite a while and is done cup by cup. There is no huge kettle and little tea bags. I felt as though it was more focused on the whole experience of making the tea than the actually act of drinking tea.

When we arrived barefoot in the incense-smelling temple we took our seat in front of the Buddha and eagerly and quietly waited. Soon we were welcomed and given sweet biscuits to eat and were told the sweet before drinking the tea makes the bitter tea much tastier. Then we watched the man begin the ceremony and one by one had beautiful bowls of tea placed in front of us. When the bowls are set down, it is so the one who will drink the tea can admire the design. Then you carefully turn the bowl clockwise until the intricate design is facing away from you. That way as you drink others can admire your cup. (Interesting – tea, noodles, soup, etc. are seen as a compliments in Japan, so the noisier you are, the better it tastes!) The foamy green tea was quite nice as well, but I am sure it was the whole experience I loved rather than the end product.
Arts and crafts always seem to be a hilarious, happy, and somewhat messy time, and this one definitely fit that description!

After experiencing how to make proper tea, a pottery artist taught us how to make the actual cup.

Once we were done, we gave the cups to the potter. After all it is about the process – not the end result, as Zen Buddhism had taught us.

We talked to the monk at the temple quite a bit about what Zen meant and how it was similar and different to other forms of Buddhism. In short, this is what we learned from the kind monk.

Zen is to focus on your own soul rather than focus on a deity.

Buddhism starts with a curious, questioning, suspicion about life and the world around.

Meditation is important to reach enlightenment or to open your eyes.

With an "empty mind" we should be free, fresh, and flexible.

Sometimes it's not something you can logically analyze, it's something you must feel.

The lesson is: think more about how you live than the life you are living. It is not about the end product; it is about how you go through the process, the experience. If you do the absolute best you can in everything you do, the effort will pay off later in life.

Zen Buddhism
After weathering the culture shock experienced upon our arrival in Japan and making sure that our etiquette was up to par, we set off on our first early excursion of 2014: a five-day trip to the city of Kyoto. Kyoto itself is a city full of old world charm, and the dense history of Japan’s former capital made it the ideal setting for an excursion. The city’s citizens have shown a fastidiousness in the upkeep of its shrines and temples—many of which, alongside Nijo Castle, are now recognized as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. These culturally significant locations provided the backdrop for our interdisciplinary project, which centered on gaining a better understanding of Kyoto’s past, crafts and traditions.

During the course of the week’s activities, many students took snapshots of their experiences through the use of their iPhones.

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A rickshaw driver proudly holds up the clue cards.

After acing their finals and with a week to go before their graduation, our seniors set off on a weeklong Amazing Race around Japan. Originally debuted during our Berlin, Germany term, the Amazing Race sends our students on a dash across multiple cities (or countries) as they compete in a series of puzzle and activity-based challenges. After months of prepping for exams, it was the perfect way to experience Japan in a light-hearted manner.

This year’s Amazing Race also contained an “amazing” caveat for our globetrotting, puzzle-sleuthing youngsters: surprise appearances by former faculty members. Ambika Dani, Andy McLean, and Cecile Evans were all along for the ride, and upon their appearance each was greeted by a collection of shrieks that likely terrified the yurei (ghosts) skulking around their haunted pagodas.

The rules of the race were simple: the seniors were broken up into groups of 3-4 and given the objective of solving as many challenges as they could in each of the locations they visited. Each leg of the race had a set of mandatory challenges and additional bonus challenges that could be completed for bonus points. Sounds easy enough?

On to the race!
Our first challenge had our students on the hunt for a rickshaw, and more importantly, two of their teachers (Bree and Lindsay) decked out in kimonos and blue anime-style wigs. After snapping photos in the rickshaw, it was onto the next challenge.

**IN FOR THE LONG HAUL**

Location Clue: “Sometimes getting around is as easy as sitting back and enjoying the view. Other times you really have to work for it.”

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**FLY AWAY HOME**

Location Clue: "At this Rokku cafe near the golden arches, they actually DO give a hoot. And feathered friends will flock to your team if given the chance.”

They have cafes for everything in Tokyo? Well, one of those cafes caters to those whose lives have gone to the birds: at the Tori Parrot and Owl Cafe, you can surround yourself with colorful parrots and rows of razor-sharp taloned owls.

After donning protective gear to prevent leaving with any unwelcome surprises (see: bird poop), our seniors took turns seeing how many parrots they could perch on their body. Bonus points were awarded to the team capable of balancing the most birds.

**BIG TIME AT THE BIG TOP**

Location Clue: “There’s no big tent or dancing bears here, but you’ll hear the screams AND laughter from all over Asakusa. Look for this fun ‘flower’ park, the oldest its kind in Japan, near the Sensoji temple.”

After braving the beaks and talons of the Tori Café, the seniors headed off for a more traditional thrill at Japan’s oldest modern amusement park, Hanayashiki. From merry-go-rounds to roller coasters, teams gained points by being photographed on the park’s popular attractions. After the roller coaster ride that is final exams, these amusements probably felt like child’s play. Bonus points were doled out to any team lucky enough to catch a crayfish by fishing on the midway.

**GET INTO CARICATURE**

Location Clue: “Take your characters to east of Nakamise Dori to find the little shop where you can have them captured permanently.”

From Dragonball Z to One Piece, comics and cartoons are an important part of pop culture in Japan. On this challenge, our seniors had the opportunity to immortalize themselves in ink by having their caricatures drawn at a small shop on the super crowded Nakamise shopping street.

**LIGHT THE WAY**

Location Clue: “From Kaminarimon to Hozumon, two rows of white lanterns reveal the way. And if you were to be asked how many, what number would you say?”

After having their features exaggerated at the caricature shop, the seniors set about counting the lanterns that hang in long rows up and down the 250-meter Nakamise Dori Street. If you are ever in need of kitschy souvenirs or a tasty tempura, the Nakamise Dori is the perfect place to satisfy all of your tourist and battered shrimp needs!

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DOMO ARIGATO MR. ROBOTO
Location Clue: "This Shinjuku robot show is almost more famous than R2-D2."

MAY THE FRESHEST OF FISH SWIM HAPPILY EVER AFTER IN YOUR TUMMY
Location Clue: "You are about to enter the Tsukiji Fish Market, the largest wholesale fish and seafood market and one of the largest wholesale food markets of any kind in the world. Complete the following challenges to move on."

And just like that, our three days in Tokyo were over in a blur. Next stop? Hakone.

No Amazing Race would be complete without massive amounts of food being consumed in one sitting, and our time in Tokyo was no different. Whereas during the first Amazing Race in Europe, the seniors got to gorge on ridiculously oversized pretzels, this time they got to chow down on Pablo’s famous sweet and fluffy cheese tarts, complete with a gooey core that oozes out when you cut it open. To receive the tart, each team had to show proof of four completed challenges, and to receive the next clue, they had to show proof of a tart being shared and consumed. The circle is complete!

The seniors wrapped their second evening in Tokyo up with a visit to the Robot Restaurant, a visceral experience that would make Hunter S. Thompson proud. From the enormous mechanical fembots that greet you at the neon entrance to the dinosaur vs. robot battles that rage inside, this animated and highly caffeinated spectacle makes about as much sense to the viewer as string theory, but therein lies its magic. As the show wrapped up, our teams grabbed selfies and snapshots with their favorite performers before calling it a night.

One of our senior’s final challenges in Tokyo was a visit to the Tsukiji Fish Market. And this place is a challenge: it’s frigid and perpetually smells like dead fish, so the timid certainly had their work cut out for themselves. There are no goldfish, minnows, or tetras to be found here; these are the bad boys of the seafood world: huge tunas stacked in rows, bloodied shark’s heads peering out of Styrofoam coolers. If it came from the deep, it’s good enough to eat. Enough with the catchy slogans, though; each team was tasked with taking three photos to complete the task.

1. Find and photograph the biggest fish in the market
2. Photograph the squishiest, grossest pile of guts
3. Snap a photo of the market workers in action

FLASHIN’ THE FASHION
Location Clue: "Hip Harajuku will dress you up and dress you down, but never leave you with a frown. Get it on all over the town."

DOMO CHEESE TORTE
Location Clue: "Not far from the crossing near Shibuya’s Center Gai is a small shop with Picasso inspired confections."

Gwen Stefani put Harajuku girls on the map, but in this challenge our students got to live out their dreams of being Japanese fashionistas (and if that wasn’t their dream, we offer no apologies — they owned it!). Using Harajuku’s many vintage and costume shops as their own personal wardrobes, the seniors geared up and struck modelicious poses before moving on to their next challenge.

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After indulging our five senses in Japan’s capital city, it was time for our seniors to continue their race elsewhere. At our next stop, Hakone, there would be no bleached blonde Harajuku girls or robot/dinosaur hybrids. Instead we found fresh air, fantastic views of Mount Fuji, and vermilion torii gates. Many of the challenges would take place among the various colorful sculptures found at the Hakone Open-Air Museum - the first of its kind in Japan.

On a bright sunny day, few places can compare to Hakone’s Venetian Glass Museum in terms of man-made beauty. Realistic glass trees and cascades reflect the sunlight brilliantly, leading to fantastic photos amid the delicate, twinkling landscapes. Staff members greeted our seniors here with their next clue and a new means of transportation.

With their ascension of Mount Kilimanjaro mere weeks away, it was imperative that the seniors get their heart rates pumping in preparation during the Amazing Race. The 10-kilometer bike ride from the Hakone Botanical Gardens to Lake Ashi and the Hakone Shinto shrine allowed them to do just that. Revered by samurai during Japan’s feudal days, this large torii gate juts out into the water, making for a fantastic photo opportunity.

After snapping a photo beneath the torii gate, each team swapped their bikes for a swan boat and a chance to pedal out to the middle of Lake Ashi for their next clue.

Did you know that Japan has a horrendous pirate problem? We’re kidding, of course! There’s hardly any crime here at all... and we’re pretty sure there isn’t a single pirate. Nonetheless, our seniors had the chance to monkey around on one of the pirate ships that have become something of an icon at Lake Ashi, the decks of which are the perfect place to relax, be jolly, and on a clear day catch a great view of Mount Fuji. After singing a pirate song of their choice they were able to move on to their next challenge.

The final Hakone challenge required a fair amount of dexterity on the part of our seniors and a penchant for hard-boiled protein. After taking a cable car up to Owakudani (the great boiling valley), the students got to indulge in a local treat: eggs hard-boiled in the sulfurous hot springs. Each black-shelled egg eaten is said to add seven years to your life, so of course this wasn’t an opportunity to be missed! Team members took turns relaying the eggs up the hill, their precious cargo carefully cradled between their knees or on a spoon. For each egg they successfully transported up and ate, bonus points were added to their tally.

With the promise of long life bestowed and pirate shanties stuck in their heads, our seniors bade farewell to Hakone and set off for their next destination: Japan’s old capital, Kyoto.
Our teams arrived in Kyoto with a plan: battle, battle, and battle! Before Americans like Mario Batali and Bobby Flay became famous for slicing and dicing up secret ingredients in *Kitchen Stadium*, seven Japanese chefs brought honor to the cooking game through their culinary creations. These were the skillet and cleaver-armed heroes that our seniors would pay tribute to in a challenge based on the show *Iron Chef*.

The seniors traveled to Cooking Sun, a Japanese cooking school for international travelers, where they received cooking lessons and the rules of the game (prep-cook-dominate!). Next, each team traveled to Kyoto’s Nishiki Market where they purchased their ingredients for the meal. After donning TGS-branded kimonos, each team began whipping up dishes of miso soup, vegetable and shrimp tempura, and Temari Zushi sushi rolls.

After several hours of cooking, it was determined that Team A’ntonia-Mark-Anat-Javed-Yada had won, bringing much honor to their families. After scarfing down the remainder of their creations, each team hopped on a bus to head to the Kyoto countryside.

The city of Kyoto is surrounded on three sides by mountains and a bevy of shrines, making its outskirts a popular destination for hikers and those seeking quiet contemplation. We headed 30 kilometers north to the town of Miyama, where over 200 thatched-roof cottages known as kayabuki houses provide an authentic place to relax, rest, and reflect. Here our seniors were greeted by a blast from their past, a popular figure from their term in Berlin: art teacher Cecile Evans. Cecile was joined by recording artist Morley Kamen, who helped the students pen a song for their upcoming graduation.

The following day, each of the 15 graduates enjoyed a quiet riverside trek to the top of a nearby waterfall, flanked by beautiful cedars and the occasional Shinto statue. Serenity achieved, it was time to head back to the city. This time, Osaka.
The seniors arrived in Osaka to find a new set of challenges and a very special former teacher waiting for them. Andy McLean, who taught Global Studies during years 1 and 2, was met with a barrage of hugs and the expectation of a lot of catching up to do. With one of their heroes in tow, the teams set out to explore Japan’s third largest city.

The first group of challenges took place at one of Japan’s most famous landmarks, Osaka Castle. Constructed in 1583, Osaka Castle has been repelling invaders for centuries, but would it be a match for our cunning grads? After figuring out how to acquire safe and lawful entry, each team made their way up the castle’s five floors, competing in a variety of fun activities along the way. On the ground floor each team took turns in a toy bow-and-arrow archery competition, a blindfold severely limiting their chances of scoring a bulls eye. On the fifth floor they were greeted with a ‘Where’s Waldo’ style challenge, where they skillfully hunted down portraits of the leaders in Osaka’s last major battle.

After emerging victorious from Osaka Castle, each group made their way to another landmark destination: the Osaka Aquarium. Uniquely designed as a descending spiral around a large central tank, this aquarium houses fish and wildlife from all over the world. Once inside the aquarium, each group was tasked with seeking out the emperor penguin exhibit and doing their best Happy Feet impersonation. After thirty seconds of waddling around like only a large, flightless bird can, the groups were given the hint to their next task.

Various other challenges awaited each team during their time in Osaka: they learned if they had a taste for the space confection Dippin’ Dots when they attempted to eat a cup’s worth in under 60 seconds, they did their best table-top Wayne Gretzky impersonations against our staff members in five rigorous rounds of air hockey, and they closed out the afternoon with a bird’s-eye view of Osaka atop the enormous Tempozan Ferris Wheel, formally the tallest in the world (no word on how annoyed they are with the London Eye).

After completing all of their challenges, each team met up in Dotonbori, Osaka’s trendiest and most illuminated neighborhood, for a clue regarding their final destination. Were they tired? Maybe. Were they ready to turn in for the night? Definitely not! With the Amazing Race wrapping up tomorrow afternoon in Miyajima, the seniors headed out to enjoy a night filled with one of Japan’s guiltiest pleasures: karaoke.

STORM THE CASTLE
Location Clue: “Osaka has been the scene of many fierce battles throughout its history. Today it’s time for one more. Demonstrate your team’s prowess by seizing the castle. Your spies report that Gokurakubashi Bridge offers your best chance of penetrating the castle walls.”

HAPPY, HAPPY, HAPPY FEET
Location Clue: “The movie Happy Feet showed us penguins can get down and dance. Find these flappers and show ’em a 30-second video of your happiest feet.”

FALSE FINISH LINE
Challenge Instructions: “Bring it home over the bridge to the finish line. Well almost. This giant Dotonbori icon is showing you how it’s done. Take some tips on how to cross the line in style tomorrow and find the waiting staff member to finish the day’s adventures.”

Last stop, Miyajima...
After a week of nonstop action, the finish line was almost in sight! After arriving at Hiroshima Station from Osaka, the seniors boarded a ferry to take them to their final destination: Miyajima Island. A World Heritage Site, Miyajima is believed by the Japanese to be the island where God dwells. Due to this sense of awe for the island, the most prominent shrine was not constructed on land, but on the shore just off of Miyajima. The vermillion color of the gates and shrines is said to keep evil spirits away, but luckily it had no such effect on our intrepid racers.

As the teams wrapped up their final challenges and approached the finish line, where they were greeted by former mathematics teacher Ambika Dani, their maturity shone through: instead of competing to see who could cross the finish first, they made the decision to all cross the finish line at the same time, tossing out the points accumulated over the week in favor of standing together as one. After four years and 12 countries together, would you have expected anything less?

Andy and Ambika reunited with their students.
Polaroid project

To add a creative element to the trip, each of our school’s five houses has been provided with a polaroid camera and assigned one of the letters in T-O-K-Y-O. It is up to the students in each house to decide what the subject of their letter will be:

- **T** could stand for transit, and include photos of students packing themselves into a busy rail car
- **O** could stand for Opulence, and include photos of demure women in Shibuya clutching their designer handbags
- **K** could stand for kids, and include photos of kids playing in Tokyo’s parks
- **Y** could stand for Yokohama, and include photos of their experiences
- **O** could stand for Oshikata, and include photos of delicious meals

The opportunities here are limitless, and if there is one thing that our students have proven, it’s that creativity courses through their veins.

Crazy Good

Leaving Japan in five hours now. Having lived here for six months, it feels super weird to know that I’ll never be returning with the same people I’ve been with. I’ve had so, so many fantastic experiences and it’s going to be hard saying goodbye. So here it is – my tribute to Japan, and everyone who’s made it such a special time.

Hiroshima, from Mitate-yama

Six months feels like it’ll last forever, but it comes and goes so fast, I just. This is weird, it’s crazy, but it’s good. So, so good.

For the last few months, I called Hiroshima my home. ...and it’s been nothing but wonderful.

I loved every second of it.

Times were rough, just rough enough to help me grow. If not for you Japan, I wouldn’t know what I now know. So thank you.

for all the experiences you’ve given me, the bonds you’ve let me make, and all the good times that kept me sane, and all the bad times that sometimes drove me a little insane

but whatever because I’m better now.

So thank you Japan.

Because being here was crazy good.
I didn’t read anything about carrying sand bags to a temple in the TGS curriculum...

It’s difficult to have everyone smile at the same time. But six out of seven ain’t bad.

It turns out that four years of traveling around the world has certain side effects.

Why am I doing this... it’ll probably end up in the yearbook.

You can never wear enough sunscreen...

I know TGS is a strong supporter of job equality, but...

Deep inside, Yodsel’s ambition is to be Bhutan’s first (and only) Elvis impersonator...

But Alun... pole dance is a career!
Before today, Nuna says, a girl’s feet were broken and bound before she could say no.

Now, Nuna says, you must stretch your toes every morning to remember that you can.

Nuna tells me, “Never forsake health for beauty, never be afraid to be good, or to be great. Otherwise your grandmother’s lotus feet will remain achingly, undeservedly beautiful.”

Once you are married which you need not do for a reason other than love, do not give him what is not his.

If he forces you away from a passion or a livelihood that you love very much, he will never be worthwhile.

If he asks only of love from you, have mercy on the man. If you have a son, teach him that a headstrong woman is not an unattractive one.

If you have a daughter, tell her never to be afraid to be good, or to be great. If your husband asks you to be anything more or less than all that you are, cast him aside.

“I ask Nuna: ‘Why must we prepare always for the worst?’ She says, ‘This has always been our fate,’ she says. ‘And those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it.’”

Before today, Pepe says, you could follow your family, your school, the government... anyone. Now, Pepe says, you must open your eyes. Never let the girl pay the bill. Never trust science. And never wear pink and red together. Otherwise, reading all those books and all the lessons I’ve taught you about being a real man will give you a mediocre life partner; or many life partners in my case.

“Once you’re married don’t ever be greedy; and remember, marriage can be forever, unless they call you Pepe and your emotional states run like a bull in a ring on a 6th of December.

If she has different beliefs than you do, try and figure them out before you get married. If she speaks French and her beauty is comparable to a Chavela Vargas song, think twice. Believe me, mine was worth it, but our love-hate relationship, ended up being a lot of hate, very little love, and it tears that tasted of Scotch and Gitanes tobacco.

If you have a son his name has to be José, in my memory of course. If you have a daughter, spoil her. Believe me, you won’t be able to resist it. I tried to be tough with my three daughters and look how your mom turned out!

If your wife asks you about your emotions, ‘jodido’ is not right word and ‘fine, thank you’ is never the correct answer. Let me make myself clear, if your wife asks anything, just nod.

“I ask Pepe ‘Why, isn’t nodding just avoiding her questions and being odious to your partner?’ Pepe looks at me with his small blue eyes and whispers to my ear, ‘Jandrito, no serás tontito, no te preocupes.’”

By Hannah.

This poem is based upon the literary structure of a poem in the novel “Sold,” called “Everything I Need to Know.” It narrates a mother telling her daughter all she needs to know in order to be the best woman, wife and mother.

Beyond simple rules, it reveals cultural, religious and geographical biases on social constructs of gender and identity.

For my vignette, I wrote in the perspective of a Chinese-American girl being told by her older cousin, Nuna, how she must be fiercely defensive of her rights as a woman because of the history of the oppression of women.
What makes a good traveler?
by Megan.

There is a question that I have asked myself a lot (mainly from the numerous debates I've had with Lindsay) on what makes a good traveler. How do we, as members of a traveling boarding school, supplement our experiences of exploration with the writing and notes that we make before, during and afterward?

This past weekend had me questioning what makes a good traveler. Is it the ability to handle situations that may arise? Is it the understanding of alternate cultures and viewpoints? Is it the honesty to accept that you aren't able to explore every situation?

Our weekend was a challenge, I will not lie about that. I've experienced long journeys before, but the 15 hours driving between Hyderabad and Aurangabad was difficult. Extremely, deafeningly difficult. That is, however, part of the experience of India. Our bus had been late because of planning errors, proper forms for taking certain highways hadn't been processed, and the deep monsoon season had not finished in its normal fashion, leaving roads disastrous for large coaches like our own. Multiply that by 25 students and five teachers in a sardine can of a bus, and we definitely have a worthy story.

After our late arrival (imagine sore teenagers staring at a clock in the lobby which glares 3:30 am with angry hands), the five hours of sleep fueled my body in some magical aura, and I woke up feeling somewhat refreshed. The act of traveling, I realized, can be as much a cure as a disease; it pulls at your lungs and tears at your eyes, but it also awakens something deep in your heart: the desperation for adventure, exploration and discovery.

After three more hours trapped in a bus, we emerged outside of the Ajanta Caves. My prior expectations of India had been flat, crowded and deafeningly noisy. Ajanta countered all those beliefs. It was green, emotively silent, lush, and stark. The growth and brush of the trees and bushes were starkly cut by the caves; facades of yellow and grey etched deep into the valley’s edge. The sounds of water and birds set the backdrop for the caves as we wandered.

I am a history nerd; I love to learn about cultures, society and the development of nations, so visiting the Ajanta and Ellora caves really lit me up. The caves connect two periods of growth, the first in the 2nd century BC and the second in the 6th century AD. They tell a story of these eras in Indian history. Seven hundred royal states maintaining their lands and cultures. “People in that time period were not frictionous like our nations are today,” Anmol explained to me afterwards. “The nations and states in the geographical India we imagine today were able to coexist back then. Religion flowed freely between cultures; art and design was always interchanged with the eras that passed.” He grinned at me and looked towards the carving of Buddha, “Life is easier when you’re allowed to trace your own path.”

That thought left me questioning the rest of my experience in India. How does the centralization of a nation add or subtract from its livelihood? We are surrounded by it every time we enter the city and even just society outside of India. The sheer volume of people can be disheartening and the levels of poverty that we are forced to comprehend are hard, but comparing the single party mentality of this culture, so focused on growth, to the small city-states that governed back then with the Maharajahs and the shamans makes me question whether the decentralization that many western countries are terrified of is really the best option for this subcontinent.

This is what traveling is in my experience. Gaining more knowledge, more opinions and more questions to fuel my time spent traveling and exploring. If you cannot find your passion within your experiences, something that makes you tick, concerned or entirely confused out of your mind — then you haven’t found something worth traveling for yet.
What kind of horse am I?
- Cailey

What’s her job?
A stitcher? What does she do?
Stitch holes?
- David

By the time I was 1 year old, I’ve been to more countries than most people have been in their lifetime.
- Alex

Let’s do some shots, guys.
- Charis

Hi, can I please get a solid amount of toilet paper?
We are loaded.
- Hudson

Liam, I hope when you give a graduation speech you slip on stage :)
- Ms. Boyce

Look, it’s cleaning its butt! Aw, it’s so cute!
- Luisa

Cameron:
When I started TGS, I used to fly in a suit. Now look at me!

In higher level math, you can divide by zero.
- Ms. Boyce

Politicians are like pigeons: When they need you they eat out of your hand; when they don’t need you they go onto the roof and shit on you.
- Jumbo (Bhutanese guide)

David, are you thinking?
David: No.

Quote of the year:
“If I’ve learned one thing over the past four years, it’s that between regular high school bureaucracy and the Flower Power movement we call a student body, doing anything besides taking an Advil and a nap is risky business.”
- Alexander
PICTURES OF PEOPLE TAKING PICTURES - OF PEOPLE TAKING PICTURES.

31 THINGS YOU DO BEFORE GRADUATING TGS

SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW AND WATCH THE VIDEO OF THE COOLEST STUFF A TGS STUDENT HAS TO GO THROUGH BEFORE GRADUATING.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DQ3-Oagknjk
More than just pretty colors.
Did you know, there’s a deeper meaning behind the color of each yearbook? The color scheme symbolizes the evolution of TGS and its students – or progress if you will. Read here.

We started year 1 with the TGS red, representing the excitement, energy and passion – the beginning.

Year 2 was orange, symbolizing enthusiasm, warmth, expansion, and the demand for attention.

Year 3 was yellow, which stands for joy, optimism, idealism and imagination.

Year 4 is the last year of the first cycle. The white color represents purity, birth, peace, humility and precision – a prepared blank canvas ready to meet the world with an open, tolerant and nonjudgmental mind.
Can you see who’s who?

- Cameron + Joseph
- Cami + Fatima
- Hudson + Julia
- Isaak + Joseph
- Jonah + Emma
- Paul + Grant
- Paul + River
- Sydney + Hannah
- Yodsel + Madeline

Sydney is having fun with Photoshop.
Upon returning from spring break, the Global Studies students at THINK Global School will take on the challenge of creating their own graphic novel.

Before spring break, students read Nakazawa’s *Barefoot Gen* for English class and analyzed the conventions of writing a graphic novel. In global studies they read Jon Hersey’s *Hiroshima* to experience personal narrative storytelling. Both of these works provide first-hand accounts of the days before and after the horrific atomic bombing of Hiroshima in 1945 by the United States. Through reading these accounts and hearing the vivid recollections of A-bomb survivor, Sada A. Kasahoro, at the Peace Park, the students gained an understanding of the power of personal storytelling. It was time to provide them with an opportunity to research a personal narrative and create a graphic novel of their own.

In global studies we discussed the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and the students worked to understand each of the 30 rights listed. They challenged the veracity of some of the rights, and took a more critical eye to the document than I suspected.

We agreed that the document is very idealistic, but it is a place to start at treating humans from all walks of life as equals.

The majority of students are having difficulty with the time constraints and may be setting the bar to high for themselves in terms of their final product. Got to give the students props for wanting to be able to create a publishable graphic novel in three weeks, but I reminded them that the graphic novels that they have read have taken years to create.

The task was set for the students to combine their acquired personal storytelling skills with a Human Rights violation in the form of a graphic novel. Caryn West’s *The Trouble With the Alphabet* was used to showcase the combination of the UNODHR personal storytelling and activism. The students were given three weeks for the project.

This Interdisciplinary Unit between English, art, and global studies was also assigned by teachers at Hiroshima International School. Each discipline has its own set of criteria. In English, their aim is to make authorial decisions to use graphic novel conventions to tell a story that evokes emotion. In global studies, their aim is to research a human rights violation and find a personal narrative to recount. Not only will they tell an emotional story but being that these are graphic novels for change they are supposed to provide an opportunity for their readers to act on this issue by providing information regarding a non-profit organization that contributes to bringing justice to the situation.

My colleagues and I are very excited and anxious for the finished products, and have enjoyed seeing all of the different programs and motifs that the students have chosen. From *Paper* by 53, to *Photoshop*, to *Comic Life*, to *Grimace* for facial expressions, to hand-drawn cartoons the students have really sunk their teeth into this project.

By Nick Martino, Global Studies teacher

The world, everything really, is a carefully constructed glass dome where the laws of gravity apply. The “TGS Bubble” is sometimes taken metaphorically, but in many cases we are in a bubble. Because while IAs, IB, IBLL FOAs, and all these abbreviations may seem to be crowding our minds, and it may seem like there is not enough freedom or too much, how can we still compare to the people back home? In a community of “yeses,” where we are surrounded by such motivational people (both the students and guest speakers), there is so much potential. We live in a surreal version of reality where possibilities are endless; that is the bubble in which I talk about. To be sure, the most valuable asset that I am gaining from TGS are the connections, which I would never have dreamed of gaining at home. And yet now, about to leave this school, the glass is starting to crack.

I came to TGS as a shy girl. I was shy to start anything or talk in front of crowds — trained to excel at what is already present in the system today. I thought all there was were academics. Getting that A+ And through these shards that the broken glass leaves behind, the change between then and now is sharp — a whole different person standing before me in the depths of my memory. With the support of the students who took the time to listen to that shy girl, who encouraged her to speak. This school forced me to do things I would have never thought of doing, things I would have laughed at before TGS. Climbing an overgrown part of the Great Wall of China? Scuba diving in the Great Barrier Reef? Being an unfit person, I would never have thought of experiencing and finding myself doing those things, nor did I ever have an inkling of speaking in front of a room full of people — let alone hundreds at TedxChiangMai. I would never have thought of starting anything like clubs — especially not initiatives — and yet now, having been changed, it is almost time to leave. Little cracks, the changes (gradual changes) all add up, and you look back and see not yourself but a stranger.

But now, having been changed, it is almost time to leave. Little cracks, the number of days counting down to zero; glimpses of a life after TGS; college acceptances and visa preparations. These days are limited, and one day I will have to wake up and realize that I can no longer say, “I am Yada, and I’m a student at THINK Global School.” No more will there be hikes up the Himalayan ranges or scuba diving in the Great Barrier Reef. At least not I can see in the imminent future. No more will there be the quirky TGS culture that the 12th grade has helped create and cultivate since its very inception. We will leave, leaving behind our legacies, traditions and trust in the ones we leave behind to preserve the spirit of this school.

The glass breaks, and all that’s left are the splinters.
Reflecting on the past four years, I think it’s been as much of a wild ride for me as the brave individuals in our first graduating class. Think about what’s happened in the world of technology alone since the year THINK Global School launched: the iPad, Instagram, and Uber are now all ubiquitous. And through Tesla and SpaceX, Elon Musk has shown that imagination and perseverance can lead to incredible technological breakthroughs. Some of these developments provide an interesting backdrop to our journey over the last four years.

During that time, as our student body grew larger, I experienced many personal firsts. As head of the technology department, I’ve had the opportunity to support our students’ travel and learning experiences at each step of the way. We’ve been through thick and thin together, and by thin I mean the dizzying air we shared atop Mount Kilimanjaro – a personal first that I’ll always remember.

But even “*I* wondered at the beginning, ‘will this thing work?’ Being a part of the founding team, in the timeframe from June 2009 to the first day of school, we spent a great deal of mental energy trying to anticipate and mitigate potential issues with the model of the school (and believe me there were many: logistical, staff, technology, marketing, and on and on). Potential issues with students were always on top of our minds: Will they be able to handle the travel at a young age? Will they get homesick? Being from many different countries, will they get along?

What has continually impressed me over the past four years is that out of all the things we’ve perceived as imminent student challenges, on the whole, our concerns have been unfounded. Since day one, our students have been resilient, curious, and tenacious. They have been able to maintain high-energy levels even when their sometimes impossibly intense travel schedule and challenging curriculum would knock many full-grown adults off of their feet.

Of course, we’ve had a smattering of behavior issues, but nothing compared with what many schools experience. No matter where we are in the world, our students have always been curious, polite, and respectful to others. And what was most pleasantly surprising to me is that any potential divides caused by being brought up in different countries, cultures, or languages were erased the instant our students were brought together. Since day one at TGS, teenagers have been teenagers. Each one as unique as the school itself, yet bonded by their age and a shared belief in travel as a catalyst for learning.

The students featured in this yearbook give me immense hope about the future of this planet and, really, that is at the heart of what THINK Global School is all about. I would sincerely like to congratulate the first graduating class of THINK Global School and, to all current and future TGS students, I commend you for your continued open-mindedness and bravery.

A TECH GUY LOOKS BACK

By Mike

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Four years after taking a leap of faith together in Stockholm, our seniors’ parents came together again, this time 8,000 kilometers away in Hiroshima, Japan, to witness the culminating moment of their education gamble: THINK Global School’s first graduation.

The graduation, which took place on May 31, 2014, was heralded as more than just the handing over of a diploma: It was a celebration of four years, 12 countries, and 15 lifetimes’ worth of unforgettable experiences.

The festivities began a day before graduation on Miyajima Island, where our parents in attendance made new introductions and rekindled previous conversations begun in Stockholm. After a short wait that surely felt like multiple time periods rolled into one, all of our parents and graduating students were collectively reunited for the first time in four years. Evidence of growth was readily apparent: the diminutive gaggle of youngsters who had invaded Sweden a few short years ago now sported well-trimmed facial hair, expertly applied make-up, and carried themselves with unfaltering poise. They were also weary, having just completed a weeklong Amazing Race across Japan. The rest of the afternoon was spent relaxing, catching up (in some cases on sleep), and showing their family Hiroshima’s sights.

Graduation day began with a voluntary guided tour of the Hiroshima Peace Park followed by a talk by ultra-marathon runner Ray Zhab, a former “pack-a-day smoker” who preferred his “trifecta of excellence” (coffee, booze, and cigarettes) to anything remotely resembling physical activity. That all changed at the start of the new millennium, when Ray quit smoking cold turkey and began running. And running. And running. Since 2000, Ray has taken running to the extreme, running across the Sahara Desert in 111 days, breaking the world speed record in 2009 during an expedition to the South Pole, where he covered 1,100 kilometers without the use of skis, and most recently running 2,000 kilometers across Mongolia and the Gobi Desert for his documentary project “To the Edge.”

Ray’s running has taken him to far-flung corners of the world and allowed him to interact with and learn from cultures completely removed from the trappings of the modern world. Despite their surroundings, the cultures living in these inhospitable conditions have figured out how to thrive. On his race across the Sahara, Ray witnessed tribes pulling water out of wells built in the desert, essentially proving that we as human beings have no limits if we set our minds to it. And that is the message that he imparted to our seniors as they prepared for the next stage of their life: “If we believe the impossible is possible, we work unbelievably hard to make our goals happen, we are free from all boundaries.”
That evening, family, friends, students, and staff headed over to the Hiroshima Grand Prince Hotel to celebrate all that our graduates had accomplished.

The ceremony began with a commencement speech by philanthropist Maggie Doyne, who at age 18 left her hometown in New Jersey to travel the world. Maggie’s travels eventually led her to Nepal, where the effects of a decade-long civil war were readily apparent. Horrified by what she saw, Maggie used the $5,000 she’d saved up babysitting to help set up the Kopila Valley Children’s Home. Ten years later, the Kopila Valley is home to more than 50 children, and Maggie’s school, the Kopila Valley School, educates more than 350 children a year. Maggie is further proof that through hard work and dedication, dreams are never out of reach.

Primped and preened in traditional kimonos, our 15 graduates were summoned to join Joann on the stage by a furious barrage of taiko drums. One by one, she introduced each student, sharing their endearing qualities with the packed, spirited room before greeting them with a hug and a diploma.

The ceremony continued with the graduates being joined on stage by singer-songwriter Morley Kamen, who uses her brand of adult pop to raise global awareness for women’s rights and human rights issues. Together they performed a song written in the Kyoto countryside three nights prior during the Amazing Race. Following the great performance, Alex McPike took to the podium to deliver a message to all prospective THINK Global School students on behalf of the graduates. The moving speech, which encapsulates sage wisdom gained through four years living and learning on the road and in the moment, can be read on the right.

Following the ceremony, everyone retired to the grand ballroom to relish the moment through dance, food, the always-popular photo booth, and a fireworks display that lit up the harbor. For our lower classes, it was a chance to enjoy a final night with the 15 friends who had inspired them to apply in the first place, and taken them under their wing upon their arrival.
To my first graduating class,

Over the past few years I have watched each of you grow as an individual and as a community. You have supported each other through a global journey, filled with life lessons, laughter and countless challenges. I hope that these challenges help guide you to your sense of purpose. I hope they have expanded your minds and your imaginations, giving you a sense of courage and compassion.


Don’t stop... keep going... stay curious... keep learning.


And most importantly, don’t just use logic. Follow your intuition. Find time every day to sit in the quiet and listen. Listen to yourself. Not society.

Stay curious... stay courageous. Break the rules. Care. Love. Smile. And give four-second hugs whenever you can.

I hope TGS has taught you that no dream is too big. TGS itself was once only a dream. Don’t ever let people take your dreams from you. You are only limited by your own sense of determination.

That’s it! It’s done! Being told what to learn is over. Now it’s up to you. My one last wish, GO! Make a difference. Do something good for people and for the planet; pay it forward!
See ya' next year

Yipee! I get to do this all over again next year!!!
THE SCHOOL YEAR by the NUMBERS

5,681 M, 18,638 F

150 rupees. The cost of having an old Indian lady watch your shoes while you’re visiting a mosque.

#OF GUEST SPEAKERS 8

8

#OF PHOTOS ON SPOT AND FLICKR 1,420

#OF STUDENTS WHO PLAY THE GUITAR

582

#OF PHOTOS IN THIS YEARBOOK

108

#OF VISAS ISSUED

27,901

LONGEST FLIGHT IN KILOMETERS

#OF DAYS STUDENTS DIDN’T SLEEP IN THEIR QUARTERS

62

THE SCHOOL YEAR by the NUMBERS

633

TGS T-SHIRTS PRINTED IN FOUR YEARS

100 percent of students who prefer Japan’s dorm over India’s.

#OF STUDENT NATIONALITIES 20

3:1

Student/Teacher Ratio