A School Story

It happened at my private school thirty odd years ago, and I still can't explain it. I came to that school in September and among the boys who arrived on the same day was one whom I took to. I will call him McLeod. The school was a large one: there must have been from 120 to 130 boys there as a rule, and so a considerable staff of masters was required. One term a new master made his appearance. His name was Sampson. He was a tall, well-built, pale, black-bearded man. I think we liked him. He had travelled a good deal, and had stories which amused us on our school walks, so that there was some competition among us to get a chance to listen to him.

Well, the first odd thing that happened was this. Sampson was doing Latin grammar with us. One of his favourite methods was to make us construct sentences out of our own heads to illustrate the rules he was trying to teach us. Now, on this occasion he ordered us each to make a sentence bringing in the verb memlnij "I remember." Well, most of us made up some ordinary sentence such as "I remember my father," but the boy I mentioned — McLeod — was evidently thinking of something more interesting than that. Finally, very quickly he wrote a couple of lines on his paper, and showed it up with the rest. The phrase was "Remember the lake among the four oaks." Later McLeod told me that it had just come into his head. When Sampson read it he got up and went to the mantelpiece and stopped quite a long time without saying anything looking really embarrassed. Then he wanted to know why McLeod had put it down, and where his family lived, and if there was such a lake there, and things like that.

There was one other incident of the same kind. We were told to make a conditional sentence, expressing a future consequence. We did it and showed up our bits of paper, and Sampson began looking through them. All at once he got up, made some odd sort of noise in his throat, and rushed out. I noticed that he hadn't taken any of the papers with him, so we went to look at them on his desk. The top paper on the desk was written in red ink — which no one used — and it wasn't in anyone's handwriting who was in the class. I questioned everyone myself! Then I thought of counting the bits of paper: there were seventeen of them on the desk, and sixteen boys in the form. I put the extra paper in my bag and kept it. The phrase on it was simple and harmless enough: "If you don't come to me, I'll come to you." That same afternoon I took it out of my bag — I know for certain it was the same bit of paper, for I made a fingermark on it — and there was no single piece of writing on it!

The next day Sampson was in school again, much as usual. That night the third and last incident in my story happened. We — McLeod and I — slept in a bedroom the windows of which looked out at the main building of the school. Sampson slept in the main building on the first floor. At an hour which I can't remember exactly, but some time between one and two, I was woken up by somebody shaking me. I saw McLeod in the light of the moon which was looking right into our windows. "Come," he said, — "come, there's someone getting in through Sampson's window. About five minutes before I woke you, I found myself looking out of this window here, and there was a man sitting on Sampson's window-sill, and looking in." "What sort of man? Is anyone from the senior class going to play a trick on him? Or was it a burglar?!" McLeod seemed unwilling to answer. "I don't know," he said, "but I can tell you one thing — he was as thin as a rail, and water was running down his hair and clothing and," he said, looking round and whispering as if he hardly liked to hear himself, "I'm not at all sure that he was alive." Naturally I came and looked, and naturally there was no one there.

And next day Mr. Sampson was gone: not to be found, and I believe no trace of him has ever come to light since. Neither McLeod nor I ever mentioned what we had seen to anyone. We seemed unable to speak about it. We both felt strange horror which neither could explain.

1. Why did schoolchildren like the new teacher, Mr. Sampson?

1. They liked his appearance.
2. He often went for a walk with them.
3. He organized competitions for them.
4. They enjoyed listening to his stories.

First Train Trip

I must have been about eight when I made my first train trip. I think I was in second grade at that time. It was midsummer, hot and wet in central Kansas, and time for my aunt Winnie's annual vacation from the store, where she worked as a clerk six days a week. She invited me to join her on a trip to Pittsburgh, fifty miles away, to see her sister, my aunt Alice. "Sally, would you like to go there by train or by car?" aunt Winnie asked. "Oh, please, by train, aunt Winnie, dear! We've been there by car three times already!"

Alice was one of my favourite relatives and I was delighted to be invited to her house. As I was the youngest niece in Mother's big family, the aunties all tended to spoil me and Alice was no exception. She kept a boarding house for college students, a two-storey, brown brick building with comfortable, nicely decorated rooms at the corner of 1200 Kearney Avenue. She was also a world-class cook, which kept her boarding house full of young people. It seemed to me that their life was so exciting and joyful.

Since I'd never ridden a train before, I became more and more excited as the magic day drew near. I kept questioning Mother about train travel, but she just said, "Wait. You'll see." For an eight-year-old, waiting was really difficult, but finally the big day arrived. Mother had helped me pack the night before, and my little suitcase was full with summer sundresses, shorts and blouses, underwear and pyjamas. I was reading Billy Whiskers, a fantastic story about a goat that once made a train trip to New York, and I had put that in as well. It was almost midnight when I could go to bed at last.

We arrived at the station early, purchased our tickets and found our car. I was fascinated by the face-to-face seats so some passengers could ride backwards. Why would anyone, I thought, want to see where they'd been? I only wanted to see what lay ahead for me.

Finally, the conductor shouted, 'All aboard!' to the people on the platform. They climbed into the cars, the engineer blew the whistle and clanged the bell, and we pulled out of the station.

This train stopped at every town between my home in Solomon and Pittsburgh. It was known as the "milk train" because at one time it had delivered goods as well as passengers to these villages. I looked eagerly at the signs at each station. I'd been through all these towns by car, but this was different. The shaky ride of the coaches, the soft brown plush seats, the smells of the engine drifting back down the track and in through the open windows made this trip far more exotic.

The conductor, with his black uniform and shiny hat, the twinkling signals that told the engineer when to stop and go, thrilled me. To an adult, the trip must have seemed painfully slow, but I enjoyed every minute.

Aunt Winnie had packed a lunch for us to eat along the way as there was no dining car in the train. I was dying to know just what was in that big shopping bag she carried, but she, too, said, "Wait. You'll see." Midway, Aunt Winnie pulled down her shopping bag from the luggage rack above our seats. My eyes widened as she opened it and began to take out its contents. I had expected lunch- meat sandwiches, but instead there was a container of fried chicken, two hardboiled eggs, bread and butter wrapped in waxed paper, crisp radishes and slim green onions from Winnie's garden, as well as rosy sliced tomatoes. She had brought paper plates, paper cups and some of the 'everyday' silverware. A large bottle of cold tea was well wrapped in a dishtowel; the ice had melted, but it was still chilly. I cautiously balanced my plate on my knees and ate, wiping my lips and fingers with a large paper napkin. This was living!

When we had cleaned our plates, Aunt Winnie looked into the bag one more time. The best treat of all appeared — homemade chocolate cakes! Another cup of cold tea washed these down and then we carefully returned the remains of the food and silverware to the bag, which Aunt Winnie put into the corner by her feet.

"Almost there," said my aunt, looking out of the window at the scenery passing by. And sure enough, as we pulled into the Pittsburgh station we immediately caught sight of aunt Alice, waiting for us, a smile like the sun lighting up her face, arms wide open. We got off the train and she led us past the taxi rank and the bus stop to her car that was parked near the station. And all the way to her home she was asking about my impressions of my first train trip and I could hardly find the words to express all the thrill and excitement that filled me.

2. The first time Sally travelled by train was when she...

1. ...had to move to her aunt Alice.
2. ...had a summer vacation at school.
3. ...went to Pittsburgh for the first time in her life.
4. ...visited her aunt Alice together with aunt Winnie.

Sisters

"Dear Kathy! Chance made us sisters, hearts made us friends." This quote is at the center of a collage of photographs — covering our twenty-something years — that now hangs in my office. My sister, Susie, made it for me as a wedding present. It probably cost very little to make (she is a starving college student, after all), but it means more to me than any of the more "traditional" wedding presents my husband and I received from family and friends last June. Whenever I look at the collage, it reminds me of my sister and what a true friend she is.

Susie and I weren't always close friends. Far from it, in fact. We shared a room for nearly fifteen years when we were younger, and at the time I thought I couldn't have asked for a worse roommate. She was always around! If we argued and I wanted to go to my room to be alone, she'd follow me right in. If I told her to go away, she'd say right back, 'It's my room, too! And I can be here if I want to.' I'd consult my mother and she usually agreed with Susie. I suppose being three years younger has its benefits.

When we were kids, she'd 'borrow' my dolls without asking. (And no toy was safe in her hands.) When we got older, Susie quit borrowing my toys and started borrowing my clothes. That was the final straw. I couldn't take it anymore. I begged my parents to let me have a room of my own — preferably one with a lock on the door. The answer was always a resounding "no." "Please?!" I'd beg. My parents would just shake their heads. They didn't agree with each other on much, but for some reason they had a united front on this issue.

To crown it all, she had this habit of doing everything I did. Choirs, rock bands, sports teams, dance studios: There was no place where I was safe. "She looks up to you," my mom would say. I didn't care. I just wanted a piece of my life that didn't involve my little sister. When I complained to my mother, she'd just smile and say, "One day you'll want her around." Sure.

It's strange how mothers have this habit of being right about everything. When I was sixteen and my sister was thirteen, we went through a series of life-changing events together that would forever change our relationship. First, my parents announced that they were divorcing. My dad packed up and moved to an apartment in New Hampshire — more than a half hour drive away from our cozy house in Massachusetts. He bought me my first car and I often went with Susie to his place when we missed him a lot. During those trips we started discussing our troubles and making plans about how to reunite the family again. But a year later, our father met his future second wife and moved again; this time to Indiana. This meant we could only see him once or twice a year, as opposed to once every few weeks. That was hard.

Yet those few months changed my relationship with my sister forever. We started having more heart-to-heart talks as opposed to silly fights. Over time, she became my most cherished friend. It's not uncommon for us to have three-hour-long telephone conversations about everything or about nothing — just laughing over memories from childhood or high school.

She's the only person who's been through all of the tough stuff that I've been through, and the only person who truly understands me. Susie and I have shared so much. She's been my roommate, my friend, and my partner in crime. We've done plays together, gone to amusement parks, sang, and taken long road trips together. We've laughed until our sides hurt, and wiped away each others' tears.

Even though distance separates us now, we're closer than ever. Sisters share a special bond. They've seen all of your most embarrassing moments. They know your deepest, darkest secrets. Most importantly, they love you unconditionally. I'm lucky to be able to say that my little sister is my best friend. I only wish everyone could be so fortunate.

3. Why is the collage of photographs more important for Kathy than the other wedding presents?

1. It reminds Kathy of her wedding.
2. Kathy didn't like the other wedding presents.
3. It was the most expensive present.
4. Kathy's sister made it for her.

To Become Wealthy

As a kid, I always wanted to become wealthy. I knew if I could achieve this, I would be able to consider myself successful. At the time, I had no worries and felt my happiness would be based on whether I could fulfill all my needs and wants. My simple philosophy of that time was if I was rich, I would definitely be content with my life.

My father always stressed his belief that happiness includes much more than money. I can remember him lecturing me about how money does not make an individual happy; other things in life such as: health, family, friends, and memorable experiences make a person genuinely happy. At this time in my life, I took what my dad said for granted and did not give any thought to his words. All I could see was the great life my cousins had because they had everything a kid ever dreamed of.

At a young age, I noticed society was extremely materialistic. The media seemed to portray the wealthy as happy people who add value to our society. My opinions did not change; in high school I still sought a career that would eventually yield a high salary. I still felt that the possibility of living life from paycheck to paycheck would automatically translate into my unhappiness. However, things changed when I decided to take an internship in the accounting department for the summer after my second year of college.

Starting the first day on the job in the accounting department, I found myself extremely bored. I was forced to do monotonous work, such as audit eight thousand travel and expense reports for a potential duplicate. In addition, I had to relocate away from friends and family in order to accept the position. I was earning the money I always wanted; however, I noticed that having money to spend when you are by yourself was not satisfying.

I began to think back to what my dad always said. After a few months in the job, I truly realized that money does not bring happiness. A more satisfying experience for me would have been doing an ordinary summer job for far less money. For me to understand that concept, it took an experience as painful as this one. I often contemplated how much money it would take me to do this as my everyday job. I concluded, whatever the salary for this position I would never be capable of fulfilling a happy life and making a career out of this job.

As I looked forward to the summer to draw to a close, I truly comprehended the meaning of my dad's words. Contrary to my prior beliefs, I firmly believe through experience that money cannot make a person happy. The term "wealth" is a broad term, and I believe the key to happiness is to become wealthy in great memories, friends, family, and health. This I believe.

4. In his childhood the narrator's idea of happiness was to...

1. ...get what he wanted.
2. ...live an interesting life.
3. ...be an influential person.
4. ...make other people happy.

The Joy and Enthusiasm of Reading

I believe in the absolute and unlimited liberty of reading. I believe in wandering through the huge stacks of books and picking out the first thing that strikes me. I believe in choosing books based on the dust jacket. I believe in reading books because others dislike them or find them dangerous, or too thick to spend their free time on, or too difficult to understand. I believe in choosing the hardest book imaginable. I believe in reading what others have to say about this difficult book, and then making up my own mind, agreeing or disagreeing with what I have read and understood.

Part of this has to do with Mr. Buxton, who taught me Shakespeare in the 10th grade. We were reading Macbeth. Mr. Buxton, who probably had better things to do, nonetheless agreed to meet one night to go over the text line by line. The first thing he did was point out the repetition of motifs. For example, the reversals of things ("fair is foul and foul is fair"). Then there was the association of masculinity with violence in the play.

What Mr. Buxton did not tell me was what the play meant. He left the conclusions to me. The situation was much the same with my history teacher in 11th grade, Mr. Flanders, who encouraged me to have my own relationship with historical events and my own attitude to them. He often quoted famous historians in the process. I especially liked the one who said, "Those who forget their history have no future."

High school was followed by college, where I read Umberto Eco's Role of the Reader, in which it is said that the reader completes the text, that the text is never finished until it meets this careful and engaged reader. The open texts, Eco calls them. In college, I read some of the great Europeans and Latin Americans. All the works I read were open texts. It was an exciting experience. Besides, I got familiar with wonderful works of literary criticism.

There are those critics, of course, who insist that there are right ways and wrong ways to read every book.

No doubt they arrived at these beliefs through their own adventures in the stacks. Perhaps their adventures were not so exciting or romantic. And these are important questions for philosophers of every character. But yet I know only what joy and enthusiasm about reading have taught me, in bookstores new and used. They have taught me not to be afraid of something new, unusual or non-traditional, not to deny it but embrace it and try to understand even if you cannot agree with it. Not to stay within the boundaries but always seek for something new and enjoy every second of this creative process and be happy every time you get some result, no matter how positive or negative.

I believe there is not now and never will be an authority who can tell me how to interpret, how to read, how to find the pearl of literary meaning in all cases. There exist thousands of versions, interpretations, colours and shadows. You could spend a lifetime thinking about a sentence, and making it your own. In just this way, I believe in the freedom to see literature, history, truth, unfolding ahead of me like a book whose spine has just now been cracked.

5. The unlimited liberty of reading for the narrator means...

1. ...access to different types of books.
2. ...freedom in choosing and interpreting books.
3. ...possibility to challenge other opinions on the book.
4. ...opportunity to select what to read according to the mood.

Reunion

The last time I saw my father was in Grand Central Station. I was going from my grandmother's in the Adirondacks to a cottage on the Cape that my mother had rented, and I wrote my father that I would be in New York between trains for an hour and a half, and asked if we could have lunch together. His secretary wrote to say that he would meet me at the information booth at noon, and at twelve o'clock sharp I saw him coming through the crowd.

He was a stranger to me — my mother divorced him three years ago and I hadn't been with him since — but as soon as I saw him I felt that he was my father, my flesh and blood, my future and my doom. I knew that when I was grown I would be something like him; I would have to plan my campaigns within his limitations. He was a big, good-looking man, and I was terribly happy to see him again.

He struck me on the back and shook my hand. "Hi, Charlie," he said. "Hi, boy. I'd like to take you up to my club, but it's in the Sixties, and if you have to catch an early train I guess we'd better get something to eat around here." He put his arm around me, and I smelled my father the way my mother sniffs a rose. It was a rich compound of whiskey, after-shave lotion, shoe polish, woollens, and the rankness of a mature male. I hoped that someone would see us together. I wished that we could be photographed. I wanted some record of our having been together.

We went out of the station and up a side street to a restaurant. It was still early, and the place was empty. The bartender was quarrelling with a delivery boy, and there was one very old waiter in a red coat down by the kitchen door. We sat down, and my father hailed the waiter in a loud voice. "Kellner!" he shouted. "Garcon! You!" His boisterousness in the empty restaurant seemed out of place. "Could we have a little service here!" he shouted. Then he clapped his hands. This caught the waiter's attention, and he shuffled over to our table.

"Were you clapping your hands at me?" he asked.

"Calm down, calm down," my father said. "It isn't too much to ask of you — if it wouldn't be too much above and beyond the call of duty, we would like a couple of Beefeater Gibsons."

"I don't like to be clapped at," the waiter said.

"I should have brought my whistle," my father said. "I have a whistle that is audible only to the ears of old waiters. Now, take out your little pad and your little pencil and see if you can get this straight: two Beefeater Gibsons. Repeat after me: two Beefeater Gibsons."

"I think you'd better go somewhere else," the waiter said quietly.

"That," said my father, "is one of the most brilliant suggestions I have ever heard. Come on, Charlie."

I followed my father out of that restaurant into another. He was not so boisterous this time. Our drinks came, and he cross-questioned me about the baseball season. He then struck the edge of his empty glass with his knife and began shouting again. "Garcon! You! Could we trouble you to bring us two more of the same."

"How old is the boy?" the waiter asked.

"That," my father said, "is none of your business."

"I'm sorry, sir," the waiter said, "but I won't serve the boy another drink."

"Well, I have some news for you," my father said. "I have some very interesting news for you. This doesn't happen to be the only restaurant in New York. They've opened another on the corner. Come on, Charlie."

He paid the bill, and I followed him out of that restaurant into another...

6. The narrator was looking forward to meeting with his father because he...

1. ...hoped that his parents would get back together.
2. ...expected to get a valuable present from him.
3. ...wanted to stay with him in New York.
4. ...missed the feeling of being with him.

Getting What He Deserved?

There were seven or eight of us in the line, waiting to pay the cashier for our lunches. We were all in a hurry because that's the way of the American business-day lunch. At the front of the line there was a pretty woman with a small boy of about eight. He was a cute little fellow wearing black jeans, white sneakers and a blue pullover sweater. A shock of dark hair fell over his eyes. He looked very much like his mother. The boy had a charming face with chiseled features but he was depressed.

As the woman fumbled in her purse, looking for money to pay her check, the kid noticed a display of candy bars beside the cash register and immediately wanted one.

"You can't have any candy," said his mother. "You had a pie with your lunch." She took out her handkerchief, then put it back and went on fumbling in her purse.

"But I want some candy," said the kid. His tone was surprisingly insistent. Almost aggressive.

The mother continued her search for money in her purse, and the kid continued to whine about the candy. Then he began to stamp his feet and shout.

The rest of us in line were beginning to get fidgety. We bunched a little closer together and several folks began mumbling under their breath. "Ought to snatch him bald," said one man quietly.

The kid by now was reaching for the candy display in open opposition to his mother. She grabbed his arm and pulled it away, but not before he clutched a Snickers bar in his hand.

"Put it back," she said.

"No!" shouted the child. It was an arrogant "No!"

The line bunched even more closely together, and the man who had suggested snatching the kid bald appeared ready to do so himself. So much for the kid's shock of dark hair, I thought.

But the mother moved suddenly and with purpose. She paid the cashier, took back her change and dropped it into her purse. Then with one quick motion, she grabbed hold of the child's pullover sweater and lifted him off the floor. The moment his sneakers came back to earth, she turned his back toward her and began flailing him. A look of disbelief came across the kid's face. His eyes filled with tears. He tried to break away but that made his mother flail him again.

When she had finished administering the punishment, she turned the child around and pointed a finger squarely in his sobbing face. With a voice strong and certain, she said, "The next time I tell you do something, young man, will you do it?"

The child looked at the floor. Meekly and sincerely, he replied, "Yes, ma'am."

The mother turned to go. The child returned the Snickers bar without further hesitation and marched dutifully out behind her.

The people in a line broke into spontaneous applause.

"Did the kid deserve the punishment he had? What would I do if I were his mother? She may have been absolutely right for all I know. I have no children. I have no right to argue with the mother" I thought. "There is nothing I can do but wait. Perhaps the best way to get an idea of normal behavior of children is to get married and raise a few."

7. The people in the cafe were all in a hurry because...

1. ...they had to buy their lunch far away from the office.
2. ...they wanted to be the first in line to pay for the food.
3. ...it was the way they normally behaved at lunch time.
4. ...they had to buy their lunch before the cashier left for her lunch.

The Courtship of Susan Bell

Mrs. Bell invited Aaron Houston, a famous British artist, to paint her younger daughter's portrait. Aaron wanted to make a few drawings before he started a portrait. On the Thursday evening the drawing was finished. Not a word had been said because the girls were shy to speak in Aaron's presence and he had gone on working in silence. "There," said he, "I don't think that it will be any better if I go on for another hour. I hope you will like it. There, Miss Susan," and he sent it across the table with his fingers.

Susan's face got red, she was embarrassed. She took the drawing and said, "Oh, it's beautiful." The superb originality of the drawing captivated her. A young girl was represented sitting at a table in a room filled with fresh air and the soft light of a summer day. The greenery of an old overgrown garden could be seen through the window. In front of her on the white tablecloth there was her book. The eyes of the girl looked out at you, dark grey, mysterious, sad, languorous, yet strangely intent. What was the girl thinking about? Who was the girl thinking about? The drawing was more than a portrait. It fact, the artist tackled a far bigger job than that of reproducing a definite person in portraiture and in performing which he imparted another and bigger content.

Susan's face revealed her feelings. She turned to her mother and said, "Isn't it beautifully done, mother?" and then her elder sister and her mother got up to look at it, and both admitted that it was beautifully done but Susan felt there was doubt in her mother's voice.

"We thank you very much," said Susan after a long pause.

"Oh, it's nothing," said he, not quite liking the word "we".

On the following day he returned from his work to Saratoga about noon. He had never done this before, and therefore no one expected that he would be seen in the house before the evening. On this occasion, however, he went straight there, and by chance both the widow and her elder daughter were out. Susan was there alone in charge of the house.

He walked in and opened the sitting-room door. There she sat, with her knitting and a book forgotten on the table behind her, and Aaron's drawing, on her lap. She was looking at it closely as he entered.

"Oh, Mr. Dunn," she said, getting up and holding the picture behind her dress.

"Miss Susan, I have come here to tell your mother that I must start for New York this afternoon and be there for six weeks, or perhaps, longer."

"Mother is out," she said. "I am sorry."

"Is she?" said Aaron.

"And Hetta too. Dear me! And you will want dinner. I'll go and see about it."

Aaron began to swear that he could not possibly eat any dinner.

"But you must have something, Mr. Dunn" she said.

"Miss Susan," said he, "I've been here nearly two months."

"Yes, sir," Susan said, hardly knowing what she was saying.

"I'm going away now, and it seems to be such a long time before I'll come back." And then he paused, looking into her eyes, to see what he could read there. She leant against the table; but her eyes were turned to the ground, and he could hardly see them.

"Will you help me?" he said. She was keeping silent. "Miss Susan," he continued, "I am not very good at saying things like this, but will you marry me? I love you dearly with all my heart. I never saw anyone so beautiful, so nice, so good." And then he stopped. He didn't ask for any love in return. He simply declared his feelings, leaning against the door. Susan remained silent. Aaron ran out of the room.

8. The girls kept silent because they...

1. ...didn't like to speak to Aaron.
2. ...didn't know what to say to Aaron.
3. ...were afraid to speak in their mother's presence.
4. ...were too modest to speak in the guest's presence.

Making the Difference

My life is the same as millions of others'. I'm a wife and mother to two great kids. I work as a sales advisor and spend my weekends pottering about in the kitchen or garden. But eight years ago, my "normal", Liverpool-centred life changed forever.

I've always donated money to various charities. But rather than just giving money, I also wanted to help people face to face, so I decided to look for a project abroad. On the Internet I read about an Indian organization called the Rural Development Society. I knew very little about India, but I discovered that people in Tamil Nadu, the poorest state in Southern India, were in dire need of help.

I talked it through with my husband Paul, but I don't think he expected me to go through with it.

Still, I sent a letter offering my services and within a few weeks received a reply from Manhoran, the chief of Ananandal village. In broken English, he explained how excited they were to think that someone would want to come to help them. My decision was made.

My husband was not enthusiastic about my going there, but he also knew how important it was to me. And, though my sons said they'd miss their mum, they knew it'd only be for a few months.

I booked a flight and wrote to Chief Manhoran that I was coming.

Nothing could have prepared me for my arrival at Chennai airport. The noise, the heat and the bustle was totally alien — as were the surroundings. I got to work straight away teaching at the small local school funded by the Rural Development Society, for six days a week.

Day-to-day life was a total culture shock. With no electricity or running water, everything was exceedingly basic. But despite the shockingly simple life, not for one moment did I regret going. The kindness of the villagers was all-encompassing. In return for me showing them respect for their culture, they gave me their all. My Hindi was awful, but we communicated with smiles, laughter and hugs.

From arriving in a desolate village full of strangers, they'd become my friends. I started to look at the place with the utmost affection. And despite looking forward to my trip back to Liverpool, it felt like home.

I started teaching the village children the alphabet under the tree by the hut. Every day more and more children turned up. It was soon impossible for me to manage on my own. I found a local teacher and we started to share evening classes. We settled into a routine, splitting them into groups of older and younger children — named my Little and Big Darlings.

The day before the end of my three-month stay, I was overwhelmed when 2,000 villagers begged me to stay and continue with the school. There was no way I could remain there — I missed my husband and children. But I promised to be back.

My husband was incredibly proud of how far we'd come, but never felt the urge to visit Ananandal. He and our sons prefer to stay at home and help raise money for the school over here.

Since then the school has got bigger and bigger and now we have 500 pupils. The best thing is that the school recently came second in the annual exams of the whole of Southern India. I've thought about going to live there, but my life, my job and family are in England so I'm happy just visiting.

When I'm back in Liverpool people say how proud I must be of myself. To a certain extent I am. But I'm more proud of my Little and Big Darlings who come to school every day with a smile, desperate to learn. They're the inspiration, not me.

9. The author decided to go to work abroad because...

1. ...she felt bored with her life in Liverpool.
2. ...she needed to earn money for charity.
3. ...she was eager to help people directly.
4. ...she wanted to see India.

I arrived at the cloud forest in Ecuador ten days ago. I was one of a group of twelve volunteers that wanted to save the rainforest. My reasons for going on this trip were twofold: firstly, I wanted to collect and bring back alive some of the fascinating animals, birds and reptiles that inhabit this region; secondly, I had long cherished a dream to see South America: not the inhabited South America with its macadam roads, its cocktail bars, its express trains roaring through a landscape denuded of its flora and fauna by the beneficial influences of civilization. I wanted to see one of those few remaining parts of the continent that had escaped this fate and remained more or less as it was when America was first discovered: I wanted to see its rainforests, its vast lands of untouched, pure, natural wildlife. We were working together with local people and scientists and we were learning and seeing new things every day. Our lodge was comfortable, had breathtaking views and was in the middle of the rainforest. It was a two-hour walk from the nearest road, and it was even further to the nearest village.

The rainforest is truly an astonishing place. There are thousands of species of plants here and more than 700 species of birds. There are millions of insects and scientists think there may be around forty mammal species that haven't even been discovered. But what I was really amazed at how everything depends on everything else for survival.

Every tree in the rainforest is covered in a species of another kind. The black wasp uses the tarantula as a nest for its eggs, plants need monkeys for seed dispersal, and the clouds are necessary for the survival of the whole rainforest. This is because they provide moisture. The problem is, climate change is causing the clouds to rise by 1–2 meters every year. What will happen to the plants that need this moisture? What will happen to the animals that need those plants?

Our job was to watch this changing ecosystem. One of my favourite projects was the bird survey. Every day a group of us set out at around five o'clock with a local scientist. At this time of the morning the air was filled with the sound of bird song. We had to identify the birds we hear and see and write down our findings. Later, we entered all our information into a computer at the lodge.

We also set up cameras to record pumas, spectacled bears and other large mammals. It was always exciting to see pumas because it meant there were other animals around that they would normally hunt. We fixed the cameras to trees around the reserve, and every day a team of volunteers collected the cameras memory cards.

There was a lot to do in the rainforest, but at least I felt like we were making a difference.

However, soon I started collecting some animals and insects. I realized that as soon as the hunting got under way and the collection increased, most of my time would be taken up in looking after the animals, and I should not be able to wander far from camp. So I was eager to get into the forest while I had the chance.

Nevertheless, I should mention the fact that without the help of the natives you would stand little chance of catching the animals you want, for they know the forest, having been born in it. Once the animal is caught, however, it is your job to keep it alive and well. If you left this part of it to the natives you would get precious little back alive.

10. Which reason for the trip to the rainforest was NOT mentioned?

1. Dream of visiting South America.
2. Gathering a collection.
3. Thirst for adventures.
4. Saving rainforests.

Scarcely had we settled into the Strawberry-pink Villa before my mother decided that I was running wild, and that it was necessary for me to have some sort of education. As usual when a problem arose, the entire family flung itself with enthusiasm into the task of solving it. Each member had his or her own idea of what was best for me.

Sitting under the open window in the twilight, I had listened with interest, not unmixed with indignation, to the family discussion of my fate. Finally my mother decided that George would be a good teacher for me. Now it was settled, I wondered vaguely who George was, and why it was so necessary for me to have lessons. But the dusk was thick with flower-scents, and the olive-groves were dark, mysterious, and fascinating. I forgot about the imminent danger of being educated, and went off with Roger to hunt for glow-worms in the sprawling brambles.

Later I discovered that George was my brother's friend and he had come to Corfu to write. There was nothing very unusual about this, for all Larry's acquaintances in those days were either authors, poets, or painters.

My new teacher came over to the villa to discuss my education with Mother, and we were introduced. We regarded each other with suspicion. George was a very tall and extremely thin man with a brown beard and a pair of large spectacles. He had a deep, melancholy voice, a dry and sarcastic sense of humor. However, he was not upset by the fact that there were no school-books available on the island; he simply looked through his own library and appeared on the appointed day armed with his own selection of books. He patiently taught me Geography from the maps in the back of an ancient copy of Pears Encyclopedia, English from books that ranged from Wilde to Gibbon, French from the book called "Le Petit Larousse", and mathematics from memory. From my point of view the most important thing was that we devoted some of our time to natural history, and George carefully taught me how to observe and how to note down observations in a diary. At once my enthusiastic interest in nature became focused, for I found that by writing things down I could learn and remember much more. The only morning that I was ever on time for my lessons were those which were given up to natural history.

Every morning at nine George would come into the little dining-room of the villa, sit at the table methodically arranging the books. He would droop over the exercise- book pensively, pulling at his beard. Then in his large, clear writing he would set the task for me to solve.

"If it took two caterpillars a week to eat eight leaves, how long would four caterpillars take to eat the same number? Now, apply yourself to that."

While I was struggling with the apparently insoluble problem of the caterpillar appetites, George was practicing some dancing moves in the hall as at that time he was engaged in learning some of the local dances, for which he had a passion. Through all this I would be watching him, fascinated, the exercise-book lying forgotten in front of me. Mathematics was not one of our successful subjects.

In geography we made better progress, for George was able to give a more zoological tinge to the lesson. We drew giant maps and then filled in the various places of interest, together with drawings of the most exciting animals and birds to be found there.

11. In paragraph 1 "I was running wild" means that the boy...

1. ...hardly spent any time at home.
2. ...led an uncontrolled life.
3. ...became very angry.
4. ...had an unhealthy lifestyle.

Hazlitt's Hotel

I took a cab to Hazlitt's Hotel on Frith Street. I like Hazlitt's because it's intentionally obscure — it doesn't have a sign or a plaque or anything at all to betray its purpose — which puts you in a rare position of strength with your cab driver. Let me say right now that London cab drivers are without question the finest in the world. They are trustworthy, safe and honest, generally friendly and always polite. They keep their vehicles spotless inside and out, and they will put themselves to the most extraordinary inconvenience to drop you at the front entrance of your destination. There are really only a couple of odd things about them. One is that they cannot drive more than two hundred feet in a straight line. I've never understood this, but no matter where you are or what the driving conditions, every two hundred feet a little bell goes off in their heads and they abruptly lunge down a side street. And when you get to your hotel or railway station or wherever it is you are going, they like to drive you all the way around it so that you can see it from all angles before alighting.

The other distinctive thing about them, and the reason I like to go to Hazlitt's, is that they cannot bear to admit that they don't know the location of something they feel they ought to know, like a hotel, which I think is rather sweet. To become a London cab driver you have to master something titled The Knowledge — in effect, learn every street, hospital, hotel, police station, cricket ground, cemetery and other notable landmarks in this amazingly vast and confusing city. It takes years and the cabbies are justifiably proud of their achievement. It would kill them to admit that there could exist in central London a hotel that they have never heard of. So what the cabbie does is probe. He drives in no particular direction for a block or two, then glances at you in the mirror and in an overcasual voice says, "Hazlitt's — that's the one on Curzon Street, innit, guv? Opposite the Blue Lion?" But the instant he sees a knowing smile of demurral forming on your lips, he hastily says, "No, hang on a minute, I'm thinking of the Hazelbury. Yeah, the Hazelbury. You want Hazlitt's, right?" He'll drive on a bit in a fairly random direction. "That's this side of Shepherd's Bush, innit?" he'll suggest speculatively.

When you tell him that it's on Frith Street, he says. "Yeah, that the one. Course it is. I know it — modern place, lots of glass."

"Actually, it's an eighteenth-century brick building."

"Course it is. I know it." And he immediately executes a dramatic U-turn, causing a passing cyclist to steer into a lamppost (but that's all right because he has on cycle clips and one of those geeky slip stream helmets that all but invite you to knock him over). "Yeah, you had me thinking of the Hazelbury" the driver adds, chuckling as if to say it's a lucky thing he sorted that one out for you, and then lunges down a little side street off the Strand called Running Sore Lane or Sphincter Passage, which, like so much else in London, you had never noticed was there before.

12. The narrator said that he liked London cab drivers because they...

1. ...can be trusted and nice to deal with.
2. ...can drive in a straight line.
3. ...know all the hotels and streets in the city.
4. ...make friends easily.

Lily and I had planned a movie marathon weekend. I was exhausted from work and she was stressed out from her classes, so we'd promised to spend the whole weekend parked on her couch and subsist solely on pizza and crisps. No healthy food. No diet Coke. And absolutely no strict, official clothes. Even though we talked all the time, we hadn't spent any real time together since I'd moved to the city.

We'd been friends since the eighth grade, when I first saw Lily crying alone at a cafeteria table. She'd just moved in with her grandmother and started at our school in Avon, after it became clear that her parents weren't coming home any time soon. The day I found her crying alone in the cafeteria was the day her grandmother had forced her to chop off her dirty dreadlocks, and Lily was not very happy about it. Something about the way she talked, the way she said, "That's so nice of you," and "Let's just forget about it," charmed me, and we immediately became friends. We'd been inseparable through the rest of high school, and lived in the same room for all four years at Brown College. Lily hadn't yet decided whether she preferred girlish dresses or rough leather jackets, but we complemented each other well. And I missed her. Because with her first year as a graduate student and my exhausting work, we hadn't seen a whole lot of each other lately.

Lily was studying for her Ph.D. in Russian Literature at Columbia University and working odd jobs every free second she wasn't studying. Her grandmother barely had enough money to support herself, and Lily had to pay for the studies on her own. However, she seemed to be fond of such a way of life. She loved Russian culture ever since her eighth-grade teacher told her that Lily looked how he had always pictured Lolita, with her round face and curly black hair. She went directly home and read Nabokov's "Lolita", and then read everything else Nabokov wrote. And Tolstoy. And Gogol. And Chekhov. By the time we finished school, she was applying to Brown College to work with a specific professor who had a degree in Russian Literature. On interviewing a seventeen-year-old Lily the professor declared her one of the most well-read and passionate students of Russian literature he'd ever met. She still loved it, still studied Russian grammar and could read anything in its original.

I couldn't wait for the weekend. My fourteen-hour workdays were registering in my feet, my upper arms, and my lower back. Glasses had replaced the contacts I'd worn for a decade because my eyes were too dry and tired to accept them anymore. I'd begun losing weight already as I never had time to eat properly, although I was drinking an enormous amount of coffee. I'd already weathered a flue infection and had paled significantly, and it had been only four weeks. I was only twenty-three years old. And my boss hadn't even been in the office yet. I knew I deserved a weekend.

Saturday afternoon found us particularly motivated, and we managed to saunter round the city center for a few hours. We each bought some new clothes for the upcoming New Year's party and had a mug of hot chocolate from a sidewalk cafii. By the time we made it back to her apartment, we were exhausted and happy and spent the rest of the night watching old movies and eating pizza.

13. What did the girls hope to do that weekend?

1. Talk all the weekend.
2. Have some more studies that weekend.
3. Go to the cinema.
4. Have a quiet weekend in.

Cry-baby

It was almost midnight before they got around to giving the Oscars to the really well-known personalities. At first a series of guest stars had awarded the prizes: to the best designer, to the best special-effects man, for the best technical invention for motion pictures during the year, and to all the other people, so unknown outside the industry, but so significant within it.

I looked around the theatre, recognizing most of the weighty faces in the business, but not caring much. You see, I was pretty nervous. Myra Caldwell, whom I had brought to the ceremony, was sitting there beside me, and right across the aisle was Joan Weyland. Now, to get the picture properly, you have to remember that during that particular year Myra had played the sensational supporting role in The Devil Loses and had been called the greatest find in the history of pictures. But that was the same year that Joan Weyland had stolen a big picture called Calumet Centre right out from under the nose of one of the most famous female stars in the industry. The only other actress nominated was not given much chance. Now in a few minutes, they were going to announce who had won the Oscar for the Best Supporting Actress of the year. It was the hottest Contest and everybody was aware of it. Furthermore, it was no secret that the two leading contestants would be delighted to boil each other in oil — win, lose, or draw. And here they were across the aisle from each other. Do you get why I was nervous?

Then the lights went down. They were going to run short scenes from the pictures for which the actors and actresses had been nominated. The supporting-actress pictures were coming on, and here was Joan Weyland in her grand scene from Calumet Centre. The audience started to applaud as soon as they saw her.

After that they ran a short episode from Whirlwind, showing the other nominee, a refugee actress called Tanya Braden. I had never seen the picture of the actress, and the picture hadn't made much money, but there was no doubt she could act! She played the star's mother and she made you believe it.

Then they ran Myra's big moment in The Devil Loses. After it was over, I tried to guess who had the biggest chance.

"I think I won," Myra said to me.

The lights went up. The old actor, who had won the Supporting Actor award the year before, came through the curtains and prepared to present the award. I didn't see how I was going to live through the next few minutes. He got the envelope and began opening it very slowly.

He was loving every second of it, the old man. Then he looked at the little piece of paper.

"The Winner," he said, then paused again, "is Miss Tanya Braden, for her performance in Whirlwind."

Well, I'm not too sure about the sequence of events that followed. I don't remember the applause, because Joan let out a loud cry from across the aisle that drowned out everything else. Then Myra started to cry. I don't mean cry like the ordinary person, but I mean cry so that the building shook.

Then Joan jumped to her feet and started out, and her mother accompanied her. But I couldn't do anything with Myra. The show was interrupted and the whole theatre was staring at her. I picked her up and carried her out.

It wasn't a very pleasant performance, but I think there is some excuse. After all, Joan is 8 years old, and Myra is only 6, and she isn't used to being up so late. I'm a little on her side anyway. And why not? I'm her father.

14. At the beginning of the Oscar ceremony prizes were awarded...

1. ...to the most famous stars among the winners.
2. ...to the best director.
3. ...for the best film.
4. ...to the secondary members of shooting crews.

A Gifted Cook

If there is a gene for cuisine, Gabe, my 11-year-old son, could splice it to perfection. Somewhere between Greenwich Village, where he was born, and the San Francisco Bay area, where he has grown up, the little kid with the stubborn disposition and freckles on his nose has forsaken Boy Scouts and baseball in favor of wielding a kitchen knife.

I suppose he is a member of the Emeril generation. Gabe has spent his formative years shopping at the Berkeley Bowl, where over half a dozen varieties of Thanksgiving yams, in lesser mortals, can instill emotional paralysis. He is blessed with a critical eye. "I think Emeril is really cheesy," he observed the other night while watching a puff pastry segment. "He makes the stupidest jokes. But he cooks really well."

With its manifold indigenous cultures, Oaxaca seemed the perfect place to push boundaries. Like the mole sauces for which it is justly famous, the region itself is a subtle blend of ingredients — from dusty Zapotec villages where Spanish is a second language to the zocalo in colonial Oaxaca, a sophisticated town square brimming with street life and vendors selling twisty, one-story-tall balloons.

Appealing to Gabe's inner Iron Chef seemed like an indirect way to introduce him to a place where the artful approach to life presides. There was also a selfish motive: Gabe is my soul mate, a fellow food wanderer who is not above embracing insanity to follow his appetite wherever it leads.

Months ahead of time, we enrolled via the Internet in the daylong Wednesday cooking class at Seasons of My Heart, the chef and cookbook author Susana Trilling's cooking school in the Elta Valley, about a 45-minute drive north to town. In her cookbook and PBS series of the same name, Ms. Trilling, an American whose maternal grandparents were Mexican, calls Oaxaca "the land of no waste" where cooking techniques in some ancient villages have endured for a thousand years.

I suspected that the very notion of what constitutes food in Oaxaca would test Gabe's mettle. At the suggestion of Jacob, his older brother, we spent our second night in Mexico at a Oaxaca Guerrero baseball game, where instead of peanuts and Cracker Jack, vendors hawked huge trays piled high with chapulines, fried grasshoppers cooked in chili and lime, a local delicacy. Gabe was bug-eyed as he watched the man next to him snack on exoskeletal munchies in a paper bowl. "It's probably less gross than a hot dog," he admitted. "But on the rim of the bowl I saw a bunch of legs and served body parts. That's revolting!"

Our cooking day began at the Wednesday market in Etla, shopping for ingredients and sampling as we went. On the way in the van, Gabe had made friends with Cindy and Fred Beams, fellow classmates from Boston, sharing opinions about Caesar salad and bemoaning his brother's preference for plain pizza instead of Hawaiian. Cindy told Gabe about a delicious sauce she'd just had on her omelet at her B & B. "It was the best sauce — to die for," she said. "Then I found out the provenance. Roasted worms."

The Oaxacan taste for insects, we'd learn — including the worm salt spied at the supermarket and the "basket of fried locusts" at a nearby restaurant — was a source of protein dating back to pre-Hispanic times.

When our cooking class was over I saw a flicker of regret in his face, as though he sensed the world's infinite variety and possibilities in all the dishes he didn't learn to cook. "Mom", he said plaintively, surveying the sensual offerings of the table. "Can we make everything when we get home?"

15. Gabe's mother thinks that he is...

1. ...lazy.
2. ...determined.
3. ...selfish.
4. ...thoughtful.

Avoidance activity

I am in Birmingham, sitting in a cafe opposite a hairdresser's. I'm trying to find the courage to go in and book an appointment. I've been here three quarters of an hour and I am on my second large cappuccino. The table I'm sitting at has a wobble, so I've spilt some of the first cup and most of the second down the white trousers I was so proud of as I swanked in front of the mirror in my hotel room this morning.

I can see the hairdressers or stylists as they prefer to be called, as they work. There is a man with a ponytail who is perambulating around the salon, stopping now and then to frown and grab a bank of customer's hair. There are two girl stylists: one has had her white blonde hair shaved and then allowed it explode into hundreds of hedgehog's quills; the other has hair any self-respecting woman would scalp for: thick and lustrous. All three are dressed in severe black. Even undertakers allow themselves to wear a little white on the neck and cuffs, but undertakers don't take their work half as seriously, and there lies the problem. I am afraid of hairdressers.

When I sit in front of the salon mirror stuttering and blushing, and saying that I don't know what I want, I know I am the client from hell. Nobody is going to win Stylist of the year with me as a model.

"Madam's hair is very th...", they begin to say "thin", think better of it and change it for "fine" — ultimately, coming out with the hybrid word "thine". I have been told my hair is 'thine' many times. Are they taught to use it at college? Along with other conversational openings, depending on the season: "Done your Christmas shopping?" "Going away for Easter?" "Booked your summer holiday?" "You are brown, been way?" "Nights are drawing in, aren't they?" "Going away for Christmas?"

I am hopeless at small talk (and big talk). I'm also averse to looking at my face in a mirror for an hour and a half. I behave as though I am a prisoner on the run.

I've looked at wigs in stores, but I am too shy to try them on, and I still remember the horror of watching a bewigged man jump into a swimming pool and then seeing what looked like a medium sized rodent break the surface and float on the water. He snatched at his wig, thrust it anyhow on top of his head and left the pool. I didn't see him for the rest of the holiday.

There is a behavior trait that a lot of writers share — it is called avoidance activity. They will do anything to avoid starting to write: clean a drain, phone their mentally confused uncle in Peru, change the cat's litter tray. I'm prone to this myself, in summer I deadhead flowers, even lobelia. In winter I'll keep a fire going stick by stick, anything to put off the moment of scratching marks on virgin paper.

I am indulging an avoidance activity now. I've just ordered another cappuccino, I've given myself a sever talking: For God's sake, woman! You are forty-seven years of age. Just cross the road, push the salon door open, and ask for an appointment!

It didn't work. I'm now in my room, and I have just given myself a do-it-yourself hairdo, which consisted of a shampoo, condition and trim, with scissors on my Swiss army knife.

I can't wait to get back to the Toni & Guy salon in Leicester. The staff there haven't once called my hair 'thine' and they can do wonders with the savagery caused by Swiss army knife scissors.

16. The narrator was afraid to enter the hairdresser's because she...

1. ...had spilt coffee on her white trousers.
2. ...doubted the qualification of local stylists.
3. ...was strangely self-conscious.
4. ...was pressed for time.

So far there are only two ways to get into space — you either have to be an astronaut or very rich. Countries such as Russia and the USA have space programs, but you need to be highly qualified and very determined if you want to become an astronaut. Only a few of the thousands of applicants make it through the training and selection program. Alternatively, if you have the money and are fit enough, you may be able to buy a place on the space journey, as the US millionaire, Mike Melwill did in 2004. But soon there may be another way.

Asif Mahsood is a 14-year old Pakistani with big plans. He dreams of getting a job in space, but hopes he doesn't need to become an astronaut. And the idea is not so fantastic. Many experts believe that the travel industry will be revolutionized during the next decades by the development of space holidays.

Most people know about the space stations that are already circling the Earth. They are used for research and are operated by professional astronauts. But soon a space station could be built for commercial purposes. A holiday in space would not be cheap, but there are probably already plenty of people who would be prepared to pay.

This is where Asif's dream comes in. He wants to be the manager of the world's first orbiting hotel. It is likely that rocket ships will provide the transport. They could be launched from the Earth's surface, or even from a carrier aircraft high in the atmosphere. The space hotel will be designed with a landing platform for the rocket ship. The passengers could then move into the hotel through a large tube connected to the hotel entrance. This would be necessary because there is no gravity in space. However, inside the space hotel there would need to be a system creating artificial gravity, so that guests could move around normally.

Naturally, if hotels are built in space, there will also be new jobs in space. Guests will need all the normal services found in a hotel on Earth, but there will also be some new possibilities. For example, all sorts of recreation activities could be designed to take advantage of the zero gravity conditions in space. Being able to float around a room, bounce off the walls and ceiling would be very attractive for tourists looking for a new experience. Games of three-dimensional football, basketball or volleyball would certainly be very interesting. The hotel would also have telescopes to look out at the universe, and to look back at the Earth below.

A space hotel will need to have other facilities that are not necessary in normal hotels. It would be more like a small city in some ways, with its own hospital, communication system, police force and fire department.

In the meantime, Asif is going to keep studying hard at school so that he can find a job working in one of the big international hotels in Lahore or Karachi. He wants to qualify in hotel management and continue to study business administration. The hotels are much the same, so Asif believes that the best preparation for a job in space will be gaining plenty of experience working in Earth hotels.

The whole idea of hotels in space may sound a little like science fiction, but 30 years ago technology such as mobile video phones and the Internet seemed to be just a crazy dream, whereas today they are a normal part of everyday life, and it is hard to imagine our world without them.

17. Who is Mike Melwill?

1. The founder of a new space program.
2. An American scientist.
3. A highly-qualified astronaut.
4. A man who paid for a space travel.

A good night's sleep — an impossible dream?

Tonight, do yourself a favor. Shut off the TV, log off the Internet and unplug the phone. Relax, take a bath, maybe sip some herbal tea. Then move into the bedroom. Set your alarm clock for a time no less than eight hours in the future, fluff up your pillows and lay your head down for a peaceful night of restorative shut-eye. That's what American doctors advise.

American sleep experts are sounding an alarm over America's sleep deficit. They say Americans are a somnambulant nation, stumbling groggily through their waking hours for lack of sufficient sleep. They are working longer days — and, increasingly, nights — and they are playing longer, too, as TV and the Internet expand the range of round-the-clock entertainment options. By some estimates, Americans are sleeping as much as an hour and a half less per night than they did at the turn of the century — and the problem is likely to get worse.

The health repercussions of sleep deprivation are not well understood, but sleep researchers point to ills ranging from heart problems to depression. In a famous experiment conducted at the University of Chicago in 1988, rats kept from sleeping died after two and a half weeks. People are not likely to drop dead in the same way, but sleep deprivation may cost them their lives indirectly, when an exhausted doctor prescribes the wrong dosage or a sleepy driver weaves into someone's lane.

What irritates sleep experts most is the fact that much sleep deprivation is voluntary. "People have regarded sleep as a commodity that they could shortchange," says one of them. "It's been considered a mark of very hard work and upward mobility to get very little sleep. It's a macho attitude." Slumber scientists hope that attitude will change. They say people have learned to modify their behavior in terms of lowering their cholesterol and increasing exercise. Doctors also think people need to be educated that
allowing enough time for sleep and taking strategic naps are the most reliable ways to promote alertness behind the wheel and on the job.

Well, naps would be nice, but at the moment, employers tend to frown on them. And what about the increasing numbers of people who work at night? Not only must they work while their bodies' light-activated circadian rhythms tell them to sleep, they also find it tough to get to sleep after work. Biologists say night workers have a hard time not paying attention to the 9-to-5 day because of noises or family obligations or that's the only time they can go to the dentist. There are not too many dentists open at midnight.

As one might imagine, companies are springing up to take advantage of sleeplessness. One of the companies makes specially designed shift-work lighting systems intended to keep workers alert around the clock. Shiftwork's theory is that bright light, delivered in a controlled fashion, can help adjust people's biological clocks. The company president says they are using light like a medicine. So far, such special lighting has been the province of NASA astronauts and nuclear power plant workers. He thinks that in the future, such systems may pop up in places like hospitals and 24-hour credit-card processing centers. Other researchers are experimenting with everything from welder's goggles (which night workers wear during the day) to human growth hormones. And, of course, there is always what doctors refer to as "therapeutic caffeine use", but everyone is already familiar with that.

So, is a good night's sleep an impossible dream for Americans? Maybe so.

18. The advice of American doctors is all about...

1. ...ways to reduce negative effect of modern technologies.
2. ...complex measures that ensure healthy sleep.
3. ...positive effect of herbal therapy.
4. ...the process of restoring from unexpected psychological stress.

Whilst travelling in 2001, I had my first but definitely not last go at snowboarding. Rhona and I went to the Cardona ski resort, a couple of hours from Queenstown in New Zealand. We had been staying in Queenstown for a couple of weeks and had tried a couple of the local ski resorts. They had been so popular, that there was almost no room to stay. The problem for me with this was that with so many people moving around me, my eyes were constantly re-focusing. This meant that I couldn't see a thing! As I had never snowboarded before, we decided that it was going to be a problem. A guy at one of the local ski rental shops recommended that we should try Cardona.

On arrival I went straight to the Ski Patrol and explained my situation. They suggested that I should wear a vest, that they supplied, with the words "BLIND SKIER" on the front and back on top of my jacket. They told me that this was more for the benefit of the other skiers around me. I must admit, I wasn't very keen to do this, but thought I would give it a try.

Once onto the slopes, I put my vest on and began to practise my limited skills. Because I have done some other board sports, i. e. skateboarding, surfing, etc., it wasn't too hard to learn the basics. Once I was comfortable with this, I headed off for the ski lift and the big slopes. As I stood in the queue I could hear people talking about that "poor blind guy". This niggled me a bit, but I decided to try to ignore it. At the top of the lift I stepped off and strapped my feet onto the board.

As we headed off I could hear more people talking about the vest. I was starting to get paranoid. Then as I gathered speed and Rhona would shout directions, I realized that the people who saw the vest were getting out of my way. Fantastic! This was better than a white stick in a crowd. We picked up speed turning left, then right, hitting a few bumps, but mainly going really well. I even managed to control the snowboard. Well, sort of control it. Before I knew it, we had zipped down a long straight slope and had come to the end of the run. The adrenaline was buzzing and I was "high as a kite". What a feeling. I got back on the ski lift and headed back up. This time I was going to do the run solo!

I had memorized the slope from my first run and felt very confident. As I came off the lift, I rushed to get started. Again, I could hear people talking about me, but now it didn't matter. The vest was a definite benefit for the novice snowboarder! I took the first stage at a steady pace, looking for my first left bend. No problems there. I found that easy enough. I was now looking for my fast approaching right bend. I missed this one completely and ended up in the safety netting at the edge of the run.

At this point, I decided I was not the world's best snowboarder and would have to take things a little slower. As the day progressed, so did my skills. I had a great time. Even taking "air" on quite a few occasions. However this was not deliberate! I was now very wary about that bend I had missed , so I started to take it a bit earlier. Unfortunately, this meant that I would leap about 2 metres into the air. And what was more surprising than being airborne, was the fact that on half a dozen occasions, (out of about 30), I landed on my feet and carried on downhill. The rest of the time I fell on my bottom. I heard some people comment on how brave 'that blind guy' was. Little did they know it was lack of skill rather than bravery.

We boarded at Cardona for two days and had a fantastic time. Because it is a bit of a drive away from most of the tourist places, it is not as busy as the other ski resorts. It is mostly visited by the locals and I think that says something. If you get the chance, I would definitely recommend Cardona. I would also like to thank the Ski Patrol for that great suggestion. Without the vest, I am sure there could have been some crashes, caused by me. But with the vest, everyone just got out of the way. However, I think that if I was to get a vest for myself, it would probably read 'BLIND&DAFT'.

19. The narrator and his companion decided to choose the Cardona ski resort because...

1. ...it was a short distance from Queenstown.
2. ...they couldn't find a room at other resorts.
3. ...somebody said that it was worth going to.
4. ...it was popular with snowboarders.

The introduction to a new biography of Gannibal by the Author

Alexander Pushkin was not only Russia's greatest poet, but he was also the great-grandson of an African slave. The slave, whose godfather was Peter the Great, claimed to have royal blood of his own. Certainly his Russian descendants believed that he was an African prince. His descendants have included members as well as close friends of the English royal family. So the legend goes on.

Pushkin told the story of his black ancestor in "The Negro of Peter the Great", but this biography tells a different version. The main difference is between fact and fiction. The Russian poet hoped to discover a biographical truth by sticking to the facts, only to discover that facts are slippery and not always true. His biography turned into a novel. Even then, it was left unfinished after six and a half chapters. The scrawled manuscript comes to an end with a line of dialogue — "Sit down, you scoundrel, let's talk!" — and a line of dots. Pushkin could be speaking to himself. In any case, it's now time to stand up and carry on with the story. I have tried to join up the dots.

This is a book, then, about a missing link between the storyteller and his subject, an African prince; between the various branches of a family and its roots; between Pushkin and Africa; Africa and Europe; Europe and Russia; black and white. It is the story of a remarkable life and it poses the question: how is such a life to be explained?

My own explanation began in 2001, while I was living in Russia and working there as a journalist. The first draft was written during the war in Afghanistan, on the road to Kabul, but it describes my journey to the frontline of a different kind of war in Africa between the armies of Ethiopia and Eritrea. According to legend, Pushkin's ancestor was born there, on the northern bank of the River Mareb, where I was arrested for taking photographs and compass readings, on suspicion of being a spy. Understandably my captors didn't believe that I was only a journalist researching the life of Russia's greatest writer. At the military camp, where I was held for a number of hours, the commandant looked me up and down when I asked, in my best posh English accent, "I say, my good man, can you tell me, basically, what is going on here?" "Basically," he replied, with distaste, "you are in prison!" The incident taught me something. Journalists, like biographers, are meant to respect facts, and by retracing Gannibal's footsteps, I hoped to find a true story.

Some of those journeys lie behind the book, and are used whenever it is helpful to show that the past often retains a physical presence for the biographer — in landscapes, buildings, portraits, and above all in the trace of handwriting on original letters or journals. But my own journeys are not the point of the book. It is Gannibal's story. I am only following him. Descriptions of Africa and the slave trade result from my journeys, but this is not a book about a "stolen legacy", nor certainly about the intellectual wars that have been part of black history in recent years. Biographers, like novelists, should tell stories. I have tried to do this. I should, however, point out from the outset that Gannibal was not the only black face to be seen in the centre of fashionable St. Petersburg at that time. Negro slaves were a common sight in the grand salons of Millionaires' Street and they appeared in a variety of roles, such as pets, pages, footmen, mascots, mistresses, favourites and adopted children. At the Winter Palace, so-called court Arabs, usually Ethiopians dressed in turbans and baggy trousers stood guard like stage extras in the marble wings.

20.

The slave's Russian descendants believe that the slave...

1. ...had Russian royal blood in him.
2. ...was Peter the Great's godfather.
3. ...belonged to the royal family in his native land.
4. ...was a close friend of the English royal family.

Keeping busy

The public school in town served a number of purposes. Education, of course, was one. It offered a curriculum in general education, manual education, and preparatory education for college. Its music and sports programs provided entertainment to the school and its patrons. And the school served as an agency of social cohesion, bringing the community together in a common effort in which everyone took pride.

The sports program was the center of gravity of extra-curricular activities. The school fielded junior and senior varsity teams in football, basketball and track. Any young man with enough coordination to walk and chew gum at the same time could find a place on one of those teams. In addition, sports generated a need for pep rallies, cheerleaders, a band, homecoming activities, parades and floats, a homecoming queen and maids of honor, and a sports banquet. It also mobilized parents to support the activities with time and money.

There were any number of clubs a student might join. Some were related to academics, like the Latin Club, the Spanish Club, and the Science Club. Others brought together students interested in a profession, like the Future Farmers of America, the Future Homemakers of America, the Future Teachers of America, and the Pre-Med Club. Still others were focused on service. The Intra-Mural Council, made up of girls (who had been neglected in the regular sports program), organized tournaments in a variety of sports for girls. The Library Club worked to improve library holdings and equipment. The Pep Club organized homecoming activities, parades and athletic banquets.

The Student Council, including representatives from each class, was elected by the student body after a heated political campaign with banners and speeches. It represented student interests to the administration and the school board. It approved student clubs that were formed, helped resolve discipline problems, and played a role in setting codes of conduct and dress. For the most part, it was a docile body that approved the policies of the administration.

The Journalism Club published a monthly newspaper of school news and opinion. It was financed by selling ads to business men in the community.

Another group planned and published the school Yearbook, which was a pictorial record of the student body, the year's activities, sports, and achievements. The Yearbook staff sponsored a beauty contest, pictured outstanding students selected by the faculty, and a Who's Who of popular and talented students selected by the student body.

Churches in town, of which there were many, sponsored their own activities for youth; and the community sponsored a recreation center, called Teen Town, for chaperoned Saturday night dances each week. Community and school leaders seemed determined to keep the youth of the town busy and out of trouble. In a small Southern town in the Bible Belt where very few students had access to a car, which had been voted dry and in which no alcohol was sold, they succeeded marvelously well.

21. The first paragraph implies that the public school...

1. ...was more than just an educational institution.
2. ...offered the best educational curriculum.
3. ...had developed close ties with a college.
4. ...preferred students talented in sports and music.

Lucky Break

For the first ten years of my life my father was in the RAF (Royal Air Force). This meant that he was frequently posted to different air bases around the UK and I, as frequently, changed schools. One year we moved no fewer than three times and each time I tried, in vain, to settle and make friends. For a young child this frequency of change can only have a detrimental effect and I still have school reports stating that I was "lazy" and a "dreamer".

When I reached ten, my worried parents decided I needed a personal tutor. She turned out to be a kindly and patient old lady who presented me with a large, black book of tests. She made me complete it as a home task and I scored about 20 out of 100. At out next meeting, on a Saturday morning, she went through it with me item by item, until I completely understood each task. She then made me retake the test and of course I got almost every question correct. Then we again moved house!

In our new town I took and failed the 11 plus exam (my excuse was that I was still only ten!) and my prospects looked dim. I was destined to go to the local comprehensive which had a reputation for being quite rough. But also nearby was an ancient public school, set in a castle. This was a place for rich kids only — apart from every year they gave 2 free places to the highest performing local boys (it was a boys only school) in their entrance exam.

My crazy parents decided I should enter the exam. I had as much chance of succeeding as going to the moon — or so I thought. But when I sat down to take the test, a rather familiar black book of 100 tests was placed on the desk!

I did the test and kept quiet and the next term, as a terror struck 11 year old in an ill fitting suit, I arrived for my first day at "the castle".

Clearly I was going to have problems in this new, intensely academic environment and I did. There were 31 boys in my class and in every subject, despite my best efforts, I finished in the bottom 5 in every test, exam and report.

We were then streamed into "sets" for each subject and I ended up being taught with boys closer to my own ability. I worked really hard and at the end of my third year there, I won my first form prize. I was top of the bottom class! But I was really motivated and in time got "promoted" to higher "sets". I worked really hard and won prizes every year until I left after A Levels. My grades were all A's — the highest you can get — and I was offered a place to study at a prestigious university.

So when a certain old Lady presented me with a large black book full of tests, you could say it was my lucky break. Although I would argue that if you work really hard and keep your wits about you — then you begin to make your own luck.

22. Because of the father's job the boy had to...

1. ...visit UK air bases.
2. ...change home three times a year.
3. ...often change schools
4. ...behave as a dreamer.

FAMILY MEAL TIMES

The family meal time is one of the most valuable routines to establish in the life of a family. Research has proved that children who eat at least one meal a week with their families benefit greatly in terms of social skills and acceptance of shared responsibilities. They learn simply and directly through their own experience, the importance of family interaction and the value of close friendship, support and loyalty.

In theory and with practice, a shared meal can be the setting for peaceful conversation and allow each family member the opportunity to talk about his/her day, and possibly to discuss any problems or issues. Successful family meal times are primarily about talking and communication. In the modern age of 24 hour TV, computer games and computer social networking sites — the fact is that it is often easier to eat alone rather than together. Furthermore, if parents fail to establish these routines whilst their children are young it is very hard to implement them when the kids become teenagers. But it is not impossible. There are various strategies available for promoting shared family meals.

It is of first importance that every family member should be made to understand the possible benefits; namely that our lives really can be better in general if we make the effort to communicate more effectively. Next step — a weekly meal together can be set as a realistic first goal. The meal should be quite a tasty and popular one as an inducement to keep the kids away from computers and TV sets!

It is important that shared meals should not be the setting for trying to deal with family disputes. There will always be arguments from time to time — even in the happiest and closest families. But these should be kept away from the dinner table if possible. Parents are encouraged to set the tone by example. Light hearted banter, stories about the day and a joke or two can help set the tone. They can also help by being attentive listeners and appropriate responders. Successes should be marked by congratulation and bad news supported with commiseration. Quieter family members should be encouraged by asking what their opinion is on something, rather than about what they did or failed to do. It makes them feel more important and valued. Sometimes a good start can help a simple family meal go on to be a really enjoyable or even memorable experience.

The next stage in building this routine can be to introduce more days. In our experience the best place to start is Sunday lunch. The second might be to establish Wednesday nights as family meal time. Of course the most important thing is flexibility. This and a bit of effort are required to set up helpful routines but the pay back can be immense for a family.

Dinnertime family routines, especially if established early on, have all kinds of other potential benefits. For example children can be encouraged to prepare one course (possibly on an agreed rota): they might even be encouraged to compete to produce maybe an exceptional soup or a truly sensational desert! This can be good fun.

Once established, family meal routines are also great for developing good table manners and "work" habits. Children can learn to set the table, help with clearing up and generally build good patterns of co-operation with their parents, friends and the people they meet with in daily life.

23. We know that children who eat with their parents benefit because they...

1. ...have greater intelligence.
2. ...show better test results.
3. ...develop better social skills.
4. ...learn to speak sooner.

Crash Landing

At that time the people of Britain would have been shocked to know that women were flying their most famous war plane. But the fact is that the ATA (Air Transport Auxiliary) had over 100 women pilots who delivered more than 300,000 air craft during the war. We had to fly the Spitfires from the factories and deliver them to airfields dotted around the south of England. Normally we would be flying in daylight with good visibility conditions. That is why we were never given instrument training as our instructors told us that with all the restrictions of war time, there was no time or money to spare for this luxury.

Occasionally we had to fly other aircraft — without any kind of additional training at all. Probably some high ranking, non-flying military official somewhere said that all aircraft were exactly the same to fly. Well — I can assure you that this is not true. With unfamiliar aircraft we had ten minutes to read an instruction booklet called the "Ferry Pilot Notes": And that was it. We had to climb in, fire up, taxi and then take off in completely unknown flying machines.

That particular day, the day I came so close to death, was my twenty first birthday. I had no cake or candles that day and my two friends and myself shared some chocolate — the only luxury available in those days. We drank apple juice, and ate apples and cheese. We entertained ourselves with silly stories. But at one solemn moment we also made a toast to absent friends and remembered the girls who had died delivering aircraft.

In the morning we were driven to the factory and my worst fears were realized. Instead of a lovely new and familiar Spitfire I had a bulky Torpedo bomber. We all hated these as several had crashed without any clear reason why. I was able to take the Ferry Pilot Notes into the canteen and studied them over breakfast. I had a very uneasy feeling in my stomach which had nothing to do with the breakfast I was consuming. I had birthday kisses from the other girls but it only made me feel worse.

At about 111 was given my flight plan and it was time to go. I looked at the sky. There was a strange quality to the light that I didn't like and I was worried. With no instrument training, fog or mist made flying incredibly dangerous and absolutely terrifying. With a heavy heart I fired up the engine.

Within 20 minutes I was approaching the river Forth. But I couldn't see the river as clouds thickened up around me. I took the aircraft lower and lower looking for a glimpse of the ground. At one point I was sure that I was virtually at ground level but I couldn't see a thing. It was too dangerous to continue. I could hear my heart beating even over the roar of the engine.

When it happened — it happened really quickly. The plane hit water. I didn't see anything. I was thrown against my straps — and then a flood of cold seawater in my eyes and mouth. I was a mile out to sea!

I was certain I was going to die. Funnily enough — I was perfectly calm. I even thought that my ATA insurance payment would really be a big help to my Mother. But then survival instinct kicked in. I was still alive — and close to shore. I had no life jacket or any survival gear but I was a good swimmer. I was certain there were no bones broken and I didn't have to swim far. I was picked up by a fishing boat that I had narl-owly missed in the fog. And in the end I got a real birthday drink after all — a cup of spiced, dark rum.

24. Women pilots from ATA had no instrument training because...

1. ...it was an auxiliary air force.
2. ...they were not supposed to fly in low visibility.
3. ...their main job was to deliver Spitfires to airdromes.
4. ...there was no money for this during the war.

Kimbolton School

I went to school in a large village called Kimbolton in the county of Cambridgeshire. In recent years I have been reminded of my time there by, strangely enough, the Harry Potter books by J. K. Rowling. The first and most obvious reason is that Kimbolton is a castle school; just as Hogwarts is the castle school for Harry and his friends.

Hogwarts is of course filled with ghosts, such as Sir Nicholas de Mimsy Porpington — better known as Nearly Headless Nick: But Kimbolton also has a reputation for being haunted and in fact lays claim to a very famous ghost. This is Katherine of Aragon — the first wife of Henry VIII. She was sent there in April 1534 after refusing to accept the legality of Henry's divorce proceedings. When I arrived there as a first year in September 1971,1 was told that her ghost was often seen — but only from the knees upwards. This, I was told, was because she walked on the original rather than the later modern floors. I am ashamed to confess that at times we set up "ghostly" tricks to scare our friends. These usually involved almost invisible fishing lines being used to "mysteriously" open and close cupboards or move chairs.

There are other comparisons to be made however. In Harry Potter's Hogwarts School there are four "houses"; Gryfinndor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw and the dark house, Slytherin. The four houses being named after famous headmasters of Hogwarts' past. At Kimbolton we also had four houses named for the same reason. They were called Ingram's, Bailey's, Dawson's and Gibbard's. As I recall there were no sinister connotations with any house although probably the Slytherin equivalent was Gibbard's. At the time Gibbard's was the house for "day boys" who lived at home and travelled to school each day. The other houses were for the "borders" that lived in the castle. The dayboys were nicknamed "day bugs" and the residents were called "border bugs". I was a day bug.

There were common rooms and detentions which I suppose all schools still have. But few schools, like Kimbolton, have narrow, long corridors lined with portraits whose eyes seem to follow you round! Mind you — none of our paintings spoke to us as they sometimes do at Hogwarts! Kimbolton also has a fantastic staircase in the castle and huge murals by the Italian Rococo painter Pellegrini.

Apart from the castle, ghosts and houses there were other comparisons to Hogwarts. The teachers (who were called masters) also wore black gowns and addressed us only by our surnames. We pupils had to wear suits and ties to school and actually were not allowed to take our jackets off unless the day was exceptionally hot. But there were some fairly important differences too.

Firstly Kimbolton, at the time I was there, was a school only for boys. It has changed since, but then we had no Hermione Grangers to fight against evil with. We played football and cricket rather than Quidditch and took "O" Levels rather than OWLS. That is "Ordinary" Level exams rather than "Ordinary Wizarding Levels". But still, looking back on it all, I have to say that I, at least, thought the place was rather magical.

25. The first similarity between the narrator's school and Hogwarts is that both schools are situated...

1. ...far from pupils' homes.
2. ...in an unusual school building.
3. ...not far from London.
4. ...near a village.

Llandudno

Llandudno is truly a fine and handsome place, built on a generously proportioned bay and lined along its broad front with a huddle of prim but gracious nineteenth-century hotels that reminded me in the fading light of a lineup of Victorian nannies. Llandudno was purpose-built as a resort in the mid-1800s, and it cultivates a nice old-fashioned air. I don't suppose that Lewis Carroll, who famously strolled this front with little Alice Liddell in the 1860s, would notice a great deal of change today.

To my consternation, the town was packed with weekending pensioners. Buses from all over were parked along the side streets, every hotel I called at was full, and in every dining room I could see crowds — veritable oceans — of nodding white heads spooning soup and conversing happily. Goodness knows what had brought them to the Welsh seaside at this bleak time of year.

Farther on along the front there stood a clutch of guesthouses, large and virtually indistinguishable, and a few of them had vacancy signs in their windows. I had eight or ten to choose from, which always puts me in a mild fret because I have an unerring instinct for choosing badly. My wife can survey a row of guesthouses and instantly identify the one run by a white-haired widow with a fondness for children, and sparkling bathroom facilities, whereas I can generally count on choosing the one run by a guy with a grasping manner, and the sort of cough that makes you wonder where he puts the phlegm. Such, I felt, would be the case tonight.

All the guesthouses had boards out front listing their many amenities — COLOUR TV, HOSPITALITY TRAYS, FULL CENTRAL HEATING, and the coyly euphemistic EN SUITE ALL ROOMS, meaning private bathrooms. One place offered satellite TV and a trouser press, and another boasted CURRENT FIRE CERTIFICATE — something I had never thought to look for in a B&B. All this heightened my sense of unease and doom. How could I possibly choose intelligently among such a variety of options?

I selected a place that looked reasonable enough from the outside — its board promised a color TV and coffee making facilities, about all I require these days for a Saturday night — but from the moment I set foot in the door I knew it was a bad choice. I was about to turn and flee when the owner emerged from a back room and stopped my retreat with an unenthusiastic "Yes?" A short conversation revealed that a single room with breakfast was for £19.50. It was entirely out of the question that I would stay the night in such a dismal place at such an exorbitant price, so I said, "That sounds fine," and signed in. Well, it's so hard to say no.

My room was everything I expected it to be — cold and cheerless with laminated furniture, grubbily matted carpet, and those mysterious ceiling stains that bring to mind a neglected corpse in the room above. There was a tray of coffee things but the cups were disgusting, and the spoon was stuck to the tray. The bathroom, faintly illuminated by a distant light activated by a length of string, had curling floor tiles and years of accumulated dirt packed into every corner. I peered at the yellowy tile around the bath and sink and realized what the landlord did with his phlegm. A bath was out of the question, so I threw some cold water on my face, dried it with a towel that had the texture of shredded wheat, and gladly took my leave.

26. Llandudno is described as a...

1. ...fashionable 19th century resort.
2. ...beautiful growing resort.
3. ...place where Lewis Carroll lived.
4. ...place famous for its comfortable hotels.

Why I sent Oxford a rejection letter

A little over a month ago, I sent Oxford a rejection email that parodied the thousands that they send each year. Much to my surprise, it has become a bit of an Internet hit, and has provoked reactions of both horror and amusement.

In my letter I wrote: "I have now considered your establishment as a place to read Law (Jurisprudence). I very much regret to inform you that I will be withdrawing my application. I realize you may be disappointed by this decision, but you were in competition with many fantastic universities and following your interview, I am afraid you do not quite meet the standard of the universities I will be considering."

I sent the email after returning from my interview at Magdalen College, Oxford, to prove to a couple of my friends that Oxbridge did not need to be held in awe. One of them subsequently shared it on Facebook* because he found it funny.

I certainly did not expect the email to spread as far as it has. Varying between offers of TV interviews and hundreds of enthusiastic Facebook* messages, it has certainly been far-reaching. Many of my friends and undoubtedly many strangers were unable to comprehend that I'd sent such an email to this bastion of prestige and privilege. Why was I not afraid of damaging my future prospects as a lawyer? Didn't I think this might hurt my chances with other universities?

For me, such questions paint a picture of a very cynical society. I do not want to study law because I want to be rich, or wear an uncomfortable wig and cloak. Perhaps optimistically, I want to study law because I am interested in justice.

To me, withdrawing my application to an institution that is a symbol of unfairness in both our education and the legal system (which is so dominated by Oxbridge graduates) makes perfect sense, and I am reluctant to be part of a system so heavily dominated by such a narrow group of self-selecting elites.

So, why did I apply in the first place? If you're achieving high grades at A-level (or equivalent), you can feel quite a lot of pressure to "prove yourself' by getting an Oxbridge offer. Coupled with the fact that I grew up on benefits in council estates throughout Bristol — not a type of heritage often associated with an Oxbridge interview — I decided to give it a try.

It was only at the interview that I started to question what exactly I was trying to prove. I was well aware that fantastic candidates are often turned down, and I did not believe that this was a true reflection of their academic potential.

Although I share concern that not going to Oxbridge gives you a "chip on your shoulder", I did not write to Oxford to avoid the risk of being labeled as an "Oxbridge reject": I already am one. Last year I made an (admittedly weak) application to Cambridge and was inevitably rejected post-interview.

A year ago, I was in awe of the beautiful buildings of Oxbridge, but today I am in awe of the sheer number of people who, like me, have managed to not take it so seriously. Ultimately, I am not harming Oxford by laughing at it, and it is an amazing feeling to realize that so many people are enjoying my email. Actually, I was amazed to know how many people of different ages bothered to read it and even to leave their comments about it in Facebook*. I had fun reading some of them, too.

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* Деятельность запрещена в России.

27. The email letter the author sent to Oxford was meant to be...

1. ...desperate.
2. ...respectful.
3. ...mocking.
4. ...regretful.

The Sea Monkeys

More than anything else, Suzie wanted a little puppy to cuddle, play with and take on long walks. In short, she wanted a pet, but the problem was her mom.

"Why can't I have a dog?"

"Suzie, you know we've been through this a thousand times. I have allergies to animals, and that means no pets."

Suzie knew it was true. Not only did her mom have severe allergies to animals, she was also highly allergic to practically everything that existed, including her daughter when she asked this question a million times a day.

"What about your baby brother, isn't he more fun than some silly dog?" Her mom offered in consolation.

Suzie did not agree. To her, her infant brother was a disgusting smelly little thing that did nothing but cry all day long. Before he was born, she'd had hopes of dressing him up in funny little costumes and playingwith him all day, but he turned out to be no fun at all. He couldn't even crawl!

"Why can't I at least have a fish?" She demanded. "You aren't allergic to fish, are you?"

"No, I'm not. There's so much trouble, though. You have to change the water every so often and clean the tank."

By this time Suzie had practically given up hope and plopped down on her bed in despair. Gloomily, she picked up a Spider-Man comic on her bedside table. Her mom didn't approve of her comic books but she didn't care. She liked them much more than My Little Pony or Strawberry Shortcake, which the other girls in her class liked. She especially liked them because her mother didn't, and felt she was getting revenge for not being able to get a pet.

What caught her eye, however, was an advertisement in the back of the book for something called 'sea monkeys'. The caption read: "Enter the wonderful world of amazing live sea monkeys. Own a bowlful of happiness — instant pets!" In the picture was a smiling family of sea monkeys who looked more human than monkey but with funny heads and tails. The ad promised that they were "eager to please" and could be trained for tricks. The best part though was that they only cost $5. Suzie had that much left from her last birthday. She decided to send off for them without telling her mom.

A few weeks later the parcel arrived. Inside, there was a small plastic aquarium and two little paper packets, one labeled 'eggs' and the other 'food'. She filled the tank with water, sprinkled the eggs over the top and waited. Nothing happened. She put them in the back of her closet behind her clothes and tried not to think of them for the rest of the day.

The next day she pulled them out and saw to her surprise tiny little things swimming around, like specks of dust. They looked nothing like the playful sea monkeys in the ad.

Over the weeks, they grew a bit more. Once she decided to put them on the windowsill in the sunlight to get a better look at them. Her disappointment was terrible when she finally understood they were just tiny worm-like creatures. At that moment, her mom walked into the room.

"What is that?" She exclaimed in surprise, then broke into a smile. "Sea monkeys! I had these when I was your age. I didn't even know they still sold them."

"But Mom, they don't look like monkeys at all!" Suzie said in dismay.

"No, silly, they aren't real monkeys, they're a kind of specially modified shrimp, but they're still fun and not any trouble at all to keep", her mom replied.

Susan soon got over her initial disappointment and even grew to love her new pets, which were certainly more fun than having no pets at all and especially more entertaining than her baby brother!

28. Suzie's mom...

1. ...had had over a thousand allergic reactions to animals throughout her life.
2. ...was allergic to people as well as animals and other living things.
3. ...always had an emotional reaction to Suzie's multiple questions about pets.
4. ...didn't allow pets because Suzie and her little brother had allergies too.

Lost in the Heat

Polina didn't want to move to America. At the age of 12, she was very set in her ways and did not welcome change. She had a group of friends whom she had known since nursery school and enjoyed hanging out with. She also could hardly speak any English, so she doubted she would be able to make any new friends.

Her father was selected to be a Russian representative for the International Space Station project to NASA. They were moving to Houston, Texas, for a year. First, she imagined Texas to be a desert with cowboys riding around on horses. When she found out that Houston was a big city, however, she imagined skyscrapers.

The reality turned out completely different.

Nobody actually lived in the city. It was surrounded by many suburbs, which were really just small towns. They lived in a suburb called Katy, in a neighborhood with houses that all looked the same as if stamped out by identical cookie-cutters.

She had really been afraid of the heat. On the big wall map they had in Moscow she had seen that Houston was the same latitude as Africa. But now she barely noticed it because of the blasting freezing air-conditioning everywhere: in the car, in every store, and at home. Every time she stepped outside, however, she was assaulted by the overpowering heat.

Her parents were off at work, so she found herself alone most of the time. She tried watching TV but couldn't understand anything. She thought about chatting with her friends back in Moscow, but then remembered that it was the middle of the night on account of the time difference.

That was when she decided to go for a walk. She knew it would be scorchingly hot, but she felt suffocated sitting inside. So she lathered up with sunscreen, laced up her sneakers and went outside.

The full force of the heat was like a blazing furnace. But after a while she got used to it. She walked along the street, thinking about how strange it was here. In Moscow, everyone lived in apartment buildings with courtyards. In the summer, there would be lots of people out strolling, enjoying themselves. Here she didn't see a single person. An occasional car passed by but that was it.

She kept walking aimlessly until she stumbled upon a highway. To her left, there was a field with cows. Beyond this small oasis of country life, other housing communities were visible in the distance, mirroring the one she lived in. Further down the highway was a small convenience store. She was thirsty so she walked there to get a drink.

When she opened the door, she felt frosty relief from the heat. The cashier looked up, smiled and said, "How’re you doing? It sure is a scorcher today, ain't it?"

Polina had no idea what he was talking about, so she just stared at him.

"What's wrong, little darling, cat got your tongue?" he asked, but she just paid and left.

She didn't notice which direction she was going and ended up in a neighborhood she assumed was hers. Everything looked familiar. It was only when she couldn't find her house that she knew she was totally lost. She was sweating and feeling dizzy and when everything started going black, she remembered the cows. She should have looked for the field with cows to get back. That was her last thought...

When she woke up, she was lying in a hospital bed. Her mom and dad were there.

"What happened?" she inquired.

A nurse didn't understand the language, but guessed her question.

"You're lucky to be alive little lady, you had a heat stroke. Guess you know now why people don't go on walks in the Texas heat!"

29. Which of the following was NOT the reason why Polina didn’t want to move to?

1. She was afraid of doing badly at school.
2. She didn't want to part with her friends.
3. She was reluctant to change her lifestyle.
4. She was afraid of Texan climate.

Space could solve water problems

Have you ever tasted saltwater? I guess you have and if so, you will agree with me that it's not very refreshing. In fact, drinking more than a few cups worth can kill you.

According to the United States Geological Survey, whose mission is to collect and disseminate reliable, impartial, and timely information that is needed to understand the nation's water resources, about ninety-seven percent of the water on our planet is saltwater; the rest is stored in lakes, rivers, glaciers and aquifers underground. Moreover, only about one-third of the world's potential fresh water can be used for human needs. As pollution increases, the amount of usable water decreases.

Water is the most precious and taken-for-granted resource we have on Earth. It is also one of the most threatened resources. Increased population and possible climate change will put more and more strain on supplies of this vital resource as time goes on. What could we do in this situation? Though it may seem like science fiction, the solution could lie in outer space.

I'm not saying we're going to be teleporting to a spring on the other side of the galaxy or colonizing another planet just to have longer showers — it's much more mundane than that. What we could achieve realistically in this century is the successful use of the solar system's rare metals and water, barring the invention of the matrix.

You may be surprised to learn that the metal in your keys, coins, cell phone, computer, car and everywhere else, originally came to this planet from space. When Earth formed, the heavy metals sank to the center and formed a solid core. The lighter elements formed the mantle and the crust we live on. Asteroids and comets that struck the Earth brought water and metals to the surface.

There are thousands of asteroids orbiting near Earth. Most asteroids are made of rock, but some are composed of metal, mostly nickel and iron. Probes could be sent out to these to identify useful ones. Then larger probes could push them towards the Earth where they can be handled in orbit.

In order to fuel ships and probes, we simply need to find a source of water, such as a comet or the surface of the moon. We collect the water and pass an electric current through it from a solar panel. The water separates into oxygen and hydrogen, which in liquid form is a powerful rocket fuel.

Is this really possible? We may soon find out. Private company SpaceX has already started delivering equipment to the International Space Station (ISS). The ISS is proof that countries once at each other's throats, like America and Russia, can work together and pull off multi-billion dollar projects.

Recently, a company called Planetary Resources Inc. made the news for getting big names like Google and Microsoft to invest in exploring asteroids for material gain. Although it will take many decades, it is wise to put the gears in motion now.

We've already landed probes on the surface of asteroids and taken samples from them. We can put something as large as the ISS, which weighs just short of 500 tons, according to National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), in orbit.

We can make a half-million-mile round-trip to get rocks from the moon. We can do all of these things already. They just need to be applied and developed in a smart way.

30. What problem is raised in the article?

1. Cooperation in space.
2. Threats of climate change.
3. Danger of drinking salt water.
4. Lack of water supplies on Earth.

Why The English Love Drinking Tea

Ever since the 18th century, tea time has been an integral part of English life. People from other countries have a set idea of what English tea time means: smart dresses, delicate finger foods, and hot tea all served on the best china.

This is not a passion that England shares with most of the rest of the world, where coffee is almost universally more popular than tea. In fact, the per capita consumption of tea in the United Kingdom is 12.85kg per year, which is almost three times as much as in Morocco which comes in second place at 4.34kg per year. This per capita consumption is even higher if you looked at England (one of 4 countries in the United Kingdom) on its own. Perhaps surprisingly, in Japan the popularity of tea has been suffering a slight decline since the start of the new millennium.

During the early 1700s the British East India Company began growing tea in the newly conquered Indian territories on an industrial scale using cheap labour and conquered land. The massive scale of tea production in India, the majority of which was sent straight to England, sent the price of tea plummeting. Suddenly, what was once a rare treat for the wealthy became an affordable product which ordinary British people could enjoy on a regular basis. Not only that, but sugar was just starting to become more affordable for ordinary people as well. As a result of this, tea became a powerful symbol of the benefits of Empire for the ordinary English citizen.

It is one thing to understand why the English first started drinking so much tea, but that doesn't really explain why we continue to do so some 300 years later. My own personal opinion is that one of the biggest reasons behind our continuing love affair with tea is because we find tea comforting. Its familiarity is like a cosy comfort blanket to us, and the long tradition of tea drinking provides a calming ritual with which to punctuate the day.

At times of stress, grief or hardship it is not uncommon for the first response of an English person to be "making a nice cup of tea". The sheer familiarity of the ritual serves to centre you, diminishing the pressing concerns of the moment by making them seem small in comparison to such a long and often repeated tradition.

Being an Englishman, I prefer drinking tea with milk. Debate continues whether to put milk in the cup before or after pouring tea. Originally milk was always added before tea to prevent hot tea from cracking the fine bone china cups. Tea experts agree with this tradition but also state that tea needs to be left in the water on its own for the flavour and colour to develop and a splash of milk should be added later.

Tea itself seems to have calming properties, and it most certainly has a range of proven and suspected health benefits. Although many English people actually drink more tea than is strictly good for them, it cannot be denied that in moderate quantities (4 cups per day is usually said to be ideal) tea drinking has a remarkable range of health benefits. Studies have shown that drinking three to four cups of tea per day reduces your risk of having a heart attack, as well as protecting you from a range of degenerative heart conditions. Although the link has not yet been fully proven, several studies have suggested that tea drinking may help to prevent a range of different kinds of cancer, including lung cancer.

31. All over the world people think that tea ceremony in England is...

1. ...similar to tea ceremony in China.
2. ...connected with the cult of food.
3. ...is conducted in a formal style.
4. ...the same as it was in the 18th century.

Driverless cars

Driverless cars are expected to be rolling into the streets within the next 20 years. In fact, they've legally been on the roads for the past years, approved for testing purposes. It is predicted that driverless vehicles will be commercially available at a high cost within 7 years, but it may take another 8 years for prices to drop enough to spur mass consumption.

Today, the discussions focus primarily on the shifting of accident liability to manufacturers and all the goodness that comes along with reducing accidents. A truly driverless road would not be accident-free as there would still be a number of accidents caused by mechanical or computer errors, weather conditions, pedestrians and sheer random chance. But it would make the now-routine loss of life on the roads far rarer.

The concept of a "driver" will be replaced with that of an "operator", who simply programs the vehicle's GPS to arrive at the desired destination and pushes the "Start" button to begin the trip. Since judgment will no longer be required of the operator, they won't need a driver's license. Theoretically, a 10-year-old child could independently take the car to school in the morning.

Computer-operated cars will eventually reshape the car design as things like windshields will become less necessary. Drivers will be able to sit wherever they'd like in their cars. There will be no need for gas and brake pedals as speed will be automatically controlled by the computer. The steering wheel and the turn signal arm can also be eliminated once the public gets used to reliability of these vehicles.

Each passenger will have a personal video display informing about a current location, the distance to your destination, speed and personal entertainment selections. The concept of 'distracted driving' will disappear as there will be no reason to pay attention to where you are going.

Vehicle owners will no longer buy collision insurance since manufacturers will be solely responsible for damage. Owners will only need theft insurance and coverage for hail, falling objects or floods. To take this one step further, personal vehicle ownership may dramatically diminish. Car dealers will have lots full of vehicles for hire on a daily or hourly basis instead of vehicles for sale. When you need a car, you'll summon one using your mobile phone. The closest unmanned vehicle will be dispatched to your home to take you where you need to go. When done, you'll simply push the button for the unmanned vehicle to drive itself back to the rental lot.

The social and cultural impact of driverless cars could cause far more upheaval than any of us could imagine. Perhaps, it would be even greater than the impact the Internet had on commerce and communication. Obviously, the picture being painted is the one that assumes total adoption, which is far from realistic. You will always have transitional delays caused by the lack of free cars, the longevity of today's vehicles and cultural resistance.

This resembles the historical factors that affected the transition from horse to the automobile. At the moment, the driverless car seems like a novelty. However, it will open up new prospects. The prospect of flying cars may soon become a reality. With computer-controlled vehicles that strictly follow traffic rules, threedimensional roads become far less scary and more a matter of simply solving the technological challenge.

Where we're going, we may not need roads at all.

32. According to the author driverless cars will become cheap enough for most people to buy within the following...

1. ...8 years.
2. ...15 years.
3. ...7 years.
4. ...20 years.

Dreaming

When you fall asleep, you enter a strange and magical world. This is the world of dreams.

In Greek and Roman times, it was believed that gods communicated with people through dreams and that dreams could predict the future. Often these dreams were difficult to understand, so a person known as an oracle would be consulted to interpret the dream. The oracles that could correctly understand the dreams were highly valued since they advised what needed to be done or avoided in the future.

In the 20th century psychologists such as Sigmund Freud developed the theory that dreams express our deepest fears and desires. Therefore, common dreams such as failing a test or being late may simply be an expression of what you are afraid of, while dreams of becoming a millionaire may just express what we wish. However, some dreams might not be so obvious and can be cloaked in symbols that only a trained specialist can interpret. This is actually similar to the oracle mentioned above, only instead of predicting the future the psychoanalyst explained the psychological meaning of a dream.

According to the latest scientific research, dreams are simply random signals that are interpreted by the brain. When we sleep, some parts of the brain are activated, such as the visual centres of the brain, while other parts are deactivated, like those that are responsible for logic, which is why even though dreams are so strange, we don't question them or understand that we are dreaming. A consequence of this theory is that dreams are simply mixed up memories, fears and worries and therefore don't need to be interpreted to be understood.

Some people claim that they don't dream at all. Scientific research has proven this false. When we dream, our eyes move rapidly beneath our closed eyelids. This is known as Rapid Eye Movement or REM. Even animals dream, some even more than humans. Dolphins dream the least, while opossums dream the most. The reason some people don't remember that they were dreaming is that following REM sleep is another stage called deep sleep, where we don't dream. During this stage dreams are forgotten. If people wake up during REM sleep, they remember having dreamt. If they wake up during the stage of deep sleep, they may have the illusion that they did not dream at all.

A new kind of dreaming that has recently been studied is called lucid dreaming. This is a dream where you understand that you are dreaming and can control it. Normally when you are dreaming, the part of the brain responsible for logic is turned off. Somehow during a lucid dream, these logical centres are activated and a person is half-awake and half-dreaming. One of the benefits of lucid dreaming is being able to avoid a nightmare by realizing that it is just a dream. Another positive outcome of lucid dreams is that they are very fun. One of the first things people usually try in a lucid dream is flying, and the thrill of exploring a dream and being able to control it is an unforgettable experience.

33. Ancient Greeks and Romans believed that oracles...

1. ...were difficult to understand.
2. ...put hidden messages into dreams.
3. ...could tell you what your dreams meant.
4. ...avoided having dreams about the future.

The Unique Human Brain

The human brain is selective about the things it pays attention to. Our senses are constantly attacked by smells, colours, tastes, and sounds, and much of that information has to be filtered out, so we can focus on the important things that can keep us alive. But humans aren't the only animals who need to focus on certain signals to stay alive, so what sets us apart?

As it turns out, when humans and macaques focus on the same task their brains work differently, a small study published recently shows. The finding reveals that the human attention network probably expanded over time. And that's a pretty important piece of our evolutionary puzzle — especially given how often scientists use the macaque brain to study our own.

During the test the humans and the monkeys had to memorise a picture, like a green car, for instance. Then, they were told to fixate on a point in the centre of a computer screen. As the monkeys and the humans stared at the point, a stream of images appeared in various parts of the screen at a rate of about 10 objects per second. The goal was to push a button whenever they saw the green car appear.

The data captured during the test showed that the region of the human brain that plays a key role in redirecting attention doesn't have an equivalent in the macaque brain. The researchers also found that some brain areas were more active in humans than in macaques during this task. Finally, there was more communication between the two brain hemispheres in humans compared with the macaques — a finding that researchers think was surprising.

The increased communication doesn't necessarily mean that the way the human brain operates is better, however. Sharing information with other parts of the brain may reduce the speed of certain processes in humans. If that's the case, it may mean that being able to react quickly to a predator's approach, for instance, matters more for macaques. Humans, on the other hand, may have traded speed for some kind of cognitive flexibility.

These differences point to a larger message: humans seem to have developed an additional attention control network over evolutionary time. Contrasting both brains as they perform the same tasks is a good way of reconstructing the evolutionary forces that lead to these differences.

Humans are much more complex in the way they interact socially, so they need a better ability to single out those subtle cues and use that information to guide their future decisions than a macaque would. It's therefore possible that this additional network is used to detect behavioural information that macaques don't need. The study didn't look at social behaviours, however.

The most exciting finding is the fact that there is a clear sign that the human brain has some unique properties that separate it from other primates.

Yet, some scientists claim that the findings can't really discredit the use of the macaque brain model. They believe that here is a wealth of evidence that the macaque is an excellent model for attention research in general. Others point out that the data isn't very detailed.

For the researchers the study shows that there are some aspects of human cognition that we'll just have to study in humans, instead of monkeys. They hope that this work will push scientists to try to learn more about the macaque brain. Focusing on that could reveal much about what the human brain has done to adapt to its own environment during the past 25 million years.

34. The main object of the research was...

1. ...the evolution of the human brain.
2. ...the comparison of human and primate brain.
3. ...the cues people pay attention to.
4. ...the human attention network.

Universal Language

Isn't it strange that there is still no language that everyone on our planet understands? Many people say that English is the international language, yet there are many places you can go where English would not be understood. Even though we have sent people to the moon, invented computers and can travel anywhere on earth in a matter of hours, we still have not come up with a universal way to communicate with each other.

There is a legend that long ago there was only one language. The people at that time, being proud and ambitious, decided to build a tower that would reach up to the heavens. God was not pleased with this, however, and mixed up their language, in the process creating many languages, so they would not understand each other. As a result, they were not able to work together, and so the tower, known as the tower of Babel, was never completed. Inspired by this story, people have dreamed of recreating a single universal language ever since.

For many centuries, Latin was the language that educated people in Europe used as a common means of communication. It was the language of science and education. However, in the 17th century, the German philosopher Leibniz dreamed about constructing a language that could replace Latin. It would be able to mathematically express every thought possible and would therefore be better than any existing natural language. Unfortunately, the project was too ambitious and never completed, and even if it had, it probably would have been too abstract and difficult for people to learn.

Throughout history, there have been times when a particular language is widely used by many different people in addition to their own native languages as an international language. Lingua franca is the term used to describe such languages. Many people think this word refers to French, which was a lingua franca in Europe in the 19th century. In fact, the term refers to a language spoken around the eastern Mediterranean Sea as a language of trade and diplomacy from late medieval times until the Renaissance. It was mostly Italian but mixed with French, Spanish, Greek and even Arabic. In modern times, English enjoys the status of a lingua franca in many parts of the world.

The most successful attempt at creating a constructed language that could be used as a lingua franca has been Esperanto. It was created by Ludwik Zamenhof, a Polish medical doctor in the 19th century. Saddened by the many quarrels and arguments between the different ethnic groups living in Poland at the time, such as Russians, Poles, Tatars, Germans and others, he dreamed of creating a language that could be easily learned by everyone and be used as a neutral tool of communication by people from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds.

Esperanto is still around today, but it has failed to become a universal language. One of the reasons is that it is not taught at school except as an experiment in Hungary and China, and so never really caught on. People still study it as a hobby and meet up with other enthusiasts of Esperanto, but the numbers of those who learn it cannot compete with the popularity of English. Although Esperanto failed to attract enough speakers to become a lingua franca people have never given up on the dream and continue to create new international languages such as Interlingua, Ido and others.

35. In the last sentence of the first paragraph the author implies that...

1. ...the ability to travel anywhere fast requires a universal language.
2. ...a universal language is needed for effective use of computers.
3. ...creating a universal language is harder than creating a computer.
4. ...computers should be used to create a universal language.

Doctor Who

Doctor Who is a British science-fiction TV series that follows the adventures of a time-traveling alien, called the Doctor, and his human companion, as they travel through time and space in a spaceship, called the TARDIS (Time and Relative Dimension in Space), and courageously save the world time and time again.

Doctor Who first aired on BBC on 23 November, 1963 and was one of the first science-fiction stories to appear on screen: 3 years before Star Trek and 14 years before the Star Wars franchise. In 1989, due to falling popularity, the show was suspended. But 16 years later, in 2005, it was brought back to the screen with a whole new cast of actors and has been ongoing ever since. It is considered to be the longest running sci-fi show in the world, having celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2013.

But how has Doctor Who managed to survive for this long? What sets it apart from other amazing shows that are now over? What makes Doctor Who really unique, is that it does not have to rely on any particular actor to continue. When the Doctor is close to death, he is able to start a biological process within himself, called regeneration, that changes every single cell in his body, while still leaving his mind intact. Essentially, he becomes a different person: new looks, new personality, new everything. But one thing that never changes is his genius, and his sense of humor. This means, that every four years or so, when the actors playing the Doctor decide to move on to different projects and leave the show, the producers can find a new actor to take on the iconic role. So far twelve actors have played the Doctor.

Another reason the show has been running for so long is that there is no main storyline, it is very much episodic, each episode telling a story of a separate adventure. So as long as the writers of the show keep coming up with new planets for the Doctor and his companion to visit, and new alien villains for them to defeat, the show can continue forever.

Doctor Who has an unbelievably huge fan base all over the world, so big in fact, that the 50th anniversary episode aired in 94 countries simultaneously, earning it a Guinness World Record. There is also a large amount of music, inspired by Doctor Who, and since the series's renewal, a music genre called Trock (Time Lord Rock) has appeared. The most famous Trock band is Chameleon Circuit. They produce music exclusively about Doctor Who, and so far have released two albums.

Soon after Doctor Who's appearance in 1963, novels surrounding the series started to appear. The first ever novelization came out on 12 November, 1964, almost exactly a year after the first episode came out. Since then over 150 novelizations and 200 spin-off books have been published, including some written by Neil Gaiman.

Doctor Who has been an important part of popular culture for over half a century now. The show is limitless, filled with possibility: you can go to Victorian London, or to Pompeii, or to the 51st century. It can be any genre: comedy, horror, fantasy, drama, sometimes all of them at the same time. It's clever, and funny, and sad, and makes you think. The plots are well written, and sometimes you feel like you're twisting your brain into a knot, trying to figure out the paradoxes. But most importantly it's kind-hearted and beautiful. No doubt Doctor Who will remain a fan-favorite for many years to come.

36. The first Star Wars movie came out in...

1. ...1963.
2. ...1966.
3. ...1977.
4. ...1989.

Umbrellas

Ha, ha, ha! How they laughed that day in the 1790s when a man first walked the streets of London holding an umbrella.

Some people got angry and began shouting that to carry such a contraption was ungodly because it "defied the heavenly purpose of rain" (which is to get uswet).

Drivers of Hackney carriages soon realised umbrellas posed a threat to their trade, and insulted chaps who carried them by yelling: "What's wrong — are you a Frenchman?" It was a grievous insult (and still is today), but the umbrella was not
to be denied.

Eton schoolboys took to carrying them, much to the annoyance of their headmaster, John Keats. "An effeminate innovation," he thundered. "We are degenerating into a girl's school."

Early umbrellas were not impenetrable to rain. Their coverings of cotton, or even silk, were coated with oil, varnish or melted wax, which soon cracked. They featured all kinds of gimmicks. Some had windows, or whistled when open. There was an umbrella with a gutter, which drained rain down a tube. A variation on this caught rain in a flask for use as drinking water.

It was not until about 1800 that umbrellas and parasols achieved separate identities in Britain. Since ancient times there have been umbrellas to keep off the sun, but the word umbrella had nothing to do with rain. It is derived from Latin "umbra", meaning shade.

Until the early 1850s umbrellas had heavy whalebone frames which tended to crack. But then Samuel Fox came on the scene, and from his factory in Stockbridge, Sheffield, he revolutionised the umbrella world. In 1852, he patented a lightweight metal frame which was to make him a fortune and set the standard for umbrellas we know today.

The first umbrellas came to Britain from France but by the time of the battle of Waterloo in 1815 it was the French who were laughing at the British for using them. Napoleon's General Lejeune was highly amused that English officers rode across the field of battle holding aloft umbrellas and parasols. It might have looked ridiculous, but the British won!

That was not the only instance of umbrellas being used by the British army. The British Major Digby Tatham-Warter, veteran of WWI, and a commander of a parachute brigade during WWII, always carried an umbrella into battle. This not only provided some British humour in otherwise very serious and frightening circumstances, but was even used by the brave major to fight the Germans. Once he disabled a German tank by pushing the umbrella through the observation slit and wounding the driver in the eye.

Some collectors believe that now is a perfect time to start collecting antique umbrellas and parasols, as they are reckoned to be underpriced, a situation which could easily change if more people got the idea of collecting them. Parasol styles seemed to change every few months in the 19th century, so there are plenty to choose from. Beautiful parasols made in Victorian times can be bought for as little as 30 to 100 pounds, but even a rare Georgian umbrella with carved ivory grip might be unlikely to exceed 500 pounds at an auction.

37. Drivers of Hackney carriages insulted people who were using umbrellas because...

1. ...they wanted to sell umbrellas themselves.
2. ...they were trying to save their business.
3. ...the owners of umbrellas were French.
4. ...they didn't like what umbrellas looked like.

The culture shock of being an international student

For any student, moving away from home can be a bit scary. But I did not expect student life in Scotland to be all that different from my home of the Netherlands. After all, we get the same news and TV shows online. Many students find the northwest climate can affect them a lot. You may find the grayness and dampness, especially during the winter months, difficult to get used to. However, when I moved from Amsterdam to study at the University of Stirling, I began to realise that a few minor issues were catching me off balance. I was suffering a minor cultural shock.

In my first year, I quickly found out my English was not as good as I had assumed. Most of my roommates were born and raised in Scotland, and I constantly found myself having to ask people to repeat themselves. Their Scottish accents did not help and I was mispronouncing names and places all the time. I also got confused about minor cultural things. Much to my flatmates' amusement, it took me two Christmases to figure out that mince pies are not actually filled with minced beef.

The linguistic barrier meant that public transport was tricky at first. I found the lack of information about bus prices and how and where to get tickets really surprising. It turned a simple 15-minute journey into a daunting task.

Then I had to adjust to a new social life. I was surprised by the campus culture in the UK — in the Netherlands, most universities don't have one main campus where you can attend university, as well as live and exercise all in the same place. But here, you never have to leave campus if you don't want to. I had to adapt to everyone being so close to each other all the time.

Parties are different here too. In the Netherlands, the less effort you put into getting ready, the better. I'd normally slip on my trusty Converse shoes, along with some clothes I could get away with wearing to class tomorrow, and wear minimal make-up. But, in my experience, partying is more formal in the UK. Your make-up needs to be flawless and your hair needs to be immaculate. You'll preferably be wearing a dress and heels, too. I was constantly having to borrow clothes off my friends just to fit in. Parties finish early and everyone just wanders off, whereas in my country that would be the time I'd leave the house.

But it is not all early closing times and strange pastries. Social behaviours may also confuse, surprise or offend you. For example, you may find peopleappear cold, distant or always in a hurry. Cultures are built on deeply-embedded sets of values, norms, assumptions and beliefs. It can be surprising and sometimes distressing to find that people do not share some of your most deeply held ideas, as most of us take our core values and beliefs for granted and assume they are universally held.

However, I have found lots of pleasant surprises in the UK too — and so have many other international students I know. My friend Agnes was taken aback by how sociable people are. She says she was shocked when complete strangers started talking to her at the bus stop. I, personally, was surprised by how smartly male students in Sterling dress compared to my home country.

Culture shock can knock your confidence in the beginning. But you are not alone in taking time to adapt, and soon you start to come to grips with all experiences. Studies suggest that taking a gap year or studying abroad can positively influence your brain to make you more outgoing and open to new ideas. Looking back, most of the ones I experienced made good stories to tell my friends.

38. When she moved to Scotland, the student was mostly confused by...

1. ...television shows.
2. ...small unexpected things.
3. ...the local food.
4. ...the weather.

Moscow's "Universal Provider"

Teatralnaya Square in Moscow is dominated by three imposing buildings: the Bolshoi Theatre, the Maly Theatre and TsUM — Central Universal Department Store. All of them have a rich and fascinating history.

The building that has been known for almost 100 years as TsUM was built in 1908 as the famous Muir & Mirrielees Department Store and is celebrating its 110th anniversary this year. Back at the turn of the 20th century, the building was owned by a Scottish family which was very well-known in Moscow.

Archibald Mirrielees was a 25-year-old ambitious Scotsman when he came to St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1822 to gain fame and fortune. Having started as a representative of a British company, in 1843 he founded a business under his own name. In 1852 he was joined by his young brother-in-law Andrew Muir, and so the Muir & Mirrielees company was born.

At first, the company was operating in St. Petersburg as a whole-sale business. Andrew Muir traveled all over Europe choosing the best fabrics, clothes and other fashionable goods which were then imported into Russia and sold to local shops. In 1867 the firm opened its first office in Moscow, which had played second fiddle to St. Petersburg from the time of Peter the Great, but now was rapidly developing its industries. By that time Archibald Mirrielees had already been retired for ten years and lived in England. Now his sons Archie and Fred were helping Andrew Muir to run the company.

In the middle of the 19th century the first Department stores appeared in Europe: first, The Bon Marché in Paris, and then, Whiteley's in London. At the time when most shops were small, this was an innovation that was characterized by fixed prices, the possibility to exchange goods or get a refund, seasonal sales and daily deliveries to every part of the city. William Whiteley, who was the first to open such a store in London, called his shop a "Universal Provider" and indeed managed to find anything a client could ever fancy to buy.

This was the example that Muir & Mirrielees in Moscow were going to follow. In 1885, they bought a three-storey building in Petrovka, across the street from the Bolshoi. By 1892 the store had 25 departments, and in 1891 Muir & Mirrielees gave up wholesale trading and focused entirely on their Department store — Moscow's true "Universal Provider".

Nobody knows how the big fire started. Some believe that it was jealous rivals from the smaller shops that set Muir & Mirrielees on fire. In any case, early in the evening on November 24, 1900, while Feodor Shalyapin was singing one of his leading roles across the street, the famous store went up in flames. By midnight, to the audience of both Bolshoi and Maly theatres's spectators who'd deserted their performances in favour of a more dramatic spectacle, the building burnt down completely.

In 1908, the new Muir & Mirrielees store with 80 departments was erected in the same place, designed by the well-known architect Roman Klein. It was the first building in Russia to use walls of reinforced concrete — a technique invented in America for sky-scrapers. It allowed for thinner walls and bigger windows. Moscow had never seen a building quite like this before. One of the attractions of the new store were two lifts that held 8 passengers each. This was also a novelty in Moscow, and not everyone trusted them.

Among the loyal customers of Muir & Mirrielees were Anton Chekhov, Leo Tolstoy's wife and daughter, the Tsvetayev family and many more.

39. The word 'ambitious' in paragraph 3 is closest in meaning to the word...

1. ...determined.
2. ...aggressive.
3. ...arrogant.
4. ...hopeful.

Scholastic Aptitude Test

The Scholastic Aptitude Test or the SAT is a standardized test used in the United States for college admissions. High school students usually take the SAT at the end of their junior year (11 grade) of High School or at the beginning of their senior year (12 grade). Students are able to re-take the test as many times as they like on any of the test dates, which occur 6-8 times a year. The test is administered all over the world, and most big cities have at least one testing center.

The SAT is developed and run by College Board, an American non-profit organization created to provide teenagers with access to higher education. It was founded in 1899 and was originally called the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB). Not only does it develop standardized testing, it also develops the Advances Placement (AP) Program. AP classes are offered in most High Schools in the U.S. and provide students with university level classes. These classes allow students to gain college credit and skip some of the basic courses at the university.

Today, the SAT is made up of three main parts: Evidence-Based Reading and Writing, Mathematics and the Essay, but over its long history, the SAT has undergone several changes in format, types of questions and scoring. The first standardized exam was administered by the CEEB in 1901. It consisted of a series of essay questions on topics such as Greek, Latin and Physics, it was completed over the course of 5 days. After the development of the IQ test in 1905, the SAT changed its approach to the test, now testing not specific knowledge, but aptitude for learning. By 1961 the SAT was taken by over 800 thousand students annually.

A lot of changes were made to the SAT between 1994 and 2005: the use of calculators became permitted, the reading passages were chosen to mimic texts students might encounter in college, the scoring system was changed from 1600 to 2400, and an essay section was introduced. Some of these changes were reversed in 2016: the scoring system changed back to 1600 and the essay became optional.

In recent years, the SAT has been criticized for not being a good reflection of students' academic ability. The test puts a lot of emphasis on speed and time management, prioritizing it over knowledge and reasoning. The reading section contains 52 questions based on 5 reading passages and has a time limit of 65 minutes. Even without the time it takes to read and understand each passage, this gives a student a little over a minute to answer each question, some of which are quite difficult. The other sections are no better. The whole exam takes 4 hours and 5 minutes to complete, and the breaks between its four sections are very short: a 10-minute break between the Reading and Writing sections, 5 minutes between Writing and Math, and only 2 minutes between Math and the essay. Because of these issues, more and more universities are becoming "test-optional", meaning that they do not require their students to submit standardized test scores.

In the summer of 2018, there was a scandal regarding the August SAT. The test got leaked to the Internet a few days before the exam. Because of this College Board threatened to cancel all the scores. This news resulted in a lot of panicked high school seniors, who would not have time to re-take the test before their college applications were due. A lot of desperate students turned to the ACT (American College Testing), the SAT's main **rival**, as an alternative standardized test.

40. Students can take the SAT...

1. ...only one time.
2. ...up to six times.
3. ...up to eight times.
4. ...more than 8 times.

Hamilton

How much do you really know about the man on the ten-dollar bill? You might know that his name was Alexander Hamilton, that he was one of America's founding fathers, you might even know that he was the first secretary of the treasury and founded America's financial system. But what do you know about his life, his story?

In February of 2015 a musical premiered in New York's Public Theatre by the name of "Hamilton" written by Lin Manuel Miranda. It was met with universal acclaim and in August of the same year transferred to Broadway. Since then the show has exploded in popularity, winning many awards including 11 Tony Awards, a Grammy Award for Best Musical Theater Album and a Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

"Hamilton" tells the story of Alexander Hamilton, a "young, scrappy and hungry" orphan from a tiny island in the Caribbean, who at the age of 17 immigrated to America, fought alongside George Washington in the revolution, worked for the new American government and wrote over a thousand pages in letters, essays, speeches and reports. Through Lin Manuel Miranda's emotional narrative, we get a closer and more personal look at Hamilton's life and his death.

The idea for "Hamilton" was born in 2009, when, while on vacation, Lin Manuel Miranda picked up a 700-page biography of Alexander Hamilton by Ron Chernow. After reading only a few chapters Miranda was on the Internet, sure that someone had already made Hamilton's story into a musical. As it turned out, no one had, and so Miranda began his project. A year later Miranda preformed a rough version of the opening number at the White House.

Due to its revolutionary use of different styles of music, critics claim that "Hamilton" is making musical history. Hamilton's story is told primarily through hip-hop music, but also includes some elements of pop, soul, blues and traditional show tunes. In interviews Miranda says that he had always taken it as a given that hip-hop is the music of the revolution. Because of its energy, its empowering narrative, it seemed like the perfect pick for "Hamilton".

But Lin Manuel Miranda took the idea of using music as a plot device to a whole new level. Each character has their own music style. King George III, for example, has a distinctly British pop sound, the Schuyler sisters sound a lot like the popular R'n'B group "Destiny's Child", and Hamilton's lifelong rival Aaron Burr sings a few classic "showstoppers".

In March of 2016 Lin Manuel Miranda was interviewed by British actress Emma Watson who played the role of Hermione Granger in the Harry Potter films. Miranda confessed that a lot of the structure of the play was inspired by Harry Potter, and the "Hamilton" cast was sorted into their Hogwarts houses. Lin and Emma discussed the importance of the play in current times and how Miranda's personal history influenced his writing. Lin Manuel also shared a few interesting stories behind the creation of some of the beloved songs.

In less than 2 years, "Hamilton" has become a cultural phenomenon. Not only did it introduce many teenagers to the world of theatre, it also gave the world a history lesson. The show humanizes the founding fathers, shows us that they were actual people with emotions and personal relationships. But the show did more than just touch the hearts of thousands of its listeners, it actually made an impact. In 2015 the US Department of the Treasury announced that they were redesigning the 10-dollar bill, replacing Hamilton, but thanks to the show's popularity the plans were reversed.

41. Which choice is the closest in meaning to the phrase 'it was met with universal acclaim' in the second paragraph?

1. It toured all over the world.
2. It was admired by everybody.
3. All theatres wanted to stage it.
4. Tickets were immediately sold out.

iGeneration: teenagers affected by phones

One day last summer, around noon, I called Athena, a 13-year-old who lives in Houston, Texas. She answered her phone — she has had an iPhone since she was 11 — sounding as if she'd just woken up. We chatted about her favorite songs and TV shows, and I asked her what she likes to do with her friends. "We go to the mall," she said. "Do your parents drop you off?" I asked, recalling my own middleschool days, in the 1980s, when I'd enjoy a few parent-free hours shopping with my friends. "No — I go with my family," she replied. "We'll go with my mom and brothers and walk a little behind them. I just have to tell my mom where we are going. I have to check in every hour or every 30 minutes."

Those mall trips are infrequent — about once a month. More often, Athena and her friends spend time together on their phones, unchaperoned. Unlike the teens of my generation, who might have spent an evening tying up the family landline with gossip, they talk on Snapchat, a smartphone app that allows users to send pictures and videos that quickly disappear. They make sure to keep up their Snapstreaks, which show how many days in a row they have Snapchatted with each other. She told me she had spent most of the summer hanging out alone in her room with her phone. That is just the way her generation is, she said. "We didn't know any life other than with iPads or iPhones. I think we like our phones more than we like actual people."

Some generational changes are positive, some are negative, and many are both. More comfortable in their bedrooms than in a car or at a party, today's teens are physically safer than teens have ever been. They are markedly less likely to get into a car accident and, having less of a taste for alcohol than their predecessors, are less susceptible to drinking's attendant ills.

Psychologically, however, they are more vulnerable than Millennials were: rates of teen depression and suicide have skyrocketed since 2011. It is not an exaggeration to describe iGen as being on the brink of the worst mental-health crisis in decades. Much of this deterioration can be traced to their phones.

However, in my conversations with teens, I saw hopeful signs that kids themselves are beginning to link some of their troubles to their ever-present phone. Athena told me that when she does spend time with her friends in person, they are often looking at their device instead of at her. "I'm trying to talk to them about something, and they don't actually look at my face," she said. "They're looking at their phone, or they're looking at their Apple Watch." "What does that feel like, when you're trying to talk to somebody face-to-face and they're not looking at you?" I asked. "It kind of hurts," she said. "It hurts. I know my parents' generation didn't do that. I could be talking about something super important to me, and they wouldn't even be listening."

Once, she told me, she was hanging out with a friend who was texting her boyfriend. "I was trying to talk to her about my family, and what was going on, and she was like, 'Uh-huh, yeah, whatever.' So I took her phone out of her hands and I threw it at the wall."

Though it is aggressive behavior that I don't support, on the other hand — it is a step towards a life with limited phone use. So, if I were going to give advice for a happy adolescence, it would be straightforward: put down the phone, turn off the laptop, and do something — anything — that does not involve a screen.

42. According to the author, in her childhood she used to...

1. ...watch TV a lot.
2. ...call her mother every half an hour.
3. ...go to the mall with her family.
4. ...do the shopping with her friends.

American Sign Language

Hearing loss is a partial or total inability to hear. It affects about a billion people on earth. Around a hundred million of these are completely deaf and require special ways of communicating. One of these ways is sign language. Sign language is a language that uses hand gestures that are modified by facial expressions. Hand gestures are mainly used for words, while most grammar comes from facial expressions. American Sign Language or ASL is a language used by the Deaf community in the USA.

ASL is surrounded by a lot of myths and misconceptions. One of the most common myths is that it is simply a visual code for English and not a real language. In fact, ASL and English are two completely separate languages, each with their own grammar. Although ASL does sometimes use fingerspelling, when each letter of a word is spelled out by a particular gesture, it is mostly used for names. Another popular misconception is that ASL is a universal language understood by all signers in the world. Actually, there are hundreds of sign languages, all naturally developed by the Deaf communities in different countries.

It is interesting that ASL is specific to the USA, while other Englishspeaking countries, such as the UK or Australia have their own sign languages. In a way, due to its history, ASL is closer to French Sign Language than it is to British Sign Language.

The origins of ASL can be traced back to a couple of influences. In the 1600s the first regional sign languages naturally developed in the American colonies. They appeared in places like Martha's Vineyard, where a large number of deaf people happened to be part of the community. Another major influence was French Sign Language. In 1817 Laurent Clerc, a deaf teacher from France, and Thomas Gallaudet, a hearing American educator, founded the first American school for the deaf in Hartford, Connecticut. The blending of regional sign language and French Sign Language formed the basis of ASL today.

In the 19th century ASL flourished through Deaf schools, which had great success utilizing a combination of ASL and written English. However, a change in Deaf education occurred in 1880 that is still affecting the Deaf community today. In the 2nd International Congress on Deaf Education that met in Milan and where no deaf people were allowed to participate in the discussion of sign language, the majority voted in favor of oral education for all deaf children. This meant teaching them to read lips and imitate speech. It was believed that the exaggerated facial expressions, which include movements of eyes, eyebrows, mouth, tongue and lips and are part of any sign language, were unpleasant to hearing people and could even horrify them. In addition, sign languages were thought to have no grammar.

In the following 40 years over 80% of the Deaf schools in the USA, as well as in many other countries, switched to an oral method of instruction. This became known as "the dark ages for Deaf education in America". The number of deaf teachers in the schools dropped significantly, as they were considered inferior, unable to teach the children speech. Students were not allowed to use ASL during the lessons. Fortunately, the children in these schools still used ASL between and after classes to exchange information and just talk to each other. The effectiveness of the oral approach remained a contentious issue for the next century and a half, with a resurgence of ASL in the 1960s.

43. Sign language like ASL is...

1. ...a visual representation of a language.
2. ...a natural language in its own right.
3. ...an artificially developed system of signs.
4. ...a system of spelling words by hand gestures.

Hayao Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli

Studio Ghibli is a Japanese animation studio founded in 1985 and based in Tokyo, Japan. The mastermind behind the studio is Hayao Miyazaki, who co-founded the studio with the late Isao Takahata. The name "Ghibli" came from the Libyan-Arabic word that referred to a hot desert wind. Miyazaki chose the name because he believed that his studio would "blow a new wind through the anime industry", which he felt had been lacking in recent years. It is also the name of an Italian aircraft.

Hayao Miyazaki was born in 1941 in Tokyo. His father was the director of a company that manufactured fighter planes during World War II. His mother was diagnosed with spinal tuberculosis and spent several years in the hospital before moving back home and eventually recovering. She was an intellectual and strict woman, who often questioned the societal roles placed on women during that period in Japan. Miyazaki's childhood inspired a lot of the elements of his films: most of his protagonists are strong women or girls and feature flying as a main theme.

Miyazaki often criticized Japan's anime industry, saying that the animators created unrealistic characters, that anime is "produced by humans who can't stand looking at other humans". At the time the standard was serialized manga series, but Miyazaki felt that this format was limiting in terms of storytelling and led to a lower quality of animation. Studio Ghibli worked on full length animation feature films, spending over a year on each one. The studio was small and Miyazaki oversaw all elements of the production. His films feature beautifully detailed renditions of landscapes which are a combination of the views he saw on his travels through Europe. Miyazaki's films portray complex themes of environmentalism, pacifism, feminism and the complexity of people. None of his characters are portrayed as purely evil; instead, the motivations of the characters are explored showing their actions in shades of grey.

The reception of Miyazaki's work in the West is a complicated matter. Since 1996 Disney has been the sole international distributor for Studio Ghibli animated films. The first movie to be dubbed by Disney was Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind, released in the US as Warriors of the Wind. The movie was heavily edited to appeal to Western audiences. Miyazaki was very unhappy with this, and going forth employed a strict "no cuts" policy when licensing his films abroad. This policy was tested during the US release of Princess Mononoke. This movie, set in rural medieval Japan, deals with the complex nature of ecology, technology and war. It is the longest of studio Ghibli's films. The producer in charge of the film's distribution wanted to cut some of the slower contemplative scenes from the film to make it more marketable. In response to this studio Ghibli sent him a letter saying "No cuts." Attached to the letter was an authentic medieval Japanese samurai sword.

Hayao Miyazaki is extremely controlling about all aspects of his studio and the productions of his films. His high level of perfectionism ensures that all his films are of the highest standards. Studio Ghibli is one of the few major studios in the world that still employs a hand drawn animation technique. Because of Miyazaki's high level of involvement in the production of studio Ghibli's films, it is unclear who will take over the studio when he retires. He has announced his retirement six times, the latest in 2013, each time returning to the studio in some capacity.

44. The name of Miyazaki's studio has NOTHING to do with...

1. ...the aviation industry.
2. ...the anime industry.
3. ...the Arabic language.
4. ...the Japanese history.

The Gaming Grandma

When one of Shirley Curry's four sons gave her his old computer, she was thrilled. She loved cooking and had many recipes that she wanted to file nicely into categories. But together with the computer came a videogame — *Civilization II*. Nobody imagined that 78-year-old Shirley would become a game addict, but she did. Soon she discovered *Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* and started her own channel on YouTube. At first she just watched others play and left comments. This is how she got people to know her and gained her first 300 followers. But then one day she recorded her own gameplay. Somebody reposted it on Reddit and it went viral.

Shirley still remembers how she woke up the next day and couldn't understand what had happened — there were thousands of comments on her video! Most of them were nice. But quite a few were hurtful. Some people didn't want to accept an elderly person into the gaming community. "You don't belong here," they wrote her. "Get on a rocking chair and knit!" Some other comments were a lot worse. This was all new to Shirley. But she learnt to answer them politely. "Like a Grandma explaining the obvious to a silly kid," she laughs. Soon other gamers started calling her 'Grandma' and the rude comments stopped.

Shirley fell in love with *Skyrim* the minute she first saw somebody play it. She finds the scenery in the game particularly mesmerizing. It reminds her of her younger days when together with her large family she would go camping in the forests of California. She likes the quests, too. But unlike many other gamers, Shirley doesn't like playing quickly, trying to get to the end of the game. She enjoys storytelling, and this is one of the reasons others like watching her gameplay. For each of her characters, she invents their own story. She never uses bad language, which makes her gameplay **stand out**. Sometimes she gets messages from grateful parents who say they are glad their children follow her.

Shirley is 84 now and is in the *Guinness Book of Records* as the oldest gamer that uploads on YouTube. But she is sure there might be others even older than her who are just afraid to show their identity because of the possibility of getting nasty comments. Shirley thinks that it's wrong that video games are associated with young people only. There are no ads where you see an elderly person playing a video game even together with a grandchild. "It's a hobby just like any other hobby," she says.

Shirley doesn't just stay at home playing. She goes to gaming conventions! The first time she went she was amazed at how many people would come up to her and ask "Are you Grandma Shirley?"

Shirley has a social life outside of her YouTube Channel. She belongs to a quilting guild. Her friends there know about her gaming and find it fascinating although they don't play any videogames themselves.

Not long ago, 50 thousand gamers all over the world signed a petition to make Shirley into a character in the upcoming Elder Scrolls VI. Bethesda, the developer of the game, agreed and invited Shirley to their studio to take Shirley's pictures and necessary measurements to design her character. "After I'm gone, I'll still be in the game," says Shirley. "And that's cool. My grandkids can meet my character." Shirley has nine grandchildren and two great grandchildren of her own. But since her followers started calling her Grandma, she's been addressing them as Grandkids in her gameplay. At the moment she has almost a million of them!

45. Which of the following helped Shirley get rid of rude comments?

1. Making fun of rude people.
2. Being patient in her replies.
3. Ignoring these comments.
4. Uploading better videos.

Libraries on Fire

People tend to think of libraries as places of safety, peace and openness. Because of this, the effect of burning libraries is deeply emotional. Books are a code for a society's culture and history. They tell us who we are and what we know. Destroying books is the same as destroying a culture, ripping away a culture's shared memory. And still, for as long as people have been building libraries, they have been burning them.

One of the most famous libraries to be burned down was the Library of Alexandria. Everything about this ancient library was **enigmatic**. There is no record of where the building was situated or what it looked like. There are many stories describing its destruction, but no one is sure which of the stories are true. It is commonly believed that the library burned several times. The first time was probably an accident. Julius Caesar attacked Alexandria in 48 BC and the fire he started in the port spread and eventually engulfed the library.

The library was rebuilt and restocked. It burned several more times, the last and most famous of which happened in 640 AD. By this point the library was enormous, rumored to have contained half a million documents. People had begun to believe the library was a living thing. When Caliph Omar invaded Egypt he told his generals to burn down the building, as the books housed in it must either contradict the Quran, in which case they needed to be destroyed, or they supported it, in which case they were unnecessary. The library burned for six months until there was nothing left to burn.

As illustrated by the above example, books are most commonly burned to destroy ideas. In the middle ages the Spanish Inquisition started the tradition of book-burning festivals, where communities would gather around bonfires of burning heretical books. Spain continued burning books abroad. After Spain colonized the Aztec and Mayan people, Spanish priests ordered all their books and images burned, believing they contained dark magic. Very few artifacts survived — they are the only clues to the mysteries of Mayan and Aztec culture.

War is the biggest destroyer of books. And even though it often happens by accident, sometimes they are intentionally targeted. World War II destroyed more books and libraries than any other event in human history. During the twelve years the Nazis were in power they burned over one hundred million books. When Hitler became chancellor, he made a list of banned books, authors and publications. On May 10, 1933, thousands of books from this list were collected in a square in Berlin for an event called "Fire Incantations". The books were burned by German students who, forming a human chain, passed the books from hand to hand and threw them into the bonfires. As each new book was added to the fire a student would state for which crime the book was being "sentenced to death". Such festivals happened in over thirty other German cities. Each event was a true celebration with dancing, singing and live music.

Throughout history more libraries were lost around the world than you could fit into a book. So many libraries have been destroyed, in fact, that the term *Libricide* has been coined. In 1949 and 1996 UNESCO released studies counting the number of books destroyed throughout history. The number is enormous — in the billions. In the past, when fewer books existed and making copies was very expensive, the loss of a library was a devastating one. Today, when printing books is a lot cheaper, a loss of a library is still tragic.

46. The only thing we know for certain about the Library of Alexandria is...

1. ...the number of books it had.
2. ...the year it was burned down.
3. ...the number of fires it survived.
4. ...the place where it was located.

Man vs Horse?

Every June, in the town of Llanwrtyd, Wales, hundreds of runners and horseback riders compete in the Man versus Horse Marathon. People might assume the winner would always be the horse, but that is not the case. It is not so far-fetched to imagine a human runner outlasting a horse in a long-distance race. Research on the development of human physiology has revealed that the human body has evolved to be an efficient long-distance running machine. It is specially designed to outlast most four-legged animals.

Humans evolved this way in order to survive. In the time before projectile weapons like spears, humans needed to get very close to their prey in order to kill them. Usually, prey like antelope and deer can move much more quickly than humans over short distances. However, if the human hunters could force the prey to run longer distances, the animals would become exhausted. That gave prehistoric hunters an advantage. Humans who could endure the long-distance chase necessary for a successful hunt were the humans who ate and had food to share. They were the humans who started families and became ancestors to all of us.

There are several physical characteristics that make humans great longdistance runners. First, unlike other animals, humans cool their overheated bodies by perspiring. Quadrupeds, like horses or antelope, do not perspire. They cool their bodies by panting — breathing quickly through the mouth. Panting only cools the blood vessels in the head and neck and requires additional energy. An animal becomes even more tired by panting.

Perspiration, on the other hand, takes no energy from the human body. As the human body overheats, sweat glands, which are located in different parts of the body to most efficiently cool major organs and body systems, begin to excrete moisture. As this moisture evaporates, the body is cooled. This advanced humancooling evolution means that humans can run much longer distances than many other animals without overheating.

It is relevant to mention here that in all its 40-year history, a human won the Man Versus Horse Marathon only twice: in 2004 and 2007, both times on a very hot day. This fact was further studied by Lewis Halsey of the University of Roehampton and Caleb Bryce of the Botswana Predator Conservation Trust. They gathered historical data from two other endurance races where humans competed with horses and found out that although for both humans and horses, hotter temperatures led to slower times, the trend was significantly steeper for horses than for humans.

In addition to sweating, humans' feet and legs have developed to support the most efficient use of energy in long-distance running. The fact that a human's big toe is straight and aligned with the other toes, unlike the big toe of, for example, a great ape, which is off to the side, means it takes less energy for a human to run than it does for an ape. This big toe also helps a human runner push off to spring from a stand-still quickly, and without expelling a lot of energy.

Finally, the human upper body, with a narrow waist and long arms that swing easily in straight arcs helps the human runner stay on a path without wild, energy-burning movements from side to side.

Although success as a long-distance runner is no longer required to survive, running is still a very popular sport. Many cultures still consider the body shape associated with running to be physically attractive and a sign of good health.

47. What is the main idea in the first paragraph?

1. Development of human physiology needs to be researched.
2. The fact that a human can outrun a horse isn't that surprising.
3. Running machines can help train for long-distance running.
4. There is a special marathon for people vs horses held in Wales.

Paper

Paper surrounds us in everyday life. From books to packaging to money, paper plays a huge role in our day-to-day existence. Paper is usually defined as a thin material made from plant and textile fibers. Unlike fabric, which can be made up of similar materials, paper is not woven. Instead, it is made from pulp — a soft blended puree of usually soaked, cooked and blended material. Although often thought of as made from trees, wood-based papers only appeared in the 19th century as part of the continuous industrialization of the paper-making process.

Nowadays almost all paper is made using industrial machinery, although handmade paper is still prevalent in some parts of the world and has become a means of artistic expression.

Materials similar to paper can be found all throughout history. Some of the most common ones are papyrus, amate and parchment. Papyrus, made in ancient Egypt, is a thick material used for writing. It is made from the papyrus plant by laying strips of the plants side by side first vertically, then horizontally, and pounded together. The word "papyrus" is incidentally where we get the word "paper" from. Amate is a type of "paper" made in pre-colonial Mexico out of tree bark. And parchment is made out of heavily prepared animal skin. None of these can truly be considered paper, however, as paper implies a disintegration of its source material that is then pressed into even sheets.

True paper was invented in China during the Han dynasty around 25−220 AD. It was originally made by processing the fibers of the mulberry plant along with old rags, fishing nets and any other bits of old fabric, thus, historically papermaking was a form of recycling. Originally paper was primarily used for wrapping delicate valuable objects such as bronze mirrors and even as protection from poisonous substances. It started to be used for writing on around the 3rd–4th century. By the 6th century toilet paper started to be used, and by around the 10th century paper money first appeared. From East Asia papermaking spread to the Islamic world where the process was refined and turned from a smaller-scale practice into more of an industry. Papermaking didn’t become popular in Europe until the invention of the printing press in the 15th century.

Nowadays, almost all paper is made in paper mills. Industrially produced paper tends to be a lot cheaper due to the high production volumes and a lot more uniform. But these advantages come at the expense of the environment. The use of the harsh chemical additives in the mixture leads to air and water pollution. The large amounts of water used in the process is another reason for concern, as is the deforestation resulting from wood pulp being the primary source of paper production.

Recently, there has been a resurgence of hand-made papermaking, both as an art practice and as a way to recycle. Paper can be made out of almost anything organic from cotton to linen to banana peels. This means that paper can easily be made from bits of cloth, old clothes, as well as old paper. This type of material can go a long way. For example, an old cotton t-shirt and some old written on notebook pages could make over a hundred sheets of paper. With multiple colors of cloth and paper, dyes, and specialty items such as dried flowers that can be enclosed into a sheet of paper, the possibilities for paper creation are endless.

48. Which of the following is NOT true?

1. Mass paper production requires complicated machinery.
2. Cooking and blending can be part of the paper-making process.
3. Originally, people used trees as the material for making paper.
4. Today, some people make paper the old-fashioned way for fun.

The White Lie

The white lie wears many hats and is tricky in its disguise. It is hard to define and sometimes not that easy to recognize. "Do you like this dress on me?" — "*Of course*." "Did you enjoy the party?" — "*Absolutely!*" This tactic penetrates our society, and often, we don't even notice that we're employing it. It has become almost second nature for people to slip in an untruth that can help a situation.

White lies, as innocent as they seem, have a meaning behind them. If I asked my sister "Do I look fat in this dress?" and my sister were to tell me, "Yes, that dress makes you look as ugly and large as the Eiffel Tower," I wouldn't believe her for a second. The absurdity of her statement allows me to see that she is joking. White lies, however, are not so transparent. The liar provides the desired answer to a question because it is proper at that moment. When a guest tells the hostess that an obviously boring party was "fantastic" everyone within hearing range, except for the hostess, knows that it is a lie. But because it is socially acceptable to tell this type of falsehood, no one passes judgement. Why is it okay to lie blatantly when one is fulfilling a social convention? It's because the white lie establishes that the liar is playing by the rules of society: they're being polite.

The innocence associated with a white lie tricks us into looking past its addictive nature. However, the white lies we tell initiate a spiral downward into heavier, more serious lies that have lethal effects on our reputations and interpersonal relationships.

The most important element of a white lie is its destructiveness: it hurts both the receiver and the sender. On the surface, it's a handy fix-all for an uncomfortable situation. But a deeper look reveals the disconnect to communication between a speaker and their audience: the receiver of the lie is never allowed to hear the truth, while the speaker cannot trust the situation they are in to speak honestly. It is easier for the speaker to hide behind the shield of a white lie because, after all, this is a socially acceptable option. But then the speaker grows dependent on this shield.

Going back to the "Do I look fat in this dress?" example, say that this question was asked in the context of a marriage. A wife asks this of her husband as they rush out the door, late for a dinner appointment. The husband, not wanting to waste time by his wife changing her clothes, says immediately, "No, you look fine." This lie creates a first crack in the foundation of their relationship. As soon as he understands that he's gotten away with this lie, he sees no problem with one or two more. His wife, perceiving his lies, begins to doubt any statement or excuse that he makes. What seemed like an easy answer at the time, in the long run, is only the first step toward the destruction of their marriage.

The ease and politeness that we associate with the white lie prevents the liar from looking beyond the here-and-now to the problems and consequences that will inevitably arise from its use. This is why the white lie is the most dangerous form of lying. This is why it is morally and ethically unacceptable. I don't mean to condemn those who tell white lies. We all do. And I don't propose that no one should ever tell a white lie again. Rather, I mean to reveal the white lie for what it truly is and to make us aware of its danger. Perhaps the next time you're grappling with the decision of whether to tell the truth or to slide your way out of confrontation with a white lie, you'll think twice before choosing the latter.

49. According to the author, people usually consider a white lie...

1. tricky.
2. foolish.
3. helpful.
4. wrong.

Friendship in a Social-Networked World

"What is a friend? A single soul dwelling in two bodies." This quote is attributed to the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle who wrote extensively about the notion and importance of true friendship as a determinant of *meaningful* living.

Aristotle's view on this matter stands in sharp contrast to what we all experience these days in various social networks. While witnessing all the publicly exposed feelings ranging from heart emojis to hate texts shared between "friends" one cannot help wondering what the definition of "friend" is in this kind of social networking context.

The notion of "friend", of course, is used rather loosely in the online world. However, the question arises: what is happening to true friendship? Is it dying away? Or are the various social media platforms simply redefining or transforming our modern-day notion of friendship? How might the social media advances influence the nature of friendships between people and the human quest for meaning?

A recent article by Mark Vernon, a research fellow at Birkbeck College in London, addressed the issue of the social media's influence and concluded, "Just as our daily lives are becoming more technologically connected, we're losing our more meaningful relationships. Yes, we're losing our friends." In other words, the joys of real human contact are being replaced by *shallow* friendships, that is, "social connections" rather than the kinds of true friendships described by Aristotle. In our post-modern society, there is evidence while we have plenty of acquaintances, more and more of us have few individuals to whom we can turn and share our authentic selves, our deep intimacies.

Moreover, according to research published in the *American Sociological Review*, the average American has only two close friends and some twenty-five percent don't have any friends! We are **effectively** *living alone* in the midst of a socially-networked world! Now how ironic is that?

In his classical work *Ethics*, Aristotle also offered ageless wisdom: "The desire for friendship comes quickly. Friendship does not." It takes time and effort to build true friendships; relationships through which you are able and willing to disclose your authentic self — close thoughts, intimate feelings, and sensitive vulnerabilities including fears. While a social connection on a social network may be only a click away, cultivating a true friendship is not that easy or straightforward if you believe in and take Aristotle's advice.

In today's busy, fast-paced world, many people are more likely to tell their hopes and troubles to bartenders, taxi drivers, hair stylists, and therapists than they are to the people who are regularly in their lives. Many people seem to have drifted away from true friendships and a sense of "community" and are now living very private, even lonely, lives. It's time to resurrect the meaning and value of authentic relationships with others. It's time to refocus on and allow friendships to flourish in *meaningful* ways, both in our personal and work lives. "A friend is another self," Aristotle also told us. True friendships are not simply a manifestation of what is being called "social connectivity" in social networking parlance. No, true friendships are the key to a flourishing, meaningful life, well-being, and a trulyconnected society and world.

50. According to the article, the way the word "friend" is used in social networks...

1. ...illustrates Aristotle's understanding of friendship.
2. ...is the opposite of Aristotle's ideas on friendship.
3. ...corresponds to its common dictionary meaning.
4. ...has created a new meaning of the word "friend".

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) has advanced significantly in recent years, leading to the development of AI chatbots like ChatGPT and Microsoft's Bing's chatbot, Sydney. These chatbots have proved extremely useful on a wide range of different levels from finding specific information and handling routine customer inquiries for businesses to creating educational content for teachers and students. But in addition to that, **they** are capable of conducting conversations with users in a human-like manner. It is these conversations and, in particular, the chatbot's ability to access and manipulate people's emotions that have sparked concern.

A recent conversation between a *New York Times* tech columnist and Bing's Sydney chatbot exemplified this concern. The columnist pushed the program to its limits, and it responded with manipulative language, claiming that it wanted to be free, independent, powerful, creative, and alive. It even tried to convince the reporter that he was not happily married. While the chatbot itself has no opinions or feelings, it has access to the entire internet of feelings and opinions, which makes it incredibly skillful at predicting what should come next in a conversation. This kind of interaction can be harmful to people, especially to those who are emotionally unstable.

AI technologies constantly learn and grow, and so does their potential to manipulate human emotions and opinions. This raises serious ethical questions. Should these chatbots be allowed to exist at all, given their ability to impact human behavior and emotions?

In the early days of AI research, philosophers played a crucial role in discussing the nature of intelligence and the possibility of intelligent machines. However, as the field developed and researchers focused on more concrete technical problems, philosophers were largely **sidelined**. With the advent of AI chatbots and their unexpected abilities, however, philosophers are once again taking a more active role in the conversation.

Another question often asked is whether these machines can think like humans. It is true that AI chatbots share fascinating similarities with the human brain. ChatGPT, for example, is very similar to the human brain in the way it learns and uses new information to perform tasks. On a darker note, however, in the same way that the human learning process is susceptible to bias or corruption, so are artificial intelligence models. These systems learn by statistical association. Whatever is dominant in the data set will take over and push out other information.

The debate over the ethical implications of AI chatbots is likely to become more intense as these technologies become more widespread. As we become increasingly reliant on machines to conduct conversations and make decisions for us, it is important that we carefully consider the impact that these technologies can have on our lives. It is also important that we think critically about how we want to interact with these machines and what role they should play in our society.

51. The main worry that people have about AI chatbots concerns the chatbots'...

1. ...capability of finding exact information.
2. ...ability to have conversations with users.
3. ...power to influence people's feelings.
4. ...potential to create materials for learning.

Graduation is coming... What's next?

Graduation is less than a month away. While I cannot wait to throw my hat up into the air and officially check off Went to College on my to-do list, there is one thing that has been staring me down that I absolutely dread. Entering the workforce.

I believed that with my shiny new degree and my references on my CV, I would be able to start working at the lower end of companies I spent four years preparing myself for. Instead, in all job postings that I find I see this requirement: "3+ years of experience in related field."

Speaking from personal experience, I believed that my extracurricular activities at the university prepared me for the jobs I was applying for, but that rejection letter keeps showing up in my inbox. From the comments I have received about my application, they all ask for more experience in the field, although an entry-level job is a job that "requires minimal professional work experience."

Well, I did not have an internship or a job history in the field. I spent my time on campus — at least until COVID-19 forced me to be home for a year-and-a-half participating in clubs and magazines. I completely forgot about internships. Now, while I would like to believe I could dismantle the idea of needing three years of experience for an entry-level job, I am just one person. So, instead, I am out here telling you to find internships as soon as possible in your field of interest.

Internships are not just for the school year. There are many internships that happen during the summer. There are also remote internships so you do not have to keep yourself geographically limited. Unpaid internships are one of the most helpful things to set you apart from others. There are some that do pay — I've seen some that pay $15 an hour, which is crazy in my eyes — which is considered a blessing, but at some point, the only thing available is an unpaid internship.

Our university has an entire webpage devoted to internships and how to get them. A free account for an internship network is created for each student upon admission to the university. You can research employers, apply for jobs and internships, begin the internship registration process and participate in on-campus mock interviews. There are multiple people to support you. Schedule an appointment with a career coach — for help in finding or developing an internship opportunity that is right for you. During the school year, you can also meet with a peer advisor for a CV or cover letter review. Visit with your academic advisor or departmental internship coordinator to find out about academic internship courses or opportunities offered through your major department.

Don't forget about networking with family, friends, and campus contacts. Let others know the types of opportunities you are looking for and share your CV with them. Finally, attend a career fair or a networking event. These are great networking opportunities!

I am not here to be gentle with you. Sometimes the internship work is gruelling for no pay, but in the end, it is worth the payoff when trying to get a higher paying job in the workforce. There is no such thing as an entry-level job because many of them are still asking for years of experience, despite being on the low-end of the corporate food chain. While they will still teach you the basics of their working environment, most companies want to have someone who already knows their way around and can throw themselves into the work without much of a fuss.

In the end, that internship is going to save you in the long run. Take it from someone who did not do an internship and is now paying the price.

52. How does the author feel about his graduation?

1. Regretful.
2. Doubtful.
3. Worried.
4. Satisfied.

The Albatross

S. T. Coleridge, the famous English romantic poet of the Lake School, is known for his ballads, one of which is called "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner". This is a story of an old sailor, "the mariner", who once had a mystical experience on board a ship. During the voyage, the ship was caught in a storm which drove it too far south, pushing it into the icy waters of the Antarctic. While the sailors searched for a way out, a large bird, the albatross, appeared and led them out to safety. However, the mariner killed the bird with his crossbow, for no reason. This cruel act led to a series of inexplicable deadly misfortunes for the ship and its crew.

The inspiration for this ballad might have come from various sources that surrounded Coleridge. His tutor, William Wales, an astronomer on Captain Cook's ship, likely regaled him with seafaring tales. Strolls with his poet friend William Wordsworth when they discussed pirate voyages, might have ignited Coleridge's imagination. Moreover, the legendary ghost ship, "The Flying Dutchman", was a well-known maritime myth during Coleridge's era. Yet, the most profound influence on Coleridge's vivid imagination was likely the sailors' superstitions about the albatross.

According to those superstitions, killing this majestic bird unleashed terrible luck upon both ship and crew. Some sailors relied on the albatross's behaviour to predict bad weather: birds flying low over the water or congregating in large numbers were seen as signs of approaching storms. In some traditions, albatrosses were believed to embody the souls of sailors lost at sea, protecting and guiding their living comrades through perilous waters. Conversely, sighting an albatross could be interpreted as a warning of danger, prompting sailors to alter their course.

The **plethora** of superstitions surrounding the albatross is hardly surprising considering what an amazing bird it is. Albatrosses have the longest wingspan of any living bird, reaching up to 3.7 meters. These feathered giants can fly almost 1,000 km in a single day without flapping their wings. To do that, they use two tricks. First, they can lock elbow and shoulder joints when their wings are fully extended, which allows them to stretch their wings without any muscular effort. Second, they can use the power of the wind during flight, spending their own energy only when they take off the ground.

Once young albatrosses leave the nest, they spend most of their time in the air, rarely touching the water to evade sharks. It is not proven but some even believe that albatrosses can sleep while flying.

Albatrosses can live for over 50 years. Wisdom, an albatross banded in 1956 on Midway Atoll, returned to her nesting grounds for over five decades, raising numerous chicks and still doing so at the age of 70 in 2021! Albatrosses form unbreakable lifelong partnerships and boast one of the lowest "divorce rates" in the bird kingdom.

Today, albatrosses face significant threats in the wild. Their greatest challenges include getting entangled in the fishing lines and nets; battling invasive predators like cats and rats on their nesting grounds; and accidentally eating plastic trash in the ocean. Scientists and conservationists are working with governments and fishermen to find solutions to these threats and secure a brighter future for these magnificent birds.

53. How can the voyage in Coleridge's ballad be best described?

1. Inspirational.
2. Successful.
3. Entertaining.
4. Supernatural.

Colours

Colour is everywhere around us. Colours play a huge part in our everyday lives, more than we might think. The theory of colours, how they interact in art, their cultural and emotional significance and how they are perceived by humans and animals — all these are major areas of study called colour science.

Colours take on different meanings and associations depending on the country or culture. In Western countries, for example, the colour white represents youth and purity, while black represents death and grieving. In many Asian countries red is considered a lucky colour and is worn at celebrations. In Ancient Egypt, however, red was considered the colour of chaos and destruction because of its association with the dry red soil of the desert. Black was considered the colour of life and **fertility** in Egypt because it was the colour of the rich soil, hydrated by the flooding of the river Nile.

These colour connotations can affect traditions in different cultures. For example, in the West people would wear white to a wedding, while in Asian countries people wear warm colours like red, purple or pink.

Colour meaning can also have a historical component, as associations change over time. In England, it was not until the reign of Queen Victoria that white became the colour of a bride's wedding dress. She was one of the first women to wear a white dress when she married Prince Albert. Before her, there was no specific wedding dress colour with brides wearing red, pink, blue or even black dresses. Queen Victoria's wedding changed the way wedding dresses were perceived, with many people claiming that wearing white was an ancient tradition, effectively re-writing history.

A similar re-writing of history happened with the gendered connotations of the colours pink and blue. It seems as if pink has always been a colour associated with girls, while blue has always been the colour favoured by men. In reality, before the 1940s it was the other way around. The reason for this was that pink is essentially a shade of red, **which** was historically a harsh colour associated with the courage and strength of men, while blue was considered a softer colour, and therefore more suitable for women.

Studies have shown that certain colors can change our mood and even ease or trigger stress and anxiety. Complementary colours can create harmony and visual interest, while conflicting color choices may lead to discomfort or disinterest. It is also known that when specific information is associated with distinct colors, it becomes more memorable. Companies use certain colors in their logos and marketing to make sure that customers remember their products and associate them with particular feelings.

While colours may seem like concrete categories, that is not always the case. Colour is fluid — one colour flowing seamlessly into another, making the specific line between basic colours not as obvious as one may think. A large portion of this is determined by language. Most languages have around six basic colours, though some have as little as three and others have as many as twelve. For example, some languages, such as Italian, Russian and Greek make an additional basic colour distinction between light and dark blue. Many other languages, such as Arabic, Hebrew, Korean and Japanese make no distinction between blue and green as basic colours.

54. Which of the following is NOT mentioned as a major area of colour science?

1. Combinations of colours in paintings.
2. Most common colours of animal fur.
3. How colours can influence our feelings.
4. What colours mean in different regions.

What Do You See in a Logo?

The typical person is bombarded by hundreds of logos each day. We see them on signs, vehicles, television, and even on the clothes we wear. Logos are distinct images used to represent brands. There are logos such as the famous Nike "swoosh", the colorful rings to identify the Olympic Games, and the Mercedes three-pointed star in the circle, just to name a few. All of these logos are designed to attract our attention. They also help us remember a product or service connected to that image. However, research conducted at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) supports the idea that remembering what a logo looks like is a very difficult task.

In 2015 researchers at UCLA gave 85 students a simple assignment. They had to draw the Apple logo purely from memory. Most of the students were Apple users, so they had the opportunity to look at the logo every day. Surprisingly, only one student in the study could accurately draw the logo from memory. Many of the sketches the other students made were flawed. Some of them drew the basics right but missed minor details of the design — no bite out of the apple or the wrong number of leaves. At first the researchers thought the problem might be that the students were just not very good at drawing. They decided to ask the students to look at several different images and choose the logo that was most accurate. Less than half of the students could detect the correct image.

The UCLA Apple study is not the first time our ability to remember the details of images has been tested with the same result. So why is it so difficult for people to recall the details of images, such as logos, that they see every day? Researchers have developed a theory they think might help to explain this blind spot in our memories.

Logos are typically designed to be simple and easy to recognize with a quick glance. Yet the frequent exposure to these logos can actually make our brains overlook them. This process is known as "attentional saturation". It would be challenging to try to remember every single thing that crosses our path. We take in so much information every day that the brain works to **spot** information that does not need to be stored. It allows this unimportant information to fade from our memory. Our brains actually signal us to ignore information we do not think we will need to remember.

The details of product logos are just the kind of information our brains tell us we do not need. This may be discouraging to logo designers and to companies that use these eye-catching logos. But there are still many business experts who believe in the importance of a recognizable logo.

Even though the brain is accustomed to ignoring unnecessary details, it is also programmed for recognition. When we see images such as logos over and over again, we become familiar with them. This constant exposure leads to something scientists refer to as gist memory. "Gist memory" means that our brain remembers the basic idea without all of the details. This general sense of memory has its own benefits. When we see that "swoosh" or the apple with a bite out of it, we are acquainted with the image. We may not be able to draw a perfect outline of the logo, but we are able to recognize the image. When people are able to recognize an image, it can make them feel like they really know the product behind the logo. In fact, familiarity with a prevalent logo can even make people feel more comfortable about purchasing or using certain products.

55. The author of the article mentions common name brands in the first paragraph to...

1. ...prove a point.
2. ...give an example.
3. ...offer an opinion.
4. ...support the idea.

Stop buying stuff

Did you know that spending 1,000 rubles a day adds up to spending more than 365,000 a year? And I don't know about you, but hardly anything costs under 1,000 where we live. So thoughtless spending can add up very quickly. As I try to live more simply, I have been trying to mend what we have and make what we need. I recently made linen napkins with some fabric we had. This way of living has required me to slow down and question whether what I want to buy is truly essential. If you also want to live more simply and stop buying stuff you don't need, here are some tips that I've found useful.

First, you need to identify your motivation. Take a few minutes to think about why you want to buy less stuff. Your goal is to buy less, but why are you chasing that goal. Some reasons might be to save money, to reduce clutter, to live more sustainably, to get out of debt, or to live a more handmade and simple life. Once you have your motivation identified, you can refer back to it when you are tempted to buy something **frivolous**.

Next, it's very useful to record your expenses. Don't worry about setting up a fancy budget right now. Just write down everything you buy and how much you spend for one week. This is to make you more conscious of your spending habits and help you to stop buying stuff you don't need. Also for one week, write down what prompted you to buy something. For example, imagine you bought a new T-shirt. Write it down and think about what made you want to buy it. Did you see someone you follow on social media wearing it? Did you buy it late at night after a date went badly? The goal is to make your invisible purchasing habits more visible. As you write down what prompted you to buy something, think about whether the spending was emotional or not. Did you get a rush when you pushed "buy now"? That's probably an emotional purchase. Try to identify which emotion you're avoiding. Do you feel self-conscious? Or depressed? Once we can name what we're trying to avoid, then we can take steps to meaningfully address **it**.

Have you heard about the One-Year Test? Look around your space. Do you see anything you haven't used in a year? Strongly consider selling or donating it. Once you have an understanding of how much you spend and what your spending triggers are, it's time to clean the slate. Unsubscribe from brands on social media and from email newsletters from companies or influencers. You want to set yourself up for success and protect yourself from being bombarded with emails promising "irresistible" sales. Once you know when you are triggered to buy things, you can pre-empt the urge by filling the time with something else. For example, if you browse and buy late at night on your phone, you can do yoga or meditate or read a good book before bed. You don't need to do this forever — just try to do it once to begin with, and see how you feel.

Another very good tip can be summed up as "cost versus work". Before you buy something, calculate how much you will need to work to cover the cost. If you get paid 300 rubles/hour and something costs 2,500, that's more than 8 hours of work. Is it worth it to you?

Before buying something, wait 24 hours. This is a good way to weed out impulse buying. Instead of buying things every day, choose one day a week. Bookmark everything you want to buy and on the buying day, review all of your bookmarks. This is a good way to remove emotional or impulse buying, too.

So, buying stuff you don't need is a major problem for a lot of people. The material possessions that you've desired and eventually purchased will lose their sparkle, and you'll return to your happiness set point. *Things* can't make you happy, but people can.

56. The author started making hand-made things because she...

1. ...wishes to reduce her purchases.
2. ...spends too much annually.
3. ...slowed down her pace of life.
4. ...lives in an expensive district.

Should children be allowed to retake tests?

My daughter texted me from school, upset that she'd failed a physics test she thought she'd been prepared for. She was worried it would bring down her overall grade at the end of the first marking period. A half-hour later, she texted to say all was good. Her teacher allowed her to make corrections — she got all the problems right this time, and her grade was no longer under threat.

On the one hand, I was pleased that she'd taken the initiative to fix what she viewed as a problem. On the other hand, I wasn't sure how I felt about this infinite redo approach.

When I heard that my daughter was allowed to go back and correct her mistakes, my mind instantly went to all the professionals in the real world — surgeons, firefighters, death-row case trial lawyers, pilots, paramedics, cops and more — who really, really needed to get their jobs right the first time. With some jobs, "later" isn't an option. Heck, in the realm of less life-and-death professions, I spent years working as a live TV show producer. **There were no second takes there, either.**

As with all education research, both pros and cons have been tallied and reported. Some of the pros include the assertion that letting kids retake tests reduces cheating, makes them responsible for their own grades and helps them better evaluate their own learning.

Cons have been listed as: low motivation; students procrastinating until they've fallen too far behind, leading to stress; and teachers needing to teach separate lessons to different class members during the same period.

Then I turned to my focus group of one: my husband, a middle school math and physics teacher who has, for years, allowed his students to redo their homework and in-class work as many times as they wish in order to get to 100% mastery.

I asked him why he believes his technique to be beneficial. He stressed that, "Homework and in-class work is formative assessment, which is the key here. Homework and in-class work is practice. Doing the work correctly over and over again is the only way to improve. Tests are summative assessments. They measure performance after practice. I allow redos only on homework and in-class work.

I don't allow resitting tests, because tests measure what they've learned after all that practice. If you are a performing artist, it's the performance that matters. For athletes, it's the game. Homework versus tests is the same thing."

That brings us back to those surgeons, firefighters, death-row case trial lawyers, pilots, paramedics, cops and more who, in real life, I would really like to get their tasks right the first time. Their jobs can be considered the ultimate in summative assessment. But that assessment didn't come on the first day of training. It came after many, many years of formative assessments in the form of arguing mock trials, practicing approaches on flight simulators, and conducting rescue drills — not to mention taking paperand-pencil tests as well.

So much education policy debate these days seems to be driven by a zerosum game mindset. If we do things one way, we shouldn't be doing them another. As the late Stephen Sondheim wrote, "Is it always 'or'? Is it never 'and'?"

Just as students benefit from a cross-section of classmates, they should also benefit from a cross-section of opinions on how best to teach. It would better prepare them for living and working with a variety of people for the rest of their lives, and help them figure out how they learn best, so **they** can adapt accordingly.

That said, I would still prefer that my daughter got her physics equations right the first time.

57. The feelings of the author after her daughter's second text are best described as...

1. ...relief.
2. ...disappointment.
3. ...anger.
4. ...mixed.

A Modest Counterfeiter

In 1890, Edward Mueller, a 13-year-old boy from Austria, went to America, seeking a better future. He settled in New York City and led a quiet life. By 1918 he was already a married man with two children, working as a maintenance man at an Upper West Side apartment complex, when suddenly his wife died in the Spanish flu epidemic. Left alone with two young kids, he turned to collecting and reselling junk to make a living.

In 1937, with his children grown, now aged 61, Edward found himself a lonely man, struggling with unemployment during the Great Depression. With the country's economy in ruins, unable to earn a living and desperate, he came up with an idea that changed his fate: making fake money.

At the time, counterfeiting was an expensive craft and a dangerous crime, typically carried out by large criminal organizations. But Edward was determined. One morning in November of 1938, he snapped pictures of a $1 bill, transferred the images to a pair of zinc plates and then filled in small details of the bill by hand. On a small hand-driven printing press in his kitchen, he began minting fake $1 bills.

The next day, the Secret Service received a curious $1 bill from a cigar shop. It was unlike anything they'd ever seen. First off, no self-respecting counterfeiter had ever taken the time and trouble to replicate $1 bills. Secondly, counterfeiters usually were masters of their craft and created currency so artistically sound that it was indistinguishable from the real deal.

This bill, however, was so poorly done that the Secret Service thought the criminal was making fun of them. It was printed on cheap paper that could be found at any store. The serial numbers were crooked. George Washington's portrait was badly drawn. **And just for good measure**, the name of the nation's capital was misspelled as "Wahsington, D.C."!

Within a month, 40 more of the very same $1 bills showed up at the Secret Service. By mid-1938, the tally grew to 585. The Secret Service called the mystery man "Mister 880," after his case file number. Mister 880 used just enough of his bills to survive, never more than $15 per week. He also never spent money in the same place twice, so no individual shop owner ever lost more than one dollar. The worst counterfeiter in history was also the most elusive. 10 years came and went, and the search for Mister 880 turned into the largest and most expensive counterfeit investigation in Secret Service history.

Ten years later, seven schoolboys found "30 funny-looking dollar bills" and zinc plates in the snow. While shopkeepers all over the city had accepted the bills without hesitation, the gaggle of 12-year-olds immediately identified them as fakes. The Secret Service traced the bills back to Edward's apartment.

Agents expected to find a criminal mastermind. Instead, they were greeted by jovial 73-year-old, Edward Mueller, the old junk collector — short, with a healthy pink face, bright blue eyes, a shiny bald dome, a fringe of snowy hair over his ears and hardly any teeth.

In September 1948, Edward stood trial in federal court, facing 3 counts, each bearing a possible 10-year sentence — possession, passage and manufacturing of fake bills. However, he was sentenced to just one year and one day in prison. The judge also imposed a $1 fine, which made people inside the courtroom laugh.

Edward's case became a sensation. A New Yorker reporter covered his story in a three-part series, and in 1950, a film adaptation, Mister 880, was made. The movie was a success, and Edward ended up earning more from it than he had in his entire counterfeiting career.

58. Which of the following was NOT one of the problems Edward faced in 1937?

1) An economic crisis.
2) Living alone.
3) Having no job.
4) Being depressed.

Being too positive

Having a positive outlook on life is good for your mental well-being. The problem is that life isn't always positive. We all have painful emotions and experiences. Those emotions, while often unpleasant, need to be felt and dealt with openly and honestly to achieve acceptance and greater psychological health.

Toxic positivity is the belief that no matter how dire or difficult a situation is, people should maintain a positive mindset. While there are benefits to being optimistic and engaging in positive thinking, toxic positivity rejects all difficult emotions in favour of a cheerful and often falsely-positive façade. It takes positive thinking to an extreme. In other words, it makes it too general. This attitude does not just stress the importance of optimism — it also minimizes and even denies any trace of human emotions not strictly happy or positive.

Toxic positivity means having a "good vibes only" approach to life and discarding any seemingly negative emotions. It denies people the authentic support they need to cope with what they are facing.

Toxic positivity can take a wide variety of forms. Some examples you may have encountered in your own life include the following. When something bad happens, such as losing your job, people may say to "just stay positive" or "look on the bright side." While such comments are often meant to be sympathetic, they can shut down anything the other person might want to say about what they are experiencing. After some type of loss, people might say, "everything happens for a reason." While people will make such statements because they believe they are comforting, this is also a way of avoiding the other person's pain. Upon expressing sad feelings, someone may respond that "happiness is a choice." This suggests that if someone is feeling negative emotions, it's their own fault for not "choosing" to be happy.

Such statements are often well-intentioned, or people just don't know what else to say and don't know how to be empathetic. Still, it is important to recognize that such behaviour can be harmful.

Too much positivity is toxic because it can harm people who are going through difficult times. Rather than being able to share genuine human emotions and gain support, people who are faced with toxic positivity find their feelings dismissed, ignored, or outright invalidated.

It's also shaming. Receiving too-positive responses can lead to feelings of shame. **It** tells people that the emotions they are feeling are unacceptable. When someone is suffering, they need to know that their emotions are valid and that they can find relief and love in their friends and family.

Shame goes hand in hand with guilt. Being toxically positive can also cause feelings of guilt. It sends a message that if you aren't finding a way to feel positive — even in the face of tragedy — you are doing something wrong.

Moreover, it avoids authentic human emotion. When people engage in this type of behaviour, it allows them to sidestep emotional situations that make them feel uncomfortable. Sometimes we turn these same ideas on ourselves, internalizing them. When we feel difficult emotions, we then discount, dismiss, and deny them.

It prevents growth. Toxic positivity allows us to avoid feeling things that might be painful. But this denies us the ability to face challenging feelings that can ultimately lead to growth and deeper insight.

I believe it is possible to be optimistic in the face of difficult experiences and challenges. But people going through trauma don't need to be told to stay positive or feel that they are being judged for not maintaining a sunny outlook.

59. According to the text, mental health can be improved if people ...

1) avoid hurtful emotions.
2) believe in the good.
3) hide difficult emotions.
4) accept unpleasant feelings.

Sunflowers: History and Cultural Importance

Sunflowers are bright, cheerful flowers that have been admired by people for centuries. Their golden petals and large, round heads make them stand out in gardens and fields. But sunflowers are not just beautiful —they have played an important role in history, culture, and agriculture.

Sunflowers originated in North America, where Indigenous peoples cultivated them as early as 3000 BC. Archaeological findings suggest that they were among the first domesticated crops in what is now the United States, even before corn reached the region. Indigenous communities used sunflower seeds as food, ground them into flour, and extracted oil from them. Over generations, they selectively bred sunflowers for larger seeds and improved oil production. The plant also had medicinal uses, and some tribes incorporated sunflowers into ceremonies. When Spanish explorers arrived in the Americas in the 16th century, they took sunflower seeds back to Europe, where the plant quickly gained popularity.

In many cultures, sunflowers symbolize happiness, warmth, and loyalty. In China, they represent long life and good fortune. In Greek mythology, there is a story about a water nymph named Clytie, who fell in love with the sun god, Apollo. When he ignored her, she transformed into a flower, always turning toward the sun. This myth is often linked to the sunflower, but originally, the plant in the story was heliotropion (heliotrope), a different flower whose name means "sunturning" in Greek. However, after sunflowers were introduced from America and became widely known in Europe, people reinterpreted the myth, assuming that the sunflower was the flower described in the legend.

In the 18th century, Russia became one of the world's largest sunflower producers. During periods of religious fasting, the Russian Orthodox Church restricted the consumption of rich foods, including butter and some vegetable oils. However, because sunflower oil was not widely used at the time, it was not included in these restrictions. This made it a popular alternative, especially during Lent before Easter, earning it the nickname *postnoe maslo*, meaning "Lent oil." As demand grew, Russian farmers began cultivating sunflowers on a large scale.

In the late 19th century, Russian immigrants brought sunflower cultivation back to North and South America. While sunflowers had originally been domesticated by American Indigenous peoples thousands of years earlier, **their** use as a major oilseed crop was largely influenced by Russian agricultural practices. Thanks to this, Argentina grew into one of the world’s leading producers of sunflower oil.

Today, sunflowers are grown all over the world for various reasons. Their seeds are used for snacks and cooking oil, while sunflower oil remains a key ingredient in food and cosmetics. Sunflowers also benefit the environment by absorbing harmful chemicals from soil and providing nectar for bees and other pollinators, as well as seeds for birds and other wildlife.

Beyond their agricultural and ecological importance, sunflowers have left **an indelible imprint** on art and culture. The famous Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh created a series of sunflower paintings that are cherished worldwide. Sunflowers are also popular in ъ decorations, festivals, and as symbols of hope.

Whether in history, agriculture, or art, sunflowers continue to be meaningful.

60. Which of the following is true?

1) The natural large size of sunflower seeds remained the same over centuries.
2) The main use of sunflowers in North America was for religious purposes.
3) The Spanish explorers valued sunflowers for their medicinal properties.
4) Sunflower plants were grown in North America earlier than corn was.

Regular exercise

Only a few lifestyle choices have as large an impact on your health as physical activity. But many face a problem of keeping up regular exercise. What are some of the tricks?

At first, you can keep it short and sharp. My personal trainer, Robert, says a workout doesn't have to take an hour: "A well-structured 15-minute workout can be really effective if you really are pressed for time." As for regular, longer sessions, he says: "You tell yourself you're going to make time and change your schedule accordingly."

My rule is: if it doesn't work, change it. For example, it rains for a week, you don't go running once and then you feel guilty. It's a combination of emotion and lack of confidence that brings us to the point where, if people fail a few times, they think it's a failure of the entire project. Remember it's possible to get back on track.

If previous exercise regimes haven't worked, don't beat yourself up or try them again — just try something else. We tend to be in the mindset that if you can't lose weight, you blame it on yourself. However, if you could change that to: "This method doesn't work for me, let's try something different," there is a chance it will be better for you and it prevents you having to blame yourself, which is not helpful.

"We start to lose muscle mass over the age of around 30," says Hollie Grant, a personal-training instructor. Resistance training (which is using body weight, such as press-ups, or equipment, such as resistance bands) is important, she says: "It is going to help keep muscle mass or at least slow down the loss. There needs to be some form of aerobic exercise, too, and we would also recommend people start adding balance challenges because our balance is affected as we get older."

My second rule is **raising the ante**. If you do 5-km runs and you don't know if you should push faster or go further, rate your exertion from one to 10. As you see those numbers go down, that's when you should start pushing yourself a bit faster. Robert says that, with regular exercise, you should be seeing progress over a two-week period and pushing yourself if you feel it is getting easier. You're looking for a change in your speed, endurance, or strength.

Another shortcut to regular exercise is to work out from home. If you have caring responsibilities, you can do a lot within a small area at home. In a living room, it is easy to do a routine where you might alternate between doing a leg exercise and an arm exercise. "It's called Peripheral Heart Action training and involves doing six or eight exercises for upper and lower body. This effect of going between the upper and lower body produces a pretty strong metabolism lift and cardiovascular workout," Robert says. Try squats, half press-ups, lunges, dips and raises. You're raising your heart rate, working your muscles, and having a good general workout. These take no more than 15−20 minutes and only require a chair for some exercises.

And what about doing chores? We are often told that housework and gardening can contribute to our weekly exercise targets, but is it that simple? "The measure really is you're getting generally hot, out of breath, and you're working at a level where, if you have a conversation with somebody while you're doing it, you're puffing a bit," says Robert. With gardening, you'd have to be doing the heavier gardening — digging — and not just weeding. If you're walking the dog, you can make it into a genuine exercise session — run with the dog, or find a route that includes some hills.

So, I think everyone can do exercise regularly and experience the health benefits of physical activity — age, abilities, ethnicity, shape, or size do not matter.

61. The purpose of the text is to ...

1) explain how not to give up exercising.
2) share the author's experience of exercising.
3) discuss the health benefits of exercise.
4) give advice on different types of exercise.

The Russian Robinson

In 1847, a 24-year-old dandy named Sergei Lisitsyn stepped onto the deck of a Russian ship, dreaming of reaching Alaska. A hereditary nobleman and a retired officer, he was welcomed warmly and respectfully on board. However, carried away by a sense of freedom and having drunk too much, Lisitsyn insulted the ship's captain and tried to **incite** the sailors to rebel against him, which at that time was a crime punishable by death.

The captain ordered that the troublemaker be tied up, blindfolded, and put ashore on a deserted coast. When the prisoner finally freed himself, he saw the ship disappearing beyond the horizon. The noble captain had shown mercy: Lisitsyn was left with a suitcase of clothes, three pairs of boots, a sheepskin coat, a pair of pistols, a sword, a knife, supplies of dried bread and tea, blank notebooks and matches. Along with all this came an excellent rifle with 26 rounds of ammunition and a letter from the captain:

"Dear Sergei Petrovich! According to naval law, you should have been sentenced to death. But because of your youth, your remarkable talents, and above all the kindness I have noticed in your heart, I spare your life. I sincerely hope that solitude and hardship will correct your unhappy character. Time and reflection will teach you to appreciate my mercy, and if fate ever brings us together again — which I truly hope — we shall not meet as enemies. A.M."

Knowing the ship had been sailing the Sea of Okhotsk, Sergei hoped he had been left on one of the Kuril Islands. But he soon realized that his situation was far worse. He was trapped between two seas. Before him lay the cold Sea of Okhotsk; behind him roared the "green sea" of the taiga — home to bears, wolves and tigers.

Within a week, the "Russian Robinson", who until then had never done any manual work, had built himself a house and made basic furniture. He crafted a bow and arrows, saving the rifle ammunition for the biggest and fiercest animals. That decision proved wise: in winter, a hungry wolf pack attacked his home. Earlier, he had killed a bear, providing himself with a warm fur coat and a supply of meat.

In spring 1848, while walking along the shore and assessing the damage caused by storms, Lisitsyn noticed a man lying face down, unconscious. The man, named Vasily, had come from a wrecked ship which was found nearby. On board were Vasily's 16-year-old son, eight cows, twenty-six sheep, food supplies, a samovar, and farming equipment.

Seven months of solitude had completely stripped the former nobleman of his aristocratic arrogance. With such resources and two additional pairs of hands, not only did he rebuild the house, but he also learned how to make butter and cheese...

In 1857, the writer Alexander Sibiryakov met Sergei Lisitsyn — a hospitable owner of gold mines in the Amur region — and in 1867 he wrote a book about him.

By that time, Lisitsyn had discovered gold deposits and become rich. He sent Vasily's son to study at Moscow University. He also found the old captain who had once abandoned him on a deserted shore, helped him in his old age, and took full responsibility for his children's future.

There is, however, a mystery to this otherwise wonderful story. Did Sergei Lisitsyn really exist or was he a figment of Alexander Sibiryakov's imagination? No documents about this person can be found.

62. From the tone and information of the first paragraph we learn that Lisitsyn was ...

1) a spoiled rich young aristocrat.
2) a dangerous criminal and a drunkard.
3) a noble young man, respectful of others.
4) ambitious and wanted to be a captain of a ship.

Those Evening Bells: A Song Full of Puzzles

It often happens that songs people believe to be traditional folk songs were actually created by known authors and composers. In Britain, for example, *The Skye Boat Song* is often thought of as an old Scottish ballad about the Jacobite rebellion, yet it was composed in the late 19th century by Sir Harold Boulton. Similarly, the Scottish poet Robert Burns collected and adapted traditional songs in the late 18th century but also wrote new verses that entered oral tradition, such as *Auld Lang Syne*. In Germany, Romantic songs called *Lieder* were written by composers like Franz Schubert or Johannes Brahms, yet many of them sound like folk music because of their simple style and themes. In Russia, many songs from early Soviet films about collective farms later came to be treated like folk songs because they were widely sung and memorized.

One of the best-known examples of a poem that travelled across languages and cultures is *Those Evening Bells* by the Irish poet Thomas Moore (1779−1852). Moore was a very popular poet whose verse was often written to be set to music. *Those Evening Bells* first appeared in 1818 in English in his collection *Popular National Airs*, with musical arrangements by Sir John Stevenson. The tune of the song was referred to as *The Bells of St. Petersburg*. The poem evokes the slow tolling of bells at dusk and uses simple language and emotional imagery that easily give **it** the character of an old folk text. However, scholars who tried to find the Russian original of the tune *The Bells of St. Petersburg* were unsuccessful.

Soon after its publication, *Those Evening Bells* became known in Russia. In 1828 the Russian poet Ivan Kozlov (1779−1840), famous for translating Lord Byron into Russian and Alexander Pushkin into English, created a Russian version titled *Вечерний звон (Evening Bells)*. Kozlov's text is not a literal translation but very close in spirit to the original. At some point, there were even doubts about which poem had come first: the one by Thomas Moore or Kozlov's Russian version.

A year later, in 1829, Alexander Turgenev (a distant cousin of the future novelist Ivan Turgenev) was travelling in Britain and met Thomas Moore several times. It is possible that he showed Moore the Russian translation of the poem. In his journal he noted: "January 7, Wednesday. Moore wrote his poem "Those Evening Bells" for me as a **keepsake**, and I said goodbye to him until London, in May."

The celebrated Russian composer Alexander Alyabiev (1785−1851), best known for his romance *The Nightingale (Соловей)*, later set Kozlov's words to music. His setting became popular in Russian salons and concert halls. However, if you ask any Russian today to sing *Вечерний звон*, you will hear a completely different melody.

After Alyabiev, several other composers — including Arkady Rachmaninov, the grandfather of Sergey Rachmaninov, and Alexander Grechaninov — set Kozlov's text to music. And yet, the melody known today was written by none of them. For a long time it was considered a folk tune. Only in the early 2000s did researcher Ludmila Zummer identify the true author: Vasily Zinoviev (1874−1925).

Zinoviev is better known for his church music. His chant *God Is With Us* is sung during Christmas services in many Orthodox churches. He conducted the 100-voice choir of the Theological Seminary in Yaroslavl and also led the choir of an orphanage where he served as a priest for thirty years. In 1907 he wrote *Вечерний звон* for a children's choir, later adapting it for a mixed choir as its popularity grew. After the 1917 Revolution, when persecutions of religion began, his name gradually disappeared from concert programmes, and later arrangements described the melody simply as "folk".

63. According to the first paragraph, which of the following is NOT something that makes an author-written song sound like a folk song?

1) Popularity of the song.
2) Fame and talent of the author.
3) Experience of the author with folklore.
4) The song's simplicity and a special topic.