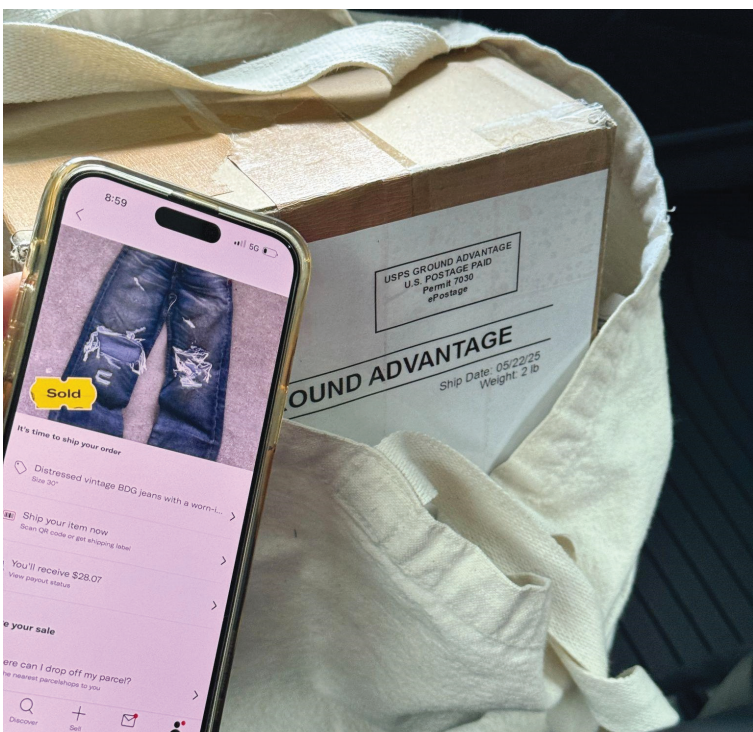


A Fight Against Fast Fashion



James Lim
Grade 12
Francisco Bravo Medical Magnet High School



WE GOT A SALE! While sorting out my closet and getting rid of clothes I don't wear, I was able to make some money to go towards revamping my wardrobe. [Source: Author, James Lim]

Heaps of clothes piling overseas—worn for one season, then forgotten for the rest of their lifetimes—is a dystopian reality made true as a result of fast fashion. With trends constantly changing, consumerism has experienced a drastic increase. Buying new or, even worse, throw-

ing out clothes, only contributes to crowding landfills and cheap, shallow wardrobes. Additionally, the money spent on the highly mass-produced garments funds unethical work environments where workers may not be receiving adequate compensation for

their time while being forced to trudge through lengthy shifts in hot warehouses with minimal breaks.

However, the used clothing market offers a solution to this dilemma. Depop, in particular, is an online market for second-hand clothes, predominantly used by a younger audience. Customers have the option to buy and bargain for, or negotiate the sales of clothes. It gives garments a new home and therefore a new life; a once-disregarded shirt that finds a new owner on Depop is given a new opportunity to be loved.

Although vintage clothes are often associated with items that are being held together by a single thread and on the brink of disintegrating, this is not often the case. Before the boom in fast fashion, people generally valued longevity and utility. Along with these values, materials weren't as mass-produced as they are now, making them a bit harder to come by. This resulted in clothes that were made to last and people wanting to take good care of what they had. Jumping to the present, these clothes end up in the second-hand market, like Depop, and will often go on to last longer than newly bought clothes from large retailers.

As a result of this accessible market for vintage and durable

clothes, many teens have resorted to doing their shopping via the used market. When asking Zirui Li, a Bravo High School student who frequently uses Depop to update his closet, why he prefers using the app, he stated, “As an avid connoisseur of fashion held back by a not-so-avid wallet, Depop has made it possible for me to find chic clothes that cost less than a meal.” This holds true to many young adults alike, and the market for previously loved items continues to grow.

This idea of thrift culture has become mainstream in recent years and caused the prices of some rare grails to become more expensive than their original prices in the early 2000s. Ultra-baggy JNCO jeans and worn-in Carhartt jackets are exemplary of these tendencies, as they cost hundreds as a result of the demand shock caused by mainstream thrift culture.

Disregarding these extreme anomalies, there are still a plethora of fairly priced clothes that are built to last. Going against fast fashion is more sustainable and economically viable for those who seek to look good while saving money. In the end, shopping second-hand isn't just better for the planet but also a way to find clothes that feel more personal, meaningful, and true to your style.

Family Bonding in the Yosemite Valley



Yulkwon Lee
Grade 9
University Prep Value High School

Traveling is often full of adventure and surprises. Before my most recent trip, I used to think of traveling as just a long, tiring journey with no real reward. But the moment I stepped out of the car at Yosemite, my opinion immediately changed. The mountain air and stunning views made me feel calm and refreshed, and for the first time, I witnessed the true beauty of nature.

Yosemite National Park is located in the Sierra Nevada mountains of California. It's known for its towering granite cliffs, 3,000-year-old Sequoia trees, dramatic waterfalls, and peaceful viewing areas such as Mirror Lake, which is my most memorable location. Historically, the land was first home to the Ahwahneechee people and became a coveted site during the Gold Rush as a result. Eventually, in 1890, when Congress also recognised its exceptional history, the land was declared a national park. Today, over 3 million people visit every year—not just for the views, but to disconnect from the modern world and reconnect with each



Mirror Lake, located in Yosemite National Park, where the mind becomes clear. [Source: Author, Yulkwon Lee]

other. My family and I would come to understand this ourselves, just not in the way we expected.

After spending the day exploring Yosemite's landmarks, we ended the night with pizzas named after the park's icons. The next morning, just before we left,

my mom suggested we visit Mirror Lake to finish off the trip. My dad and I agreed, and we all headed to the trail. After reaching the lake, we played in the water for a little while, then kept walking until we reached a bus stop. I had a feeling we were already close to

our car and didn't need to take the bus, but my dad looked exhausted, like he had just risen from the dead, so we decided to take the bus instead. But, a few stops later, we realized we were completely lost. We didn't have a map, and our phones weren't working either. After walking for a few miles, our phones finally had a signal, and we followed unfamiliar trails using Google Maps. Eventually, after a lot of walking, we made it back to the parking lot.

In the end, getting lost helped me gain something very valuable: a better understanding of my parents and myself. Usually, I rely on my parents for everything, but in that moment, I felt like we were helping each other equally. I learned that sometimes, unexpected challenges bring out the best qualities in people. While we searched for the parking lot, we talked, supported each other, and kept moving together. Though our exhaustion was at its peak by the time we found the car, the trek was without a valuable reward: we became closer as a family that day.

The Importance of Biotechnology



Yejoon Choi
Grade 10
Northwood High School

Biotechnology has profoundly shaped the lives of billions throughout human history, playing a vital role in combating diseases and driving the development of numerous innovative inventions. The study of life has had such a profound impact on the world that, without it, the necessities of our societies, such as food and water, might not be met. Beyond the fundamental impact and biotechnology's role as a central backbone in our society, numerous advances and potential future technologies are still currently being developed.

Applications of life, such as genetic modification, are constantly expanding and advancing in their technology; their mainstream usage has only been more cemented over time. Despite the general controversies surrounding the subject, its rising significance is noticeable.

Through gene research, genetically modified plants have been developed to withstand harsher climates, grow quicker, and produce higher yields. It is hypothesized that they may become the primary source of food for the human population as global warming creates increasingly difficult conditions for traditional or “organic” agricultural plants. But the impact of gene research on our lives extends beyond ag-

riculture, as growing advances in bioremediation and specialized medicinal products using genetic modification have steadily become an integral part of our world and economy.

Gaining a sense of awareness and knowledge on these topics would certainly prove beneficial to even those who aren't specializing in these fields. I adopted this mindset and aimed to participate in classes related to biotechnology. However, as a high school student, the traditional courses offered lacked specificity in the utility of biology, primarily teaching the more fundamental topics rather than their applications in human history and the present. My frustration over the subject's bleak vagueness was resolved, however, when I took classes offered by Irvine Valley College for high school students.

These so-called “Dual Enrollment” classes from Irvine Valley College allowed me to select a wide variety of more specialized courses that were still fundamentally built upon the science and biology I had learned in high school. Opportunities for high schoolers to work with authentic biotechnology materials, such as genetically modified microbial life, were also provided in lab experiments, which would have been an experience previously



The IVC-provided dual enrollment classes in biotechnology allow high school students to delve deeper into the utility of life. [Source: Author, Yejoon Choi]

unavailable in traditional high school courses. I had a fantastic time thanks to the educators and professors from IVC who came to our school to teach us personally. I would recommend familiarizing oneself with biotechnology by taking these classes as a student.

As an essential component

of numerous mechanisms and innovations in our society, biotechnology continually advances and evolves to address many of the world's problems. Due to its significance, educating oneself in biotechnology is akin to preparing for a better future.

Student Reporter

San Diego Symphony’s Ambassadors Program



Kristine Park
Grade 10
Del Norte High School



San Diego Symphony’s Cohort 1 Ambassadors stand in front of the Rady Shell before their ushering duty starts. [Source: Author, Kristine Park]



Ambassadors come together during lunch in the Jacob’s Music Center building to get to know each other better, while also playing fun games like Concentration and Mafia. [Source: Author, Kristine Park]

Every summer, the San Diego Symphony offers a paid internship experience to a group of high school students through its Ambassador program, teaching art education, leadership development, and real-world skills. This program provides a very unique opportunity to step behind the scenes of one of San Diego’s most valuable institutions

As a participant in this year’s program, I was assigned to Cohort 1, comprised of 15 students from across San Diego County. Every weekday, we arrived at the Jacobs Music Center at 10 a.m., prepared to start a day full of learning and

collaboration, and wrapped up at around 4 p.m. Through our final concert project, which we worked on for a week, each team of 5 collaborated to design a full-scale concert event, challenging not only our creativity but also our teamwork and public speaking skills. The concerts we made consisted of: a multicultural concert called “Stay Cultural San Diego” (a spin-off of the San Diego Symphony’s motto), an element-based show called “Elemental,” and a concert about love titled “A Life of Love.” Throughout this program, one of the highlights was meeting representatives from

every branch of the symphony – from production and marketing to education and artistic planning – and learning how each role contributes to creating a symphony performance.

A highlight of the program was the visit to Mission Federal Credit Union’s headquarters, where we participated in a financial literacy workshop. Instead of listening to a lecture about finance, we played a real-life “Game of Life,” where we learned how to budget, invest, and keep track of our credit scores. It was extremely engaging, eye-opening, and fun, while also teaching us practical skills about saving, invest-

ing, and spending wisely.

Volunteering was also a significant component of this program. Our cohort had the opportunity to assist at three major performances at the Rady Shell, where we were assigned to different posts located in different seating areas. We were able to experience greeting guests, handing out programs, and helping guests with directions. Still, something we all collectively learned was how to deliver excellent customer service with sincerity and a smile. It was especially inspiring to meet the long-time volunteers who devote countless hours to the symphony to help create the best concert experience possible. Their enthusiasm and kindness reminded us of the importance of hospitality and goodwill in life.

The San Diego High School Ambassador Program provided me with an experience far exceeding my expectations. It taught me leadership, boosted my confidence regarding public speaking, and showed me the value of teamwork, responsibility, and service. However, it also gave me a new community— a group of peers and mentors who are just as passionate about making a difference in San Diego through the arts.

Student Reporter

The Secret to Clear Skin



Chaewon Wi
Grade 11
New Covenant Academy

A lot of people have most likely experienced breakouts. The biggest stress or fear for many people can be topical breakouts, especially considering that it’s summer. As K-beauty’s popularity grows, a lot of people have started stepping into cosmetics and skincare bandwagon; These products are used to take care of the skin. However, skincare is not everything when it comes to having a good complexion. It’s about diet, sleeping, cleansing, and more.

Eating healthy is so important. Eating fruits and vegetables will help maintain a good nutritional balance. Eating sweet desserts makes blood sugar go up, creating more sebum, which can lead to a higher risk for acne. Too much sugar and fried foods are the worst things you can consume, which will not only cause acne but also deplete your overall health. Eating nuts, seeds, avocados, and fish, which are rich in omega-3, will promote a healthy skin barrier.

Additionally, it’s really important to have a good lifestyle that promotes healthy habits.



Having a correct lineup of skincare prevents you from having breakouts, so try one that fits you. [Source A: Author, Chaewon Wi]

This includes sleeping at least 7-8 hours; your body restores energy by resting, and the epidermal layer will repair itself while the body is asleep. Also, it’s so important to keep our

hands away from our faces. We tend to pick at pimples and scratch at sebaceous filaments, but our hands carry bacteria, which can make skin way worse. Lastly, it’s important to reduce

our stress. Stress can lead to acne and inflammation. Meditating is a good habit to reflect on ourselves, and can reduce stress.

Using good and proper skincare products helps to supplement a healthy skin barrier. Having a good cleanser will keep your skin clean and fresh. After cleansing, use a toner and serum, which provides extra hydration. Lastly, put moisturizer so that you can keep your skin hydrated and protected. Also, don’t forget sunscreen if the routine happens to be in the morning.

Furthermore, changing pillowcases may reduce breakouts. Bacteria build-up in pillowcases can be transferred to the face, so it’s important to change them often. If pimples do show up, don’t pop them, although they are bothersome. Popping pimples can cause scars on the face, so it’s important to be patient. Good skin takes time, and it’s normal to have pimples or acne in the teenage years. Always love yourself, no matter what appearance you have.

Student Reporter

Hurricane Erick: A Natural Disaster While Abroad



Paisley Park
Grade 9
Los Angeles County High School for the Arts

It is often easy to ignore natural disaster alerts when not in the midst of one, but experiencing a near-hurricane in Puerto Escondido reminded me to stay aware of the nearby weather forecasts. During my trip to Southern Mexico, I stayed in Puerto Escondido, a small town off the coast in the state of Oaxaca, and enjoyed sunny weather, warm ocean waters, and laid-back beach life, while practicing my Spanish. I immersed myself in the culture: from trying traditional foods like tlayudas and mole, to walking through artisanal markets, and absorbing the beach atmosphere of surfers going about their day.

During my stay in Puerto Escondido, several alerts suddenly appeared regarding a threatening hurricane brewing in the Pacific Ocean–Hurricane Erick. Hurricanes are massive tropical cyclones, forming over warm ocean waters and gaining power with motion. These storms bring fierce winds, torrential rain, and life-threatening flooding, often devastating communities along their path. The Saffir-Simpson scale, used to categorize hurricanes, ranked Erick as a Category 3, with winds reaching near 120 miles per hour, enough to cause significant damage; storm surges and dangerous rises in sea water pushed inland could leave homes

and streets flooded for several days. The hurricane season lasts from June to November, and locals become used to warnings and the preparation required. There can be major consequences with a lack of readiness; the Mexican resort town of Acapulco suffered two years ago when Hurricane Otis, originally forecasted to stay offshore, intensified to a Category 5 before making landfall. The unpredictability of hurricanes means that communities must stay prepared at all times during hurricane season, because of storms intensifying with little warning.

Hurricane Erick formed in the eastern Pacific Ocean, near southern Mexico. It quickly gathered strength, ushering strong winds and heavy rain to Puerto Escondido on June 19th, causing major disturbances such as water and power outages in surrounding regions. In preparation for the lack of resources, many (including my family) stocked up on food and water. Locals in the neighborhood stayed inside, while store owners boarded up windows and closed up their shops for a couple of days. The air was harsh and windy, and thunder raged for hours on end. When the skies cleared the next day, the damage was visible, with trees uprooted from sidewalks, and shopkeepers reworking stores, inspiring hard work. The



An uprooted tree displays the aftermath of the narrowly missed Hurricane Erick. [Credits: Author, Paisley Park]

National Guard and police officers helped facilitate damage clean up, and businesses as well as community members helped clean up debris by the beach.

By acknowledging these storms and their effects, we can help people understand that these warnings are essential for safety, and spreading awareness

about natural disasters such as this can support better community preparedness and boost local resilience. Experiencing Hurricane Erick, though a near-miss, showed me why hurricanes must be taken seriously, and it is important to support communities that face these threats year after year, especially to neighboring Mexico.