

Editors Column



Sora Ju
Grade 11
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Scene and Be Seen: a Table at Nobu Malibu

For years, Nobu Malibu has carried the kind of reputation that makes people wonder whether it could possibly live up to the hype. Between its weekly celebrity sightings, impossible reservations, and exuberant prices, it might come across at first as more of a tourist trap rather than a quality restaurant. After finally visiting the restaurant myself, I can personally admit that Nobu might be deserving of most of the attention it gets.

The cruise up Pacific Coast Highway already feels cinematic, with the sea breeze rushing against one side of your face, lush greenery, and grand mountains on the opposite. But the seating experience at Nobu is its focal selling point, which sets it apart from the numerous other sushi restaurants in the city. The restaurant sits directly above the ocean, and almost every table, even ones not on the balcony, has some kind of view of the water. Around sunset, the entire place glows gold from the light reflecting off the Pacific Ocean. Nobu Malibu genuinely is one of those spots that reminds you why people romanticize Los Angeles so much.

During my experience, all of the seafood was fresh, well-presented, and the service was up



With its unique oceanfront proximity and stunning views, Nobu Malibu upholds its reputation as a premier celebrity hotspot, where high-end sushi meets the Malibu shoreline. [Source: Author, Sora Ju]

to top standards. Sometimes trendy restaurants rely too much on presentation alone, but Nobu's food actually delivers. The raw fish tasted incredibly clean and light, and every dish

felt carefully balanced and deliberate. Even simple items like common tuna rolls had a level of freshness that made them memorable.

The miso black cod, arguably

Nobu's most famous dish, absolutely deserves its reputation, in my opinion. It was soft, buttery, slightly sweet, and one of the best seafood dishes I have ever had. I have seen people online rave about it for years, so I expected it to be overhyped, but it somehow still exceeded my high expectations. The spicy tuna crispy rice, the favorite appetizer of those visiting the Los Angeles sushi restaurants, was another highlight because it had just enough heat without overpowering the flavor of the fish itself. If you are going to Nobu for the first time, those are the two dishes I would immediately recommend.

What also makes Nobu Malibu memorable is the atmosphere. Yes, it is upscale, but it does not feel cold or overly formal. People are dressed up, taking pictures, and clearly there to enjoy the experience, but the ocean view keeps everything relaxed.

Of course, the biggest hesitation in booking a reservation might be the price. Nobu is expensive, and there is no way around that. Reservations also have to be made far in advance unless you are lucky. Still, for a special occasion or even just a memorable night out, I can see why people keep coming back.

Student Reporter



Jordyn Bak
Grade 10
Mira Costa High School

International Day: A Culture Haven

Rarely does the opportunity arise to become acquainted with multiple cultures simultaneously. However, cultural days, like Manhattan Beach Unified School District's International Day, aim to overcome such obstacles. Through musical performances, games, and food, International Day is one of the few culturally enriching events for the Manhattan Beach Unified School District community.

During the International Day event, booths are set up, each representing a nation. In total, there were 20 nations involved. Defne Bayiz, a host for the Turkey booth, when asked about her experience hosting, said: "It's great to introduce our culture to the MBUSD community because we can answer questions many guests have about cultures they aren't familiar with." As a booth spokesperson myself, I also found great significance in educating and immersing others about my culture. I took part in hosting the South Korean booth with Korean cuisine such as kim-bap, games, and merchandise like pencils.



Benkadi teaches West African drumming to guests during the International Day. [Source: Author, Jordyn Bak]

Zen Sasaki, a consecutive guest of International Day, said his favorite drink this year was the Korean sweet rice drink Sikhye and Thailand's mango sticky rice. Jade Soriano, a first-time visitor to the International Day, said her favorite was yaki soba. I personally enjoyed tasting Palestine's falafel for the first time, a food made of chickpeas.

However, even with all of the

delicious dishes, I enjoyed listening to the musical performances the most. The Benkadi organization, representing West Africa, had a musical stage where guests could play along and learn West African percussion. This is a charitable organization that holds West African drumming, dancing, and culture classes in schools around the Los Angeles area. Darryl Franklin, a member of Benkadi, when asked how music impacts culture, explains,

"Because music has been our entertainment for thousands of years, music making is foundational in every society across the world."

In addition to Benkadi's musical performance, the Mira Costa High School Chamber Orchestra played numerous songs originating from continents such as South America and Asia. Defne Bayiz and Niamh Adamis performed a cello duet playing cultural tunes originating from their countries, Greece and Turkey. And for the final performance, the Mira Costa High School Jazz Band 1 put on a jazz performance.

International Day is not just an event to immerse in other cultures, but it's also a reminder of how significant cultural preservation and recognition are. It brings a sense of identity for each one of us while providing a sense of belonging within our diverse country. Learning about different cultures and nations is also essential for an open mindset and to broaden perspectives.

Student Reporter



Karis Kim
Grade 8
Robert Frost Middle School

For years, I counted down the days until high school. But now that middle school is coming to an end, I wish that time would slow down. It is not the last day of school yet, but time has seemed to pass within the blink of an eye. It felt like it was just yesterday that I was walking into the first day of my last year at my middle school. I realize that this will be the last time cleaning out my middle school locker or seeing the same group of small classmates every day. The feeling of leaving middle school is familiar-like leaving elementary school, but somehow it feels much more surreal. Soon, all my friends will venture off into different high schools.

There were times in middle school that were frustrating but also enjoyable-like trying to find my classes for the first time or choosing the spot where my friends and I would come to eat lunch for the next three years. The stressful science tests and the lunches I spent studying, last-minute reviewing with my friends, were the things that made 8th grade memorable. The long nights preparing for the Academic Pentathlon competitions

and the excitement of hearing my name being called during award ceremonies are memories I never expected to miss so much. Looking back at the school year, the memories worth remembering are really just the ordinary ones: the ones I spent seeing familiar faces every day, inside jokes, or that one school field trip. Even the



Standing together at the awards ceremony, none of us realized we were creating one of our last middle school memories together. [Source: Author, Karis Kim]

Thursday mile runs that everyone complained about eventually became part of the routine I grew attached to. Realizing that these will be the last days of walking through the hallways that shaped me, laughing with my friends at campfires, and staying up late at school camps, is something that heightens my fear of leaving mid-

dle school.

It is easy to be excited about high school, but difficult not to grieve a chapter of my life that is coming to a close. Middle school may have seemed small and repetitive, but that sense of routine is what brought me comfort. Thoughts of getting lost in a larger campus with thousands of people, getting used to the rigorous workload-(especially knowing that PSATs will eventually turn into SATs and that everything will begin to feel more serious), wondering if academic pentathlon will become academic decathlon, reuniting with people from elementary school, becoming more independent and trying to make friends, these are all thoughts that scare me as middle school comes to an end.

Maybe that is why it's so hard to let go. Somewhere between stressful science tests, crowded hallways, weekly mile runs, and ordinary afternoons with friends, middle school quietly became a part of me. As the last bell gets closer, I'm realizing I'm not just moving on to high school, I'm saying goodbye to a version of my life I will never fully get back...

Student Reporter

Hanbit Korean School at Children's Choir Competition



Kristine Park
Grade 11
Del Norte High School

On April 25th, the 37th Annual Children's Choir Competition was held at Grace Korean Church. Hanbit Korean School attended this year's contest alongside schools from across the country to celebrate Korean culture, music, and tradition. Hosted by the Korean School Association of America, the competition featured both returning competitors and new participants. Some of the other schools that performed included Grace Korean School, SD Calvary Korean School, and Fullerton Korean School. Korean schools located outside of California also competed by sending in videos.

This year's theme focused on Korean tradition, and Hanbit embraced it through their songs "넘어저도 괜찮아 (It's Okay if You Fall)" and "Mugunghwa," named after South Korea's national flower. Their second song featured a solo on a traditional Korean drum, buk, which added a cultural element to the performance.

Preparation for this competition began in December. Every Saturday after Korean school, students gathered for long rehearsals to refine their performances. Even



Hanbit Korean School's children's choir pose for a picture with their conductor, Kim Yun Sun (far right), with their beautiful hanboks to match the theme "Korean culture" of the 37th Annual Children's Choir contest. [Source: Hanbit Korean School]

after hours of studying Korean, they continued to show up with positive attitudes and always gave their best effort.

At the competition, Hanbit immediately captured the audience's attention with upbeat choreography and energetic singing. Between songs, the students performed a short skit before transitioning into their second piece. Hanbit showcased their strong dancing, beautifully blended harmonies, and precise formation changes. At the end, students re-

vealed flowers as a final touch that left a lasting impression. I noticed how the audience quieted down when watching because they were awestruck, myself included.

Conductor Kim Yun Sun shared that tears welled up in her eyes as soon as the performance ended, and that she "Was overwhelmed with indescribable gratitude for the children who had wholeheartedly given their all." She described the performance as one that "Left absolutely no regrets," feeling that the choir could not have done any bet-

ter. Reflecting on Hanbit's growth, she recalled how the choir first began two years ago with just 20 children who struggled to stay in harmony and melody, while this year they successfully performed a difficult piece built entirely on chords. Kim also expressed her desire to continue conducting youth choirs, explaining that children have "A pure heart that absorbs music like a sponge" and that they "Accept music exactly as the conductor teaches them," which results in a sincere and pure sound. For her, hearing the children's voices come together in harmony is "A happiness that cannot be exchanged for anything."

Support from parents also played a major role in Hanbit's success. They organized rehearsals, provided lunches, and continued cheering on the children throughout the competition. These preparations could not have gone smoothly without the help of these parents.

In the end, Hanbit tied with two other schools to secure first place. Their hard work and dedication really paid off this year, and the performance was unforgettable and truly showed their months of commitment, teamwork, and pride in Korean culture.

Student Reporter

Lexington's 8th Grade Promotion Dance



Grace Song
Grade 8
Lexington Junior High School

Lexington Junior High's 8th-grade promotion dance, held on May 7th, was a memorable night filled with music, memories, and photos taken as students came together one last time before heading to high school. Held from 5:00 to 6:30 PM, the dance gave students a chance to dress up, spend time with friends, and celebrate their middle school year.

Lexington Junior High frequently hosts dances such as the Halloween and Winter Dances, which take place right after school and are casual. However, since everyone arrived at the 8th-grade dance in formal wear, the event immediately felt more special than a regular school dance. Students wore elegant dresses, dress shirts, ties, heels, and dress shoes, making the night feel like a true celebration. "It was fun seeing everyone dressed up because you usually only see people in school clothes," Erin Park, an 8th grader at Lexington, shared. "It made the whole night feel more important."

One of the most popular attractions of the night was the



The photo strips taken by students were one of the most memorable parts of Lexington's 8th Grade dance. [Source: Author, Grace Song]

photo booth, where students could take printed photo strips with their friends. Long lines quickly formed as groups waited for their turn to pose with accessories and smile. Walking around, students were bound to see others with photo strips in their hands. The reason this was so popular was that it gave students something they could take home and remember. Many compared their photo booth pic-

tures afterwards and went back for more.

Another highlight was the dessert table, which gave students a place to enjoy good food and talk with friends. Lining the tables were cookies, cake pops, cake cups, and other sweet treats available throughout the evening. Many gathered around the tables between songs and pictures, eating their share. The

desserts added a fun part of the night, allowing the students to rest and enjoy sweet treats.

The center of the event, however, was the dance area. It was inside the multipurpose room, and it was a place where students gathered to dance with friends. As soon as popular songs began playing, people rushed to the floor and danced. Many sang along to familiar songs, formed large circles, and laughed together. Whether students were confident dancers or just there to enjoy the moment, the dance floor seemed to bring people together. "I liked how everyone was just having fun, and nobody really cared about being embarrassed," Vivienne Kim said. "Everyone was just enjoying the last big event together."

Overall, Lexington Junior High's promotion dance was a great way for students to end the year. Between the formal outfits, photo booth, desserts, and the lively dance floor, the night gave 8th-graders a chance to end their junior high experience on a high note before moving on to high school.

Student Reporter

The Curse of Being Forgotten

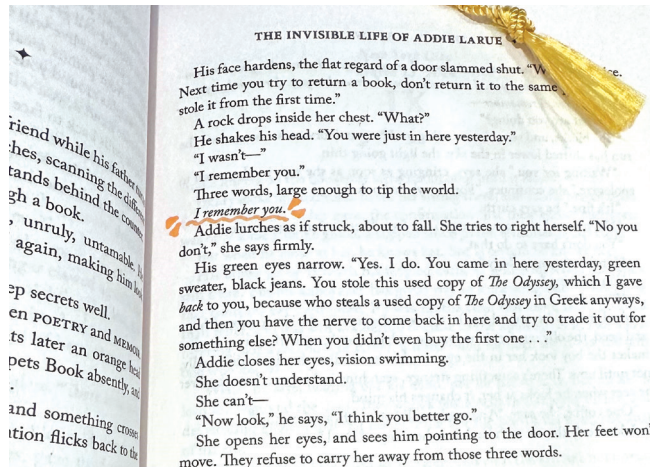


Amber Lee
Grade 10
La Mirada High School

Recently, I had the opportunity to read the novel *The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue*, by V.E. Schwab. The novel follows Adeline LaRue, a young French woman living in the 18th century, who bargains with a god of darkness to escape her societal norms. Unlike many fantasy novels that often focus on action and romance, this novel is exceptional as it explores the themes of identity, isolation, and connection, which stood out to me greatly.

In the beginning, Adeline asks the dark for unlimited time and freedom, though he twists her words and offers her immortality, cursed to be forgotten by everyone she meets. The only way for her to end her curse is to surrender her soul, which she refuses to do. Now with the name Addie, she continued to wander around the world for the next three hundred years, until 2014, when she met Henry, a man living in New York City who could somehow remember her.

Throughout the novel, Schwab uses detailed descriptions and imagery that allow the readers to feel immersed in Addie's experiences. At first, she struggles as everyone around her forgets her moments



The moment Addie's life changes in the novel *The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue* is when she meets the only person who remembers her while living for the past three hundred years. [Source: Author, Amber Lee]

after meeting her. Over time, she learns how to survive, and it was especially interesting to see her grow as an individual as she travels around the world, wishing to leave some type of mark.

The main conflict of the novel centers on Addie's internal struggles, as she is consumed by the question of her existence's purpose if she cannot be remembered. With such an unstable identity but with no one to rely

on, the question in her head only grows as time goes by.

This idea of wanting to leave a lasting impact can easily connect to one's identity, which really intrigued me because Addie's struggles relate to the problems people face in the current high school generation. Teenagers and young adults today live in a society where views, followers, and likes on social media are often tied to one's popularity, identity,

and even self-worth. The pressure to have many followers and to be well-known is very similar to Addie's ultimate fear of being forgotten, as people constantly feel that they need to be remembered.

As a teenager myself, I know social media is not always negative. It allows people to express themselves, connect with others, and build communities. However, it also pressures people to show the best versions of themselves, which can form anxiety and fear of being left out or forgotten, just like Addie.

Overall, *The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue* helped me to realize the human's deepest desire and purpose: to be remembered. Though I do not want to spoil the entire ending, Addie later is able to leave a mark of her own in a special way that readers won't expect. Through achievements, social media, relationships, and so forth, everyone naturally desires proof that their existence matters, and Schwab's novel ultimately lets the readers realize that identity is a shared reality defined by the connections, experiences, and impacts we leave behind in others.