

5. Despite their origins in the Gupta Empire of India or Ancient Egypt, games like chess or bowling remain widely enjoyed today. What modern game do you believe will withstand the test of time, and why?

—Inspired by Adam Heiba, Class of 2027

The Official MAO Rules

+7 years , 3-10 Players

Object:

1. *“Rule one: play a card if you can, if not then pick up a card and either play it or say pass. Rule two: from now on, no one can talk about any more rules after this one.”*
My friend smiles mischievously as she lays out the cards for the first time. Then she addresses us:
“Mao is now in session.”
2. Upon discovering the card game Mao, it amazed me at how easily I fell in love with it. Within minutes, I felt hooked, and as long as sleepovers continue to exist, I know people will continue to play Mao. But to recognize how a game can stand the test of time, one must first understand the importance of characterizing something as contemporary. Mao originates from a German game popular in the late fifties—hardly qualifying as something new. Yet the fateful night my peers and I huddled together to play, we already knew that the Mao we participated in became just that: a modern game that will withstand the test of time.

Playing:

1. *“Spades,” I say as I put my card onto the pile. It's our fifth round of playing, and since I won the last game, I now hold the power. Whenever someone switches the suit to a spade, failure to call out their action results in an extra card added to their deck. My rule has now become law.*
2. The secret to Mao's modernity remains in the ability of players to make their own adaptations as they see fit, a common pattern seen throughout human history. Take Communism, for example. The ideology as a whole has existed for centuries, yet despite its long tenure, many adaptations of its central idea are contemporary topics. Why? When Marx and Engels wrote *The Communist Manifesto*, they drafted the document for an audience of impoverished working class people. Their work provided a theory that aligned with the events of their era, and the *Manifesto* became a modern document. Even so, by the time Lenin led the Bolshevik revolution, the ideology had already shifted to fit the glove of a more current time. Taking inspiration from Russia, Mao Zedong then created his own system in China. Later, communism even appeared in Ecuador, Cuba, and Vietnam. Today, whether good or bad,

many forms of the belief influence society. Similarly, Mao's adaptability creates a new card game for every session played, no matter its origin in time. Each additional rule fed into the system reforms and adapts the style of the match, allowing the game to revitalize itself over and over. It will always stay modern.

Set Up:

1. *"Failure to thank the dealer," my friend says, triumphantly forcing an extra card into my hand as soon as the sixth round starts. Oops. I accept the card with a grumble as we begin. "Thank you."*
2. Though the experience of Mao changes every round, a few base rules apply. Their "unspoken" nature easily becomes arguable between players, but at the same time offers stability amongst the game's general chaos. Analyzing modern understanding of human evolution reveals the same principles. According to Darwin's theory of Universal Common Descent, all living organisms share genetics that trace back to a single species, though his approach remains highly debated. Recently, the biologist Douglas L. Theobald published a paper confirming the existence of a Universal Common Ancestor (UCA) by statically testing the hypothesis among microorganisms. His findings concluded that the theory does indeed hold. Darwin's approach, therefore, remains the foundation for present-day evolutionary understanding, just as the implied base rules of Mao are the game's backbone. As biological evolution and card games advance, the UCA and Mao's fundamentals will remain as two powerful dealers holding the cards of future development.

Special Cards:

1. *When my turn comes back around, I set down an ace of hearts on the growing pile. "Rapunzel, Rapunzel." I say. "Let down your hair," my friends dutifully repeat. A smile creeps into my face as we near the seventh round. This frivolous rule has become one of my favorites.*
2. At a first glance Mao appears complex, yet a deeper look into the game's core reveals a structure that players can easily grasp. Its simplicity makes Mao an enjoyable experience. Often, literature has a similar, standardized narrative arc, and considering the classics, Grimm's Fairy Tales stands as one of the most prominent. Originally published in 1812, the Grimm brothers wrote their collection of short stories with graphic and often gruesome descriptions: violence, cannibalistic tendencies, and assault play a major part in the legends. Yet many today see the same narratives in a completely different light. Grimm's works are classified as fairy tales, not through their darker aspects, but rather through their themes of love, virtue, and heroism against evil, thus creating touching stories that have easily replicable structures. Like Wilhelm

and Ludwig Emil Grimm's carefully crafted domination of the media, Mao will continue to grow in relevancy. Even though many can change, re-write, and diversify the game's palette, Mao, at its core, carries a plain theme and story-like quality that will keep players playing throughout time: it's just really fun.

Scoring:

1. An analysis of human history, evolution, and media reveals a common determinant among the subjects that can persist throughout time, and ironically the key is not just persistence. Adaptation and advancement go hand in hand with consistency, as long as the core values remain strong. Even seemingly unchanging games like chess and bowling have faced innovations to keep their relevance. If not for Chess.com and other online platforms allowing players from around the world to compete together, or the introduction of automatic pinsetters and high-performance bowling balls, such competitions might not have the audience they've accumulated today. As far as card games go—when it comes to dynamic play while maintaining core values—it's clear what will stand against the erosion of time. All signs point to Mao.
2. *I shed the last card of my hand: "The session has now concluded."*