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RISING STARS

FOR YOUNG MINDS ON THE RISE

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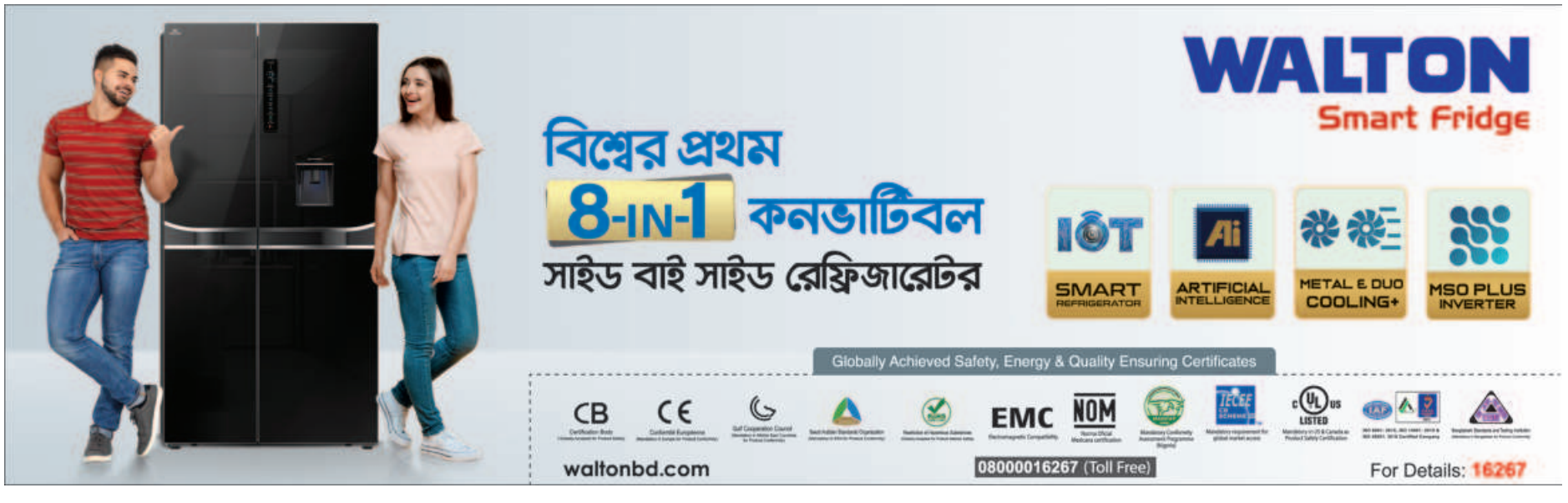
SETTLING THE DEBATE

Team Bangladesh at WSDC 2023

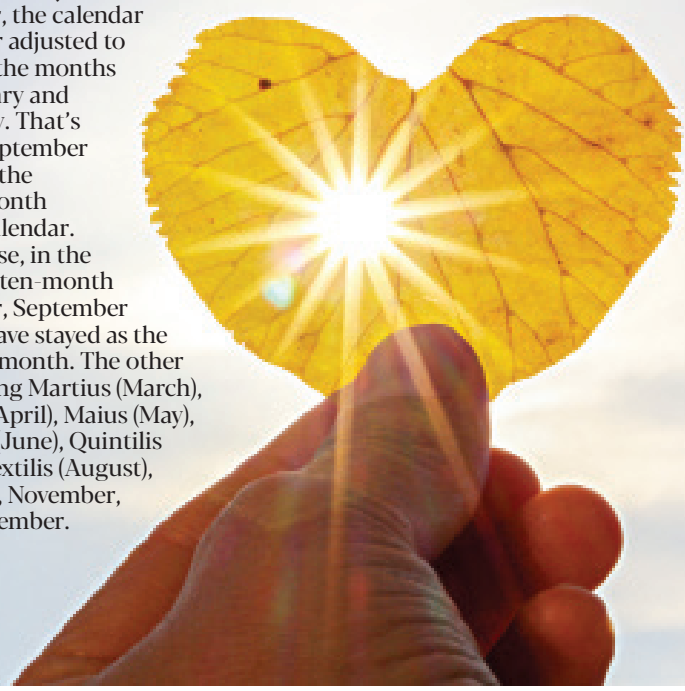
PHOTO: MOHAMMAD TASAWAR ISLAM



DID YOU KNOW?

SEPTEMBER

September was originally supposed to be the seventh month of the year. The month's name is derived from the Latin word "septem", which means "seven". In the original Roman calendar, September was the seventh month of the year. However, the calendar was later adjusted to include the months of January and February. That's when September became the ninth month of the calendar. Otherwise, in the original ten-month calendar, September would have stayed as the seventh month. The other nine being Martius (March), Aprilis (April), Maius (May), Juniius (June), Quintilis (July), Sextilis (August), October, November, and December.



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MOVIEREVIEW

Reintroducing TMNT to a new generation

SABIL SADAT ZAHIR

There has been a unique interpretation of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles for every decade since their first comic book appearance. *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Mutant Mayhem* carries that legacy and provides a heartwarming and exciting reinvention of the Turtles.

Mutant Mayhem follows the titular turtle brothers as they attempt to find ways to be accepted by the human world while encountering other mutants on their journey. The film is very much a reintroduction of the Turtles – having a fresh spin on their origin.

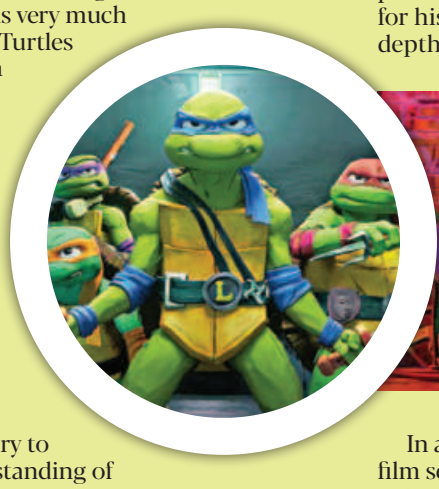
While the plot of the movie treads on a lot of superhero tropes, it manages to acknowledge and embrace those aspects in such a way that it seems more compelling than predictable. This is reflected in how the Turtles reference other superhero movies and try to implement their understanding of what it means to be heroes.

The film leans heavily on the comedy and lighthearted tones. A large amount of the dialogue comprises recent pop-culture references, which may be annoying to some but actually suits the tone and is an accurate depiction of how teenagers speak.

The "teenage" aspect of these heroes is also emphasised greatly. Despite the negative expectations that may come with teenage portrayals, the brothers are actually quite likeable, with their camaraderie and banter as well as their collective desire to be accepted and loved by people.

There are some emotional and nuanced themes in this movie, such as social acceptance and belonging. The primary villains of the movie also struggle with these conflicts, which makes them equally multi-layered in the sense that they are not just evil. They too are just trying to fit in like the Turtles.

Though the movie fails to properly balance the comedy with these dramatic themes, these aspects are exhibited best with certain characters, especially Splinter. I'd say Jackie Chan's portrayal of Splinter is the best part. This version of Splinter has a wholesome dad vibe as opposed to the sensei/teacher he is usually portrayed as. His distrust of humans and his affection for his turtle sons gives him an incredible amount of depth.



In a broad sense, the art style and animation of the film seem very much inspired by the *Spider-Verse* animated movies. However, it is distinct enough and abundant with its own personality. The art style has a sketchbook or concept art aesthetic, and the character and environmental designs make this a really colourful and pleasant movie to experience.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles has always been one of the most consistent superhero franchises, with a version of them resonating with kids from every decade. My favourite interpretation of the team has to be from the 2003 animated series, which had that early 2000s grungy vibe indicative of that time. Nonetheless, it is safe to say that overall *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Mutant Mayhem* is a fun, visually innovative and wholesome movie that people of all ages can enjoy.

The SATs: EXPLAINED

KOUSHIN UNBER

If you're somebody who has ever considered going to university in the USA, you're bound to have come across the most popular standardised tests known across the world: the SATs. By the time a student is in class 11, this test becomes a big part of life for those aspiring to study abroad. Since many high schools calculate grades and GPA differently, the SAT can provide a standardised data point for colleges to compare students.

The Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) is meant to assess basic high school level skills with 4 sections: reading, writing, and math (calculator and non-calculator). The entire test comes in the form of multiple-choice questions, and is rather abruptly timed, unlike the other exams we sit for which usually give us more than enough time to finish all questions. Therefore, test takers have to be highly skilled at time-management in order to secure a good score. Answers to the questions are also highly objective, so the possibility of answers that are grey or open to discussion are eliminated.

The SAT really is a measurement of skill more than anything else. Unlike your usual school exams, you do not need to memorise or learn difficult concepts and know how to actively recall and apply them in questions. In fact, applying or inferring any of your pre learned knowledge in the reading passages is going to cost you; a repeated piece of advice for the SAT is to only focus on what is in the passage and nothing else. You need stellar comprehension skills and a good knowledge of English grammar to score well in the Reading and Writing section, and as for the Math section, a basic knowledge of geometry, trigonometry, probability and statistics, algebra, and functions should be enough. Most of these math skills are things that are included in your school curriculum anyway, so not much extra preparation is needed to learn new math concepts.

Scores range from 400 to 1600, as a sum of the Math section and Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section. What makes a good SAT score differs across countries, schools, and cultures. For the most competitive schools such as the Ivies, MIT, and Stanford, a score that is between 1460-1560 is the average. However, the worldwide average is 1050. A score of 1350 would put you in the top 10 percent of test takers and help make your application competitive at more selective schools. There is no objective good SAT score, just one that helps you get admitted to a college that you want to go to.

From March 2023, international test centres began administering the digital SAT in order to make it easier to take, easier to give, and more relevant for students. Students will be using their own personal devices instead of paper, and the test will become shorter in terms of duration and passage length.

There is a misconception surrounding students, teachers or guardians that the SAT measures your intelligence, your earning potential, or your ability as a student. Students often doubt themselves or question their intelligence when they end up getting a low test score when in reality, it does none of those things. The Princeton Review states "- all the SAT really measures is how well you take the SAT. It does not reveal how smart - or how good - a person you are." This is an important distinction to remind others and yourself when discussing the test.

The SAT really is a measurement of skill more than anything else. Unlike your usual school exams, you do not need to memorise or learn difficult concepts and know how to actively recall and apply them in questions.

Since they are not a necessity for admission in most public/private colleges in Bangladesh and, there are not a wide variety of options available for official SAT training as opposed to the standard O/A level or HSC/SSC examinations. However, many resources are available online for you to teach yourself - such as Khan Academy, CollegeBoard, etc. It is safest to start your SAT prep around 3 months before your test day.

The SATs are going to be an important part of your US college admissions journey, especially if you're an international student. Even though high school grades and SAT scores are much more likely to increase your chances of getting into a selective college than anything else, it's important not to attach your self-worth or intelligence to your SAT scores - something a lot of people are guilty of doing. Remember that at the end of the day, the SATs really just measure how good you are at taking the SAT.

Koushin Unber is a high school student.

4 YouTube channels to help you prepare for the SAT

Star Tutors
If you've already mastered the SAT syllabus and are trying to get a better understanding of the question pattern, Star Tutors is the channel you're looking for. It has an extensive list of question paper walkthroughs where the instructor goes over an entire SAT paper and explains the thought processes behind its answers.

Hayden Rhodea
Hayden Rhodea has over 400 videos dedicated to tackling various aspects of the SAT including Math, Reading, and the optional Writing section. The channel's videos are straightforward, and Hayden presents tricky concepts in an easy-to-understand manner.

SupertutorTV
SupertutorTV addresses a variety of questions students may have and gives the viewer solid advice on a variety of concerns regarding the SAT, like preparing and managing the anxiety that comes with preparing for the exam.

Khan Academy SAT
Being the only College Board partnered organisation for SAT preparation in the world, you can count on Khan Academy SAT's videos to be reliable and accurate. The channel also covers the bulk of the topics tested on the exams, and their impeccable style of teaching, combined with the efficiently spaced learning modules, makes their videos a must-watch for exam candidates.

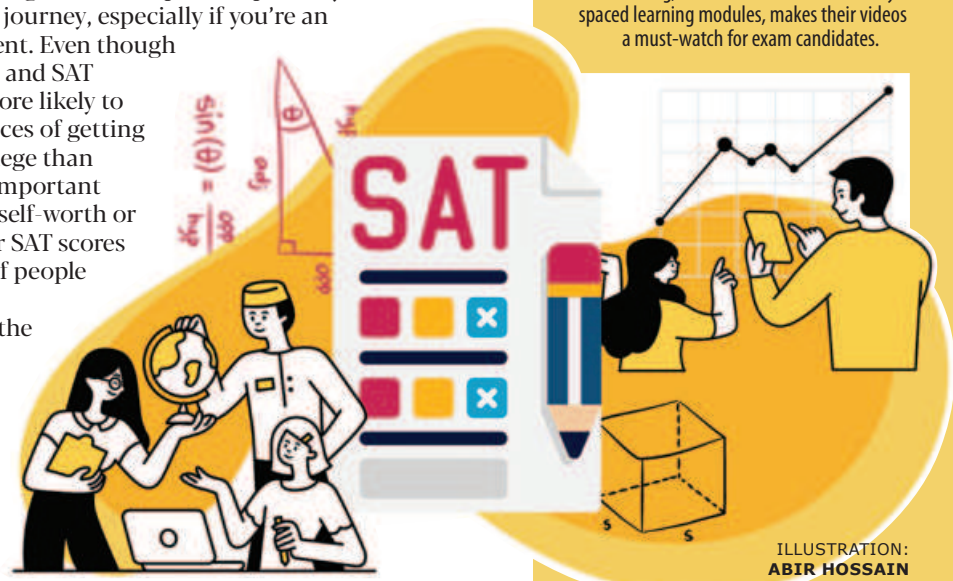


ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

PHOTOS: ORCHID CHAKMA

SETTLING THE DEBATE

Team Bangladesh at World Schools Debating Championship 2023

AMRIN TASNIM RAFA

Every year, five feverishly passionate individuals persevere through many rigorous rounds of selections conducted by the Bangladesh Debating Council (BDC) and travel to destinations around the world to wave the Bangladeshi flag at the World Schools Debating Championships (WSDC), the world cup of Debating. This summer, Zahi Wali Aadit, Nazwa Nasheeta Rahman, Robiah Arefin Ibne Mahmud, Sarah Tasnim, and Shayor Khan travelled to Bangkok, Thailand to represent Bangladesh at Asia World Schools Debating Championship (AWSDC), from where they took flight to Hanoi, Vietnam, where they made history at WSDC.

This year marks the first in-person WSDC since the pandemic. It was also the largest WSDC ever hosted with 64 competing nations. The team from Bangladesh broke third, right after India and the USA.

The team

Robiah Arefin Ibne Mahmud, from Mastermind School, has been debating since class five, having overcome the early challenges of a stutter and social anxiety. During the Covid-19 lockdowns, Robiah reached out to prominent debaters in the community, watched lectures, and participated in practice matches with other school teams, known as spars, over Discord. Outside of debate, Robiah produces music, he had 92 subscribers on Spotify at the time of our interview, plays chess, and writes.

Zahi Wali Aadit's school, Sir John Wilson School, did not initially offer debating. He gained inspiration to debate from his father, a successful TV debater in his own school days. As an extroverted and outgoing person, Aadit thought that being able to talk for a while would be nice. In 2020, he founded Wilsoners' Debating Association with two of his friends. Aadit loves football and confessed that part of his motivations to get to WSDC was to meet the teams from Spain and Argentina.

Sarah Tasnim from Scholastica Uttara, described her journey to be "long, slow, and incredibly agonising". Inspired by her older brother who had won pre-worlds, the national championship, she started debating at age fourteen. During lockdown, she met her two teammates from school online, and the three of them would go on to win the national championship two years consecutively (2021 and 2022).

Nazwa Nasheeta Rahman, also from Scholastica Uttara, won "open best speaker" in her very first tournament. Lockdown prevented her from accessing coaching from her school club, and thus, Nazwa and her friends would get together on Discord every night and teach themselves to debate by watching lectures, breaking down debate motions, or debating amongst themselves. In the years following, Nazwa, along with her national teammate Sarah and another debater from her school, Progga Parmita Rupkotha, won the national championship in both 2021 and 2022. Nazwa is proudly of the opinion that Uttara is genuinely a great place to live.

Shayor Khan is the captain of the team. He is a recent graduate of DPS STS School, currently residing in California to attend university at UC Berkeley. A third-time returning member of Team Bangladesh, Shayor performed so badly (according to him) in his first pre-worlds that he quit debating for the next four years. During lockdowns, his mom urged him to return in order to enhance his extra-curricular profile for universities. He made the team in 2021, fell in love with the sport, and met his now closest friends. Shayor was awarded 4th best open speaker, and 3rd best ESL (English as a second language) speaker overall at the WSDC.

The coaches

Shourodip Paul is a consultant at the World Bank and a board member of Bangladesh Debate Council (BDC). He is a two-time coach of Team Bangladesh, and winner of the World University Debating Championships 2022 and Australasian Intervarsity Debating Championships 2022.

Sadid Murshed is currently working at Boston Consultant Group. Sadid started debating back in school and continued doing so during university. He formerly coached Scholastica and Sir John Wilson schools.

Nayara Noor is currently working as a teaching assistant at BRAC University and equity officer at BDC. She has formerly coached BUP, Jahangirnagar University, Ideal School & College, and BAF Shaheen College, among others.

We asked the team some burning questions to allow us to experience Vietnam vicariously through accounts of their travels.

Rising Stars: How has representing the country on the global stage changed you and your perspectives?

Robiah: Coming from Bangladesh, we tend to underestimate ourselves. We interacted with a lot of people, people who are going our dream colleges, and we realised that we are not all that different from them. Perhaps they have more resources, but they are somewhat similar in terms of capability. I learned to believe in myself more, and not discount myself for being Bangladeshi.

Sarah: The most prominent thing for me was the gratitude I developed. I realised that for a lot of us, this is the only time we ever get to represent our country in any capacity. The most pivotal moment was breaking third, watching Robiah wave the flag, watching the large international audience chant Bangladesh over and over and over again, and seeing the response on Facebook from our very small niche debating community.

RS: Can you share some memorable moments from your trips to Thailand and Vietnam?

Shayor: One of the most memorable moments for me was sitting in a hotel lobby in Bangkok late at night with a lot of the other teams. We sat in a circle and chatted away. It was phenomenal, extremely smart people from different corners of the world brought together for their love of this one activity, having these incredible conversations with our diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

RS: Did you face any disparity in terms of the resources you had access to compared to other countries?

Aadit: You have a sense of disparity when you're talking to India, USA, Canada, etc. because of their abundance of resources, but at one point you realise that it's not about the sheer quantity or expense of resources, but the quality. We had a world champion directly coaching us, we had guidance from WSDC alumni, and WSDC had a lot of Bangladeshi debaters involved, who are some of the bests in the world. Armenia's three coaches were from Bangladesh, and Qatar had two Bangladeshi coaches, we were able to communicate with them and they were always giving us help and support, this made us feel supported and an integral part of the community.

RS: What do you think contributed to these kids performing the best in WSDC in Bangladesh's history?

Sadid: I think this year's performance was a result of three factors: who they are as people, mindset, and training. All five kids were very driven, open to collaboration and receptive to feedback. Shayor has been in the team for the past three years, it was his last chance to leave a legacy. It was the last chance for Aadit, Nazwa, and Robiah as well. Sarah has been working toward this for so long, the win was a long time coming for her.

RS: As one of the decision makers for team Bangladesh selection, please share insider insight on what qualities you look for and what aspirants should know.

Shourodip: Whenever someone works hard, it shows. We can see the effort you put into your speeches, and what topics you have researched. We value this. To prepare yourself, all necessary resources are available online. You can watch WSDC and WUDC matches and choose to model your speeches after successful debaters.

RS: Please share any initiatives that you or Bangladesh Debate Council took to increase access, diversity and inclusivity in the debating circuit for minority students such as girls and students from outside Dhaka and/or Chittagong.

Nayara: To boost participation by female debaters, we annually host a tournament by girls for girls called Fempowerment, previously known as Shevolution. The top ten speakers get access to a national camp and a special training programme. We regularly collaborate with circuits outside of Dhaka to host BDC-partnered tournaments, take sessions, conduct outreach, etc.

To finish off this engaging conversation, we asked the debaters to leave some sage words for aspiring debaters.

RS: What would you want all the kids who are currently working toward their dream of representing Bangladesh at the WSDC to know?

Sarah: It's hard, there is no trick to doing this. Most people have to persevere through losing over and over again, as I did, which is possible if you really love and enjoy the activity.

Sadid: If you get as far as camp, differences in debating ability between you and your competitors are marginal. At that stage, being collaborative and willing to learn by being malleable and receptive to feedback will be much more in your favour.

Nazwa: For a lot of people, the dream is to get into team Bangladesh, there is nothing beyond that. The dream shouldn't be that, it should be to win WSDC, and I'm counting on whoever is reading this interview to do that. Aim high, you have nothing to be afraid of.

HOWYOUCAN MAKE IT TO THENATIONAL DEBATETEAM

- Participate in Pre-worlds or Fempowerment, which are national tournaments by Bangladesh Debate Council, with your school/college team
- Top 24-30 debaters from these tournaments selected for national camp
- Pass through 2-3 phases of national camp. Each phase eliminates debaters
- From the final phase 5 people make team Bangladesh. Sometimes a development team is also selected

How to avoid getting DISTRACTED WHILESTUDYING

AZNEEF CHOWDHURY

Let's face it, studying feels like a chore for most of us, and we'd all like to avoid it if there weren't any consequences. Yet, when exam season rolls around, we students must find a way to keep ourselves focused and attentive at the study table.

Here are a few things you can do to avoid getting distracted while studying.

Using a Pomodoro Timer
The Pomodoro Technique breaks up your study time into 25-minute segments, with five-minute intervals in between. It creates a psychological barrier to prevent you from getting distracted. Every time you turn on the timer, you essentially promise yourself to not do anything to break your flow for 25 minutes. After you're done, you reap the rewards of staying diligent by utilising that five-minute break for whatever you want. There are plenty of different versions of this simple yet effective technique, and apps are available to keep track of your time.

Disabling your social media
Taking a break from your socials is one of the most effective ways to keep yourself on track. When your social media is disabled, it keeps your brain from constantly craving that dopamine hit derived from social media and allows you to think about things other than what your friends are doing. I usually recommend you do this for a few weeks before your big exams and then re-enable your social media once they're over.

Listening to music
For some people, music can drown out distracting elements in your study environment and allow you to focus on the task at hand. It can also help boost your working memory and enhance your brain's cognitive tasks. Lo-fi music is a genre specifically made for this purpose.

Getting adequate rest
It might seem tempting to forgo some rest time and get some work in, but working when you're tired makes it harder for you to hold your focus and hampers your concentration and ability to reason logically. Ultimately, you end up failing to pay attention to your study for an extended period and get distracted, and your productivity plummets. Thus, you must be well-rested before starting a study session. A short 10-minute power nap usually does the trick for most people.

Meditation
Sometimes, the elements distracting our study sessions aren't around us, but rather inside. A scurry of thoughts raging inside the depths of our minds can interrupt our flow of study and ultimately keep us distracted. Regular meditation can keep your mind calm and reduce your stress levels, allowing you to give your best whilst studying.

References:
1. The Daily Star (March 1, 2023) *Can lo-fi music actually help you study?*
2. Columbia School of Professional Studies (May 10, 2021) *How Meditation Can Help You Focus*

ILLUSTRATION: **FAISAL BIN IQBAL**

ILLUSTRATION: **ABIR HOSSAIN**

THE BENEFITS OF POSITIVE SELF-TALK

RUBAMA AMREEN

Self-talk is the inner dialogue which constantly makes subconscious observations about our surroundings. It often reflects the recurring ideas, beliefs and biases of the subconscious mind. A lot of the time, these thoughts can be quite negative and destructive, which can result in one undermining their confidence and leaving themselves demotivated.

Therefore, it is important to consciously practise positive self-talk throughout the day. This does not necessarily mean to maintain an optimistic demeanour all the time. Occasionally changing one's perspective of things can also do the trick.

Breaking out of the cycle of constantly berating oneself for one's faults can be difficult. Identifying the negative thoughts and either replacing them or challenging them can be effective, or one could simply stop thinking for a while, and divert one's train of thought to another topic to distract themselves. Cynical comments about oneself are mostly just the exaggerated truth.

Speaking to oneself out loud can also be beneficial. After a tiring, cumbersome day, muttering a few words of encouragement to oneself in the mirror can provide us with a boost of self-esteem.

Instead of telling oneself "This is too difficult", they could instead opt for "I'll try my best". Small changes can cause a significant shift in one's mindset. The process could take some time as breaking out of an old habit is difficult.

Speaking to oneself out loud can also be beneficial. After a tiring, cumbersome day, muttering a few words of encouragement to oneself in the mirror can provide us with a boost of self-esteem. It should be noted that how one addresses oneself also affects their emotions – using second-person pronouns such as "you" or one's own name can ultimately yield better results.

Positive self-talk has many benefits to physical, mental, and emotional health. It helps regulate one's feelings and behaviour and can be used as a stress-management tool. It can also help an individual develop healthier coping mechanisms for tense or traumatic situations and enhance social skills.

References:
Positive Self-Talk: How Talking To Yourself Is A Good Thing (June 27, 2020). Healthline.
What is positive self-talk? (March 18, 2022) Medical News Today.

Rubama Amreen is a student of Maple Leaf International School.

PARTING

SHAIKH SABIK KAMAL

Let's be honest.
Our memories are burning in a forest.
Our hurt deepens in this restless tempest.
Love, this is a resolution, it's not a protest.
I won't protest.

Clearly,
These tides aren't temporary, they come yearly.
You're looking for a confirmation to finally fear me,
While I fear whom you'll become once you hear me,
once you leave me.

Forsaken Anemones,
Our wounds dig graveyards into our flesh and bones,
These words seem to live their lies through telephones,
Notwithstanding the love-starved hearts; they're on their own.
We're on our own.

Night turns to day,
The holographic seasons will soon fade away,
This melancholia has far too long extended its stay
But the wailing flowers await a breeze, so they may sway.
I'll tell them, it's okay.
It's okay.
It's not your fault, nor mine, that –
Saying goodbye is always the hardest part.

The writer is a student at St. Joseph Higher Secondary School

ILLUSTRATION: **ABIR HOSSAIN**

MY HOME

AMAYA RAHMAN

Safe with my inner circle,
Confident around the vehicle,
Judgments over,
With the kind people over.

I don't need your powder or power.
I smell the soft flowers.
Hanging out with kindness,
Feeling the happiness,

The trust you gain takes time.
Remembering your lines,
Home is pure gold,
It is hard to let it fold.

The hangouts make me feel pretty.
Home, the bed you sleep in makes it prettier.
Home, walking like no one cares.
Feeling fair, with a smile on your face.

The writer is a student at Grace International School.

ILLUSTRATION: **ABIR HOSSAIN**

Fathers and Daughters andUnmailed Letters

WAZIHA AZIZ

Father's a ghost. In the shadows, he'd drift.
His scowl through our windows, a draught, haunting.
Eyes never mirrored the flames that burnt his
Home, a place he'd fled, he'd lost, he's lost in.
Hidden away were old uncle's letters,
Sheets furrowed, folded, in father's drawers.
Told tales of harsh summers and shrewd winters.
Those rose-lipped words, "*bhai jaan*" like signed waivers.

Was that where dad kept his fondness, folded?
Refuge in solitude, his brother's words?
Perhaps father was never taught to love.
Perhaps the only love he knew, he stole.
Perhaps alive, I would not feel that love,
Only once I too, became letters, worn.

The writer is a high school graduate.

ILLUSTRATION: **FAISAL BIN IQBAL**

FIVE AMAZING BOARDANDCARDGAMES worth checking out

RAIAN ABEDIN

While many are quick to dismiss board and card games as boring or complex, the reality is that they offer a variety of styles of play, many of which are bound to keep you hooked, especially with the right crowd. All it requires is patience until you get started because once you do, you're in another world.

Here are five amazing board and card games that are worth checking out.

Catan

The premise of the game places you on the island of Catan, where all the players act as settlers in a race against time to build their colony. The rules are simple, and yet they leave plenty of room for players to engage in the game tactically as the need to prioritise specific resources over others leads to strategic plays. The result here is an experience that is easy to get the hang of and deadly addictive.

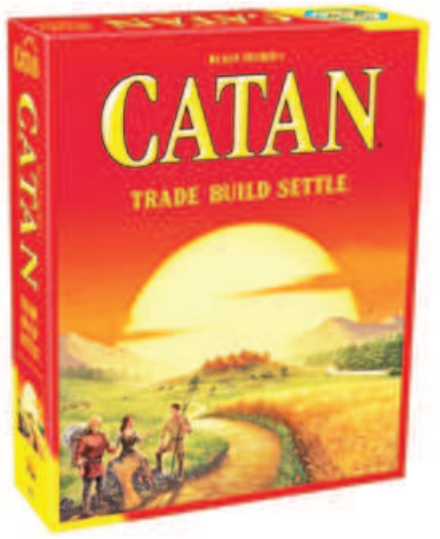
Mafia

Another phenomenal game that may be more familiar to people, Mafia combines strategy and guesswork in one package that may be enjoyed by a crowd of varying sizes. The setup is a whodunit-style civilians vs mafia scenario reminiscent of something like Among Us. The goal is simple – either the mafia kills the civilians or the civilians deduce which players are mafia. It's simplicity like this, combined with the randomised distribution of roles and the variety they have, that creates an endlessly replayable game.

Coup

Coup is best described as a quick and refreshing game that can be enjoyed by groups of four to six people. Make no mistake, though, this card game relies on nuanced actions by the player and is not easy-going at all. The game also requires a healthy amount of bluffing, especially since much of the game focuses on bluffing to your opponents about what role cards you have and calling other people's bluffs. The rules are set up in a way for each round to be short-lasting, yet with every round I find myself wanting to play more. In fact, the first time I played Coup, we kept playing for four whole hours without even realising it.

For wordsmiths and those with a penchant for puzzles, Scrabble is the go-to. The design is so iconic it doesn't even require an introduction.



Codenames

When it comes to games that rely on focused thinking and deductive reasoning, Codenames is your go-to. The design is brilliant, there's a spymaster for both competing teams who eke out clues in the form of single words, players are then made to find their agents before their opponents do, securing victory.

While that serves to be a brief breakdown of the gameplay, the game is certainly more complex than that. There are also many ways to win, and no proper 'strategy' to follow, only an intuitive understanding of clues and how they relate to your goal.

Scrabble

For wordsmiths and those with a penchant for puzzles, Scrabble is the go-to. The design is so iconic it doesn't even require an introduction. Simply put, you make words with the alphabet tiles you are given. And this leads to plays that are tactical and stupendously fun. Only if word games are up your alley, though, for those who may not enjoy the idea of creating words as a recreational activity, this game might not be for you.