

潛移默化

qian2 yi2 mo4 hua4

Many of those who were arrested in connection with the Mong Kok riots were young people, and the alarm has sounded about media influence.

Some blamed the propagation of radical ideology in the media. Lawmaker Priscilla Leung Mei-fun took issue with certain movies and publications that she said have instilled “a despairing mood” among the younger generation.

She pointed to messages such as “Hong Kong does not have democracy because nobody has died,” “rebirth comes only from sacrificing” and “the root of violence is tyranny.”

People probably won't be influenced by one or two movies or articles. But negative ideas, no matter how subtle, disseminated over a long period of time, may affect attitude and behavior. This process is called “潛移默化” (*qian2 yi2 mo4 hua4*).

“潛” (*qian2*) means “hidden,” “secret,” “移” (*yi2*) “to move,” “to change,” “默” (*mo4*) “silent,” and “化” (*hua4*) “to change,” “to transform,” “to in-

Idiom by Lon Yan

fluence.” Literally, “潛移默化” (*qian2 yi2 mo4 hua4*) “secretly change, silently transform.”

It means “to influence secretly,” “to change and influence unobtrusively and imperceptibly.” “潛移默化” (*qian2 yi2 mo4 hua4*) can be good or bad. It really depends on what is being influenced.

A teacher who talks to students about positive values and sets a good example every day will, over time, help students become better persons through “潛移默化” (*qian2 yi2 mo4 hua4*).

If you run with bad company, you will pick up wrong ideas and go astray, slowly and imperceptibly. The process is also “潛移默化” (*qian2 yi2 mo4 hua4*).

Terms containing the character “默” (*mo4*) include:

默許 (*mo4 xu3*) – tacit consent

默契 (*mo4 qi4*) – rapport

默認 (*mo4 ren4*) – to acquiesce

沉默 (*chen2 mo4*) – taciturn