

Editors Column

Asian Comfort Foods for Upperclassman in High School



Audrey Park
Grade 11
Northwood High School



Japanese Udon is just one of many students' various comfort foods during the school year.

[Source: Audrey Park, Author]

The start of the school year has prompted graduating seniors and busy juniors' schedules to be full of sports, concerts, after-school classes, and extracurriculars. Many have turned to coping methods to deal with everything on their academic plates. However, students with bi-racial, Asian American backgrounds have also begun to fill their plates with cultural comfort foods and delicacies in order to combat the pressure of work.



Pork Katsu is often paired with various side dishes and curry plates to remind the students who eat it of warm home meals.

[Source: Audrey Park, Author]

Relying on comfort foods is already a commonly used method to overcome hardship, but attaching the sentimental value of one's cultural nostalgia to each bite of banh mi, tteokbokki, or satay makes an everyday necessity like eating even more special. While student insights are important to verify the warmth behind such ideas, it's significant to first acknowledge just how many individuals this practice is able to emotionally reach and support by preventing a

sense of isolation in an otherwise menial or routine task. By engaging in the therapeutic ritual of preparing and tasting these comfort foods, students in my Irvine area, where many residents of diverse Asian American backgrounds live, have found support in achieving various academic goals.

For instance, through different sensory aspects, such as getting wafts of lavender aroma from jasmine rice when opening a pot or registering the diverse textures of banchan upon eating them, simple meals have turned into opportunities to reminisce on New Year events or lively family gatherings where such cultural dishes are served. Courtney Lee, a junior at Northwood High School, expressed how her own experiences at family events where Chinese food was served provided the basis for her love of "hotpot" to grow. Especially during Chinese holidays, family dinners are centered around a turning table, where side dishes and main meals can be shared to highlight harmony and prosperity through reunion. On the other hand, Ethan Han, another junior

at Northwood, voiced his love for traditional foods of his own background, like "Korean pears and 된장찌개 (soybean paste stew)," as it was frequently served at family gatherings. Similarly, Audrey Brown, a Korean-American senior at Beckman High School, expressed having a similar fondness for broth-based meals consisting of "spicy and comforting tofu soup" and "식혜 (scorched rice water)."

It is undeniable that culturally tied comfort foods have a profound impact on younger generations in their pursuit of overcoming academic and emotional challenges. Whether it be the rich and careful preparation of pho or the decorated process of arranging toppings on a ramen bowl, many Asian American students can agree that dishes rooted in nostalgia provide the warmth and liveliness that pervades cultural holidays and dinners. So, no matter if you're a Vietnamese auntie joining a family dinner or a Japanese American high schooler cramming for their midterms, cultural dishes create the bridge between nostalgia and comfort.

Student Reporter

Peer Pressure: A Common Challenge for Teens



Jason Lee
Grade 9
Northwood High School

Peer pressure is a term that everyone knows. It is one that is used when friends influence one's behavior and decisions, and this is particularly present among teenagers. As teenagers (like me) continue to try and fit in, peer pressure can become a large problem. Understanding what it is and what it does can really help you make smarter choices.

At its core, peer pressure is about wanting to belong. During teenage years, social circles become very important. Teens crave approval from their friends, which can lead them to really try and show off or do something that they wouldn't normally do. This pressure can be present in things from fashion sense to talking habits and, to a more serious extent, risky actions and substance abuse.

However, peer pressure isn't always negative. Positive peer pressure can motivate teenagers to excel



Being the "odd one out" isn't always a bad thing. You just need to accept your uniqueness and not fold under peer pressure. [Source: Author, Jason Lee]

in academics, become involved in sports, or participate in community events. When friends encourage each other to reach positive goals, it builds a sense of teamwork and accomplishment. The problem is that the negative aspects are the only

ones that stand out, like bullying, all to just fit in.

So, how can teens deal with peer pressure effectively? One strategy is being confident in your own ability. Teenagers who are confident in their values and interests are less likely to fall to peer pressure, as they know what they want and don't want to do. Understanding and talking about these pressures can be incredibly helpful. I interviewed a member of my high school who has been a victim of peer pressure, and he stated that, "opening up to someone about these problems can really help. Being with your own thoughts alone can make it hard to deal with these problems. Some of my past friends always went out and did things that I didn't feel comfortable doing, but I couldn't build up the confidence to say no until I talked to my mom about it."

Another crucial aspect is choos-

ing friends wisely. As the quote above implies, the speaker didn't have people who were a good influence on him. Surrounding yourself with positive influences can make a huge difference. Friends who share similar values and goals can create an environment where healthy choices are abundant.

Even though peer pressure is a natural part of growing up, it shouldn't define who someone is. By encouraging self-confidence, uniqueness, and promoting positive friendships, both teens and their support networks can navigate this challenging aspect of youth together. Understanding peer pressure as a common issue can empower teens to make choices that reflect their true selves rather than just trying to fit in. Through these supportive measures, teens can learn to handle peer pressure with confidence and integrity.

Student Reporter

Studying While Getting Paid



Huichan Kim
Grade 12
Homeschooling

How would you feel if you studied while getting paid? This is the perfect example of killing two birds with one stone. A few weeks ago, while using SNS, I saw a flier about a vocational school offering a free computer certification course in my neighborhood. It was from September 3 to 30, 10 am to 4:40 pm, and if you attended all classes and finished all courses, you'd get \$256 at the end of the course. I applied for it without any hesitation.

The computer certification that I'm currently learning is a government-certified license, one in handling Excel. Obtaining this certification is helpful when it comes to applying for an office job or any other program. Getting useful certification and money, there's no reason not to apply.

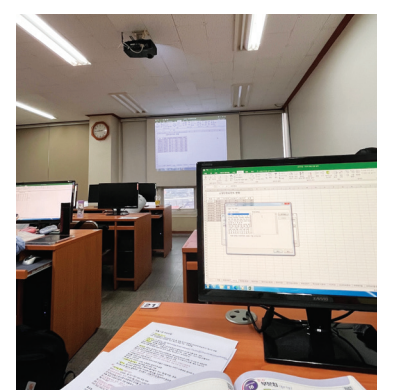
The first day of class was effortless. I learned basic computer functions such as keyboard short-

cuts, settings, PNP: plug & play, Network commands, and more. I already knew a lot about these topics so it was a piece of cake, yet over time, it became increasingly arduous. More and more unfamiliar terms appeared: DNS, VCS, and RFID, for example. These words are not used in specific programs but appear often in written exams. So memorizing terms is important if you want to get an A on exams. I never heard of these words, so at first, it was hard to memorize them just by their explanation. I memorized them by using their abbreviations and everyday examples.

Some of the things I learned I found very interesting. First, DNS stands for "Domain Name System." It is a system that translates domain names (like www.naver.com) into IP addresses, allowing it to load Internet resources. Second, VCS stands for Video Conference

System." It is a tool that helps manage changes to source code or files over time, enabling multiple collaborators to work on projects efficiently and track modifications. It is beneficial when it comes to doing group projects. Google Docs is similar to VCS. Lastly, RFID, Radio Frequency Identification. It uses radio waves to automatically identify and track tags attached to objects, allowing for wireless data transfer. For example, RFID is embedded in an access card, a card reader recognizes it and will give one grant access and save information on the card. These terms will likely be helpful when I take exams.

All classes are conducted in person, and students learn by using a computer, taking notes, and doing tons of assignments like solving previous exam questions or term quizzes. Furthermore, staring at the monitor for 7 hours was not



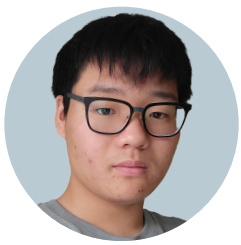
I was able to learn and improve on a wide range of skills related to computers throughout certification classes.

[Source: Author, Huichan Kim]

easy for me. I had to wash my face often during the classes. The computer class was tough for me but I could feel myself getting more comfortable with the computer, improving my skills and typing. The exam is next week, I can't wait to see myself hold a computer certification and Grant.

Editors Column

Going From Tutored to Tutoring



Derrick Ahn
Grade 11
Oxford Academy



The 10th annual YLOC Mathematics Competition featured children with a passion for mathematics, joined by Senator Janet Nguyen. [Source: Author, Derrick Ahn]

Tutoring comes in many semblances—whether in the form of professional teaching or simple volunteer work that reaches numerous scholars from far and wide, its impact on the educational journey and personal development of a student inspires a lifelong love for learning, ignited by the passion to learn.

As a young child, I struggled with organizing my ideas and using them to effectively to employ critical thinking. I had many ebullient and uncontrollable ideas

and desperately sought someone, someone who could be a beacon of light that I could follow. In third grade, I was swiftly introduced to an organization named YLOC, or Young Leaders of Orange County, by a close acquaintance who noticed my struggles. YLOC was a tutoring center run by local Korean-American students who taught mathematics (at least in the branch I attended) and held a deep place in my heart like no other. It was an environment full of ambition, one that resonated with not

only my learning endeavors but with my desire to involve myself with the community.

With all of the help I received from YLOC, I felt compelled to help as well. Before I knew it, six years had passed since I had first enrolled in YLOC, and the question remained unresolved until I finally answered my call. During my freshman year of high school, I received an eligibility notice to tutor students at YLOC myself—from being tutored to tutoring—and there it was, my opportunity to reciprocate the help I had received.

Upon becoming a tutor at YLOC, I was steadfast in my commitment towards helping the young scholars develop a passion for mathematics that would rival an unquenchable flame, the same embers I felt at their age and when my tutors were of my age. In a way, my time as a tutor at YLOC helped me fulfill my obligation to the community through service and, hopefully, by passing the baton to the forthcoming generations.

Eventually, through my extensive devotion to the organization, I worked my way through the ranks of YLOC's board, helped host annual mathematics competitions, and even served as the vice president. Serving on the board proved a novel experience and opened my eyes to the monumental effort my tutors invested into teaching students like me, revealing how much the community often takes for granted. As my peer, Tyron Kim, who served as the president of YLOC, states, "The tutoring landscape is something you appreciate only after one experiences the role for themselves. Although overwhelming, repaying the community is already more than enough to justify the effort it takes."

What started out as a struggle in a fit of desperation at the age of nine has come to a full circle at the age of seventeen, and as the mental fog clears, I can finally say for myself that tutoring has offered me a priceless opportunity to express my gratitude communally and to serve as a source of purpose in my life.

Student Reporter

How Teens Turn 15-Second Clips Into Study Tools



Seo Yun Lee
Grade 11
Chadwick International School

When people think of short-form videos like TikTok, YouTube Shorts, or Instagram Reels, they usually picture dance challenges, viral memes, and endless scrolling. However, for some teenagers, these platforms are becoming a tool for learning. I sat down with a Grade 11 student, whom we'll call "Alex," to find out how teens are using quick content to help with their studies.

"I used to think these videos were just for fun, but then I started encountering clips that were actually useful for studying," Alex said. "Some of those 15-second clips explain faster than my textbooks." Alex is not alone. Many students have discovered that the bite-sized content from short-form videos can be surprisingly educational.



A student uses short-form videos on their phone as study tools, exploring quick tips and hacks to help prepare for exams. [Source: Author, Seo Yun Lee]

From math tricks to quick science explanations, creators have begun filling their feeds with short, engaging videos that make complex topics easier to understand.

The appeal lies in the quick, digestible format that matches how teens are used to consuming content. Short-form videos do not require long blocks of concen-

tration. Instead, they offer quick bursts of information that can be absorbed in seconds, perfect for a generation accustomed to fast-paced media. "I like that I can watch a brief but helpful tutorial in the middle of a study break," Alex shared. "It feels like I am still being productive, but without feeling overwhelmed."

However, using these platforms to study comes with challenges. The apps are designed to keep users scrolling, and it is easy to get sucked into an endless loop of unrelated videos. Alex admits that watching a short-form video is a balancing act. "[With] those short-form videos are easy to get distracted," Alex confessed. "I might start watching a helpful video, but then five minutes later, I'm watching a cat dance to a

Taylor Swift song. I have to remind myself why I'm there."

Despite the distractions, Alex believes that short-form videos can be useful to gain knowledge in a quick and easy way. "I would not rely on them to learn everything, but they are great for picking up quick tips or getting a different perspective," Alex stated. "Sometimes, it is just about finding new ways to understand a topic, and these videos do that."

As platforms like TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels continue to evolve, it is clear that the way students learn will also change. Whether they are used to memorize a formula or find a new study hack, these study tools are integrated into the academic toolkit for today's teens.

Student Reporter

Kicking Off the New School Year at Bethel's Kick off Picnic



Jayden Eom
Grade 11
Sunset High School

As school enters its first few weeks and people begin to settle into their schedules, Bethel Church decided to hold a fun kickoff picnic to begin their new term. The leaders and teachers spent many days and hours making an engaging picnic for the students of the youth group to enjoy. Their plans included tons of activities that revolved around community-building and water activities. This would make the attendees very happy as they would be seen jumping and running around soaked.

At the picnic, all of the students were separated into teams and made team names for themselves. After that, the leaders started the first game, a relay race with various partner interactions and collaboration. Afterward, the groups went into a bracket-style dodgeball game where water balloons were used instead of normal dodgeballs. For the final game, they played tug of war on slip-and-slide turfs in a tournament bracket. In the

very end, the students were given opportunities for extra points through challenges and trivia. Overall, the event was enjoyed by many students. But talking to the leaders, they revealed a bigger mission with this event. When asked, Bethel Student Board members responded, "[the church] wanted to make this kickoff special by trying to include the incoming 6th graders, newcomers, and people who may not have had the chance to be included in the past." They did this through more intentional team building and games like the relay race to build chemistry between the team members and perhaps create new friendships. When discussing team building, they tried to separate the 6th graders to try and get them to be more social and involved with other grade members in the youth group so that they may feel more comfortable in the future.

Although this is all very significant, the most important part of



A group photo taken after the kickoff picnic at Bethel Church.

[Source: Nathan Sung]

a picnic was the enjoyment of the attendees. When asking one student their thoughts on their experience, they said, "I really enjoyed the games and liked my team. Sometimes it felt a bit rushed, but I think the overall experience was good." This was the main goal for the event and it seemed to be a shared sentiment within the community. When observing the event, the attendees were all talking with their teammates, and the

event had a very good vibe overall.

When I saw and talked to people around the event, it seemed like an overall success. The event seemed to bring the community closer together, and along with it, the students also seemed to have a great time. Events like Bethel's kickoff picnic are something that more communities should incorporate, even if they are secular, as they help newcomers become incorporated in the community.

Student Reporter



Jane Won
Grade 12
Korea Liberal Arts School

Crime Shows: Why People Are Obsessed



The eye in the magnifying glass represents our curiosity and desire to find the truth, like the detectives in crime shows. [Source: Author, Jane Won]

Crime shows are the guilty pleasure of the 21st century. From true crime documentaries to crime series, crime-related entertainment is significant in the media. They have become a major source of entertainment, captivating the

attention of many. But have you ever wondered why people are so addicted to these shows? What makes people binge episode after episode, hooked on murder, crime, and justice?

Most watch out of curiosity. Many people have the natural disposition to explore the darkest parts of humanity, making this genre captivating. Although most people are law-abiding citizens, they have the desire to understand and explore what is most foreign to them. Therefore, people seek the media to tell crimes we cannot see from watching crime shows. Moreover, crime shows often place viewers in the role of detectives. Humans love solving puzzles, and crime shows intrigue and leads people to ask “Who, what, and why?”

Punishment and justice are another factor. In the beginning, crime shows feel unsettling but always end with justice, giving us a sense of relief.

Interestingly, people are attracted to fear as well. We are drawn to the adrenaline of fear, and crime shows most effectively trigger this emotion in us. This adrenaline gives a thrill to many people, just like riding a roller coaster, giving us excitement with the fear. Moreover, crime shows allow us to experience fear without actual risk, which fills that natural need for this emotion, but in a safe way. We deeply empathize with the characters, yet we know that nothing can truly harm us in the moment. Professor of sociology and criminology Scott Bonn put it this way:

“Serial killers are for adults what monster movies are for children—that is, good, ghoulish fun.”

Furthermore, mental health expert Emily Mendez explains that crime shows “appeal to our natural instinct to survive” and “it eases our fears about the same thing happening to us.” Watching the victims act in certain situations makes people feel in control, and many people think watching crime shows helps them act wisely in such extreme situations.

Because crime shows give us a sense of fear, safety, and justice, and we are drawn to the fear that crime shows give us, but are comforted when control is regained. So don't feel bad next time you go to your favorite streaming service and binge-watch a crime show.

Student Reporter



Claire Lee
Grade 11
La Canada High School

Halloween Horror Nights: A Thrilling Night to Remember

As Halloween draws near, people worldwide are invigorated with a spirit of thrill. A spirit that can be enlivened at Halloween Horror Nights (HHN), an annual event hosted by Universal Studios, California, lives up to its name as an unforgettable, frightening experience. From late August to early November, the entire park is transformed into a terror zone, with actors, themed haunted houses, and scare zones scattered around the park.

Universal Studios is renowned for its top-notch film industry and production, which can be seen in HHN's most popular attraction: haunted houses. Each haunted house has its own story, brought to life by immense detail in its set design. Upon entering a house, visitors are immersed in a true horror film, where a haunting ambiance permeates each room. Though they differ for each house, details like the



After anxiously waiting in line, we are finally met by the entrance of the Weeknd Haunted House, which is embellished with neon city lights and vibrant signs, symbolic of the themes in his music. [Source: Samantha Quion]

revving of a chainsaw, the stench of raw meat or sawdust, or unreal animatronics add to the horrifying scene. This year's HHN featured famous blockbuster movies such

as *Insidious*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire*, *A Quiet Place*, and more. Another popular theme was the *Weeknd Trilogy* featured in 2022 and 2024, mirroring the nightmarish, dark motifs in his songs and music videos. This attraction combines aspects of pop music and horror into a singular haunted house. A friend with whom I visited HHN with, Samantha Quion, described the experience as “horrifying, but in the best way possible” and enjoyed the “rush of adrenaline from being scared.”

Differing from enclosed, narrow haunted houses, scare zones are more interactive with actors roaming unpredictably and oftentimes creeping up behind visitors without notice. However, not all perimeters of the theme park are covered in scare actors. They can be found in designated scare zones: *Murder of Crowz*, *Luchadores: Monstruos*,

Skull Lordz, and *Chainsaw Punkz*, which are unique to this year's event.

A major must-see is the *Terror Tram*, parallel to *Studio Tours* on non-HHN days. This year, Blumhouse Productions oversaw the event, featuring films like *M3GAN*, *The Black Phone*, and *The Purge*. Guests are first transported by tram to the main attraction, where they are dropped off and must walk through various scenes. Actors lurk, waiting for the next visitor to approach, preparing to catch them off guard and seeking out those who look the most afraid.

For anyone planning to visit Halloween Horror Nights or anyone who enjoys fear, HHN is a must-do. Despite being frightening at times, my experience was memorable and reinforced my desire to visit again in the following years.

Student Reporter



Ashlyn Choi
Grade 12
Flintridge Preparatory

My Trip to the New England Aquarium!

Recently, I spent the day at the New England Aquarium! Located by the coast, the aquarium boasts four floors of various tanks, with a center point, cylindrical tank extending up three floors. I visited sealions, seadragons, and fish from different climates and locations, all in a matter of hours!

On the first floor, the aquarium has an open-air penguin enclosure housing over 50 African and Southern Rockhopper penguins. My friends and I played with the penguins using a light beam, which we maneuvered to mimic a fish. The penguins interacted with us, practicing their hunting skills by following and then diving for the light.

The second, third, and fourth floors had various tanks with fish, crabs, and even frogs and birds from different regions and levels of the ocean. I saw colorful tropical poisonous frogs, adorable sandpiper birds from Rhode Island, and

a recreation of an Indo-Pacific coral reef. I spotted a dwarf seahorse which was barely the size of half of my pinky finger! When we reached the fourth floor, we looked down at the cylindrical tank and saw Myrtle, a nearly five-foot sea turtle who weighed over 500 pounds. The aquarium worker told us that she would sometimes flip for visitors if she was in the mood.

Outside, we saw two California Sea Lions, who swam around playfully with each other. The aquarium offers workshops with the sea lions, teaching kids how and why enrichment toys are made, about their diet, and a chance to make art with them! My friends and I were not able to participate, as the age range was from 7 to 11, but we were told how fun the experience was by an animated 8-year-old.

In a short conversation with an aquarium worker, I learned just how important ocean conserva-

tion was, and I was surprised at how directly ocean and marine health are tied to our own. As oceans are delicate ecosystems, disruptions to the food chain can cause large-scale ramifications. With the onset of the climate crisis, there's already been an upset in the balance—coral reefs bleaching and some species struggling to reproduce enough to maintain their population. And as more than 3 billion people worldwide depend on our oceans for food, research endeavors like the ones the New England Aquarium's help truly do matter.

At the end of the day, we stopped by the shark and stingray touch tank, but unfortunately, we weren't able to touch any. We did see them swim together from afar, but as we had just come after a feeding, they were feeling a bit lethargic. I finished the day at their gift shop, which had everything from sea turtle ornaments



Myrtle, a Green Sea Turtle, is approximately 70 to 90 years old and resides at the New England Aquarium.

[Source: Author, Ashlyn Choi]

to penguin plushies. The proceeds from the gift shop fund their research and conservation efforts, which they carry out worldwide, tracking sharks, turtles, and even whales. Overall, I would say that it's worth a visit if you're ever in Boston.