



ECHOES BY
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DO I NEED TO BE MORE LIKE THEM?

I
 Childhood is fantasised in most cultures. In the West, Mum and Dad read *Grimm's Fairy Tales* or Hans Christian Anderson. In Bangladesh, Mum and Dad read Dakshinaranjan Mitra's *Thakurmar Jhuli*.

Fairy tales follow a common formula. Most end with the phrase, "...and they lived happily ever after." Reality is, childhood for many is anything but living happily ever after.

From the moment kids go to school, they're compared against other kids who do better. The boy in the seat to your right is wonderful at Maths. He's the teacher's pet. On the day the teacher isn't in a good mood, you're bombarded with, "Why aren't you like him?"

Pink Floyd expressed this wonderfully with "How can you have any pudding if you don't eat your meat?" I'm sure we can all recall one teacher who compared us with their pet and struck terror in our hearts. We can probably laugh it off now. When we had to go through it, though, it was tough.

II
 If you thought teachers were the only ones in school who compared you with their pet, you must have lived in Geoffrey Boycott's "cloud-cuckoo land". There was another boy who sat to your left. He was the one with the latest gadget. No, that friend didn't compare himself with you,



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but did indirectly show off his gadget.

Wait. There's another one. You went on a school trip. Unfortunately, your Mum and Dad didn't dress you up in designer clothes. Your friends never pointed a finger, but you still compared yourself with others. Comparisons can go either way. Don't

always blame it on others. The problem is, it's not simple.

Comparisons are ubiquitous. Just open Facebook or Instagram. Your friends are posting and showing off. Once again, you're comparing yourself with them. It's Hotel California. "You can check out any-

time you like, but you can never leave."

Even if it's getting on your nerves, you can't block or remove your friends due to social pressure.

III
 Comparing X with Y isn't necessarily a problem. Our parents, elders, teachers and well-wishers want our best. We would definitely love to see our loved ones be as happy as the others. We also compare ourselves with others to improve. The problem is, how many people can handle the pressure of these comparisons?

Pressure, over time, they say, makes diamonds out of coal. What they don't tell you, is that too much pressure can turn coal to powder.

Do promise yourself one thing. When you become a parent, or a teacher who handles young minds, never shatter the dreams of the young by comparing them with somebody else for no good reason. If you've experienced it yourself, then please be empathetic.

If everybody tried to be Einstein, the world would only have one colour. Even black and white has three shades; the third being grey.

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satire.

The Bangladeshi Way to Cracking High School

HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

Having been a teacher's pet and gained nothing out of it, I am probably the perfect person to advise others on how to nail high school. I could stretch this article to an entire self-help book and rip gullible teenagers off in the process, but I'm not famous on social media.

HIS MAJESTY'S WAY IS THE ONLY WAY

The golden rule of nailing your math exam is to solve problems "the right way" -- your teacher's way. Sure, you can approach the problem differently and solve it in an easier, more efficient manner but don't expect full marks once you're done.

And, by God, don't even dare approach the teacher for correction and say, "But sir, this other teacher solved it using a different and valid method." My left cheek still stings at the memory of the repercussion of the response to that.

NEVER MISS TUTORIALS

"Keep your school close and your tuitions closer" - Moon Tzu

Attending school regularly might be tough. So, take a raincheck every once in a while. However, make sure never to miss private coaching classes of the same teacher teaching you at school (or whatever it is that he does in school). The teacher takes school as seriously as you do, which basically means he doesn't care.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

If you miss tuitions though, you hurt his ego and most importantly, you jeopardise his tax-free prime source of income. If you do miss a class in case of emergencies, definitely complete your payment first thing next class to cheer him up.

OWN BLUE PENS

A blue pen is the most useful tool for a high school student, a weapon which may even help compensate for the

lack of substantiality in your answer sheet. If you don't know why the mitochondria is the powerhouse of a cell, just write the word "mitochondria" with a blue pen. Leave a few lines blank and write "reason for mitochondria being the powerhouse of the cell" in blue. Write the digits 1, 2 and 3 vertically, again, in blue pen. And then, using a black pen, fill up the blank spaces with whatever you want.

As a cherry on top, draw an aesthetic horizontal line to specify the end of your answer and hope that your teacher is delusional enough to fall for this scam.

BANGLA ESSAY

Points, pages and poems, also known as "The Three Ps", are going to help you get the highest marks in Bangla essays (12 out of 20 that is).

According to them, "Poets are born in exam halls." So, unleash your inner Tagore and forge verses. If you run out of points, just use synonyms of previous headers to create new ones and spread them out evenly so that the teacher doesn't notice by the time he flips over 27 pages.

Lastly, don't let your creativity and passion for something extra-curricular come in the way of your academics. God forbid, you might end up surviving school or worse -- wind up being happy!

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