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## An Ocean Away

By Konnie Guo



Konnie Guo is a senior at Miramonte High School in Orinda where she is a member of Club BTSYA. She is an avid reader, and during her spare time, enjoys playing the piano and doing volunteer work.

has practically become an essential form of communication." Luckily for Kazama, if she were ever to visit China, she would find plenty of alternatives. For example, the app WeChat is becoming increasingly popular as a method of contact, acting as a substitute to its American counterpart, Facebook messenger.

Chinese teens are undoubtedly miles apart from those in Lamorinda, both figuratively and literally. However, there is a trait that makes every teenager in the world connected to each other—we're teens! So, while we can examine all the differences of living in China, the undeniable bond of simply being a teenager makes us just one step closer.

Teenagers form a large community not only in Lamorinda, but all around the world. In the populous country of China, teens are an especially major part of society. During my summer visit to Shanghai, China, I had the opportunity to find out what life of a Chinese teen is like. Lamorinda and Shanghai are separated by over 6,000 miles, and while teenagers in both areas have drastic differences, they also share surprising similarities.

Every high school student stresses out about getting into the right college, and in China, the pressure is even greater. The college application process is highly competitive, requiring dedication, diligence, and determination. For most teens, their college acceptance rests on a single exam: the National College Entrance Examination, or "gao kao." Once they have received their results, students must apply to only three schools to which they send their scores. According to 19-year-old Chinese student Wei Shen, "I was very worried that I would not score high enough on the exam to get into the college I wanted." Luckily, Shen did extremely well and is currently studying to become an airplane engineer.

Additionally, in mainland China (not including Taiwan or Hong Kong), major websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are banned. While it is still a common sight to see teenagers toting around their iPhones, they have to resort to other forms of social media and entertainment.

Moraga teen Yurika Kazama explains, "Facebook is used so ubiquitously nowadays that it

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