

# Tunes Marooned in Solitude

Text Type: Magazine article  
Suggested finishing time: 25 mins

## Let's think!

1. Do you like singing karaoke?
2. What if you need to do it in a compact environment?

### More to Take Away

It was Daisuke Inoue, a Japanese businessman, who invented the first karaoke machine in 1971. 'Karaoke' literally means 'an empty orchestra' in Japanese.

### STEAM

Sound energy is produced when objects vibrate. As it travels through air and solid materials, one way to reduce noise is to block off the paths through which it travels or to simply absorb it. For example, rubbery materials that absorb sound energy are used in walls.

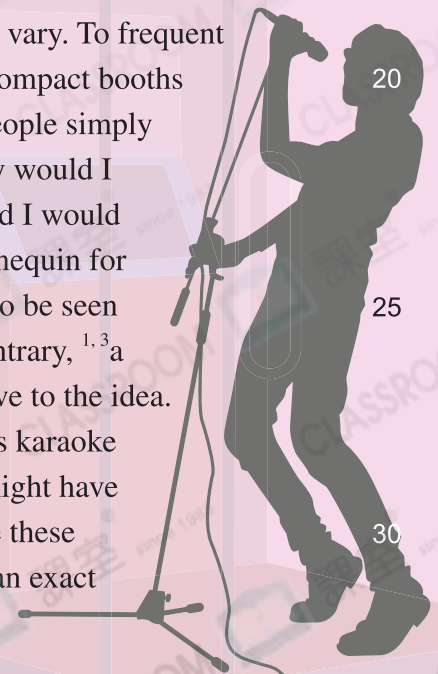
### What is the main idea of paragraph 3?

- What kinds of views do the quotes represent? What does the writer say about them?
- A. <sup>1</sup>Everyone likes karaoke booths. (some people dislike them ➤ ✗)
- B. Karaoke booths are a commercial success. (the profit is not mentioned ➤ ✗)
- C. <sup>2</sup>Karaoke booths are too small. (only the opinion of some users ➤ ✗)
- D. <sup>3</sup>Different people react to karaoke booths differently. (opposite views are represented ➤ ✓)

Who says karaoke is exclusive to party animals? Walk around the shopping malls in China today, you will be surprised by the nationwide prevalence of phone booth-sized karaoke booths. There, you may find one or two people singing along to flashy lyrics displayed on a screen, which may seem eccentric to those who consider appearing friendless a no-no. Yet, statistics have demonstrated the emergence and growth of this kind of karaoke: over 20,000 of these tiny units were installed and are operating in China—not only in shopping malls, but also in cinemas and even metro stations.

These karaoke booths, in many ways, resemble phone booths: transparent and self-contained, offering twenty-four seven access and charged on a per-minute basis, etc. Customers simply have to enter one of them, sit on the stool, pay digitally with a quick scan of the QR code and then grab the microphone to kick off singing. It may surprise you that some of these booths come with song libraries comprising more than 30,000 songs of various genres, which are comparable to those at traditional karaoke bars. Some booths even enable users to instantly livestream their singing.

<sup>1,3</sup>Society's reactions towards these booths vary. To frequent visitors to traditional karaoke bars, these compact booths may look rather tight and bizarre. Some people simply frown upon the whole idea, saying <sup>2,3</sup>'Why would I cram myself into such a limited space? And I would never want to be like an eye-catching mannequin for window display, as I certainly don't want to be seen singing at the top of my lungs!' On the contrary, <sup>1,3</sup>a lot of youngsters are actually quite receptive to the idea. Liang, a university student who often visits karaoke booths alone, revealed something which might have concerned every karaoke bar-goer, 'Before these booths emerged in the market, it required an exact



In lines 39-52, what is the writer's tone?

- How does the writer present another person's view?
- A. unfriendly (not even the person quoted ➤ ✗)
  - B. neutral (the writer shows neither agreement nor disagreement with the quotes ➤ ✔)
  - C. eager (not sounding positive ➤ ✗)
  - D. angry (not even the person quoted ➤ ✗)

headcount for the booking: if any of us can't make it to the lounge in time, the reservation has to be called off. Thank goodness, with these booths, life is now made carefree as one no longer needs to get frustrated with the rigid booking arrangement.' Obviously, the twenty-two-year-old deeply appreciated the booths' flexibility, as she seemed to be an advocate of the 'fast-food culture', a common way of life in which everything is preferably done in a snap of a finger.

Although some users refused to acknowledge that karaoke booths are somewhat better than their elder counterparts, they have to admit one thing, that they easily outcompete them in one particular aspect—being a budget alternative. An ex-karaoke bar-goer recalled, 'Very often, you're made to pay for unwanted snacks, drinks and fruit, in addition to the unreasonable service charge in the lounge.

I want to relax and have fun with friends, but not at the expense of my entire wallet. Karaoke food is mostly average, if not below standard, yet an inseparable part of the deal!' Yet another karaoke bar-goer joined the opposition and raised a sensible concern, 'Every time I go to karaoke bars, I feel like a maze runner amidst the hazy nightly mist, having a hard time getting back to my friends despite knowing the room number. Fumbling in the serpentine corridors, I wonder, am I risking my own safety for fun...and what if there's a fire emergency?' When safety cannot be guaranteed, many more people may choose instead to venture into the novel booths across most commercial districts.

Having a sweeping influence as a source of entertainment in modern society for half a century, karaoke is definitely not something unfamiliar. Its transformation into a new form signals that the market for it is still expanding in many parts of the world, especially the newly wealthy China. It is, perhaps, too early to declare karaoke booths to be the winner in their battle against traditional karaoke bars. Surely there is rivalry between them, but they cater for the specific needs of different social groups. It may sound clichéd to say that 'competition leads to progress', an old chestnut, for the millionth time, but perhaps it is so often said because it is true. So, let's see what karaoke could make itself into.

~680 words

### Looking into Grammar

A phrasal verb consists of two or more words, usually a verb followed by an adverb, a preposition or both. Its meaning is usually quite different from that of its separate parts. Many transitive phrasal verbs are separable while some are inseparable.

- ✔ She can always **come up with** (✗ come up) innovative ideas for her projects.
- ✔ Have you **talked** your worries **over** (✔ talked over your worries) with your parents?
- ✔ I **came across** a vegetarian restaurant (✗ came a vegetarian restaurant across) near my workplace.

🔍 Circle TWO phrasal verbs in paragraphs 2 and 3.

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## Part A Multiple Choice Questions

Answer the following questions based on the information provided in the magazine article. Choose the best answer by blackening the appropriate circle.



1. Paragraph 1 emphasises \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. the spending power of the people in China
  - B. the invention of karaoke booths exclusive to introverts
  - C. the unexpected increase in the number of karaoke users
  - D. the increasing popularity of karaoke booths

2. People who \_\_\_\_\_ may find karaoke booths \_\_\_\_\_ traditional karaoke bars.

- A. prefer social gatherings... incomparable to
- B. want some private time...more energy-draining than
- C. are not that into parties...more acceptable than
- D. are reserved...more profit-driven than

3. People \_\_\_\_\_ may NOT be able to enjoy the services of karaoke booths.

- A. who are night owls
- B. without a smartphone
- C. who are unfamiliar with song titles
- D. who do not know how to livestream

**3** Read paragraph 2 to find ideas that match the keywords in each option and infer the answer.

4. When a woman sings 'at the top of her lungs', she sings \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. deeply emotionally
- B. extremely loudly
- C. with great ease
- D. with difficulty

5. Liang prefers karaoke booths due to their \_\_\_\_\_.

- I. security as to personal privacy
- II. flexible opening hours
- III. sensible charges
- IV. absence of reservation procedures

- A. IV only
- B. II and IV
- C. II, III and IV
- D. all of the above

**6** Figure out the causal relation between the evolution of consumers' expectation and the change in the number of consumers.

6. If traditional karaoke bars had \_\_\_\_\_, they might have been still \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. charged less...monopolising the market
- B. had clearer direction signs...popular
- C. had fancier furnishings...appealing to the younger generation
- D. had credible fire safety practices...thriving worldwide

7. Karaoke has had \_\_\_\_\_ in more developed countries.

- A. a diminishing influence
- B. fierce competitions
- C. a promising development
- D. a distinguished status



8. The writer is \_\_\_\_\_ the karaoke market.

- A. optimistic about
- B. pessimistic about
- C. uninterested in
- D. critical of



**Self-evaluation Checklist**

Please scan the QR code on P.6 to access the checklist for evaluating your own reading progress.

## Part B Pre-HKDSE Questions

Answer the following questions based on the information provided in the magazine article. For questions 1 and 2, answer in complete sentences.



1. How is the title of the magazine article related to karaoke booths?

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2. Why are karaoke booths considered to be part of 'fast-food culture'?

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**2** Find out the relation between 'fast-food culture' and the features of karaoke booths.

3. Read line 41. The word 'them' refers to \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. karaoke booths' elder users                       B. traditional karaoke bars  
 C. karaoke booths offering cheaper deals             D. advocates of fast-food culture

4. Look for words or phrases in the magazine article that are similar in meaning to the following:

(i) be like (v.)	_____ (para. 1-2)
(ii) dislike and have doubts about ( <i>phr. v.</i> )	_____ (para. 3-4)
(iii) something which can be chosen instead ( <i>n.</i> )	_____ (para. 4-5)
(iv) start doing an activity in a new place (v.)	_____ (para. 4-5)

5. What are the differences between karaoke booths and traditional karaoke bars? Complete the summary table below. Some of the details have been completed to help you.

Areas	Karaoke booths	Traditional karaoke bars
Environment	🚫 cramped	👍 spacious; 🚫 (i) _____ lighting, dangerous
Equipment	👍 in some, more than 30,000 (ii) _____ are accessible	👍👍👍 well-equipped with a vast song (iii) _____
Convenience	👍👍👍 some provide all-day (iv) _____	🚫🚫 the booking is (v) _____ if the headcount is not met
(vi) _____	🚫 relatively low, clearly seen	👍👍 relatively high
Pricing	👍👍👍 (vii) _____	🚫🚫🚫 several extra (viii) _____ may apply



6. Circle the adjective that best describes the speaker's tone in lines 49-50.

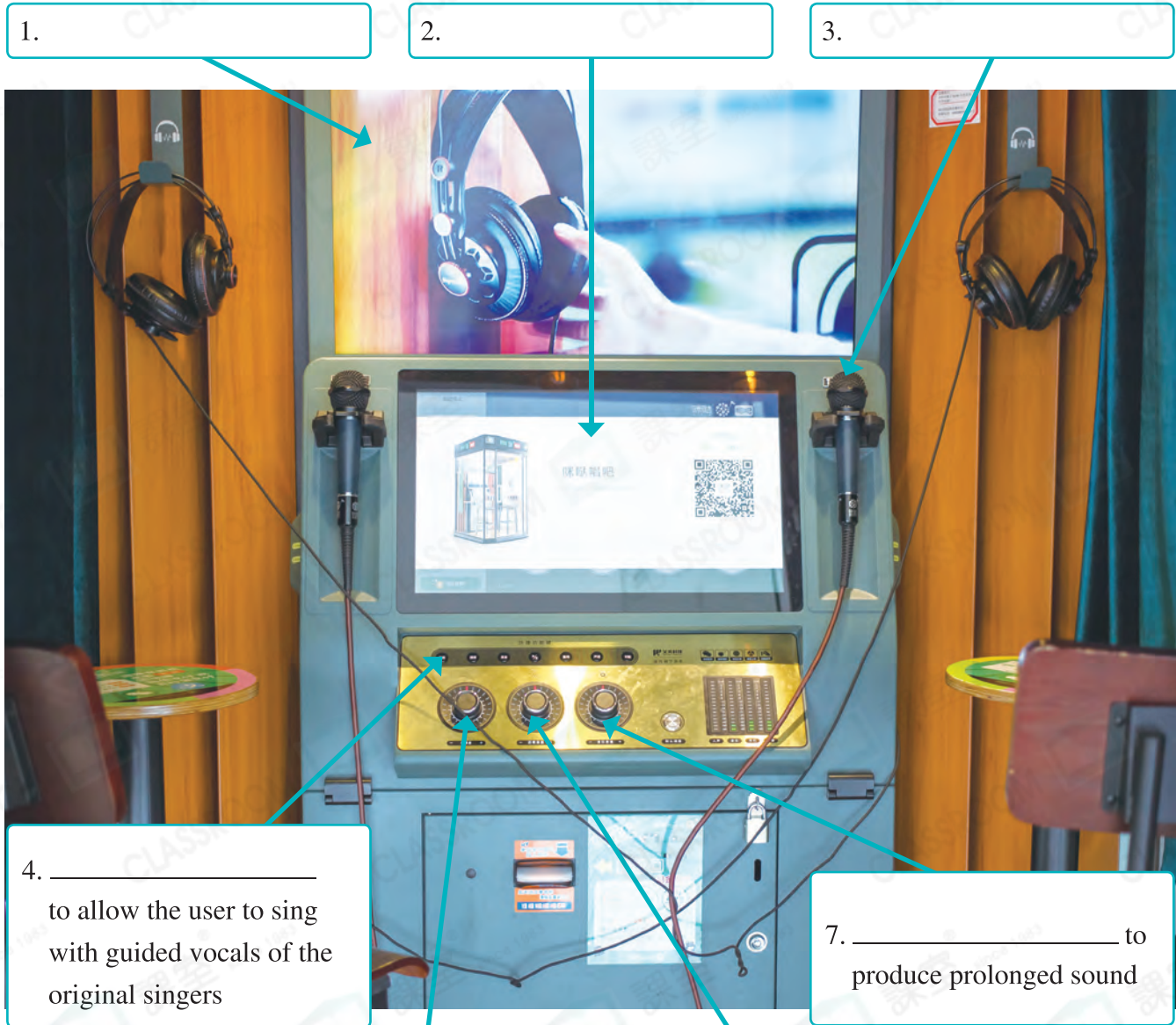
curious / sorrowful / sceptical / mysterious

**6** The question asked may have raised a concern.

## Part C Vocabulary Bank

Label the items below with the names of the equipment in a karaoke booth and the components of a music control panel from the word box.

microphone      sing-along system      display screen  
 playlist      amplifier      pitch control switch      echo effect switch



## Part D Cloze Passage

Complete the advertisement below with the appropriate words and phrases introduced on the previous page.

### Singing in a New Age

We are delighted to announce, after a long postponement, that the long-awaited karaoke booth was finally installed on 28<sup>th</sup> August in OGV Mall, the biggest shopping mall in town! For those of you who are used to singing with a group of friends in a spacious room, this brand new experience would be awesome and is not to be missed!

In each karaoke booth, there is a high-definition (1) \_\_\_\_\_ that is able to play any music videos available online and display lyrics in the meantime. Since a touch screen is being used, you may simply tap on the songs you want to reserve for later singing and drag them into the (2) \_\_\_\_\_. There, you may rearrange the order in which they are played. For example, the songs may be shuffled (made to appear in a random order), or simply played in reverse order. Similar to traditional karaoke, the booth, too, incorporates a (3) \_\_\_\_\_, which allows you to partner up with your favourite singer whenever you like.

Socialites like you might be thinking that karaoke booths are less than perfect for people who want to spend time with friends. Isn't singing by oneself too dreary an activity to be done at all? The booths, though small, are spacious enough to accommodate two people. Just in case your cheerleading impulse is driving you to perform a duet with your friend, there is even an extra (4) \_\_\_\_\_ in the booth for your partner.

If needed, you may adjust the (5) \_\_\_\_\_ to experience the multi-dimensional sound system, as well as make use of the (6) \_\_\_\_\_ to set the optimal tune for yourself. However, please remember to alter the audio volume with the (7) \_\_\_\_\_ so that the others wouldn't be disturbed by you and your friend's singing, enchanting though it may well be.

#### Word Craft

Some idioms and phrases include words related to sound. Can you guess what the following mean?

- e.g.** speak **volumes**  
fever **pitch**  
**echo** through the ages  
**tuned** in to someone/something

#### Let's Discuss!

1. Have you ever tried singing in karaoke booths? If not, would you like to give it a try? Explain your thoughts.
2. Which feature of karaoke booths is the most appealing to you?