

A Couch Potato's Guide TO Life

BY: FIONA SHI

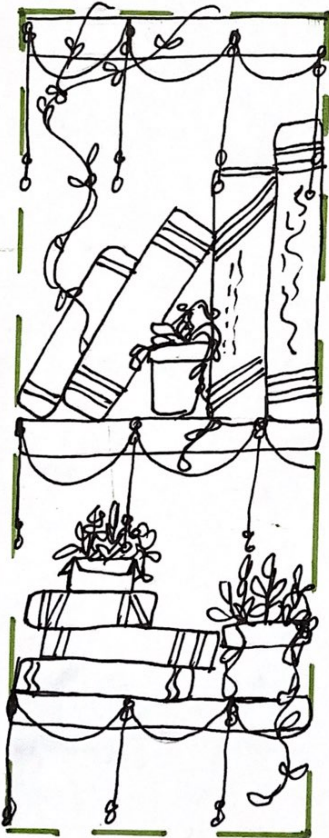


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Letter TO THE Readers

Dear Readers,

Thank you for reading *A Couch Potato's Guide to Life, First Edition*. I hope that reading this magazine is an enjoyable experience. In this magazine, you will find out more about me, the author, editor, and illustrator.

My favorite things to do are read and draw, which is probably obvious by the time you finish reading *A Couch Potato's Guide to Life*. Included inside are 3 pieces of writing, some song recommendations, and a list of things to do to relieve boredom.

I wrote about my experience with art, and an experience I had in school that made a big impact on my education. Also included, is a piece of writing that is very befitting of my writing style. Be warned that it may be slightly scary and I will not be responsible in any way, shape, or form for potential nightmares fueled by said piece of writing. (I don't think my writing can cause nightmares but quick warning just in case.)

Scattered throughout the magazine are life tips from this couch potato that might come in handy one day, because you never know what life's gonna throw at you.

Anyway, I hope that this magazine provides you with a pleasurable visual experience and that you found something useful within.

Best Regards and Happy Reading,

Fiona Shi

Academic Validation

Adding and subtracting fractions seems simple compared to all the other concepts of math taught in high school. But it isn't a very easy topic when you're just getting started. My introduction into adding and subtracting fractions was in 4th grade, during an afternoon math class. The teacher explained how to solve problems similar to the ones in our workbooks, but as always, many students weren't paying attention. This resulted in many of my peers struggling to complete the classwork.

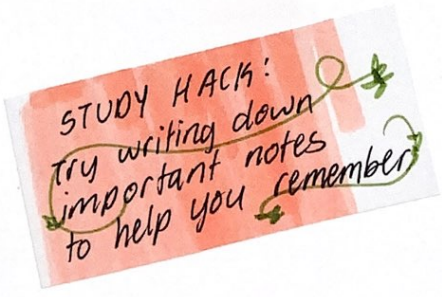
Like usual, I had completed my work, but this time with the exception of one problem, which involved adding fractions with different denominators; a topic we had not yet discussed and would not discuss that year. Being one of the few students who followed along as the teacher taught, I was always able to complete classwork before my peers, so the teacher would ask me to assist them. I always agreed, because it gave me a sense of accomplishment to be able to help others understand. I explained the work to my peers, but when we reached the last question, I was stuck.

My classmates were waiting for an answer, an explanation that I didn't have. Frustration grew inside me like a balloon as they continued to ask me questions. A balloon that continued swelling would only have one ending: destruction. My patience and composure crumpled down, tears welled in my eyes. Finally, the teacher looked up from what she had been doing and took

me outside, into the hallway. Gently, she asked me what was wrong and when I stuttered out my response, I was told it was okay and that the problem didn't have an answer.

Of course, the problem did have an answer, but it was a concept I wouldn't learn until 5th grade. Though her assurance worked, the problem continued to linger in my thoughts. Perhaps it was because in previous years, A's in math came so easily that I didn't expect to be defeated by a problem lying unassumingly amongst the others. It deflated my confidence, and it felt shameful to 10 year old me. It didn't matter that it was beyond the curriculum, because that just seemed like an excuse.

Though little 10 year old me forgot about this occurrence as the day progressed, tossed to the back of her mind by dismissal, I still remember. I still remember the feeling of frustration, the same feeling that wells up within everytime I come across something I'm unable to accomplish, a mistake I could have caught. The same voice questioning myself, the same voice telling me that ignorance is unacceptable. Perhaps this feeling results from the validation I gain from academic achievements, or maybe it's part of the cause, but it's stayed with me for years, and will for years to come. But one day, I'll be able to tell myself that it doesn't make me any less smart or any less special just because I made a mistake, that being imperfect is okay. One day I'll know and wholeheartedly believe that learning exists for this exact reason— so that one can learn what they don't yet know only for the purpose of self-improvement. Not for a feeling of validation from a letter that means nothing to who you are.



STUDY HACK:
Try writing down
important notes
to help you remember

Things to do When you're bored OUT OF YOUR mind

1. Pinch your brother's face
2. Send your best friend a recording of you singing Santa Clause is coming to town
3. Study for your next math test
4. Raid your brother's closet
5. Stop procrastinating
6. Spam text your friends

PRO TIP:
 Be careful when playing sports because if you accidentally hit your friend in the face with a frisbee, she'll hold it over you for the rest of your life.

Song Recs

NON-ENGLISH SONGS TO ADD TO YOUR STUDY PLAYLIST

- Xiao Chou (Drown one's sorrows)
by Mao Bu Yi
- Love Catastrophe
goodbye my princess OST
- Zhao Yao Xing He (shine upon the galaxy)
by Zhou Shen
- Deng Ni Gui Lai (waiting for you)
by Cheng Xiang
- Chu Chu Wen (kissing everywhere)
by Miriam Yeung
- Jia Bin (Guest)
by Zhang Yuan
- Mei Ben Hua Juan (Beautiful Picture Scroll)
by Wen Ren Ting Shu

My Artistic Journey

PASSION ARTICLE

Though there isn't really a standard for "good art," the starting point of an artist's journey is nearly always messy, chaotic, and filled with sketches that are best suited for the bottom of your mom's kitchen cabinet where they will never see the light of day. My journey begins with stage one, the "era of stick figures."

The era of stick figures is a self explanatory stage consisting of stick figures with dots for eyes and a maximum of 3 strands of hair. Sometimes, they had clothes that looked very geometrical and were colored with crayon. Some had backgrounds consisting of houses that were triangles placed atop squares, beside which lay a few trees that didn't look like trees. Also included is a similar style of art where instead of straight lines for limbs, everything was rounded. Heads were round, eyes were round, eyebrows were curved, trees, even houses and the ground were wobbly, squiggly lines because I couldn't be bothered to use a ruler. During this time I was weirdly obsessed with drawing Disney princesses, most likely due to the fact that I was approximately 6 years old. Some of my drawings were given to my friends since I thought they were the best things I've ever drawn.

The "era where heads are everything" earned its name due to the giant heads that all of the people in my drawings had during this stage of my art. Many drawings were made in my notebooks, and 4th grade me especially enjoyed drawing Youtubers as princesses with huge heads. Not only did they have giant heads, their heads were paired with limbs that were practically non-existent because of how thin they were. 10 year old me saw no problem with this, similar to the way 12 year old me saw no problem with the crooked features on each and every face I drew. To this day, second hand

embarrassment lingers from the memory of myself proudly showing off my artwork to friends and family. Thankfully, my art gained a “quarantine glow-up,” and I improved drastically, drawing faces with features that, though still lopsided, actually looked like they could exist on a human being.

Though I still face difficulty when drawing anything below the shoulders, especially hands, I’m now able to draw realistic looking portraits. Within the past year, I’ve gotten into watercolor and digital art. In the beginning, I was inexperienced with watercolor and often found the colors bleeding into one another. After more practice and tips I learnt from Youtube, I was able to paint colorful portraits that I was satisfied with.

During this time, my best friend had gotten herself into digital art and pestered me to try it. My first attempts failed miserably and I wanted to give up and stick to physical art. But I just couldn’t let it go and decided to try again. After looking at tutorials on Tiktok and Youtube, I slowly improved. With practice, I’ve become more experienced and gained pride in my artwork, using them as profile pictures for my social media accounts.

Though my art started out as stick figures, through practice and experimentation, I’ve slowly improved and found the style that works best for me. Art block can be frustrating, and I’ve wanted to rip my paper apart at times when I wasn’t satisfied with what I’ve drawn, but once you push past, you’ll find that you’ve improved. I’ve never given up on trying; even if I had to take a long break from drawing, it never stopped me from learning and improving through experimentation and inspiration from others. Art is my passion, and if you’re passionate about something, even if it’s something you’re not good at, just know that if you persevere, you’ll improve with each obstacle you overcome.

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But the girl HAD —NO—SHADOW!

A pale, carefully manicured finger tapped rhythmically against the oaken desk, behind which sat a young lady who was just barely twenty. Candlelight illuminated the desk, casting shadows upon the letters resting atop the dark red oak. Her white, silken gown dragged upon the floor, the hem swallowed by the darkness. She sat unblinking as the rain pounded on the window beside her, trees bowing to the harsh wind. A knock sounded on the study door.

“Enter,” she said, looking up sharply.

A man wearing a ceremonial suit walked into the room, stopping about three feet from the desk. “Your majesty, what shall we do with Prince Fredrick?” he asked tentatively, hoping that the young queen was in a good mood. She stared at him icily, and though it was midsummer, the man felt a chill crawl up his spine.

“Former Prince Fredrick,” she corrected emotionlessly.

“Apologies my liege,” the man said hurriedly, as if her gaze would kill him if he was a second too late. “What shall we do with former Prince Fredrick?”

“Did I not say to kill him?” She asked slowly. “I believe my instructions were quite clear. He is to be tortured until death. His head is to be delivered in an intricately wrapped box to my dear sister, and his body tossed within the forest.”

The man shivered. "B-but your majesty, doing so to the heir of another kingdom is no different to declaring war!" He stuttered out.

"So?" She asked calmly. "I know exactly what my orders mean. Must I remind you that it is not in your job description to question my decisions?"

"Understood, your majesty, I'll see myself out." The man said nervously. He felt cold sweat running down his forehead, a choking sensation forming around his neck, as if someone had him in a chokehold. Yet, there wasn't a third person within the room. He exited quickly, and the door slammed shut behind him, seemingly of its own accord.

Inside the study, the girl smiled, her pale lips twisting upward stiffly. The candlelight cast an eerie glow upon her doll-like face.

"Sister dearest, I hope this prepares you to accept your punishment for betrayal," she whispered. Her brown locks draped over the desk as she leaned forward to blow out the candle. Lightning flashed across the sky, lighting up the room just long enough to illuminate the faint red line on the girl's neck. For a second, shadows of each piece of furniture were cast upon the blood red carpet.

But the girl had no shadow.

Life Tip:
When you're being yelled at by your parents, start daydreaming or staring out into space. Nod so they think you're listening.
Warning: Try at your own risk.

Art collage



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A Couch Potato's Guide to Life,
FIRST EDITION

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