



# The HGK News Wave

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## Living Poetry: The Beauty of Rikugien Garden



Photo by Yukiho Iwao

The weeping cherry tree blossoms beautifully in the spring, while the maple trees leave the garden with such warmth in the autumn. It is no wonder why the Rikugien Garden, located in Bunkyo City, Tokyo, is considered one of the city's most beautiful Japanese landscape gardens. It was even classified as one of the special places of scenic beauty in 1953 by the Japanese government. But, did you know that the Rikugien Garden is actually based on 88 different waka poems? The fifth Tokugawa shogun, Tsunayoshi Tokugawa, loved literature, and especially waka poems, so, in 1695, he decided to commission Yoshiyasu Yanagisawa to build a garden which contains miniature scenes from 88 waka poems. It took Yanagisawa seven whole years to design and create the garden as he had to dig up ponds and even build a mountain, since he was only given a flat field by the fifth Tokugawa shogun. An example of a place in the Rikugien Garden that are based off of waka poems is "deshio no minato", or one of the shorelines of the huge lake, which is based on a waka poem that talks about how the voice of the Japanese racoon dog starts making the speaker lonely as the tide and moon

starts rising. The name of the garden, "Rikugi", is derived from the six principles of *waka* poetry that appeared in the kana preface of the "Kokin Wakashu", which modified the "Classic of Poetry", a collection of Chinese poetry. The six principles of poetry that are described in the "Classic of Poetry" are *feng* or "Airs", *ya* or "Odes", *song* or "Hymns", *fu* or "enumeration", *bi* or "comparison", and *xing* or "stimulus". These six principles are based on two parameters: the content or social functions (*feng*, *ya*, *song*) and, form or means of expression (*fu*, *bi*, *xing*). To explain it further, *feng* refers to oral literature, *ya* refers to poems that praise shrines of a monarch, and *song* refers to elegant poems performed at the imperial court. On the other hand, *fu* refers to poems where you express your own opinion, *bi* refers to poems where you give an example, and then express your opinion, and *xing* refers to poems where you sense a foreign object, and then express your opinion. In the kana preface of the "Kokin Wakashu", the six principles are still based on the same two parameters, but, this time, *feng* shifts from content or social functions to form or means

of expression. Although at first glance, the Rikugien Garden seems like a beautiful Japanese garden that was solely made from the creator's imaginations and needs, there is actually a meaning and *waka* poem behind almost all of the scenery you will see at the garden. So, if you ever decide to visit the Rikugien Garden, be sure to be appreciative of all of the scenery.



Photo by Yukiho Iwao

## AWAKENED REALITY

Lost in a lovely dream,

I slumbered so sweet.

The waking world was cold and harsh,

I yearned for my sleep.

Too soon, dawn stirred me awake.

I shivered, squeezed my eyes so tight.

Clinging to the blissful scene,

Now gone in the morning's cut.

The days stretched long and barren,

No light, no comfort.

I craved my dream's warm embrace,

Through this endless night.

Article by: Yukiho Iwao

Poem by: Julie Sasaki



# How to Stay Committed to Your Goals

The year 2025 has begun, the start of a new year often fills us with determination to create positive changes in our lives. We make resolutions to fulfill our goals we want to accomplish by the end of the year. However, as time passes, many of us lose sight of our resolutions. Why is it so hard to stay on track? In this article we would like to explore the reason behind this phenomenon.

One common reason is a lack of motivation. We set goals with excitement, but over time, that initial enthusiasm fades. Life's distractions — work, studies, or personal challenges — further weaken our resolve. Another factor is setting unrealistic goals. For example, having a goal of running 10km each day, even though it is plausible for other people but for a beginner the goal will not allow the person to continue working towards their goal.

So, how can we combat these challenges and awaken the discipline needed to fulfil our wishes? Let's break the solution into three parts: mental, physical, and Vedic methods.

## Mental Methods

Success starts in the mind. One effective way to stay committed is by visualizing the outcome. Picture yourself achieving your goal and think about how it will improve your life. Positive affirmations can also help. Whenever you are distracted, it would be effective to recite and repeat phrases like "I am capable of change" or "I will stay consistent". This trains your mind to focus on success. Another key strategy is breaking larger goals into smaller, manageable steps. For instance, instead of saying, "I will read 50 books this year," commit to reading for 15 minutes daily. Achieving small wins keeps motivation alive.

## Physical Methods

Our physical state has a significant impact on our productivity. Regular exercise, even something as simple as a daily walk, boosts energy and reduces stress. In your daily walks try not think about work, money, study or any stress. Try to think about yourself and how you spent the day. Think about the people you love. Having some "Me time" would also help you learn more about yourself.

## Vedic Methods

Ancient Vedic knowledge provides ageless methods for developing oneself. Meditation and yoga are two techniques that promote self-awareness and mental calmness. Chanting mantras, such "Om," might help you focus and find inner calm. The chanting of "Om" creates vibrations that has effects on the nervous system. The ancient Indian medical system known as Ayurveda places a strong emphasis on leading a healthy lifestyle in sync with the natural world. This can assist you in maintaining discipline and equilibrium. By integrating these methods into your daily routine, you

can stay committed to your goals throughout the year. Awakening is not just about setting goals; it's about nurturing the mind, body, and spirit to achieve them.

"A Disciplined mind leads to Happiness and an undisciplined mind leads to suffering."

— Dalai Lama

Let this year be the year where your resolutions turn into reality!

By: Tanya Tyagi

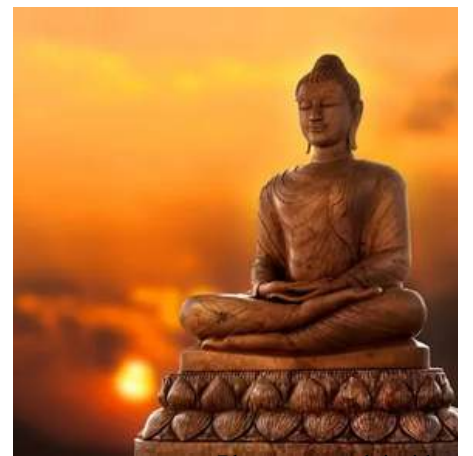


Photo: research insiders

Article: <https://kantipudi25.medium.com/my-mantra-to-self-discipline-4687caef402d>

# The Reversible Destiny Lofts Mitaka



Photo by Maria Kizaki

The Reversible Destiny Lofts Mitaka — In Memory of Helen Keller, built by architects/artists Shusaku Arakawa and Madeline Gins offers an experience no other; with its artistically unique structure, designed "to not to die". The architects/artists, Shusaku Arakawa and Madeline Gins encouraged people to "reassess perceptions, liberate their senses and challenge mortality" (Peirson). They did so through various works of art, speculative architectures, and theoretical inquiries pursuing immortality at their Reversible Destiny Foundation. Driven by a desire for immortality, they founded this foundation, conceiving the idea of

"reversible destinies." This was implemented during the 1990s and early 2000s to increase mental and bodily awareness. Shusaku Arakawa and Madeline Gins created various architectural artworks, such as the Site of Reversible Destiny — Yoro Park, Gifu, and The Reversible Destiny Lofts Mitaka — In Memory of Helen Keller, which the Hiroo Gakuen Koishikawa International Newspaper Club visited on October 24th, 2024.

Completed in 2005, the Reversible Destiny Lofts have attracted much attention from visitors worldwide, including Japan and abroad. What attracts visitors to this building lies in the way that the building reawakens the visitors, as well as revitalizes them. It is

## Awakening Your Senses

a landmark in Tokyo's Western suburbs and a collective housing project composed of 9 residential units. The building's 9 units feature 14 colors, both inside and out; primarily utilizing 3 shapes, the cube, the sphere, and the tube in stacked form. Each apartment has a circular room, with a kitchen in the center. Uneven, rough, and bumpy floors slant throughout the building. When walking on these floors, you can feel the bumps fitting the arch of your foot perfectly and unconsciously start searching for the perfect spot. They make one want to walk around the apartment, and to move around, actively exercise, which many have forgotten the joy and time for today. The apartment also consists of vertical poles that one can climb up, as well as numerous hooks on the ceiling, which can be used for storage and furniture, using one's imagination. This work of art produced through the application of the philosophy of "procedural architecture", a digital design technique that uses algorithms to generate complex structures; gives residents the chance to discover their body's full potential. It reverses the general understanding of architecture, as well as society itself.

Awaken a new self and perspective of the world through the once-lost senses that we all must have had when we were born into this world. A building out of the ordinary does not allow people to think of it as one. This "out of the ordinary" enables our bodies to discover new ways and accomplish what was once considered impossible. This is the true essence of "reversible destinies", an idea inspired by Hellen Keller, someone who was able to reverse her own destiny in her life. Through this project, Shusaku Arakawa and Madeline Gins achieved to stimulate our senses. Through The Reversible Destiny Lofts Mitaka — In Memory of Helen Keller, we also get a chance to be like Helen Keller and achieve the impossible. Open your eyes to the colorful, abnormal apartment. It is now your turn to awaken from the normals.

By: Maria Kizaki



# A Setback is Merely a Setup for a Comeback

In the high-stakes world of professional sports, athletes have expectations. Due to their high draft pick or hefty contract, the media crowns these players as the next new thing. However, not all performances can exceed expectations, and some players often perform badly and fail to meet these expectations. When this happens, these players are written off as failures and labeled as busts. However, some defy the odds, resurrecting their careers and proving their doubters wrong.

Sam Darnold was selected third in the 2018 Draft by the New York Jets. With a lot of expectations, he struggled in his first three years in the NFL. With many turnovers throughout his Jets Tenure, he was traded to the Carolina Panthers, which was a sign that the Jets had lost hope in him. After a mediocre fourth season in the NFL with the Panthers, Darnold lost his starting job to Baker Mayfield, ending his Panthers Tenure. Darnold signed with the 49ers in free agency and became their backup quarterback. After the 49ers clinched the playoffs,

they rested their starters, and this was a chance for Sam Darnold. In the last game of the season, he played well, which earned him a new deal with the Minnesota Vikings in 2024. Darnold was bought into the team to compete with new rookie quarterback JJ McCarthy. However, after McCarthy went down with a season-ending injury, the Vikings season rested on Darnold's Hands. With this second chance, Darnold took advantage of it. As of Week 16 in the NFL, the Vikings have a 13-2 record, tied for best record in the NFC. He has played lights-out football, being 6th in yards thrown and 5th in touchdowns thrown. Darnold has clinched the playoffs and is looking to have playoff success. In one season, Sam Darnold has completely flipped the narrative. He is now a starting-caliber quarterback, with a bright future in the league. With his contract ending this year, he will be expecting a large payday for his performances. Sam Darnold can become one of the better quarterbacks in the league, which seemed impossible after his tenure with the Jets and Panthers.

In basketball, the resurgence of Andrew Wiggins provides a masterclass in flipping narratives. Drafted first overall to the Minnesota Timberwolves, Wiggins was under immense pressure to become the franchise cornerstone of the Timberwolves. While putting up respectable numbers, Wiggins was never able to exceeding expectations, instead disappointing critics with his inconsistency and impact. After a mediocre tenure with the Timberwolves, Wiggins was traded to the Golden State Warriors. With the Warriors, Wiggins did not deal with the same pressure he had with the Timberwolves. Instead of being forced to be the number 1 player on a team, he was able to play as the number 2, behind Stephen Curry. This role suited his skills, and the results showed. Andrew Wiggins played a pivotal role in the Warriors Championship Run in 2022, excelling on both offense and defense and earning his first All-Star appearance. These turnarounds highlight a truth about sports and life: success depends as much on the right environment and opportunities as it does on raw talent. A fresh start or a new change of scenery can reveal untapped potential, with systems tailored to a person's strengths. Sports is not just about wins and

losses, but about human resilience. Failure is not final and with hard work and determination, comebacks are always possible. A setback is merely a setup for a comeback.

By: Yuuken Miura



Photo : Brad Rempel  
Sam Darnold passes against the Las Vegas Raiders.

## Awakening to True Feeling



Photo: given-anime.com

The story of Given begins with Mafuyu, a quiet and mysterious high school boy with a dark past. Struggling with grief over the loss of his boyfriend, Yuki, Mafuyu's life feels empty and directionless. However, everything begins to change when he meets Ritsuka, the guitarist of the band The Seasons. Through Ritsuka's music, Mafuyu starts reconnecting with music and discovers that music can be a way for him to understand more about himself and his feelings.

Through music, Mafuyu confronts his past and finds his talent for singing that he never knew about. After hearing Mafuyu sing for the first time, Ritsuka is shaken with excitement and invites him to join his band. Even though he was hesitant at first, Mafuyu eventually agrees. The Seasons are reborn as Given, with Haruki as the bassist, Akihiko as the drummer, Ritsuka as the guitarist, and Mafuyu as the guitarist and vocalist.

By: Mao Shimada

Their first major moment as a band came during a live performance of "Fuyu no Hanashi," a song built on the melody Mafuyu first sang in front of Ritsuka. This performance marks a pivotal moment in Mafuyu's journey, as he fully awakens to his love for music. In singing the song, Mafuyu is finally able to accept that Yuki is gone and comes to terms with the loneliness he feels. His voice conveys both his pain and love for Yuki, leaving the audience deeply moved.

The manga Given is not just a story about a band or a romance; it's a narrative about finding light in the darkness and rediscovering oneself. The combination of music and Natsuki Kizu's delicate art style and carefully chosen words creates a unique and unforgettable experience. I personally believe that Given reaches its full conclusion with the anime, as it brings the music of the manga to life. This harmonious blend of music and storytelling sets *Given* apart from other series and makes it truly special.



Photo: Given Manga cover vol.3

## Fahrenheit 451: A Review

### Did you know?

The title *Fahrenheit 451* is actually the ignition temperature of paper.

### Awakening

In a world where people have stopped reading books and then are forbidden in an attempt to keep society happy, a fireman slowly realizes the wrongs of his society. He changes. He stops listening and complying with the laws. He starts rebelling silently, yearning for change with his newborn morals.

### Summary

*Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury is set in the future and it begins with Guy Montag – the main character expresses his love for burning books as a "fireman". This may feel ironic, however, in this novel, a fireman's role has changed from putting a fire out to setting books on fire – as books are illegal for one to have. On his trip from work to home, Montag feels a presence hidden among the shadows, behind a corner he always turns to reach home. This continues, until he meets a "seventeen and crazy" individual who awakens him into a new mind and life.

### Recommendation

I would recommend this book to teens, not as it includes any traumatic elements, however, it may be challenging for young readers to understand the story nor the message.

The book is also very recommendable as this may help readers grow motivation to become more knowledgeable in order not to be controlled by the authorities and not to become "empty" – as it did for me.



Photo: alamy.com

### My opinion

This novel was one of the favorite literary works I have read. It was a very quick read, however, since the book is written in a quite poetic and descriptive way, it may be quite difficult to understand some phrases without a creative mind. Despite the book being a short book, a message is able to get through most readers. This classic novel by Ray Bradbury has helped me understand that knowledge and wits are key to gaining power and without such items like books, we are unable to attain anything and we become a mindless piece of blob, controlled by the authorities.

By: Momoko Ohya



# Is Democracy Working?

## (i) Democracy Index Rankings.

This shows the population and voter turnout of the top 5 democracies. (Japan and the USA are also shown for comparison).

Rank	Country	Population(million)	Voter turnout
1	Norway	5.55	77%
2	New Zealand	5.45	73%
3	Iceland	39	75%
4	Sweden	10.54	83%
5	Finland	5.60	70%
16	Japan	120	58%
29	The U.S.	340	54%

Sources: The Economist Intelligence Unit, International IDEA.

Made by Shota Hozu

2024 was a year of global elections, with over 100 countries holding elections, including Japan, South Korea, Germany, France, Russia, the US, and the UK. We believe that democracy is the best way for people. We believe it can create a satisfying society that reflects the voices and perspectives of the people. But what I saw in the media gave me pause. The polarization of countries, people attacking each other's campaigns in elections, the oppression of minority groups, people excluding different opinions, politics focused on certain people, and citizens unhappy with society...

I began to wonder: "Does democracy work well?" Why do people feel unsatisfied with society? After examining the 'Democracy Index Rankings (see figure i), which show the population and voter turnout of the top five democracies, I asked myself: Why are Japan and the U.S. so low in the rankings?

The common denominator in the opinions of the three philosophers in figure ii is that they are 'small communities'. It is true that the populations of the top five countries in figure i are small, ranging from 390,000 to 10 million. They also have a very high voter turnout.

So why does this matter in a democracy? In a nation of 100 million people, where the entire population is not close at hand, is it not possible to create a society that works for everyone? Does democracy not work?

## (ii) Ideal size of democracy.

The words of the sages.

"The ideal number of citizens in a country is 5040"

—— Plato, Laws

"A small communal society whose members can easily meet each other"

—— Rousseau, Social Contract

"A small state in which the interest of the citizens is directed towards the common good"

—— Montesquieu, The Spirit of Law

Made by Shota Hozu

I think that being close to one another fosters a deeper understanding of each other's interests and nurtures imagination and empathy. When it comes to voting, even if you're part of the majority, the voices of the minority remain important and close to you. This perspective encourages us to approach politics with care, leading us to ask questions like, 'It's fine for me, but how will this affect those individuals?' This mindset is essential for building a society that can find common ground and agreement among all its members.

Democracy is in the hands of the people. I have heard these words: 'We don't understand each other because we don't know each other. Because we don't understand each other, we become insecure. Because we are anxious, we run away. Because we run away, our minds drift apart.' I see our society in this state. But if we try to know and understand others, we can create a society where everyone can be satisfied, even if the population is very large.

I think what we need is to try to understand other people — awakening. Depending on our awareness, we can make democracy better, but we can also make it worse. We can even create dictators like Hitler. Democracy is very fragile. Democracy is in the hands of the people.

By: Shota Hozu

# The Fight for Equality

Recently, I have started to notice more and more about what gender norms really are and why women tend to face greater struggles than men in society. One significant social issue that came to my mind recently is the gender pay gap.

The gender pay gap occurs when women receive less money than men for doing the same amount of work. This disparity often stems from a company's old-fashioned ideas about how jobs are for men, not for women. Additionally, women are often denied the opportunity to get a promotion. Therefore, they are expected to accept the minimal wage that they work hard for. A term commonly associated with gender inequality is the 'The Glass Ceiling.' It is an invisible barrier that separates groups of women from achieving equality in a workplace. It's called a glass ceiling because although it isn't physically apparent, it restricts their progress and many women experience it. They are forced to stay silent about it despite being fully aware of the limitations it imposes. Many women report that they are aware and have experienced the effects of the glass ceiling, yet feel unable to speak up or talk about it to their bosses or their colleagues due to retaliation or fear of not being taken seriously.

Women are often segregated into sectors or put in groups where they have less opportunities to make

decisions that will impact the company. During the COVID 19 pandemic, gender inequality and social disparities were exposed and intensified. Especially in the healthcare sector, women like nurses or home care aides were working endlessly, and were the most exposed to the deadly virus. And yet they were underpaid compared to the male workers who worked in other areas of the workforce. Over time, gender inequality has gotten a lot better and lots of people are working to change these societal norms. However, the glass ceiling is still difficult to break. I believe that in order to close the gender pay gap, companies must disclose salary ranges. When pay practices are transparent and honest, it puts the higher-ups in an uneasy situation and will not allow them to underpay women. On top of that, strengthening anti-discrimination laws should be a priority for the government. Many companies still impose old-fashioned rules and women are segregated every day. I hope that in the future, gender inequality and the glass ceiling won't be significant and true equality will be achieved for all.

By: Ami Ube



Photo : slate.com

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**Publisher:** 広尾学園小石川中学校・高等学校

**Project Supervisor:** Paul Rowland と Hiroo Gakuen Koishikawa International Newspaper Club

**Editor:** Kanade Koike

Maria Kizaki

Tanya Tyagi

**Staff Writers:** Yuuken Miura, Ami Ube, Yukiho Iwao, Julie Sasaki, Mao Shimada, Shota Hozu, Momoko Ohya, Tanya Tyagi, Maria Kizaki, Kanade Koike

**Contact:** 2 Chome-29-1 Honkomagome, Bunkyo City, Tokyo 113-0021

**URL:** <https://hiroo-koishikawa.ed.jp/>