

TANGHIN VOICE : SUMMER 2022



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Our Minds Are Being Read – Little Fun Facts About Drama Watching

by Sally Chan (5A)



Business Proposal, *The Lincoln Lawyer*, *Suits*, to name but a few, are big hits on Netflix and are probably on your 'continue watching' list. To be honest, I am also a huge drama fan, and I would like to share with you my observations throughout my drama watching journey. You may be a drama fan as I am, or you may feel like drama is not your cup of tea. But the undeniable fact is that Netflix dramas are gaining momentum. According to research, the number of Netflix subscribers has increased drastically from less than 22 million in 2011 to nearly 214 million in 2021. So, have you ever wondered why dramas, especially Korean and American dramas are gaining such popularity?

In a Ted Talk interview, Reed Hastings, the co-founder of Netflix, once revealed his secret key to success - the algorithm. The

algorithm ensures more accurate predictions and assumptions regarding subscribers' preferences; it can successfully lure people to click into the recommended dramas, and if it's lucky enough to find true matches for subscribers, they can indulgently binge watch all related episodes in a row.

It sounds as if it makes perfect sense, and even more, common sense. Living in an era of information technology, all of us know that we are targets of big data analysis. Our every search, every browsing and scrolling behavior, and every pause we make in our viewing have all become 'someone's' analytical data. You may have assented tacitly because it brings you an enjoyable viewing experience and spares you from cumbersome work like, for instance, that of searching for a desirable program to view. But the implications are profound.

Indeed, there is a privacy catastrophe on show, because every minute we go online, we risk exposing our true selves, which is different from merely disclosing our profile information such as age, gender and addresses - it's something more substantial.

Exposing our unconscious selves is no exaggeration. If you are a K-drama fan, you should probably ask yourself if there is a Cinderella inside you. K-dramas are mainly, if not all, about Cinderella stories: 'beautiful girl from poor family marries rich guy', according to Daniel Tudor, a British journalist. But my version here is more like 'inconspicuous girl from poor family marries rich guy'. *Business Proposal* is a case in point. Owing to its relatability and the fantasy it brings, many people could become addicted to it. According to research, female viewers are more prone to K-dramas, the Cinderella stories, than males.



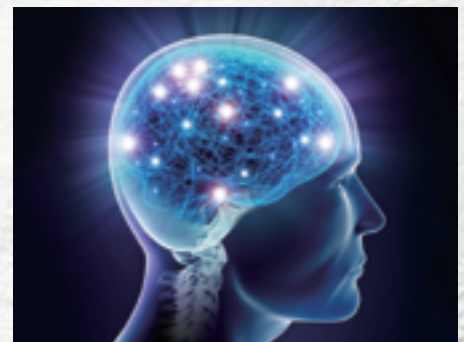
Undoubtedly, though, male viewers cannot be spared our introspection. If you are an occasional or even frequent drama viewer, think of a few dramas you enjoy. There may be a gender stereotype here, but the fact is that research has shown that males tend to enjoy legal dramas more than females. So, this is the unconscious self making another appearance! To make it clearer, legal dramas are mostly about clever male leads winning cases and hence admiration. Obviously, the successful lawyers are males' ideal selves. And this is of course not confined to legal dramas. It can also be a detective drama, a gangster drama and so on, as long as the male lead is intelligent and awesome.



The two examples above serve to show how our unconscious selves are reflected in our drama viewing habits. We never expected Cinderella characters or the successful men to be our ideal selves, but this is the truth that the dramas we watch are telling us. It may sound superficial but, in fact, popular dramas reflect people's mindset and society's engrained concepts, which include gender stereotypes.

Now, you may still be thinking, 'Okay, dramas are like that because K-dramas just cater for female viewers and that is what we call a target audience.' But this is not just about dramas. The YouTube videos we watch, the Instagram posts we scroll through and the Tweets we read all expose our true selves. It's as if we are exposing the results of daily personality tests. According to research, extroverts tend to use social media platforms to enlarge their boundary of friends and influence, while introverts spend more time on social media to compensate for a probable lack of physical interaction. Do we really want to expose the inner workings of our minds and ourselves to this extent to so many people?

So, is all this dramatic media exposure a treasure chest to dive into, find joy in and fill any supposed holes in our soul? Or, is it a mine field on which every one of us is gingerly walking? You may feel like the Internet is innocuous, but it actually lifts our veil and uncovers our unconscious thinking and personality. Is it really a good idea to let media data scientists exploit our inner selves just for their marketing purposes?



Technological development is an irreversible trend and, no matter what, we are and will still be Internet users as the Internet has already become an inevitable part of our daily lives. What I am saying is, bear in mind that we have to watch our every digital move to prevent our unconscious selves from sneaking out and speaking our minds freely. Otherwise, privacy catastrophes and interpersonal relationship crises will abound. It is hoped that while noting that our unconscious selves are to a certain degree inevitably exposed online, we can still enjoy our exploration in the digital world and let data science bring us all the benefits it can.

Christmas : To Celebrate or Not to Celebrate?

by Michelle Wu (5B)



This past Christmas holiday became a highly controversial festival. It faced a massive boycott on Chinese social media, with people blaming Christmas for replacing traditional Eastern festivals. Another group voiced its objection to this opinion, arguing Christmas now appeals to a broad audience, moving beyond a Christian commemoration day, so people with a different faith are also entitled to celebrate it. Ending up a bit clownish, the debate seemed totally unnecessary as Christmas, in essence, is a kind

of holiday that anyone could enjoy or ignore. The wrangles contribute nothing but to ruin people's festive mood.

However, it is not the first time this sort of bickering has arisen. Many people have criticized the innocent holiday with various opinions before this social media incident. The most often heard accusation against Christmas is its focus on consumerism. The holiday is seen as a consumption trap, the best opportunity for shops to make use of people's craving for shopping during holidays, greatly increasing their revenues. This can be backed up by data. According to Visa's statistics, Hongkongers spend a great deal in Christmas holidays. People raised concerns about rising materialism and people blowing too much money on unneeded goods. However, Christmas consumption boosted the economy, with pandemic-hit retail businesses recovering somewhat. In spite of the fact that consumers spend to excess, they still gain happiness and satisfaction in the action of shopping. Nothing needs to be complained about in the situation where buyers and sellers attained their respective goals during the Christmas shopping season.



Economists may be pleased by the economic resurgence, but environmentalists see things quite differently. They focus on the harmful effects the holiday brings to Earth. From the perspective of environmental protection organizations, Christmas equals the creation of waste. Decorations attracting visitors and potential customers are disposable. Once Christmas wrapping paper completes its mission, it all goes to the landfill. Food bought for parties in excessive amounts can never be eaten up. People's enjoyment of the holiday is an additional burden on the planet. But this again is not a persuasive argument against Christmas. The holiday's ritual never requires extravagant ornaments and lavish

celebrating activities. In fact, if you feel guilty about the environment, just opt for a more environmentally friendly celebration. For example, it's quite easy to reuse decorations every year, reduce gift packaging, and replace Christmas cards with e-cards.

Christmas can fulfill the promise of the three

R's: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. As difficult as it might be for some

people to forgo the excesses and waste for environmental reasons, people can still make Christmas a desirable holiday in their heart, by voluntarily choosing their particular way of celebrating it.



It's obvious that the above two condemnations of Christmas are weighty considerations that people probably don't normally think about. Frankly speaking, most people just want to grasp the hard-won free time and mindlessly throw themselves into a Christmas vibe. This holiday can just be a breathing space for those who are exhausted from study and work. Or, it can be a good reason for family reunion, or a precious chance to travel overseas (though this is not feasible under the current pandemic).

Everyone chooses his own way of spending the vacation. Seen from this perspective, Christmas is uncomplicated, as are other festivals. After all the online arguments have been considered, who can resist the urge to simply have fun? In this day and age, a cozy break should be the best companion for Christmas. People who are fed up with such a hectic lifestyle just crave a holiday. As long as it provides adequate vacation time, they don't care whether its name is Christmas or Lunar New Year.

A number of arguments against Christmas are mentioned in this passage. Some critics try to convince you that their perception of Christmas is the 'correct' one, but the holiday is actually only a normal couple of days which are the same as any other days. Any significance of the days is applied by humans themselves. If you insist on debating and denying, Christmas becomes a farce in your estimation. Or, you can just embrace and respect others' opinions while seeking new possibilities for the holiday. So, to celebrate or not to celebrate? Everyone should follow his personal instinct. Of course, it's brilliant if you can enjoy the holiday in a greener way by listening to the claim of environmentalists. But it would also be wonderful if it's just about relaxation. As long as it's celebrated happily in the way you choose, the holiday has successfully delivered its spirit.



A Boy Who Liked Pink and a Girl Who Had Short Hair

by Karl Lou (5A)

Imagine an effective world leader. Let me guess... the person who pops up in your mind is a man, and probably an alpha male. This kind of set idea that people have about attributes and characteristics, especially gender, ruling over someone can be harmful by limiting one's capacity to develop skills. For instance, girls who have marvellous gifts for science seldom end up as scientists, due to the stereotype that females cannot be good at STEM fields. They cause the girls to lack confidence to pursue degrees or occupations. Now, let me share my own experience of how gender stereotypes crept into my life and changed me.



When I was a boy, my favourite colour was pink, a signification of love, kindness and of course, femininity. You see, a boy who likes pink is surely something extraordinary; I guess you have never seen a male dressed in pink right? So yes, such an unconventional preference did bring me nothing but ridicule. When they pointed at my pink school bag, scoffed at my pink room, tore apart my pink world, it was the time I decided I would ditch every piece of pink. At last, when I finally eliminated every vestige of this colour from my life, I understood that I had abandoned femininity, but what I didn't realise is that, what had been discarded together with it were the other positive meanings of the colour.



When I completely gave up my favourite colour, I entered secondary school. Here, I met a girl with short hair. Fun fact: the school didn't forbid girls from having short hair while, on the contrary, boys had been banned from keeping long hair for some reason. So when I first saw her, I could not help asking why that 'boy' had put on a wrong uniform. After all, the whole society was saying that boys should have short hair while long hair is for girls. Anyway, the majority of the public didn't perceive it as a kind of beauty, and neither did I. That is why she was ostracised in the school -

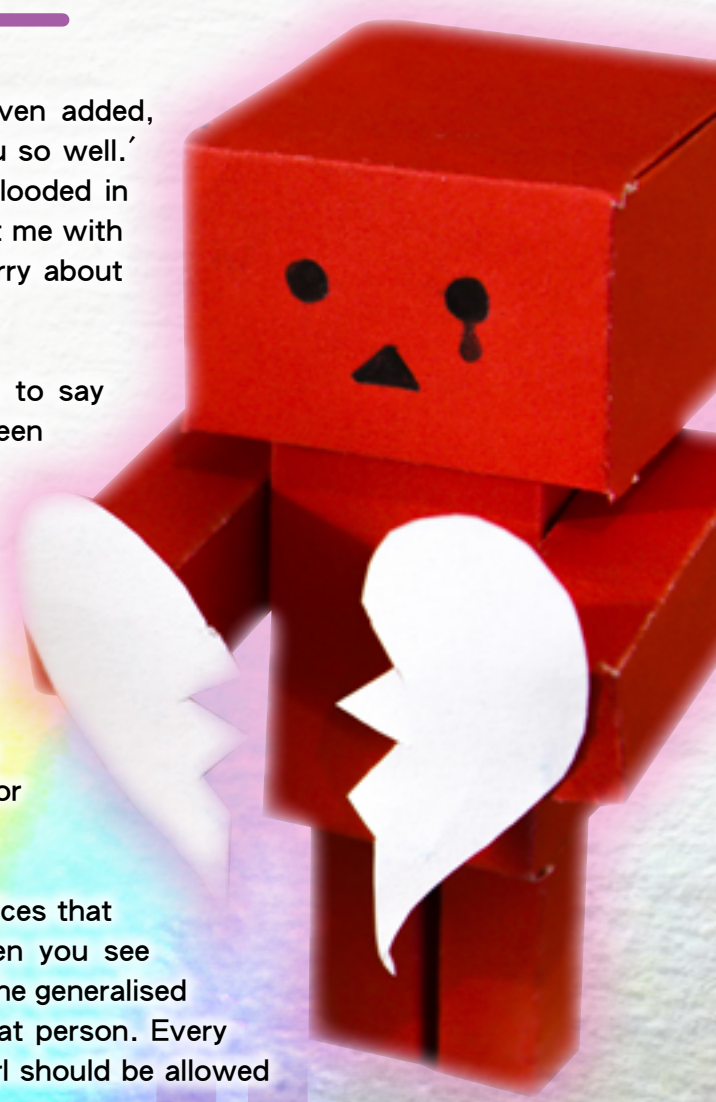


this is a classic gender stereotype. Well, in light of my past experience, I could understand her feelings, so I indeed tried to befriend her. However, that was before she gave me a card in the colour which

I hoped to have forgotten, and worse, she even added, 'it is a colour of love and kindness; it suits you so well.' At that time, all those bad memories of pink flooded in and I almost burst out, 'Don't you dare connect me with femininity!' I left her holding the card. I am sorry about that.

You may ask why I was so mean, but I have to say it was a kind of PTSD move. If you have been tortured due to the preference of something for a long time, you will end up loathing it, sooner or later. Therefore, I always wonder if there had not been any teasing, if pink would have remained a meaningful colour to me. I didn't hear much about the girl after that, but last time when I met her, she had long, straight hair. Gender stereotypes can easily change somebody's preferences for something by applying pressure to them.

Similarly, they could affect people's crucial choices that change their future. Therefore, next time when you see someone doing something which does not suit the generalised view of his/her gender, please don't disturb that person. Every boy should be allowed to like pink and every girl should be allowed to have short hair.



A Fantastic Romance Film

by Yan Chen (5B)



Want a little fantasy with romance? *Till We Meet Again* is a Taiwanese fantasy romance film released in 2021. It talks about the bittersweet love story between Ah-lun and Xiao-mi. Directed by Giddens Ko, the film is a box office hit.

The story starts with the death of Ah-lun. He is struck by lightning and is sent to the underworld after death. Newly deceased people's

choices for reincarnation depend on the good and evil deeds they do during their lifetime. As Ah-lun loses the memories of his life, an accurate evaluation of his life's deeds becomes difficult. He can either choose to be reincarnated as a snail or work as Yue Lao, a god of love, in order to acquire the qualification of reincarnating as a human being. He partners with Pinky, a girl who is killed by her boyfriend on the same day Ah-lun dies. Their main responsibility is to tie a red string between lovers.

One night, Ah-lun and Pinky run into a dog and a girl chasing after him. All of a sudden, all of his memories come flooding back. She's the love of his life, Xiao-mi and their beloved dog, Ah-Lu. To help Xiao-mi move on, Ah-lun asks all Gods of Love to help find a good match for her. Intriguingly, no matter how many times they attempt to tie the red string onto Xiao-mi's finger, the red string splits apart. The heart-wrenching hidden truth is that Xiao-mi deliberately keeps the secret that she can see Ah-lun, and she's afraid that this ability will be taken away if she discloses it.



Apart from the poignant love story between Ah-lun and Xiao-mi, there's a bizarre subplot about a malicious ghost who has escaped into the human world to take revenge on Xiao-mi for killing him in her previous life. When the ghost captures her and is going to dispatch her, Ah-lun and Pinky are sentenced to imprisonment because the secret of the forbidden

love between Ah-lun and Xiao-mi is divulged. Fortunately, Ah-Lu, who dies of long-term illness, helps Ah-lun and Pinky get out of the prison and leads them to Xiao-mi. On the edge of losing her life, the only way to save her is to tie her string to the final right one. It means Ah-lun will need to give up on Xiao-mi. Are they able to make it in the end?

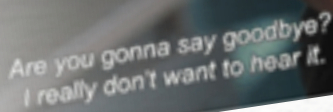
The visual effects of this film may not be as stunning as a Hollywood film's, but they are enough for a fantasy romance film like this. There are also some gripping scenes where the malevolent ghost is out for revenge. Ko Chen-tung plays the role of Ah-lun and has delivered an impressive and dazzling portrayal of the character, making you sway with the emotions he imbues in the character, especially in the scene when Ah-lun rediscovers the one he loves the most. Vivian Sung also gives a superb performance which will definitely keep your eyes glued to the screen.

If you are into fantasy or romantic movies, you will definitely like this film. It will keep you engrossed in the story and will tug at the heartstrings. You may have a cathartic cry when you watch it!



The Generosity of Goodbye

by B. Dietrich



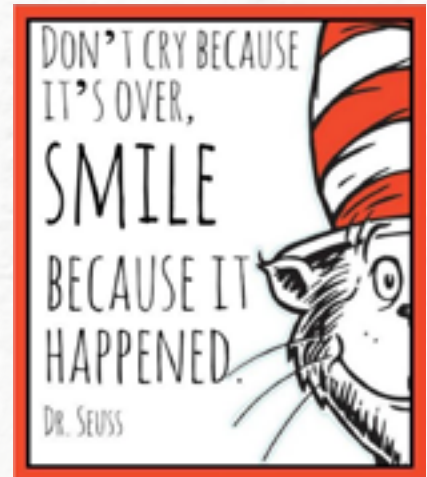
Are you gonna say goodbye?
I really don't want to hear it.

It's an important part of our existence because life is finite; most everything comes to an end. And, although we're all aware of this fact, we deliberately go about our daily lives blissfully unaware, or at least avoiding all thoughts of endings and goodbyes. That might be a good thing because, otherwise, many of us wouldn't be able to function properly. Perhaps we'd be worrying, continuously thinking about how we should or shouldn't say our farewells or share our feelings with those we are leaving, or those who are leaving us. But is ignorance truly bliss? Goodbyes can't be avoided forever.

Before these modern days of fast travel, instant communication and Zoom meetings, people said goodbye to friends and family members for years at a time, with no prospect of seeing each other again soon (sometimes ever). Goodbyes today have become much more temporary; people can speak to each other over long distances for free, share every part of their lives with each other on social media platforms and literally hop on a plane and be anywhere in a matter of hours. This greatly alters the dynamic of 'goodbye' - perhaps we don't take it so seriously anymore. Heavy goodbyes with hugs and kisses and tears have changed, becoming simply, "See ya later!" "Not if I see you first." 🙄 Goodbyes are now often casual, stress-free interactions, with both parties knowing that this is not 'the end'.

Truthfully, though, saying goodbye for good is a real part of our lives; these are true life and death matters. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to be with either of my parents when they passed away. I still consider myself fortunate, though, because I had advance warning of both their deaths and I was able to say a 'proper' goodbye beforehand. Goodbyes don't really make the loss of a loved one easy, but they provide some much needed closure and eventually remind you that you both were able to pass along the most important messages to each other. Without 'goodbye' people can be left feeling empty or as if an essential part of their body has suddenly gone missing. Parting from loved ones is like losing a limb, but having said a meaningful goodbye does help.

Centuries ago, when forms of this term originated, saying goodbye was a meaningful message used on a daily basis; people wanted to ensure that others knew they were wished well upon parting. The word 'goodbye' comes from the phrase, "God be with you". It means that people will pray for good things to come to you: I'll commend you to God. The similar term in French still used today is 'adieu', literally 'to God'. All of these terms are used to express kind wishes upon someone's departure. "I wish you well and hope God takes good care of you," people said to one another. That's sweet.



I believe goodbyes are more than just kindness, though: *goodbyes are a generous gift for both parties*. Sometimes opportunities don't arise for real goodbyes; sometimes people are taken away from us suddenly through accident or illness. We must take and appreciate the chances to tell people how we feel and that we will miss them. It's a great gift to be able to share feelings openly with people and express the fact that not being near them will be a loss. It's difficult, yes, but so worthwhile in the long run.

So, here I go. Deep breath. I'm leaving Hong Kong, most probably for good, and I want to give you my most sincere, heartfelt goodbye. To the many thousands of students and staff I've interacted with in Hong Kong over the last twenty-four years: it's been my honour and a privilege to learn from you, teach you, write for/with you, speak with you and laugh with you. I am a better person for having known you. I will miss you. I wish you all the best in the future, one that is bright and beautiful and boundless. To everyone who made my six-year stay here in Tanghin such a pleasure, I want to thank you. Please know that I won't forget you. Take care of yourselves, the environment, and those you love.

Brian Dietrich



Mr. Dietrich at his desk in the staffroom along with his favourite Japanese woodblock prints



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