

Shark Times

JANUARY 2026

NEWS FROM YHIS



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR, JAY VARS

Welcome Sharks, Parents, and Teachers to the January Issue of the YHIS Newspaper Club!

The members of the Newspaper Club have been working hard writing, editing, and designing this issue and are excited to share it.

This month has been filled with many events as we come back from a relaxing Christmas break. In this issue you can read about the success of our robotics teams and support them as they go to the national tournament. You can also have a sneak peek into the musical coming later this semester. As always, we have our teacher and student spotlight and our book and movie recommendations. This month has also had multiple global events that the Newspaper Club members have worked hard to summarize for you.

With appreciation,
Jay Vars

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EDITORS

Advisor: Mrs. Carson

President: Joy Tham (G12)

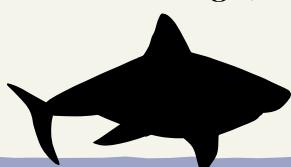
Vice President: Sarah Lee (G11)

Editor: Jay Vars (G10)

Designer: Libby Moon (G11)

Instagram Manager: Charles Kim (G10)

Writers: - *Jesmin Jung (G11)*
- *Daniel An (G10)*
- *Jin Kim (G8)*
- *Taein Kim (G8)*
- *Ellie Lee (G7)*
- *George Park (G7)*
- *JiWoo Hong (G6)*



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RED CROSS CLUB EVENT

Written by Jesmin Jung

The Red Cross is an international humanitarian organization dedicated to protecting lives, preventing suffering, and supporting communities in times of emergency. At YHIS, the Red Cross Club members actively serve their community by learning essential life-saving skills and preparing themselves to respond in critical situations. The Red Cross Club members at our school have successfully completed the “Adult and Pediatric First Aid/CPR/AED” certification course through the American Red Cross. This training equips students with the confidence, knowledge, and practical skills needed to recognize life-threatening emergencies and take immediate action.



The training was divided into two sessions: online and offline, and consisted of eight modules featuring preview quizzes, instructional videos, written guidelines, knowledge checks, and real-life scenario activities to help students understand how to respond in different situations. During the offline hands-on practice, members review what they learned and apply the skills in realistic scenarios. Through repeated practice, such as performing CPR and using an AED, they built strong muscle memory and confidence. Everyone participated with a strong sense of responsibility, teamwork, and dedication, showing that they truly care about supporting the school and the community.

Overall, going through all these modules helped the Red Cross Club members understand how to respond properly in real emergencies, not just in theory. During their training, they realized how important it is to stay calm, act quickly, and work together. The training wasn't always easy but practicing again and again made them feel more confident. Now, the Red Cross members at YHIS feel more prepared to help the people around them and make a positive difference in their community. It was a meaningful experience, and they are proud of what they have learned.

If you're interested in first aid, leadership, or simply want to challenge yourself, the Red Cross Club would love to have you in their club. Come join and be part of something meaningful!

Instagram: @yhis_redcross_youth



MS ROBOTICS COMPETITION

Written by George Park

This school year, the middle school Robotics Competition, Vex IQ, took place at Wuhan Yangtze International School on January 9th and 10th. The Vex IQ Robotics Competition engages students with and sparks an interest in technology, coding, and engineering. It also works to improve students' teamwork and problem-solving skills. Each year, the competition takes on a different focus, and this year, it was on teamwork and problem-solving.

There were twenty-eight total teams participating this year, and eight of those teams were from YHIS. On the first day and the beginning of the second day of the competition, all the teams worked with different teams to get the highest score in the one-minute game. The goal in the game was to stack different colored pins in a variety of ways and put them on different parts of the field. Additionally, all the teams had to write about their robot's improvements for every meeting they had. Jack Lee, a YHIS competitor, said that it was a good experience for him to build connections with other people in the competition. He said that he would love to participate again if he has the chance next year.



In total, there were fifteen awards for the teams in the competition. Of those fifteen awards, YHIS students won three. In addition, six of YHIS teams were able to qualify for the finals.



All the teams of YHIS celebrated a successful participation in the Vex IQ Robotics Competition, and for some teams, the competition will continue at the Vex Robotics Chinese National Competition, which will be taking place in Shanghai on February 6th and 7th. There will be four middle school teams representing YHIS in this National Competition



SPRING MUSICAL INSIGHT

Written by Jin Kim



On April 24 and April 25, the YHIS and YIA drama students are going to perform *The Sound of Music*. This musical is about a nun, Maria, who likes to sing but causes lots of problems. She then becomes the governess of Navy Captain Von Trapp's seven children. Maria teaches many things to the 7 children with her songs. When World War II breaks out, the Nazis come and offer Captain Von Trapp a high position in the German Navy. Captain Von Trapp says no, so they have to escape the country.

Now, Gabriel Miller, who has a major role in the musical, will speak to us:

Q: What is your role? What does the character do? Why is it special?

A: My role is Captain von Trapp, a stern, ex-Navy Captain for the Austrian army. He has 7 children, but because he's often away for business, he must hire a governess to watch the kids while he's gone. Over the course of the show, the captain falls in love with the most recent governess, a nun from a local abbey.

Q: How is the cast getting prepared?

A: Our director, Mr. Bower, is working hard to make sure that we all understand our roles and how to act in character. It has been going well so far, as far as I know, but I haven't been in many scenes yet, so I don't really know how well it's going.

Q: Can you say something to convince people to come to your musical?

A: Please come and watch the musical! Our actors are working very hard to deliver their best performances on stage! We look forward to seeing you there!

Many students are working hard to perform a successful musical, so we encourage you to watch the musical to support the students in a fun and interesting way.

HS ROBOTICS COMPETITION

Written by Joy Tham

On January 23rd and 24th, 23 teams from six schools competed at the YHIS-hosted High School VEX Robotics Tournament. Five teams from YHIS participated and two won awards, giving them the opportunity to participate in the ACAMIS National VEX Robotics Competition, which will be held in Shanghai in early February.

Senior Daniel Lee and junior Andy Lee were awarded the Tournament Champion Award while junior Ian Chan and YIA senior Sunny Dou earned the Skills Champion Award and Excellence Award.



Behind these awards were months of preparation and improvement from the students involved, many of whom reflected on the competition as a defining experience in their robotics journey. For Daniel, who began robotics only during summer vacation, the victory came as a surprise. He told us, “I couldn’t believe that we won because Andy and I never thought that our robot is good enough.” His teammate, Andy, shared similar feelings before the tournament but described a shift in confidence once matches began. Andy told us that before the other teams had arrived, he “wasn’t so confident facing those unknown opponents.” However, after watching how the other students performed during the practice matches, he “felt certain” that his team would “be a strong contender for the championship.” Andy also shared a lighthearted detail about his team’s robot.



He explained that their team name, Overheat, came from a key feature of their robot: a drivetrain motor that easily became overheated, requiring the team to cool it down with a fan between matches. He added that a sticker showing the robot cooling down, made by another team from Wuhan, became a humorous and memorable part of their experience.

Their team went on to win the Tournament Champion Award without losing a single match, marking a major improvement from the last year, where they made it to the quarter finals.



Ian and Sunny also celebrated a successful competition. For Ian, this was his first year participating in robotics, making the recognition especially meaningful. He told us that he was “genuinely surprised to be deemed as the best robot from the Excellence Award.” Sunny noted that the team’s success came from continued effort even after matches concluded.

HS ROBOTICS COMPETITION

Written by Joy Tham

The four students also shared memorable moments from the event that went beyond competition results. Daniel recalled the personal sacrifice he made to join robotics, explaining that he quit basketball to commit fully to the team. “When we won the final game, I was glad that I decided right,” he said. Ian described a surprising moment during the autonomous skills challenge when a programming error accidentally worked in their favor. “It miraculously parked itself into the zone instead, giving us an extra 15 points above everyone else,” he said. Andy highlighted his team’s dominant qualification performance, which allowed them to choose their alliance partners first during the knockout rounds.



Looking ahead, most of the award-winning students will attend the ACAMIS National VEX Robotics Competition in Shanghai. While Ian’s team qualified, he will not be attending due to his long-standing commitment to basketball. He noted that he still plans to support his teammates remotely.

Reflecting on the broader impact of the tournament, Ian also noted its significance for the school, saying, “We are the first high school team in Yantai to win an award for robotics in YHIS history.” With multiple teams advancing and historic achievements earned, this tournament marked a major milestone for YHIS Robotics and set high expectations for future competitions.



US - VENEZUELA SITUATION

Written by Jesmin Jung

On January 3, 2026, the United States launched a major military operation in Caracas, the capital of Venezuela. Soon after the attack, U.S. President Donald Trump posted images on social media showing Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro leaving the area. U.S. officials later confirmed that Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, were captured by U.S. forces and flown to an American warship in the Caribbean.

According to the U.S. government, Maduro will face multiple criminal charges in New York, including narco-terrorism and drug trafficking. Maduro has denied all accusations and said the charges are politically motivated. After announcing the capture, Trump stated that the United States would temporarily govern Venezuela until a “safe, judicious, and proper” transition of power can take place. He also said that U.S. oil companies would take control of Venezuela’s nationalized oil industry, which has struggled for many years. This announcement shocked people around the world. Many began asking why the United States decided to take such a serious action against Venezuela.



This situation is confusing to many experts because Trump has often supported the “America First” policy, which argues that the U.S. should avoid foreign conflicts unless they clearly benefit the country. Due to this, analysts believe there are deeper reasons behind the airstrikes. One reason may be the United States’ desire to regain influence in the Western Hemisphere. Problems in nearby countries can quickly affect the U.S., especially through illegal drugs and immigration. Another reason may be domestic politics.

Drug trafficking and immigration are major concerns for many American voters, especially in southern states, and strong action may help gain public support. Venezuela’s oil is also an important factor. Venezuela has the largest oil reserves in the world. In the past, it was a major oil supplier to the U.S., but today it sells much of its oil to China. Some experts believe the U.S. wants to reduce China’s influence in the region, while others argue that Venezuelan oil is expensive and difficult to refine.



International reactions have been mixed. The United Nations has expressed concern and warned that the airstrikes may violate international law. Inside Venezuela, opinions are divided. Some people welcome foreign intervention because they are unhappy with Maduro’s long rule and economic policies, while others strongly oppose it.



US - VENEZUELA SITUATION

Written by Jesmin Jung

In conclusion, the U.S. airstrikes on Venezuela cannot be explained only as part of the “War on Drugs.” The events are closely connected to long-standing political tensions, energy interests, and global power competition. While some people believe the operation could bring change to Venezuela, others worry that it may increase instability and violate international law. As the United States takes an unprecedented role in Venezuela’s future, the situation raises important questions about sovereignty, intervention, and global responsibility. The world is now watching closely to see whether this action will lead to lasting stability.



IRAN SITUATION

Written by Libby Moon

On December 28, 2025, protests started to occur in Iran after the sharp collapse of Iran's currency. Initially sparked by frustration over high inflation over things such as food prices and currency depreciation, the protests quickly evolved into a broader movement demanding an end to the current regime.

The protests started with shopkeepers in Tehran's Grand Bazaar going on strike and closing shops. Later on, more people joined the protests, and it began to turn into mass nationwide street protests calling for the end of the Islamic Republic system. What protesters wanted was fundamental change and transition to a new system of government which respects people's human rights and dignity. The government had four major reactions in response to the protestors:

- Casualties: Human rights groups report that between 6,000 and 36,500 people were killed, with the most intense violation occurring on January 8-9, 2026.
- Internet Blackout: On January 8, 2026, authorities implemented a near-total nationwide internet shutdown to hide the scale of the killings.
- Militarization: Security forces used live ammunition and established urban checkpoints and nighttime curfews.
- Arrests: Over 41,800 people have been detained, with reports of widespread torture and sexual assault in custody.



Before the 2025-2026 Iran protest, the government was an Islamic Republic theocracy featured by absolute authority of a Supreme Leader and a system of both elected and appointed institutions. The Supreme Leader is Ayatollah Ali Khamenei who has held the position since 1989. The President, Masoud Pezeshkian, was elected in July 2024 following the death of Ebrahim Raisi.

Due to the protests, some scholars are arguing that the Iranian government is faced with a crisis of authority and potential downfall. There are four main points of why the government might fall:

1. Loss of legitimacy: According to Max Weber, many scholars argue that widespread corruption, repression, and lack of political representation have caused Iranians to lose belief in the government's right to rule.
2. Economic failure – Based on Samuel Huntington's ideas, severe inflation, unemployment, and sanctions have weakened the state's ability to manage society, triggering mass protests.
3. Weak institutions – Scholars note that Iran's political institutions cannot effectively respond to public demands, allowing unrest to grow without peaceful resolution.
4. Repression and violence – Drawing on Hannah Arendt, heavy use of force during protests is seen as a sign of government weakness and further erodes public support.



SPRING FESTIVAL HOLIDAY

Written by Sarah Lee



With the winter upon us, people have feelings of remembrance as well as rebirth, especially those who celebrate the upcoming Chinese (Lunar) New Year, Chūnjié (春节) in Chinese. The Spring Festival is the most important Chinese holiday, a cultural pillar that promotes family and community connections.

The beginnings of the Spring Festival are buried in history and myth. It started with agricultural pledges made to gods and ancestors at the end of the harvest season and an ancient myth about a large monster, known as nián (年). This myth said that nián (年) would attack villagers during the annual harvest festival. It was discovered that this fearsome animal was afraid of the color red, the noise of firecrackers, and flames. Hence, the use of red lanterns, noise-makers, and red decorations is an ancient tradition integral to the celebrations surrounding the new lunar year.

During the New Year time, families tend to keep many different traditions. One is warding off evil by cleaning the house and another is praying for long life for parents. Families will also share red envelopes (红包, hóngbāo), which represent the sharing of blessings and good fortune from elders to children and single adults.



On New Year's Eve, a Reunion Dinner (团圆饭, tuányuán fàn) represents the climax of the season. This dinner is considered to be the most important meal of the entire year, and it is tradition for families to come together to enjoy it together. Tables are filled with many symbolic dishes, including fish that represents prosperity (年年有余, niánnián yǒu yú), dumplings shaped like gold coins that represent wealth, and long noodles that represent longevity.

With the Lunar New Year, a new zodiac animal comes around. There are twelve total animals with this year being the Year of the Horse, which is associated with energy, power, liberty, and progress. Like the other 12 zodiac animals in this cycle, this new zodiac animal serves as an inspiration for looking inside oneself. Those born under this sign are often referred to as industrious, daring, and having a magnetic personality.



As you can see, the Spring Festival exemplifies the importance of traditions involving families and a sense of who we are and what we stand for. The symbols that are used to celebrate this event signify our hopes for the future. Although you may see glowing lanterns at the Spring Festival in your community or eat dumplings with your friends, you are not simply witnessing an event. Rather, you are witnessing a tradition of humanity about home, aspirations, and our continuous efforts to preserve our stories and our families.

Wishing you a prosperous Spring Festival! 春节快乐！

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: DAVI ELIAS DE FREITAS OLIVEIRA

Written by Ellie Lee



Q1. Could you introduce yourself?

My name is Davi Elias, and I am in 7th grade. I am a curious and motivated student who enjoys learning, working with others, and discovering new ideas.

Q2. When do you feel happiest at school?

I feel happiest at school when I am learning something new, especially when lessons are interactive and make me think.

Q3. What is your favorite subject and why?

My favorite subject is science, because I enjoy understanding how the world works, asking questions, and discovering new ideas about nature, space, and the human body.

Q4. What do you like most about our school?

I believe this school is truly unique because of its strong spirit, sense of community, and the way students and teachers support one another.

Q5. What are your hobbies or interests?

One of my main hobbies is reading, because it helps me relax and learn new ideas at the same time.

Q6. What are your favorite school activities?

At school, my favorite activities are group projects, since I enjoy working as part of a team, sharing opinions, and learning from others.

Q7. What makes this school special?

The positive environment, supportive teachers, and the many opportunities to explore different subjects make this school special.

Q8. How would your friends describe you?

People often describe me as funny, while others see me as smart, and I think both descriptions reflect who I am.

Q9. What is your most memorable school moment so far?

One of the most memorable moments I have had so far was my first day at school. I was shocked by how big the campus is and by how many subjects and opportunities there are.

Q10. What do you usually do during breaks or after school?

During breaks and after school, I usually play and spend time with my friends, which helps me feel more connected and comfortable.

Q11. What are your goals for this year?

My goal is to continue learning, improving, and becoming the best version of myself.

Q12. What would you say to new students joining the school?

I would tell them that this school is a supportive and motivating environment where you can grow, make friends, and explore many opportunities.

Q13. Describe the school in one word.

Inspiring.

TEACHER SPOTLIGHT: MR. ALTMANSHOFER

Written by Taein Kim



Q1. Could you introduce yourself to our audience?

Yes, I'm Mr. Altmanshofer. I am the middle school English Language Arts teacher at YHIS. I have a wife, four children, and I grew up in America.

Q2. What inspired you to become an English teacher?

I love middle school students because I think they are really neat. It's an interesting and special time of life, and it's hard to navigate. I believe one of the best ways to navigate life is through literature. I love literature and students, and also the content. I think they go well together.

Q3. How did you end up in China and teaching here in YHIS?

I was praying about it. I have a friend, Mr. Vars, who works here, and he told me that there was a position open. So, after talking to him and praying about it, I felt like this was the right place where our family should move.

Q4. Can you explain your teaching style? What do you expect from your students?

I expect my students to think. That's the main thing, since it is an important skill to have. I try and create a classroom where students have work to do, and they need to think throughout the work, and they can't just not do things. So, I try to make the classroom interactive with discussions and have students do their work, such as writings.

Q5. What kinds of literary genres do you enjoy teaching the most?

I really love stories in general. I love books that are realistic but have little bits of magic in there. Or, if they don't have magic, then at least the story itself is magical in the way that it takes you as a person to surprising places and opens up parts of your heart that you weren't expecting to open up.

Q6. What goals do you have for your students currently?

My current goal for the students is making them read and write a lot.

Q7. What do you think makes a good readers and writers?

Good readers allow the authors to work on them. So, the work could be making you think, it could be making you feel in some way, or it could be making you think about your opinions and even change your attitudes. Good readers give the authors the chance to do that. Good writers want to connect to other people. They want their writing to impact the people who are reading it. It could be making them laugh or think about their opinions better. It's basically the same thing, making people feel or understand something in a new way.

Q8. What is one piece of advice you would give our secondary student body?

Exercise your capacity, and wonder about things. Get as curious about the world as possible because the world is amazing and there are lot of things, and it is important to know that you are also amazing.

SERVICE

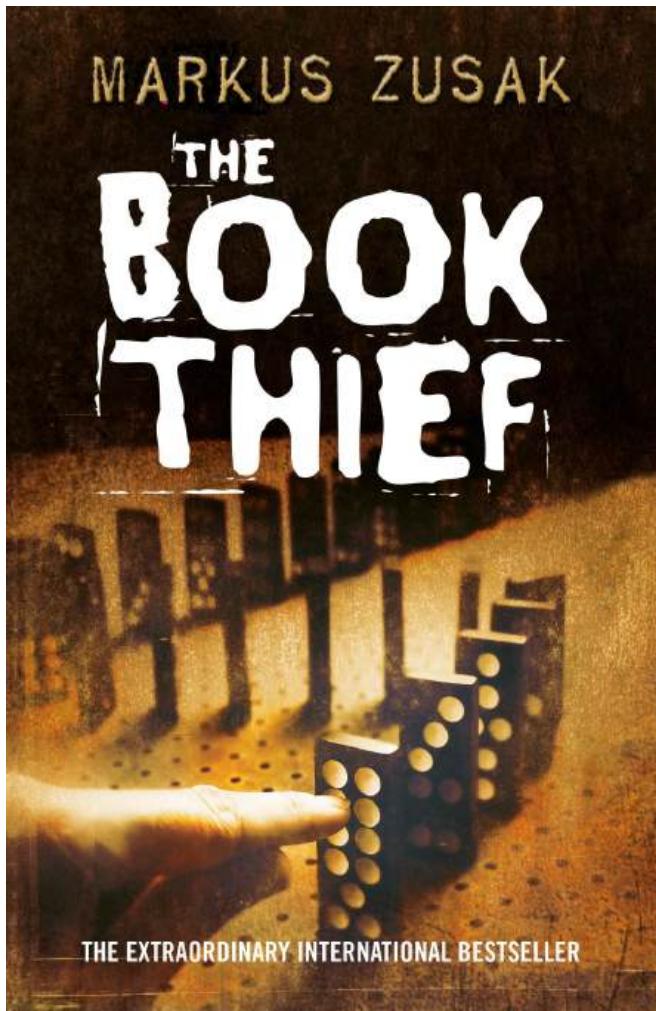
Written by Jiwoo Hong

This month's LifePlus Quality is service. Service is the action of helping and doing something for someone else. We use or see service almost everyday. For example, teachers teach students, doctors help sick people, and bus drivers take people to many places. For students, they can help teachers, such as by erasing boards, printing papers, or bringing materials for them. These are all acts of service because they help people by doing something for them. Services are very important for society because it makes life easier, safer, and happier. When there are no services, we would have no teachers to help us study, no doctors to take care of us when we are sick, and no bus drivers to take us to places. Without service, people will have more problems in daily life. So, let's show service now!



BOOK RECOMMENDATION

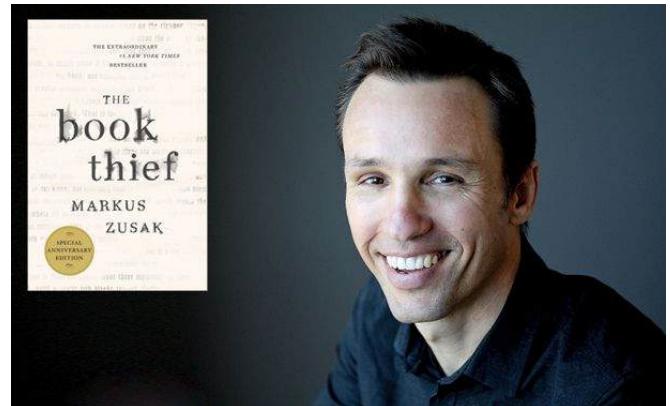
Written by Daniel An



Markus Zusak's retelling of the situation in Nazi Germany (1939-1943) is a very momentous novel, and one of the reasons is that the narrator of the book is "Death." This "Death" observes and records the life of Liesel Meminger, the main character of the book, and has compassionate and humanized characteristics, which is quite different from the image people usually have about death.

The protagonist of the book is Liesel Meminger, also known as "The Book Thief," and she is a young girl in Germany who was sent to live with her foster parents. During the journey, she finds and steals a book, which begins her relationship with words. However, Nazi ideologies dominate Germany, and people begin to burn books to eliminate every book with counter-Nazi ideology. Meanwhile, Liesel begins stealing books since that day and becomes The Book Thief.

The main theme of the book is the power of words. In the book, the Nazi ideologies use the power of words, and the protagonist resists those ideologies with words. The book is a balance of difficult and easy, making it suitable for all of secondary. Due to the lessons in the book and the reading level of it, *The Book Thief* is a great read for all people.



MOVIE RECOMMENDATION

Written by Charles Kim



My movie recommendation for this month is *Avatar 3: Fire and Ash*. *Avatar 3* is a movie produced by James Cameron and was released in late 2025, being a whopping 3 hours and 14 minutes long. That may make you think that it's too long and boring, but the possible boredom is covered with stunning visuals and memorable storytelling. Of course, *Avatar 3* introduces new challenges and many new characters that build on the original journey and test our protagonists.

A notable pro of the movie is its stunning visuals. Throughout the movie, there are highly detailed and vast environments that make you feel like you're in that world, the characters and creatures are natural and realistic, and the breathtaking battle scenes make the movie feel like reality, not you sitting in the cinema.



Honestly, who cares about visuals, though? The point is how entertaining and unforgettable the movie is. *Avatar 3*'s greatest strength would be its themes and storytelling. Each message and theme is emotionally touching and memorable, like the love between family, the feeling of being different, the responsibility of great strength, and the pressure to prove oneself. Even after the movie, thinking back at each detailed setting, storyline, and interaction is extremely entertaining since every part is connected like dots, illustrating a bigger picture.

Beyond pure entertainment, *Avatar 3* also conveys messages that convict us to reflect our own lives, like the strength of culture and spiritual areas, and the power of family bonds, making it very thought-provoking both during and after the movie.

My final rating for *Avatar 3* is 4.5 out of 5. It was exciting to watch and was an emotionally memorable for me. I couldn't get myself out of the story all night, and the story got more interesting the more I thought about it. The only parts that you should be careful of are that many scenes include weapons and violence, and that the movie is very long, so you should be ready to visit the restroom a couple of times.



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