

Hi! I'm Yana, and I'm 21 years old. I am originally from Singapore, but am living in Lawrenceville with my aunt Sun Yang, while I attend Carnegie Mellon University. It is a widespread practice and highly encouraged to attend college in a foreign country, not just a year abroad but to truly settle into a new culture for a couple of years. At first, I was scared, but when I was accepted to CMU, I knew I would be OK, seeing as I had family in the city. Sun Yang and Ethan graciously invited me to stay with them and I'm loving the experience! I will admit I was in a state of culture-shock when I first arrived in the United States. It was definitely a change, but, with the support of my aunt her family, I've grown comfortable in this culture. Sun Yang is the biggest reason for my continuing happiness and satisfaction here. She understands the culture I'm coming from and has always been able to give me the perfect advice based on her own culture-shock experiences. Because of Sun's help with this tough transition, I may even stay here to obtain an advanced degree and, possibly, long-term employment.

Another huge help has been my co-learning group that I was put in when I first enrolled at CMU. There are four people in the group, myself included, and we all come from different countries and cultures. Two of my group members, Freja and Mustafa participate remotely from their home countries, Denmark and Qatar, respectively. The third member, Tyler, is present on campus as he is originally from Seattle. He, in particular has been incredibly helpful during my transition period. Furthermore, this group allows me to not only have international connections but also offers me a forum in which to discuss my coursework and future plans in the company, albeit partially digital, of like-minded people. At least once a week, we meet up at the Learning Hub in one of the multimedia rooms, where Freja and Mustafa can holographically participate.

Right now, my long term goal is to excel in my undergraduate education so that I can have a wide range of choices for graduate school. I also want to make sure that I try out new fields of study whenever possible because being able to draw from many different disciplines will make me more adaptable and a better candidate when looking for jobs. I believe I'm definitely on the right track. Furthermore, the Fly-on-the-Wall program through CMU allows me to learn more about different fields of study by engaging in meetings at participating businesses or firms from a variety of different fields. So not only am I becoming more adaptable, I am gaining first-hand knowledge of what the different fields have to offer.

My interests are quite diverse and, thankfully, that is encouraged at the undergraduate level. I am currently a drama major; however, I take a significant number of courses in the design school. It's a lot of work, but I find that the concept of writing scenes and creating sets very similar to the concepts I'm learning in the design courses. I love being able to apply what I learn in one field to another. It's a very rewarding feeling and experience. It was actually my uncle, Ethan, when I was entering my sophomore year, who recommended that I try out some design courses. I loved them! Ever since, he has proven to be a great mentor and, through his companies participation in the Fly-on-the-Wall program, lets me sit in on some of his international conference calls in the multimedia room. Being able to watch the design process and see new innovations and ideas be born is absolutely incredible! When I start to get overwhelmed by my schoolwork,

I relax by playing my flute, which I brought with me from home. I haven't had formal lessons in years, but playing it always reminds me of my childhood and my family back in Singapore and I, almost instantaneously, feel better and more confident.

I, also, have become Ethan's unofficial translator when Mandarin-speakers are on they call. They, of course, speak English too, but sometimes ideas don't translate well out of the language in which they were thought up. And because Ethan is such a great mentor figure in my life, I like to repay his kindness by giving him some Mandarin lessons on the weekends. His Mandarin is getting much better and I know my aunt Sun Yang is always pleasantly surprised when Ethan tries out a new colloquialism or idiom. His accent is a little funny, but between me, Sun Yang, and his own kids, who are already perfectly fluent, I'm confident he'll get it eventually. I've even started giving Beth, Ethan's mother, some lessons, but her language skills are definitely less flexible. Apparently, from kindergarten to senior year of high school, she was taught Spanish, but they essentially just sat down and wrote vocabulary words over and over again, so while she learned how to write well in Spanish, she never gained conversational confidence. Now, language learning program, especially for adults, are much more organic and try to teach people second and third languages in the same way they learned their first languages. More word to picture association and a bigger emphasis on speaking facility. All children these days speak at least two languages, whether due to the increase in cross-cultural marriages or due to the establishment of stronger language courses at the pre-school level when children are truly like little sponges for information.

Another family member that I'm particularly close to is Oliana. She's a cool kid. I love how she collects antiques and dresses in decades-old fashions. I can tell that she really looks up to me and I definitely treat her like she's my little sister. Being that I'm an only child, it's great to finally get the sibling experience, but since I'm five years older, and not vying for the attention of mutual parental figures, Olie and I don't have the typical sibling squabbles. I act more as an advice guru in her life as she is always coming to me with the social issues she's facing, soaked in a healthy amount of teenage angst. I love being able to help her out and I'm happiest when she succeeds because of my sage advice. I love when Sun Yang and Ethan go out on their weekly dinner dates and Olie and I get to have a good long gossip session without the risk of being overheard (The house is very space efficient, so, when all of the family members are home, it can be hard to find true privacy). Beth is usually home, but in the rooftop garden with Jasper.

That kid is hilarious! I love his fascination with space and I am oddly really flattered when he asks me to play in the space station with him. I know Sun Yang was initially quite worried about his kind of anti-social personality, but I, honestly, think some of that he'll grown out of in time with the help of a school curriculum in which he is pushed to try learning styles with which he may, at first, be uncomfortable. He tells me that the other kids in his school are interested in things other than space travel and he gets annoyed when they don't want to play "space mission" with him. Essentially, he knows what he likes, maybe to the point of obsession, and is very strong-willed. He'd rather play "space mission" alone than play another game with his classmates. He's the baby of the family so I can't say I'm surprised by this behavior. I can get that way too sometimes, being that

I'm my parents only kid, so I always play "space mission" when he invites me.