

To whom it may concern:

My name is Catherine Elison, and I am happy to say Mr Kempe was my grade 9 Individuals and Societies teacher at Yokohama International School. Being taught by Mr Kempe was a wonderful entry into high school, defining the importance of my learning and his passion for teaching.

Mr Kempe has created a learning environment that caters to the needs of every type of student. As an international school, YIS's classes are diverse in beliefs and backgrounds, but also in learning styles. With the comfortable aura of Mr Kempe's classroom, there is no pressure to perform perfectly or to conform to any opinions that are not your own. As a teacher, Mr Kempe has guided me through my assignments, however, did not emphasize the final grade, instead, focusing on spreading the passion and interest he holds in learning. This contagious enthusiasm he carries spreads genuine thought and interest throughout the classroom, encouraging each student to collaborate and challenge themselves, as well as each other. Specifically, with more sensitive topics we had covered, such as slavery, the Holocaust, and the Rwandan genocide, he continued to teach diligently, aware of the individual feelings in the room. With his respectful leadership, every student entered the classroom with the flexibility to learn and accept different perspectives.

Furthermore, Mr Kempe's kindness makes him a very approachable teacher, without any barrier or fear of authority. His welcoming demeanour has allowed me to ask an endless amount of questions, all of which were answered with clarity and perceptiveness. Mr Kempe's wide range of knowledge and his passion to share has challenged me to pursue a real, true understanding of each topic we had covered. For example, when I presented a response to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, having Mr Kempe support me and provide me with information enlightened me to realise the genuine complexity of the situation. With the main focus of global issues, our class had collectively grown to comprehend the position we hold in the world, including our privilege and limited perspectives on conflict. As Mr Kempe was always available, it made our class feel much more united and comfortable, feeling truly at home.

Finally, the positive energy Mr Kempe radiates is visible to students, making them genuinely invested and excited in learning. Though formal writing isn't the thing I've felt most comfortable with in the past, I found myself wanting to showcase the improvement I had made throughout the year and contribute my perspective. Throughout the year, many classes tend to feel repetitive and tedious, however, Mr Kempe gave us the ideal balance of collaboration, independence, and autonomy to make each class engaging. When summative assessments were due, he provided us with the freedom of choosing how we wanted to work. Whether that meant headphones on, or off, silently working, or discussing with a peer, the flexibility of his class reduced the amount of stress and tension that comes with a looming deadline. Additionally, for formative assessments, he allowed us to present in any form. I remember performing a song about Ibn Batutta, whereas another group had created a music video describing Vasco Da Gama's life. These opportunities to take creative approaches, and create original works made each student connect resources to draw thoughtful conclusions. I believe Mr Kempe was the one teacher that could keep the attention of my class on a Friday afternoon, where most of our classes landed.

With Mr Kempe's energy and enthusiasm, he sets up each of his students for success, making their voices feel heard, and more importantly, listened to. In his class, I often found myself smiling, whether I was listening to an explanation, discussing with a friend, or presenting, something I usually feel nervous doing. Most importantly, Mr Kempe's love of learning and teaching welcomes each student with open arms, allowing them to grow into the person they would like to be.

Sincerely,  
Catherine Elison, Grade 10

You can contact me at [24elisonc@yis.ac.jp](mailto:24elisonc@yis.ac.jp) if you have any questions!