

sensation of lemonade going down my throat in a fountain of flavor, its zest striking me to my core, my hands keening to the chill of my blood as I cradle a glass of that ambrosia.

Tastes and smells reverberate from the sky toward my senses; colors turn into pineapple, mango, watermelon, bursts of delectable imagination blurring with what's real. I can feel it all even closer, clearer, as I thin my eyes and let dreaming take over. Afternoons always seem to spill over the brim of my chalice of imagination, what with their clouds and colors and easy processes. An aureole of golden repetition collects at the center of every day. Simple waves of dizziness come in as I watch the water ebb and flow a few yards away from my feet—the scent of salt is carried by the wind to circle round my ears and catch up my face in its hands, its thumbs on my cheeks, its index fingers pressed to my scalp.

Even in a fountain of feeling, soaking in the heat with my eyes drying, everything splitting and duplicating until there's an overwhelm of memory,

the ocean makes the air impossibly thi-ck, crowding my thoughts. My mind grows dampened through a maze of recollection and desperation. There's a softness in everything when the world is ending and the world has ended, when all you can think is how nice it'd be to have a tall glass of something shimmering resting in the searing cup of your palm.

With it glaring right back at me, the curling wrinkles of its smile hidden by its radiance, I bravely think that I could drink the Sun. Valiantly, I could swallow it up. I'd lie in the sand while it rode down my neck, spreading out over my hands, dribbling down my knuckles where it'd escape my thirst, and I'd know for certain that things were going to be over. Past the mirror of my sunglasses and the tan blooming across my skin, I could be assured that the world really was ending. Not this feeling of calm that warns of the end, this seasonal wanting, wishing, and winning, but a final notice upon my door. An eviction. The same boldness of a pre-picket sign, the same excitement in

that life of real estate. It's as tranquil as it will ever get, I sweetly suppose, this waiting for the reckoning under the endless glare of the Sun. I brew in my mist-blown imagination. I lean back into the royal cradle of the sand.

Summer comes, and summer goes, and the worst part of it all is that you walk on its heels. You wait on it hand and foot. The world's painted in every color, and you only get to glimpse the final product; so drink from it while you can, the glass that keeps on serving, the chalice that will forever be full of some wholly-beloved zest. Let it glide down your throat, and feel its colors—the aquamarine, the peach, the lemon-yellow. Don't settle for the glare of the picket fence. Serve the Sun its own delicious reflection.

I'm comfortable, here and now, being blinded by the Sun.

We're all sat still, here and now, while it observes and shifts around us.

The world is ending, here and now, and it's happening as calmly as it ever has.

Artificial Sweeteners What Really Are They?

As we know, regular sweeteners such as sugar increase weight and risk of serious health problems. For this reason, many choose sugar substitutes – artificial sweeteners. They don't really add any calories compared to real sugar, but what are they exactly?

Artificial sweeteners, as the name suggests, are man-made. They are not natural and are chemically made in a lab. Many of these sweeteners are sweeter than regular sugar – but some are less or the same as well. Research found in PubMed Central reveals that daily use of artificial sweeteners can give one a higher chance of a stroke, heart disease and death overall. But this is also affected by one's daily habits.

If consumed in moderation, artificial sweeteners are considered safe. Some can cause diarrhea if taken in large quantities. Extensive research highlights that diet drinks disrupt with how your body handles blood sugar and pose a higher risk of diabetes than regular sugary drinks. ■



By Akkshath Chawla

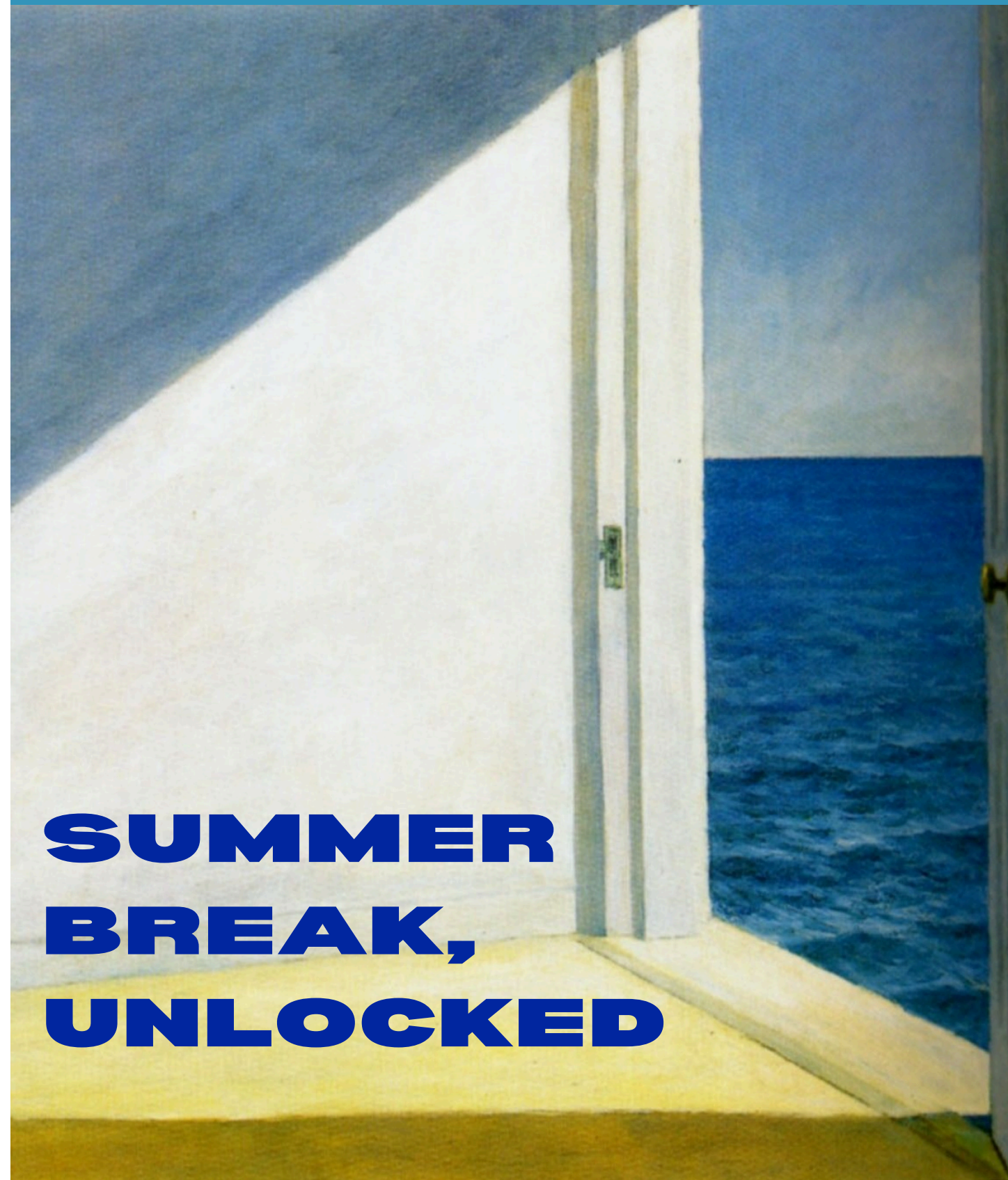
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SUMMER BREAK, UNLOCKED

WHAT MAKES AN OPEN CLASSROOM?

By Luise Lichtenstein

The demolition of the old Room 407 began a series of construction projects at our school that I am sure you are all very familiar with. The most obvious one: the two open classrooms on the fourth floor; “open” in the sense that they do not have doors – but also open in the sense that they are meant to encourage new ways of learning?

What makes a classroom an open classroom? First, let’s start by tearing down the walls. Secondly, we need to remove the doors. Throw in honeycombs, a small nook, and a long wooden table, and what do we get? Small islands of “modern education” scattered around in the part of the fourth floor that is neither classroom nor hallway. And that only concerns one side of the fourth floor, the other side is even less of a classroom and more of an intersection between hallway, staircase, and grey linoleum that reflects your motivational state after finding out you’re having class in the open classroom. Furniture is only one side of the coin though, and even that only showed up a few years after the open classrooms were introduced despite earlier promises from school management. We’ve been told “oh, don’t worry, there’ll be furniture for the open

classrooms soon” so often that I started to develop careful optimism that led to me repeatedly putting off writing this article. The other side of the coin is classroom availability. Some subjects lend themselves to open classrooms better than others – yet I have had English, biology or maths lessons there regardless of whether they actually fit the pedagogical room concept. Because let’s be honest: classes don’t take place in the open classrooms because certain subjects are better taught in different, more flexible settings, but simply because there are no other rooms available.

This begs the question of what role open classrooms should play at our school. The two most important aspects of open classrooms are physical flexibility and student-driven learning. I think you all agree with the first point being a positive development: no one likes being stuck to a chair in thirty-degree weather for seven hours a day. But a couch, a beanbag, a standing desk? Would they increase your motivation to learn?

Perhaps the issue isn’t the furniture, but a lack of shared purpose. An open classroom only works if it is actively integrated into the curriculum, rather

than just serving as an emergency overflow room. Additionally, beyond figuring out what students would want for the open classrooms, we also need teachers who are supported in adapting their lessons to the environment.

But that integration can’t just come from the top down. If school management wants the open classrooms to succeed, they need to involve us through genuine student participation, and not just put us off with grand words about future participation and involvement, simply so the school maintains a good reputation from the outside, “Look at this school, they even have open classrooms!...” The school has spent too long framing the open classrooms as a pedagogical breakthrough and revolutionary innovation while at the same time it cannot justify its failure to properly integrate these two classrooms into our learning. The open classrooms would probably be the most unpopular rooms in the building if it weren’t for the chess room, an embarrassing track record for a school that otherwise boasts of its high educational standards in every single speech at every single school event. It’s time to stop treating these spaces like a PR stunt or framing them as more than they actually are, and start building the classrooms we were promised.



A new adventure around every Berlin corner

By Sanvi Parkar If you’re ever in Berlin during the summer, I would recommend going outside for a simple walk, or run, to explore the city. It has much to offer, and such walks can be done through all weathers, with friends, family, or even solo. You could stride through the expanses of Tiergarten, Tempelhofer Feld, or even relax at Treptower Park. Discover concerts and exhibitions, and attend Museum workshops, or any event that piques your interest and you might learn something new. Visit cafes in the vicinity to elevate your tastes. Explore various flea markets like the Flohmarkt at Mauerpark, or go to an open air cinema, like the popular Freiluftkino in Friedrichs-

hain on a warm summer evening to create a tangible memory. If you seek other means of transportation, you can buy a BVG ticket and take the BVG ferry to cruise along the greater Wannsee lake. Whatever you do, the rare simplicity of these walks can lead to discovering hidden gems and creating long-lasting memories that could let you try something new. You never know what you might discover, so I urge you to take that first step.

Building Memories in Photographs

By Robin Aviña Poliseno We all take photos on vacation, making snapshots when we spot something precious. Yet I’d encourage you

not just to raise your phone’s camera and click the button as soon as you get your muse in frame, but to frame the subject! Start making your pictures beautiful by paying attention to the composition, the colors, take a few hundred shots of the same thing if you need to; but make sure that it’s a picture worth keeping once you’re done. Try centering your subject or dividing the frame into thirds based on the camera grid! Find a spot where light filters through leaves or where certain colors are especially vibrant. Keep your memory-making authentic and visually interesting to enrich the experience, so that every striking moment is worth keeping.

BEACH READS



Recommendations From The Cosmopolitan Team

FRANZ KAFKA, METAMORPHOSIS (1915), RECOMMENDED BY LUISE LICHTENSTEIN

The original German version of Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* begins with, “Als Gregor Samsa eines Morgens aus unruhigen Träumen erwachte, fand er sich in seinem Bett zu einem ungeheuren Ungeziefer verwandelt.”, a sentence that has been deemed “untranslatable” since the novella was first published in 1915. But whether Gregor Samsa now turns into a “gigantic insect”, a “monstrous vermin”, or a “giant bug” (yes, that was actually a translation attempt in the 1980s), it’s definitely a book worth reading.

The story itself is just as strange as its opening line. Gregor Samsa, a traveling salesman and the sole breadwinner of his family, wakes up one morning transformed into a [insert your preferred translation of “ungeheueres

Ungeziefer” here]. Rather than dwelling on the impossibility of his situation, Kafka focuses on its consequences. Gregor worries about missing work, his family worries about money, and before long, his transformation begins to change their relationships with one another.

What makes *The Metamorphosis* so compelling is that Kafka never attempts to explain why Gregor has turned into an insect. There is no scientific experiment gone wrong, no curse, and no miracle. The transformation simply happens, and everyone, including the reader, is forced to deal with it. This unsettling quality will stay with you throughout the novella, so don’t start reading expecting any clarification or resolution.

More than a century after its publication, Kafka’s novella remains relevant and endlessly discussable. *The Metamorphosis*, despite being barely 70 pages long (depending on the edition), is one of the most popular works of German-language literature and Kafka’s most famous work. Its enduring appeal lies not only in its bizarre premise, but also in the questions it raises about identity, family, and human worth. Kafka offers no easy answers, leaving readers to draw their own conclusions. So if you’re looking for a book to keep you busy over the summer, *The Metamorphosis* may be the perfect choice: you can probably finish it in an afternoon and spend the rest of the holidays trying to figure out what Kafka was actually trying to tell you.



AGATHA CHRISTIE, AND THEN THERE WERE NONE (1939),

RECOMMENDED BY AKKSHATH CHAWLA

Written by the queen of mystery, Agatha Christie, the book, “And Then There Were None” is easily one of the best mystery books of all time. Even though this book was published way back, almost a 100 years ago (1939), it still keeps readers on their edge of seats.

It is about a group of people who have been accused of murder and did not serve any jail time. A person lures them to a mansion on an island and as they sit down for dinner, a voice accuses them of hiding a guilty secret. By the end of one night, one person

will die. They cannot escape as there is a bad storm outside and are forced to stay inside. The main question being—who is the killer?

I found this book amazing and would easily consider it one of the best books I’ve ever read. The mystery was a real page turner and it was so interesting that I finished it in one day! I will suggest this book for anyone who can handle some heavy emotional themes and murder.



Teacher Spotlight
FORRET HOLMES

“DRINK LOTS OF WATER”

What inspired you to become a teacher? I was lucky enough to have some great teachers growing up. I adored my second grade and fifth grade teachers, and I remember thinking already at that age how I would explain the things I was learning to an imaginary classroom of ignorant peers. I had an outstanding 10th grade AP Biology teacher, who was just so effective and motivating. And my 10th grade US History teacher was a legend. He threw out the standard textbook and used instead A People's History of the United States, written by the great Howard Zinn, with whom he happened to share a name (no relation). Mr. Zinn was brilliant. When being emphatic he would bark and gesticulate like an agitated Al Pacino, and when he would scratch his head, he would reach around his head and up the back like a complete weirdo. We all competed with each other to deliver the most convincing impression of him. The thing that I admired about these teachers even then was their dedication to what is, in New Mexico, still a tragically underpaid and under-appreciated calling.

What profession would you choose if you weren't a teacher? I would have been an archaeologist, which was a job I actually had for a couple years. Or a chef, with the caveat that, while I am fascinated by cooking, I would never actually be a chef because it is maddening.

What do you think makes a great teacher? Passionate interest in a subject that you can make infectious. A compassionate heart and a sense of dedication and service.

What was your least favourite subject in school? I spent a few years at a Catholic middle school, and we devoted lesson time to prayer and Bible study and a sexual education curriculum that was leftover from the 1950s. Miserable all of it. I respect that

many people cherish their Catholic faith and traditions, but trusting the Catholic Church as an institution to enlighten people about human sexuality, or indeed to model ethical and enlightened behavior in this realm, is like going on a vegan yoga retreat with Hannibal Lector and listening to his keynote address on "Why eating people is never OK". Sadly, I can't imagine sexual education has progressed much in the US in the many years I have been abroad. In fact, in many states, it simply isn't taught, and teachers face criminal penalties for mentioning the fact that there are people in the world who have non-binary gender identities. Republican Party USA: a writhing Orwellian cesspool of hypocrisy and deceit!

What's the most rewarding part of being a teacher? All those concrete moments that make you realize you've made a positive impact in someone's life.

What advice would you give to students struggling in school? Focus on and cultivate your interests and your strengths. Is there something that you're obsessed with? There was a time when students were forced to conform to a narrow definition of educational attainment. But what if you are a visual learner who can design whole cities in your head but simply cannot reliably extract information from the written word? There is a lot more room in today's educational paradigms for you to grow and thrive. That is progress.

Do you have any pets, family, or siblings? I have two brothers, and two lovely children: a 12-year-old daughter and a one-year-old son.

What are your middle names? Fennimore

Which languages do you speak? English, German and a little Italian. Ger-

man is a wonderful language by the way. I get rubbed the wrong way by cheap remarks about how "harsh" and "ugly" German is, all of it just a vestige of anti-German wartime propaganda that could only be believed by someone with no real grasp of the language. It's actually a gentle, poetic, beautifully precise language that has been a home, also in darkest moments of exile, to countless great thinkers. It's not fun to learn though. Mark Twain wrote a great essay called The Awful German Language in which he describes the horror of learning German, something that he reckons requires about 30 years. I'm almost 20 years into it.

What are your hobbies? Cooking, collecting and listening to records, and fair-weather cycling.

What's your favorite movie or series? I love the Kurosawa classic Seven Samurai. (below)



If you could teach any other subject, what would it be and why? Biology because I loved it in high school but was too lazy to pursue it at university. Or Anthropology, which should be a required subject.

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be and why? There's nowhere quite like my hometown of Santa Fe, New Mexico, but it is unfortunately located within the USA, which is currently suffering a calamitous descent into a pitiful era of malignant and corrupt right-wing Christian-Nationalist authoritarianism and anti-democratic oligarchy. Barf!

If you could have dinner with any historical figure, who would it be? Richard Olney. He was an American painter who settled in France in the 1950s and mastered its cuisine. He would host legendary dinner parties in his provençal farmhouse and James Baldwin was a frequent guest. So I would come for the food and wine but spend the whole time talking to James

Baldwin, who would no doubt find me incredibly dull.

What's your favorite song or artist? I love Tangled up in Blue by Bob Dylan.

Do you have a favorite holiday or festival? Summer break duh

What's the best advice you've received? Drink lots of water.

Who are your favorite teacher friends? Hard to say because I get along so well with everyone and everyone likes me and finds me so approachable and fun and humble and down to earth.

What would your autobiography be titled? Yadda Yadda Yadda

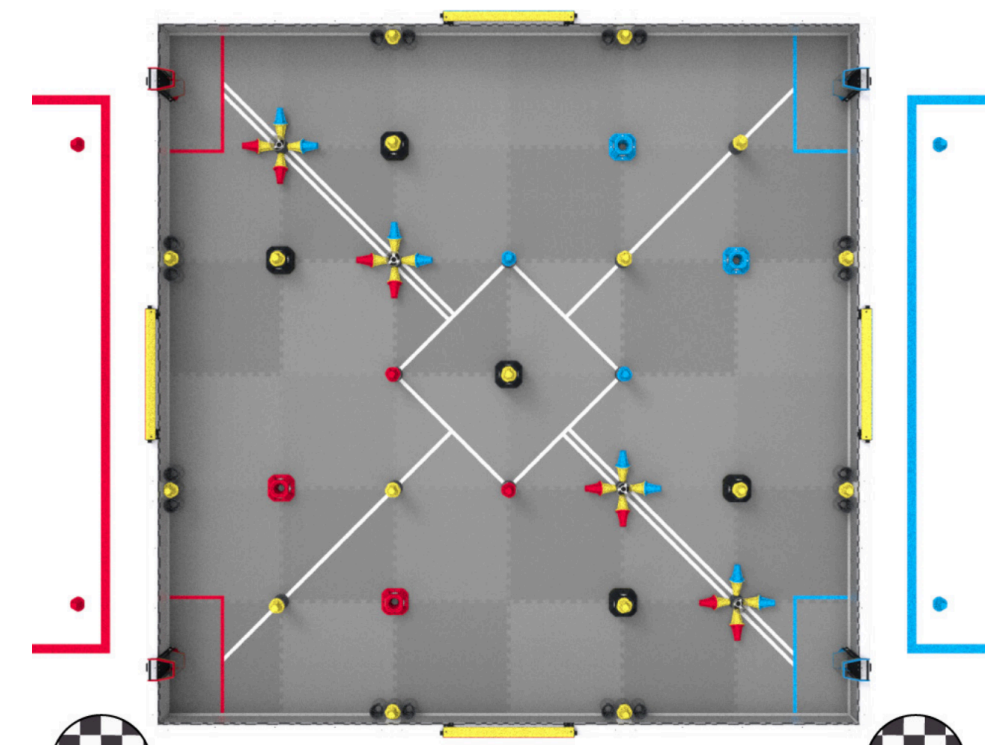
Override und Level Up

Die neuen Herausforderungen bei VEX Robotics

Von Leo Freier

Auch dieses Jahr gibt es ein neues Spiel bei VEX Robotics. Für V5, in dem man einen Roboter aus Metall baut, heißt der neue Wettbewerb „Override“. Bei IQ, in dem man einen Roboter aus Plastik baut, heißt der Wettbewerb „Level Up“. Dieses Jahr ist der Mechanismus zwischen den beiden Wettbewerben gleich, aber er wird anders benutzt.

Beim Wort „Override“ dachte ich daran, dass man eine Rampe bauen und dann darüberfahren muss. Als am 27. April der Wettbewerb veröffentlicht wurde, war es etwas ganz anderes. Override wird auf einem 4 × 4 m großen Spielfeld gespielt. Dort müssen zwei Roboter (rote Allianz) und zwei weitere Roboter (blaue Allianz), die gegeneinander antreten, Stapel bilden, die bis zu 1,27 m hoch werden können. Man muss die Stapel schlaue bauen, weil man immer nur ein Spielobjekt hin- und herbewegen kann. Pins kommen in unterschiedlichen Formationen vor und Cups sind auf einer Seite grau und auf der anderen durchsichtig. Jede rote Fläche auf einem Pin zählt 5 Punkte und jede blaue Fläche auf einem Pin zählt auch 5 Punkte. Wenn der Toggler auf Gelb gedreht ist, zählt er 0 Punkte, aber wenn er auf Rot oder Blau gedreht ist, zählt er 10 Punkte für die jeweilige Allianz. Genau das macht dieses Spiel so interessant. Es gibt neun Goals, die auf dem Feld verteilt sind. Es gibt zwei rote Allianz-Goals und zwei blaue Allianz-Goals, auf denen nur rote bzw. blaue Objekte aufgestapelt werden dürfen. Dann gibt es noch vier neutrale Goals. Zum Schluss gibt es noch ein hohes Goal in der Mitte. Die Roboter haben zwei Minuten Zeit, um möglichst viele Punkte zu machen: die ersten 15 Seku-

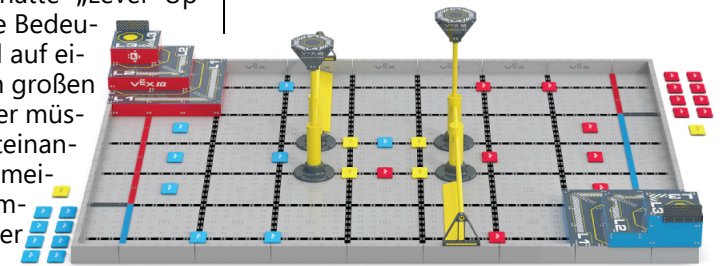


nden autonom und anschließend 1:45 Minuten ferngesteuert.

Das Spiel von IQ hat mich erstmal komplett überfordert. Ich konnte mir unter dem Namen „Level Up“ nichts vorstellen. Nach ein paar Überlegungen hatte ich die Idee, dass man etwas freischalten muss, so dass man dann mehr Punkte bekommt.

Als es herauskam, hatte „Level Up“ eine komplett andere Bedeutung. „Level Up“ wird auf einem 15,24 × 20,32 m großen Spielfeld gespielt. Hier müssen zwei Roboter miteinander arbeiten, um die meisten Punkte zu bekommen, und zwar in einer Minute.

Bei „Level Up“ müssen die Roboter Beanbags auf unterschiedliche Höhen bringen. An den Ecken gibt es Stufenpyramiden mit den Levels 1 bis 3, die drei, sechs und 12 Punkte wert sind. Zwei Ablagemöglichkeiten gibt es noch: Das „Floor Goal“ für einen Punkt und das Level 4, das 16 Punkte wert ist. Jeder Roboter darf immer nur einen einzigen Beanbag auf einmal halten und ablegen.



RUINING LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

By Aeneas
Toschek

A Warning To
Future English
Leistungskurs
Students

In the Article "Ruining Language and Literature", written by Aeneas Toschek and published in The Cosmopolitan on the 8th of July 2026, the author conveys his criticism of the current English Leistungskurs curriculum and offers solutions for a better way forward.

Firstly, ... – It's not that simple.

Nevertheless, English LK likes to pretend it's all very simple. Prepare to enter a world in which even the most complex ideas become introducible in a matter of a few sentences, reducible to themes, thematic topics, to clear points that are explainable using straightforward evidence – all neatly wrapped up in a tidy conclusion. In this world, nothing truly dares to resist structure. Nothing remains ambiguous, unclear, mysterious. English LK vows that everything can be explained – if you just follow the format. Point-evidence-explanation – also called PEE, you may have heard of it.

Follow the format, it whispers, smiling, at first almost benevolently – a smile that promises to solve all problems –

that subsequently contorts violently, twists into a malicious predatory grin, snarling, fangs dripping, preparing to lunge. Follow the format, it orders. Or else.

I suppose I should have known. Perhaps I was simply naïve when, in 9th grade, we were effectively told to prepare, write and memorise our entire class test on Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* in advance. Determined, we entered the classroom and simply reproduced it from memory – blindly, mechanically, as if without thinking –, writing until our wrists ached. I remember a classmate who didn't just prepare the essay, but rehearsed writing it three times in advance, timing each attempt as if she were training to run a marathon.

Oblivious, as seems to be my specialty, I ignored all succeeding warning signs until I found myself in my first grade 11 English LK lessons, forced to explore parenting styles (there are four; five if you count "over-involved parents") – exactly the kind of stuff that interests a 17-year-old –, attempt-

ing and failing to "outline" Tiger Mothers' unnecessarily strict parenting regimes, to "analyse" New-York-Times-mothers' emotive recounts of "letting go" of grown-up daughters, learning – or rather pretending to – the importance of social mobility. This isn't English class, I thought. How had I ended up there?

I had expected reading lists and long free discussions. Instead I got a practically useless dime-store sociology degree. But I hung on, I survived. And now I'm here to tell the story.

According to the *Berliner Morgenpost*, English was the most popular higher-level course ("Leistungskurs") among Abitur graduates in Berlin in 2026, chosen by approximately 48.5% of students. This statistic suggests two possible explanations: students are either genuinely interested in the subject and what it claims to offer (unlikely) or (more likely) they have recognised that its predictable structure and comparatively manageable demands make it an attractive strategic choice, grade-wise. The more co-

nvincing explanation in my opinion being the latter, as those approaching the course with sincere enthusiasm for the language and its literature – like myself – are likely to be severely disappointed. Don't expect to learn anything new, if anything at all, here. However, if you do happen to possess a real passion for sifting through one dry and stylistically worthless – often also outdated – article after another, underlining device after device, summing up the author's main points, feel free to join!

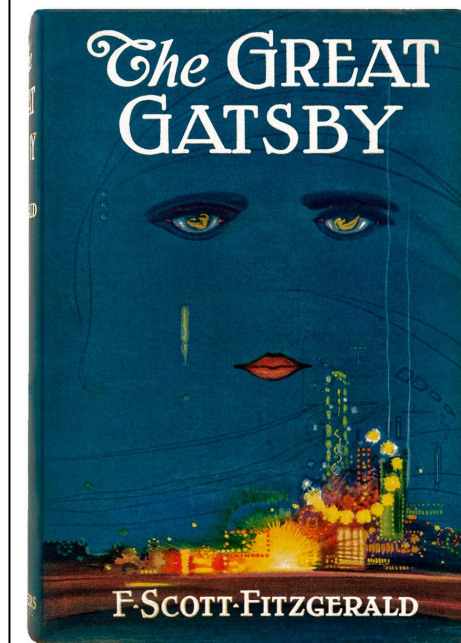
You'll know exactly what is expected of you from day one and spend the rest of your school career preparing for it (your teacher will make sure of this): reading, highlighting, summarising, writing outline after outline, analysis after analysis, until it all becomes automatic – until these processes bypass thinking altogether. Mentally prepare yourselves to memorise quotations from authors whose articles you've read in class, as well as statistics they cite, all to quote-unquote *demonstrate your knowledge* in the much-dreaded AFBIII-task. It is, I believe, one of the most questionable skills taught in schools today: not the acquisition of knowledge, but its simulation.

Prepare to read the article and despair at the fact that your teacher expects you to uncover stylistic devices the journalist never consciously put there in the first place. Then, learn to respect English teachers as you uncover the truth: journalists don't write articles. They merely follow the structures English teachers have been prescribing for decades.

You are given a toolkit infamously known as "The Persuader" in 7th grade; use it to survive English LK. Your teachers will expand it year after year until you possess a collection of approximately forty devices, ready to be detected by your stylistic-device-security-camera of a mind. But beware: stylistic devices are a dangerous business. The problem is not that they exist or shouldn't be analysed, but instead the assumption that every pattern must contain a hidden meaning waiting to be uncovered – not just any meaning, but the exact meaning already predetermined by "The Persuader". Sometimes a metaphor is profound. Sometimes it is simply a metaphor.

Accept this: Everything means something. Everything is a point. Its very existence is evidence of this fact. Explaining the point means connecting the two, while also considering the effect on the reader – even if there may be none. Do not panic; this is not unusual. Prepare to do this for the rest of your life.

Prepare to read basically nothing. And by that, I mean almost nothing that resembles what you probably imagined literature to be. It should seem logical that knowledge of literary classics is fundamental to education. It should seem logical to have read at least one Shakespeare play in school. Instead, you will be presented with a long-winded, unbearably pretentious memoir following a supposed American success story (*Educated* by Tara Westover) – the uninspired cover of which you will be forced to squeeze meaning out of. You will then encounter a modern-day technological 1984 imitation with bland characters and predictable plot points (*The Circle*: Dave Egger's most popular novel, and also his weakest), leaving you with only one truly literary classic: F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.



Above: Cover of *The Great Gatsby*.

And then they will brutally dissect it before your very eyes, injecting supposed meaning into every word, every letter, every syllable, before the focus

once again shifts to sociological instead of literary aspects and English class starts to resemble Social Studies. English LK seems to be frightened of literature. It distrusts it, because true literature is enigmatic: a word that completely exceeds the scope and abilities of this course, which teaches students to analyse while oftentimes discouraging the curiosity and uncertainty that may make a text worth analysing in the first place.

Three books. That is all. Carefully crafted by the Berlin Senate, this curriculum presents another nail in the coffin of reading as a habit – a practice that remains a crucial part of life.

If you asked me to name a few things I have learned here, they would be these: apparently, you need pseudo-knowledge to survive; do not read; and, finally, everything means something if you believe hard enough. My life is set up for success.

English LK has left me deeply traumatised. When I think, I think in PEE. In my nightmares, I am driven up walls by authority figures, employing parallelistic anaphoras and juxtaposing anecdotes, appealing to pathos by personifying my difficulty with memorising statistics and facts as a semantic field of polysyndetons – all carefully structured, all already signposted, all already analysed before the thought has even fully taken form. Just when I believe I have escaped, catching my breath in a desolate alley, a savage group of metaphors comes around the corner, hurling linking words at me, screaming: Analyse me! Compare and Contrast! Discuss! Assess! Comment! Personal pronouns pull me in from these allegorical streets, pretending I am safe with them. But safety is merely another structure. Once they serve me a tricolon to eat, I know I have been stabbed in the back. As I attempt to mitigate the effects of its parataxis, an ellipsis peeks through the door. I move toward it. Too slowly. A simile alliterates itself into existence before my very eyes and I scream at the top of my lungs: No!

I wake up drenched in sweat, already outlining the experience in a three-paragraph structure.

In conclusion, I hate English LK.

The Future of Architecture

Did you know that buildings and construction account for approximately 35% of global energy and process-related CO2 emissions? This makes the built environment the single largest emitting sector. Building materials alone account for about 10% of global emissions. This includes extraction, manufacture, and transport of construction materials. Sustainability is a huge and broad topic in many places, including architecture. Although there are many different examples of sustainability in architecture, my personal and primary interest is the use of sustainable materials in the construction of buildings all around the world.

The use of practical and sustainable materials in construction is key to helping the environment and constructing long-lasting, sustainable buildings. Using sustainable materials is hugely important since it greatly reduces emissions, since conventional materials are very energy intensive, meaning greenhouse gas emissions are extremely limited with the use of sustainable materials. Reclaimed materials such as wood or steel can be infinitely reused and recycled, leading to the minimisation of the extraction of natural resources. Some materials can also lead to energy conservation in the heating or cooling of buildings. For example, rammed earth has a natural insulation effect, which saves energy costs for heating, ventilation, and cooling systems, which in turn is better for the environment.

There are many different modern sustainable materials, among them rammed earth, Ferrock and Ashcrete. Rammed Earth is an ancient masonry technique that consists of compacting local soils, gravel, and stabilizers into thick walls. There are no transit emissions since the material is taken directly from the construction site. Another benefit of rammed earth is that the walls naturally insulate, which reduces reliance on heating and cooling systems, which use a lot of energy. Rammed earth absorbs heat during the day and will then release it during the night, causing automatic heating and cooling systems, all from the walls made from soil.

Ferrock is a very modern, high-tech concrete alternative, which is made by mixing waste iron dust and silica from recycled glass. Ferrock is carbon-negative, which means that it traps more atmospheric carbon in it than it releases during its drying and hardening phase. The main benefit of Ferrock is that it cures to be chemically inert and up to five times stronger than standard cement, meaning it is very resilient to saltwater erosion if faced with it.

Lastly, there is Ashcrete, which is a recycled cement alternative and uses fly ash, a fine, powdery byproduct of coal combustion as the primary binding agent in place of traditional, carbon-intensive cement. Ashcrete repurposes hazardous industrial waste before it goes to landfills, saving lots of energy and minimising emissions. Since fly ash particles are smaller than cement particles, Ashcrete cures into a denser material, making it more resistant to water penetration and acid degradation.

As well as modern materials, there are also many older, traditional materials that have been used for centuries or millennia to make buildings, for example, wood, stone, and earth. Wood architecture has been used for centuries in Scandinavia, China, Japan, and many other countries. The environmental benefits of using wood as a construction material are that every cubic meter of wood locks away around one metric ton of carbon dioxide for the building's entire lifespan. There are also very low production emissions because timber needs far less fossil fuel energy than smelting steel or baking cement. If the timber is sourced from certified forests, then it is replanted and creates a renewable production loop. Bamboo, for example is a wood that was and still is often used for construction because it is very fast growing, light, flexible and easy to work with, allowing builders in ancient and in modern times to build reliable, strong, and useful constructions.

Stone is another sustainable material and is a very good choice for constructing a building, since stone consumes up to 75% less energy during processing than brick, concrete, or steel.



Stone has an infinite lifespan, allowing it to just stand there for centuries without having to be renewed, repaired or demolished at any point, further reducing carbon emissions. Also, stone is 100% recyclable, meaning that salvaged stone can be reused at once in new structures or can be crushed into clean aggregate without downcycling or any chemical pollution. The high density of stone allows it to naturally absorb and slowly release heat, drastically reducing a building's mechanical heating and cooling emissions.

Lastly, a sustainable material that has been used for a long time is earth, or rammed earth. It is often used in African countries because it becomes very hard at one point and will stay solid in the heat of most African countries. Earth has virtually no transport footprint because the soil can be excavated at the construction site.

Also, the earth doesn't need any heat or energy-intensive chemical process to make a stable wall. That stable wall can then be recycled directly when a flaw is detected and a new, stable wall can be built with zero waste or recycled into the soil and then used later. Earth walls have a passive climate control effect, where they consume heat during the day and release it during the night, and, like stone drastically lower climate control emissions and energy usage. The clay in porous earth is also a natural humidity regulator, which entails with it that the walls absorb and release indoor moisture to naturally balance humidity and prevent toxic or harmful mould growth.

Overall, it is a necessity to use sustainable materials for the construction of buildings for the following reasons; It reduces carbon emissions in the tra-

nsit, production and construction of the buildings and traps carbon dioxide in the building, sometimes indefinitely. The materials can be recycled, sometimes infinitely, and new buildings can be made from the recycled materials, creating a loop of reusing and recycling. Lastly, the use of materials like rammed earth, stone or cork results in a reduction of energy consumed by heating and cooling systems in a building due to natural insulation, further saving energy. If we are actually going to make a difference in climate change, we must use more effective materials and measures as well as be inspired the past and embrace the future. Also, by combining these and other efficient materials with efficient and intelligent processes such as 3D-printing, digital fabrication and modular construction, emissions can be further reduced and minimised.

DUG IN A Short Story By Robin Aviña Polisen

The Sun, golden and unwavering, blinds me—momentarily, repeatedly. Its light catches in my eyelashes and falls into my corneas where it can curl up for the remainder of the afternoon. It'll crumple up and wither away until the stark-white moon licks up its ashes and takes its place in the sky's grip.

For now, it casts itself as the only stable pillar in the sky—clouds shift around and behind it in the melting backdrop of cerulean, rose, and orange, the air shifting with transparent lines of heat, the ocean warbling around on the horizon. My elbows are dug into the ivory sand behind my back like the posts of a "For Sale" sign into grass; a life of real

estate, one where excitement is ignited by that wonderful warning before the picket fence. A life with grins all around that shimmer in white and yellow, regal shades of sand, smoother and kinder than the roughness I'm cozier in. In perplexing tones of color, sunglasses with reflective lenses smile back at the inextinguishable light of the sun from where they sit on the sunscreened bridge of my nose. My face, torso, and limbs find themselves growing rich and tan, untouchable flourishes springing up over my body and transforming into a delicacy. I can sense the breeze whispering all around me, licking at my shoulders and the backs of my knees; all my sensitivities are told the approaching

secret of nighttime, a furtive promise, and I draw my legs closer to myself to ensure their oath is kept.

Fine grains of beach sand fiercely reflect the white heat up in the sky and glow around my arms, my feet, my patterned towel. I can feel their warmth bleeding into my body—touched by the chill, and the warmth, autumn still lingering about the lower halves of my bones when summer comes meandering into the picture. If I don't pester myself to focus, I can broadly feel every sensation of the season: I can sense the imaginative streaks of a melting popsicle down my fingers; I can feel the thin weightlessness of a beach ball against the soft paleness of my palms; I know the

How Sustainable Materials
Can Reduce the Environmental
Impact of Buildings

By Alexander
v.d. Schultenburg