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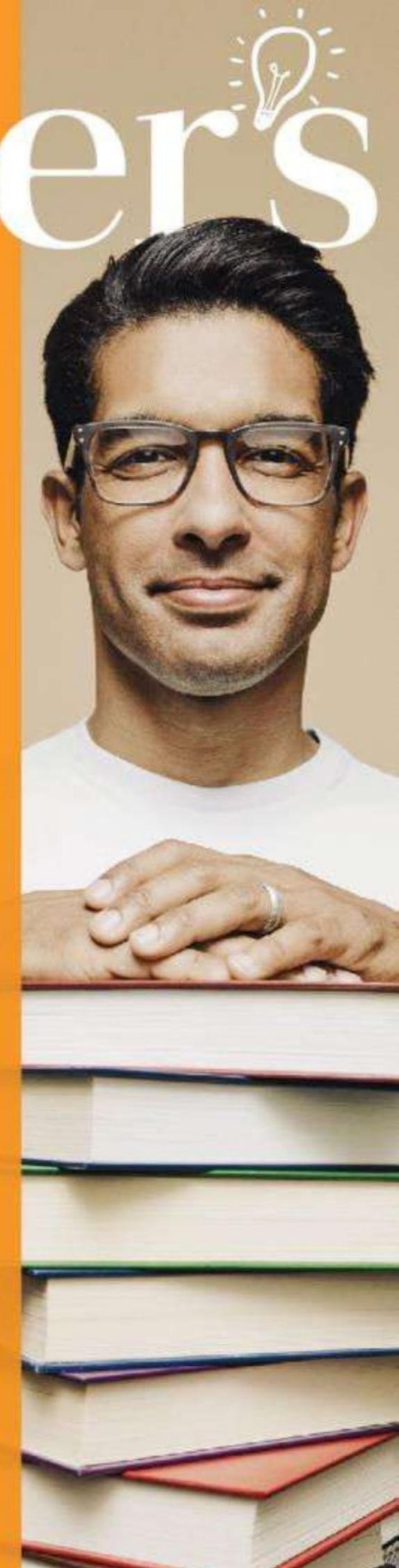
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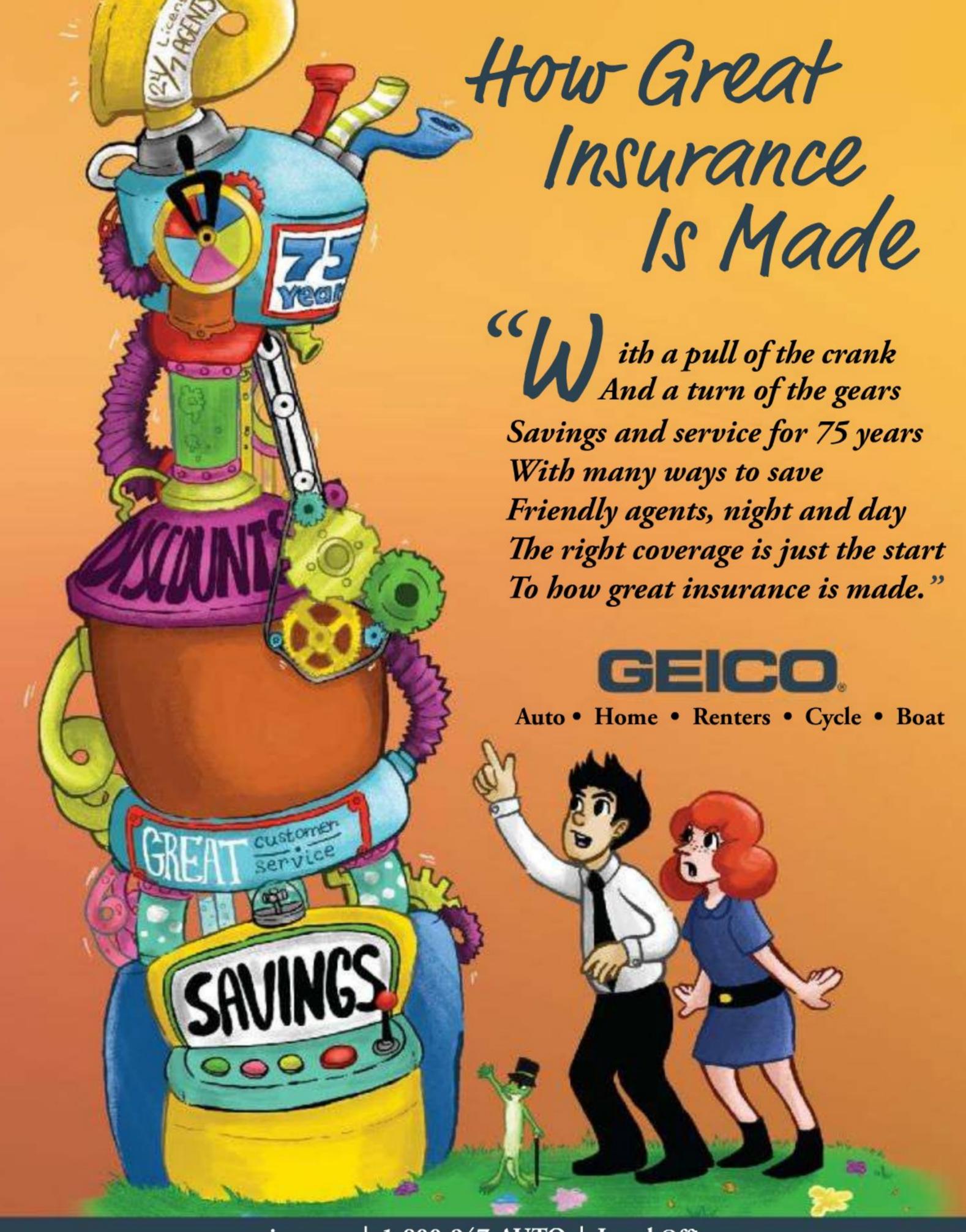
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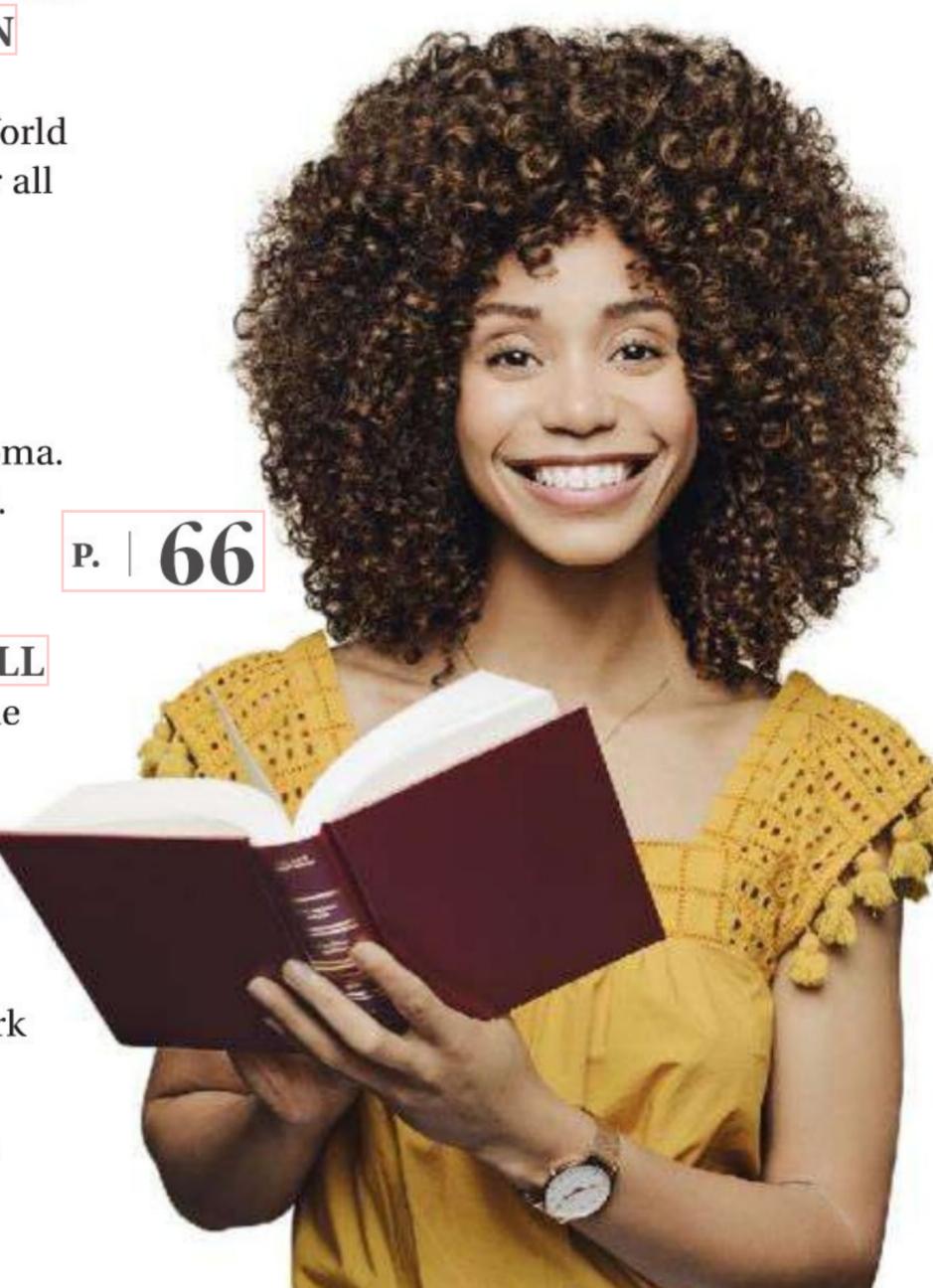
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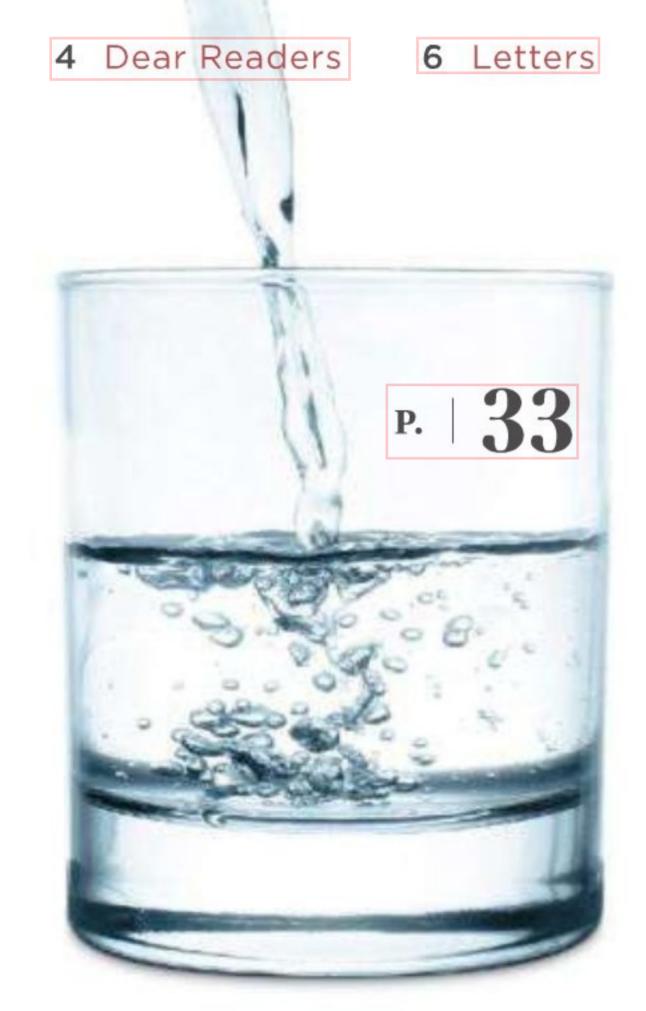
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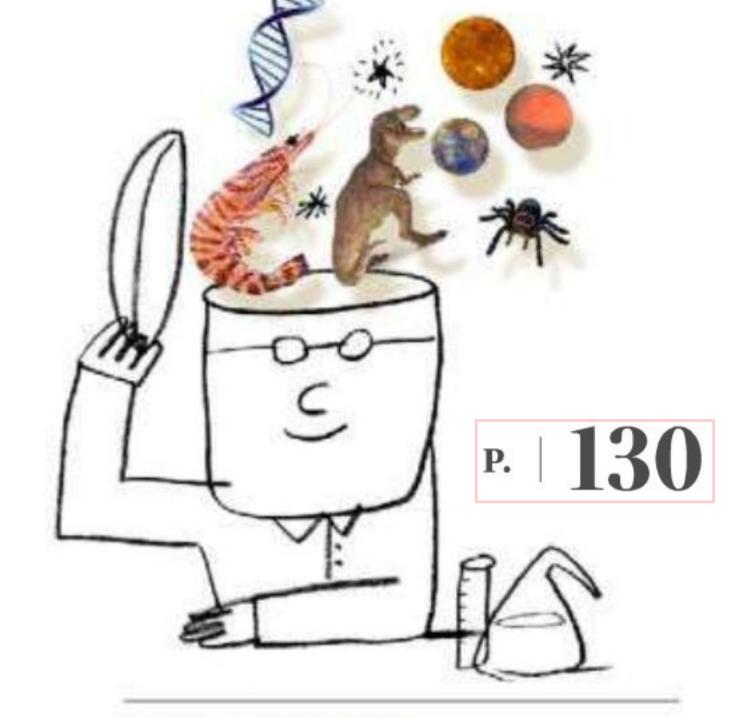
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COSMETICS

Because genius knows no gender, this month we ran two covers: his and hers!

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Dear Readers

CHANCES ARE, if you look up *geek* in the dictionary, you'll see a picture of me next to the entry. That's because when I was in high school, I actually traveled everywhere with a dictionary in my backpack.

Back in those prehistoric, late 20th-century days, most kids didn't take SAT prep courses. I was a pretty good math student, but my verbal skills needed ameliorating, especially when I would come across a word such as *ameliorate* in a lit book and have no idea what it meant.

So when I was 15, my *Merriam-Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* became my traveling buddy. Sure, kids would look at me strangely on the school bus or at the beach (my two-pound companion vacationed with me too). But my *Merriam* came in handy with *The Great Gatsby, The Brothers Karamazov,* and the great leviathan himself, *Moby-Dick*. My DIY vocabulary tutorial worked too—I scored high enough on my SATs to not get rejected by every college. On the negative side, I was voted "most studious" in my graduating class, which is not the superlative any dude dreams of snagging.

Kids have it easier now. They can view countless dictionaries on their smartphones. (Is that why they're called smart?) I'm not sure that's a good thing. While there's nothing wrong with reading on screens, I'm certain I absorbed all those vocabulary words—and my love of words in general—

because I marinated in page after page of them. It was like hanging out in their hard-covered home. In fact, I still have my old dictionary, and I still love getting lost in it.

What I love even more is when one of my teenage daughters asks what a word means and I say, "Look it up in the dictionary"—and then I bring her mine. Which is why I can't wait for them to read our third Genius Issue. They'll see that being a word nerd is cool after all.

Marc Peyser, executive editor Write to us at letters@rd.com.



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GO FOR THE GOLD

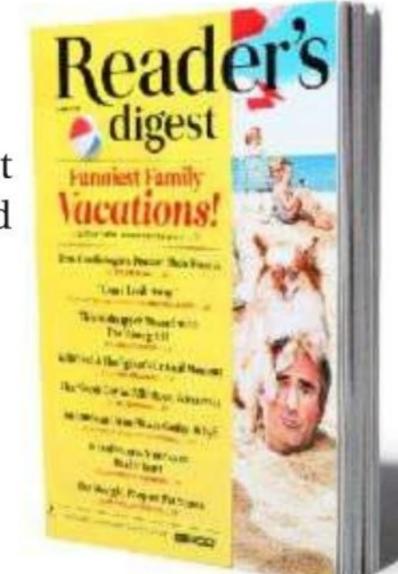


Letters

COMMENTS ON THE JUNE ISSUE

Funniest Family Vacations!

Reading your story about a missionary who earned the nickname Dances with Bees for his antics to avoid angry hornets after disturbing their nest, I literally gasped. You see, I knew that story already. My father is that missionary.



I assure you, Susannah, without a doubt, before your daddy parted so early he *did* see in you the wonderful, beautiful, accomplished woman you would become.

SERGIO HEREDIA, MD, Green Bay, Wisconsin

SARA PETERSEN, Vancouver, Washington

13 Things Pet Stores Won't Tell You

This is a must-read for anyone thinking about buying a puppy. Every purchase denies a home to a shelter dog whose life may depend on being adopted. I guess that makes me a lifesaver: The three happy, healthy pups who share my home are all rescues.

CRAIG SHAPIRO, Virginia Beach, Virginia

Things I Wish My Dad Knew About Me Before He Died

Susannah B. Lewis deeply moved me with her list of things she wished her father had lived to see as she grew up. I have an adult daughter I adore, as well as a wonderful son.

50 Seconds From Death

A very well-described event with a dramatic save. However, the "dozen or so other trainee skydivers" packed into the Cessna 182 present an impossibility. The C-182 is designed to carry four adults and baggage—about the capacity of a midsize car.

FRANK L. MILLER, Ninilchik, Alaska

Why Did This Innocent Man Plead Guilty?

Just reading this title angered me. If a person pleads guilty to a lesser charge and is convicted, not only is this person in prison for something he or she did not do, but the person who committed the crime has gotten away with it. Isn't it the responsibility of our judicial system to protect the innocent?

SHELLEY ONEY, Harris, Minnesota

That's Outrageous!

As an employee of the explosives camp mentioned in your roundup of unusual summer camps, I can tell you that it is held at a nationally recognized engineering university, where students learn to safely detonate different compounds. While that may sound like a bad idea, tell that to the grad who can make \$100,000 a year right out of college with an explosives degree.

SUE WALLACE, Chesterfield, Missouri

Don't Look Away

Melinda Gates is a living treasure. Her outreach and gut motivation to care is an example for us all to never look away, regardless of the circumstances.

LYNN SETH, Kailua, Hawaii

Whom Do We Trust?

I was surprised that I did not see tax preparers or financial advisers on your list of most trusted professions. I own my own tax-preparation business, and I have to tell you that confidentiality and protecting clients' information is a big issue. I am required to take two hours of ethics credits per year. I guess when they took the poll, it wasn't tax season!

TERESA FERRO, Bluffton, South Carolina

I felt disheartened that "America's Bravest" were not listed. In my mind, fire-rescue personnel are members of the most trusted profession.

GARY L. MACINTOSH, Bushnell, Florida



MORE ON "MY PATIENT BENNY"

The reason Dr. McCarthy is a great doctor is because he has compassion. He discarded the busyness of the profession to find the humility and care that was already deep within him.

DON A. STOWELL, Cincinnati, Ohio

I was wondering what the outcome of Benny's heart transplant was. I hope he is doing well.

> STEVE KRANICH, Bismarck, North Dakota

We reached out to the author for an update, and here's what he told us:
Benny and I have stayed in touch, and we're both doing well. He's living comfortably at home in New York with his family. My experience with Benny inspired me to become a specialist in the treatment of transplant recipients.

MATT MCCARTHY, MD

WE NEED YOUR ADVICE!

other people just love to tell other people what to do, whether or not they were asked to help. Fortunately, some guidance leaves a lasting imprint, from "You should apply for that job" to "Marry her!" What's the best wisdom you ever received, who shared it, and how did it affect you? Tell us at rd.com/bestadvice, and we might run it in the magazine.



A young man saves a suicidal stranger simply by showing he cares

Bridge Builder

BY ALYSSA JUNG

IT WAS 9 P.M. on a dark, chilly night in November 2015. Desmond Powell, then 17, was walking home from a basketball game along an empty seven-lane road in Manchester, New Hampshire; he was looking forward to seeing his mom and grabbing dinner. As he approached the Granite Street Bridge, he noticed something peculiar—a person was sitting on the cement railing, legs dangling over the Merrimack River, about 100 feet below.

"At first I thought he was just hanging out. But as I got closer, I heard

him muttering. Then I clearly heard 'I'm just gonna jump,'" says Powell.

The stranger was slender, probably in his 20s, Powell thought. He wore dark clothing, and his red hair was topped by a baseball cap. "Hey, buddy, what are you doing?" Powell asked. He kept his distance, standing about six feet away so as not to spook the stranger.

"I'm gonna jump," the guy said.

"His voice had pain in it, but I could tell he didn't really want to do this. He just felt there wasn't any other way," says Powell.



Powell sought to engage him. "You have any kids?"

Without turning to look at Powell, the stranger pulled up a picture of his daughter on his cell phone. She looked to be two years old. "Think about how losing her dad at a young age will affect her," Powell suggested.

Over the next ten minutes they talked, the stranger alternating between crying and staring vacantly at the churning black water below.

"My heart was racing, but I stayed collected," says Powell. By doing so, he teased out the source of the stranger's troubles.

"I'm having a rough time," the stranger said. "I can't make any money, I'm hungry, and I'm addicted to heroin."

Powell, who by this point had inched closer to the stranger, assured him that he cared and that others would care, too, if he leaped into the river. Something about Powell's calm, earnest entreaty caused the stranger to finally turn and look at him. Powell, now about two feet from the stranger, held out his hand and left it there. "I felt I could grab him in time if he jumped, but I also wanted him to know that I was there for him," he says. To his surprise, the stranger took his hand and climbed down.

"Let me buy you something to eat," Powell said. "I'm Desmond." They walked a few minutes to a Dunkin' Donuts. As they sat down to eat, someone who'd overheard Powell talk about the stranger's sad story suggested that the police be called. Afraid he might be arrested, the

> stranger bolted from the restaurant. "Come back!" Powell yelled. But he was gone before Powell could stop him.

Powell scoured the area, looking for the stranger. While searching a parking lot, he heard "Hey, Desmond." It was the stranger. "I'm sorry, man. I panicked." Then, after a pause:

"Can you call the police so I can get help?"

The two waited together on the street until the police arrived. During that time, the stranger turned the tables on Powell. "He asked me about my life and goals," says Powell.

Fifteen minutes later, Powell watched the police drive the stranger away. He never did get his name, nor does he know what became of him. But Powell, who was honored by the city of Manchester for his caring response, will always remember the last words the stranger said to him. As he climbed into the patrol car, he turned to Powell. "Thank you," he said. "You R really are a hero to me."

"I'm having

a rough time.

I can't make

any money, and

I'm addicted

to heroin."

Bald Is Beautiful!

BY ANDY SIMMONS

DANIELLA WRIDE was brushing her daughter's long brown hair when she noticed that with each stroke, clumps of it were coming out. That was January 1, 2017. Within 20 days, seven-year-old Gianessa Wride's hair and eyebrows were completely gone, and her dermatologist said they would never grow back. Gianessa had become one of the 6.8 million Americans with alopecia, an autoimmune disease that causes hair loss.

Alopecia isn't painful, but for kids who suffer from it, the agony comes from standing out from the crowd

standing out from the crowd. For the most part, the students in Gianessa's first-grade class in Salem, Utah, were understanding. But the occasional taunt of "Baldy" made her feel like an outcast. "I did not want her to *not* feel beautiful," her mother told *Today*.

Then the school announced its "Crazy Hair Day" competition in April, and Daniella and Gianessa decided that rather than hiding Gianessa's baldness under scarves or a wig, they would celebrate it. Daniella bought scrapbook-sticker jewels and decorated her daughter's head with floral designs and even an



Wigs scratch and scarves fall off, but stick-on jewels will always work for Gianessa.

owl. "They just fit her personality," Daniella told CNN. "She's so vibrant."

On the morning of the competition, Gianessa was nervous. Would her friends think it was funny or freaky? She had nothing to fear. Bedazzled Gianessa was a hit—and the winner of the crazy-hair competition. Gianessa is now glad she dared to go bare. "I was sad at first when I lost all my hair," she told *People*, "but now I love being bald. I can do things to my head that other kids can't. I'm thinking now it might be fun to decorate my head with some sparkly butterflies and flowers."

The Baby Catchers

BY EARL RINEHART

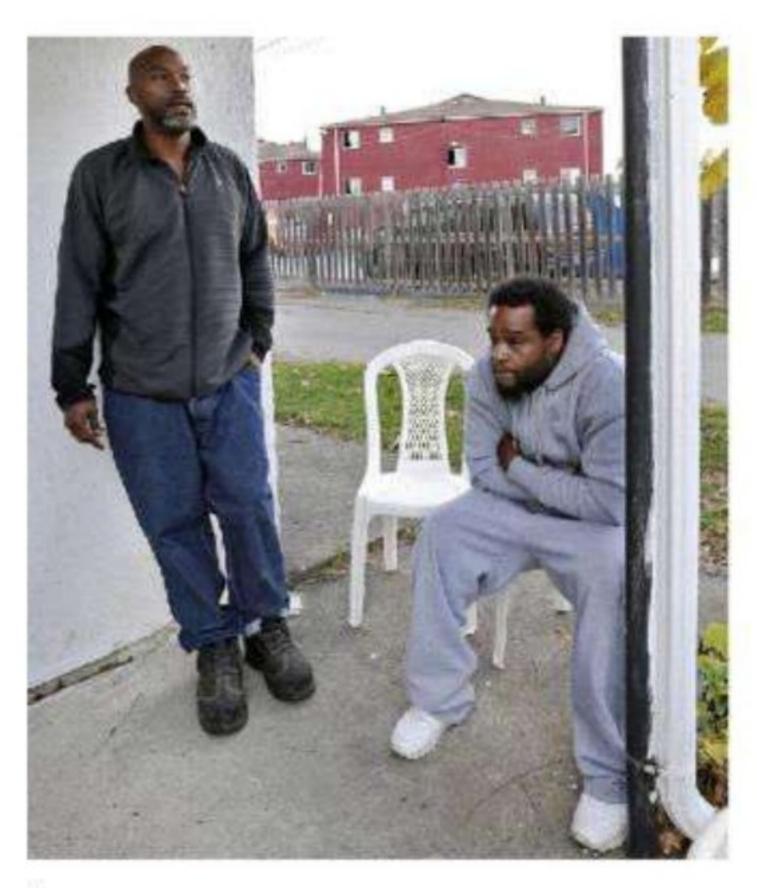
FROM THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

THE FIRST ONE out the window was a man. He was followed by his two children. Next, a baby and then the baby's mother came flying out of the third-story window, all driven by desperation and the smoke that was billowing from the apartment complex in Columbus, Ohio. Brian Smith and Corey Boykin helped them all. "We caught everything that came out of the window," Smith said.

It happened last November, at around 4 a.m., when a fire started on the second floor. "I got my family out," said Smith. "Then I started banging on doors on the first floor. I tried getting to the second floor, but the smoke was too black. I couldn't see; I couldn't breathe. So I turned around and came outside. That's when I saw people hanging out the window."

Boykin was at his friend Melanie Nunemaker's house, across the street from the complex. He knew something was wrong, he said, "when I saw a baby drop out of the window." Catching the child below was Smith.

Boykin ran to a nearby house to get a ladder and rushed back to help. He found Smith in a crouch with his



Boykin (left) and Smith caught or cushioned the fall of a dozen people.

arms outstretched, shouting, "Jump! I got you." He caught several people.

Boykin climbed the ladder to coax those on the third floor to "turn around and come toward me because they couldn't see through the smoke," he said.

"I tried to walk out the front door, but a big cloud hit me. The smoke was getting to me so bad, I couldn't breathe," resident Chase Ray told 10TV. "He saved my life, for sure."

And he wasn't finished. When Boykin saw his burned-out neighbors, he took 20 or so of them back to Nunemaker's house. "We gave them clothes, shoes, whatever we had—and they didn't," Boykin said.

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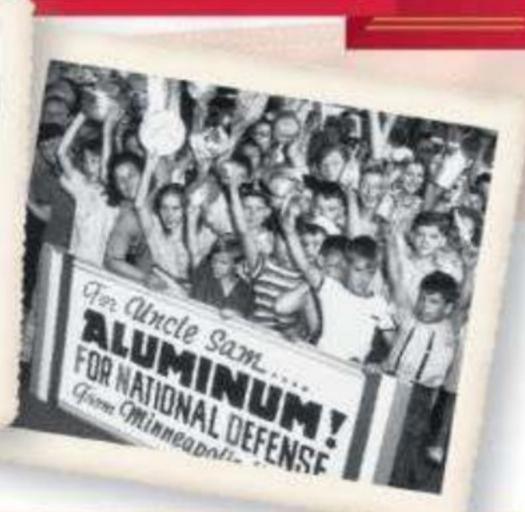
REMINISCE

Meet the Heroes

Who Served America on the Battlefield and at Home!





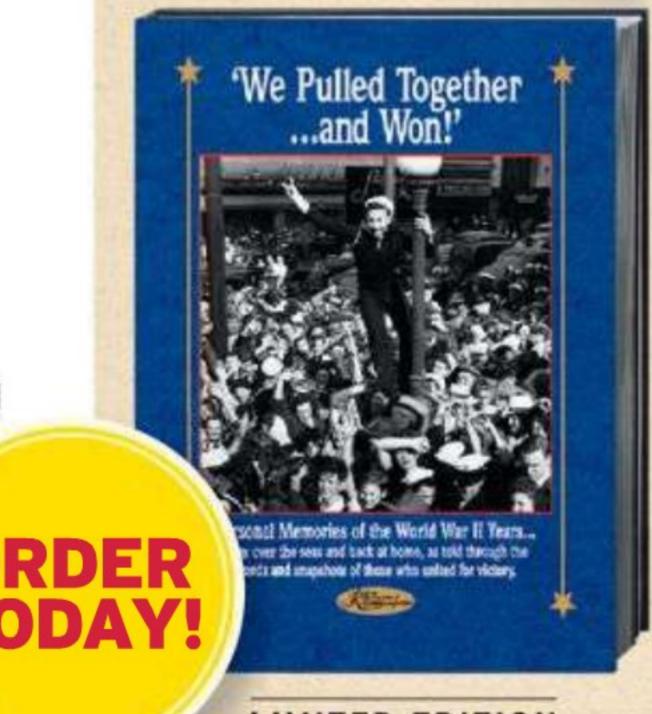


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Department of Wit

Why I Have Takeout On Speed Dial



BY DAVID THORNE FROM 27BSLASH6.COM



DAVID THORNE is the creator of the humor website 27bslash6.com.

HOLLY CANNOT COOK. She is capable of the process of cooking, but my wife cannot cook in the same way that an octopus cannot ride a bike. It has enough arms to reach the pedals and handlebars, but the result will rarely be a successful journey from A to B.

I once looked over Holly's shoulder to discover her crumbling Alka-Seltzer tablets onto a meal she was preparing because "they are salty and we ran out of salt."

Another time, I walked into the kitchen to find Holly making toast. I generally feel safe eating toast that Holly has made because it requires minimal ingredients to forget, replace, or experiment with. But this toast was a bit thin and soggy.

"It's a bit thin and soggy," I said.
"What bread is this?"

"It's the same bread we always have," Holly said, pointing to the bag.

"I didn't even know we had any brea— Oh my God!" I exclaimed. "It has a best-by date of January 2009."

"It was in the freezer," Holly said.

"The best-by date doesn't count if the product is frozen."

"I'm fairly sure there is a limit," I responded, holding up a slice of bread consisting almost entirely of permafrost.

"No, there isn't," she replied. "I saw a show once where scientists found a mammoth frozen in ice for mil-

lions of years. They thawed it out, cooked it, and ate it."

I mention all this because recently Holly stated that she was making nachos for dinner, so I was surprised to be presented with a bowl and spoon an hour later.

"What's this?" I asked.

"The nachos were a bit runny, so I added a few cups of water. It's nacho soup," she replied.

"What are these bits in it?" I asked.

"They're the chips." Holly sipped a spoonful of nachos and made a long "Mmmmmm" noise. "I put it all in the blender, so there shouldn't be any big bits."

"I'm sending out for pizza," I said.
"You never appreciate anything I
do," replied Holly.

"That's not true," I said. "I appreciate everything you do. You're a beautiful, kind, thoughtful person. But if I ordered a hamburger at McDonald's and they handed it to me in a cup with

a straw, saying, 'Sorry, it was a bit runny, so we threw it in the blender and added two cups of water—it's Big Mac soup,' I would assume there was something wrong with the restaurant staff. And if they asked me, 'Do you want fries with that?' I sure wouldn't reply, 'Yes, mix them in.'"

"It would probably be good," responded Holly. "But you would never know because you wouldn't taste it. Even if the guy at McDonald's spent an hour in the kitchen making it for you and burned his thumb on a saucepan."

"Fine," I relented, taking a scoop and raising it to my mouth. "I'll taste it." Sipping the brown and yellow puree, I felt an intense burning sensation not unlike having a mouth full of red ants. I swallowed with effort as my eyes began to water and said, "It's a bit spicy."

"Yes," said Holly. "We were out of cumin, so I used cayenne instead."

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"The nachos

were a bit runny,

so I added a few

cups of water,"

she said. "It's

nacho soup."

17



Will a single punctuation mark result in a huge legal settlement for a group of dairy deliverymen?



The Case of the Missing Comma

BY VICKI GLEMBOCKI

AFTER WORKING 50 to 60 hours a week with no overtime pay, three delivery drivers decided enough was enough. In May 2014, they sued their employer, Oakhurst Dairy in Maine, for violating state wage laws. Their claim? The dairy owed them years' worth of time-and-a-half pay for the extra hours they'd spent delivering perishables.

The dairy disagreed. In fact, Oakhurst claimed that there wasn't even a case to argue. According to Maine law, employees who work more than 40 hours a week are entitled to overtime pay unless their jobs involve "the canning, processing, preserving, freezing, drying, marketing, storing, packing for shipment or distribution of" perishable foods. Since the drivers obviously engaged in the "distribution of" perishable dairy products, they didn't qualify for overtime pay.

The drivers responded by calling in the grammar police. Because there

isn't a comma after the word *ship-ment*, they argued that the statute intended to exempt workers whose jobs involve "packing for shipment or distribution." The dairy drivers didn't pack anything. So, according to the laws of Maine and to the drivers' interpretation of the laws of grammar, they deserved compensation.

Grammarians have very strong opinions about the Oxford, or serial, comma, which is used before a conjunction at the end of a series of words. That comma can clearly affect the meaning of a sentence. For example, "I love my parents, Katy Perry and Santa Claus" could imply that the writer's parents are Katy Perry and Santa Claus. With the Oxford comma included—"I love my

parents, Katy Perry, and Santa Claus"—it's much clearer that the writer is listing three things she loves. But would a serial comma which is absent from the Maine law—have changed the drivers' case?

The district court said no, siding with the dairy's claim that the state law "unambiguously intended" to exempt two separate employee activities from overtime: "packing for shipment" and "distribution." The drivers—now part of a more than 120-driver-strong class-action suit—appealed, asking the first circuit court to clear up one question: "What does the contested phrase ... mean?"

Did the dairy owe its drivers overtime pay? You be the judge.



THE VERDICT

Yes, said circuit judge David Barron in the court's March 2017 decision. Had there been a serial comma in the statute, the "distribution" of dairy products clearly would have been exempt from overtime. But without the comma, the phrase is ambiguous. Barron sent the case back to the lower court for resolution. However, the drivers' attorney, David Webbert, says he doesn't need to stake his case on only the comma. He maintains that the lack of parallel writing in the law is "an even better grammatical argument" in favor of the drivers. If the law meant to exempt the distribution of goods, according to Webbert, it would have said "distributing" instead of "distribution of" (to match "the canning, processing," etc.). As written, he says, the law is akin to saying, "I like reading, writing, and sit." Whatever the outcome, it is already clear who the winners are—English teachers. As Webbert himself explains: "Grammar matters."

Your True Stories

IN 100 WORDS

ART ISN'T EASY

A husband and I encouraged our son, Kenny, to always try his best. One day, his dad, his godmother, and I took him to view a Matisse exhibit, *The Cut-Outs*, in Detroit. Kenny was five at the time, and as we stood in front of one of the large, colorful paper cutouts, he looked a bit befuddled. He muse

bit befuddled. He mused for a bit and then, with his hands clasped behind his back, remarked, "Well, he tried his best!"

> CATHERINE RUSSELL, Brownstown, Michigan



Years ago, my elderly neighbor mentioned she had been trying to locate a cricket that had found its way into her house. After several attempts to find it, she gave up, and her husband named the cricket Jiminy. The pair began talking to him whenever he chirped. We were having coffee in her kitchen one day when the chirping began. Her



husband introduced me to their new friend. That's when I had to tell them that their smoke detector needed new batteries.

> KAREN AUTENRIETH, San Antonio, Texas

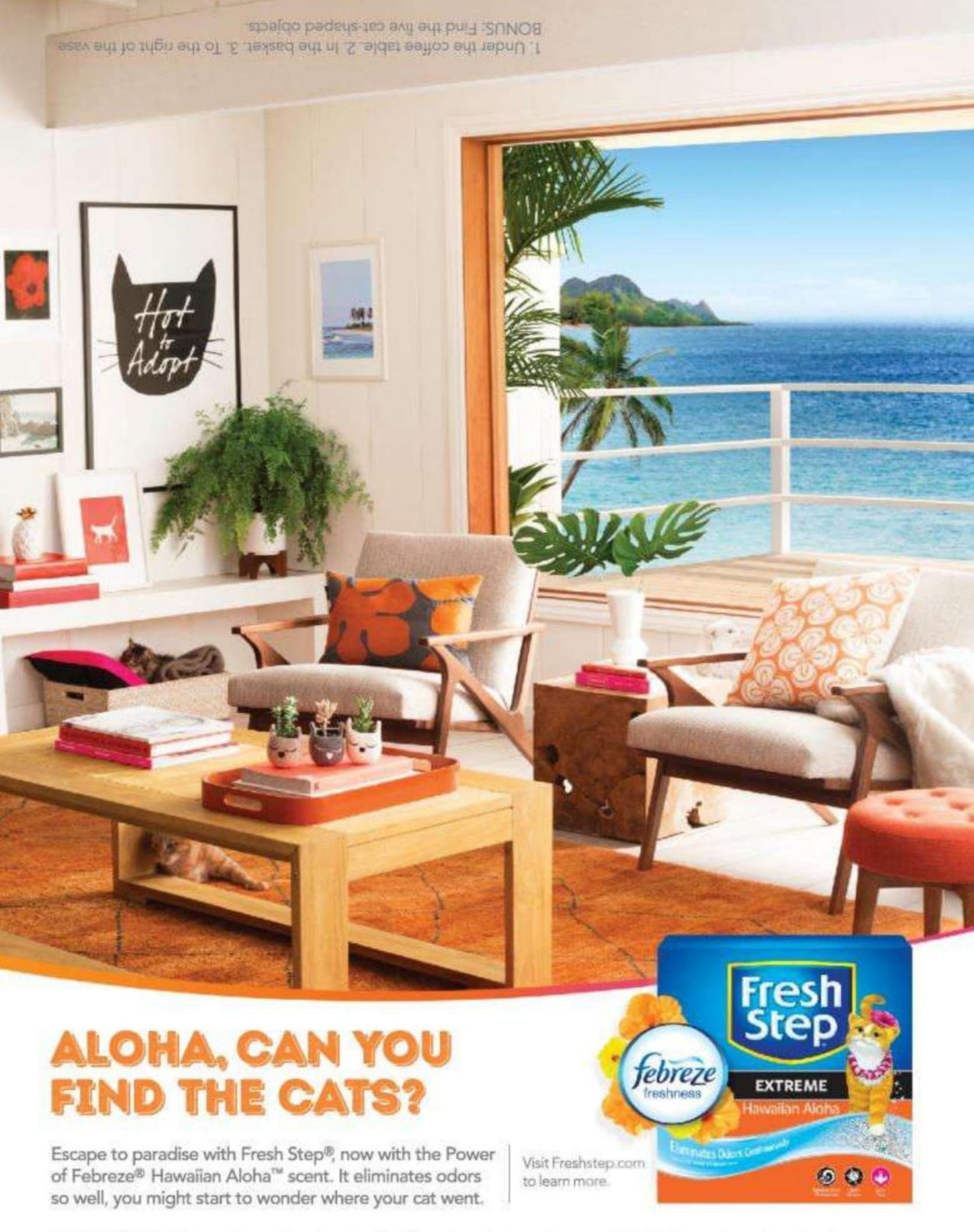
A BIRTHDAY VISITOR

In a warm day in January, I visited my father's grave for his 72nd birthday. I

placed a single rose on the grave and told him about my life. I pray each year he is happy and proud of his littlest girl, who never got to know her daddy. On this January 13, I sensed a presence behind me and looked up to see a deer in the middle of the cemetery, solitary and staring. My eyes wandered to the carving of a buck on my father's headstone, and I smiled. I knew he was all right. Happy birthday, Daddy.

ANNA LAURA MCKINNEY, Simpsonville, South Carolina

To read more 100-word stories and to submit your own, go to rd.com/stories. If your story is selected for publication in the magazine, we'll pay you \$100.



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The author's grandmother wanted the world to see her husband not as an aging farmer with false teeth but exactly as she did

The Most Handsome Man in the World

BY DR. BO BROCK FROM THE BOOK CROWDED IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE



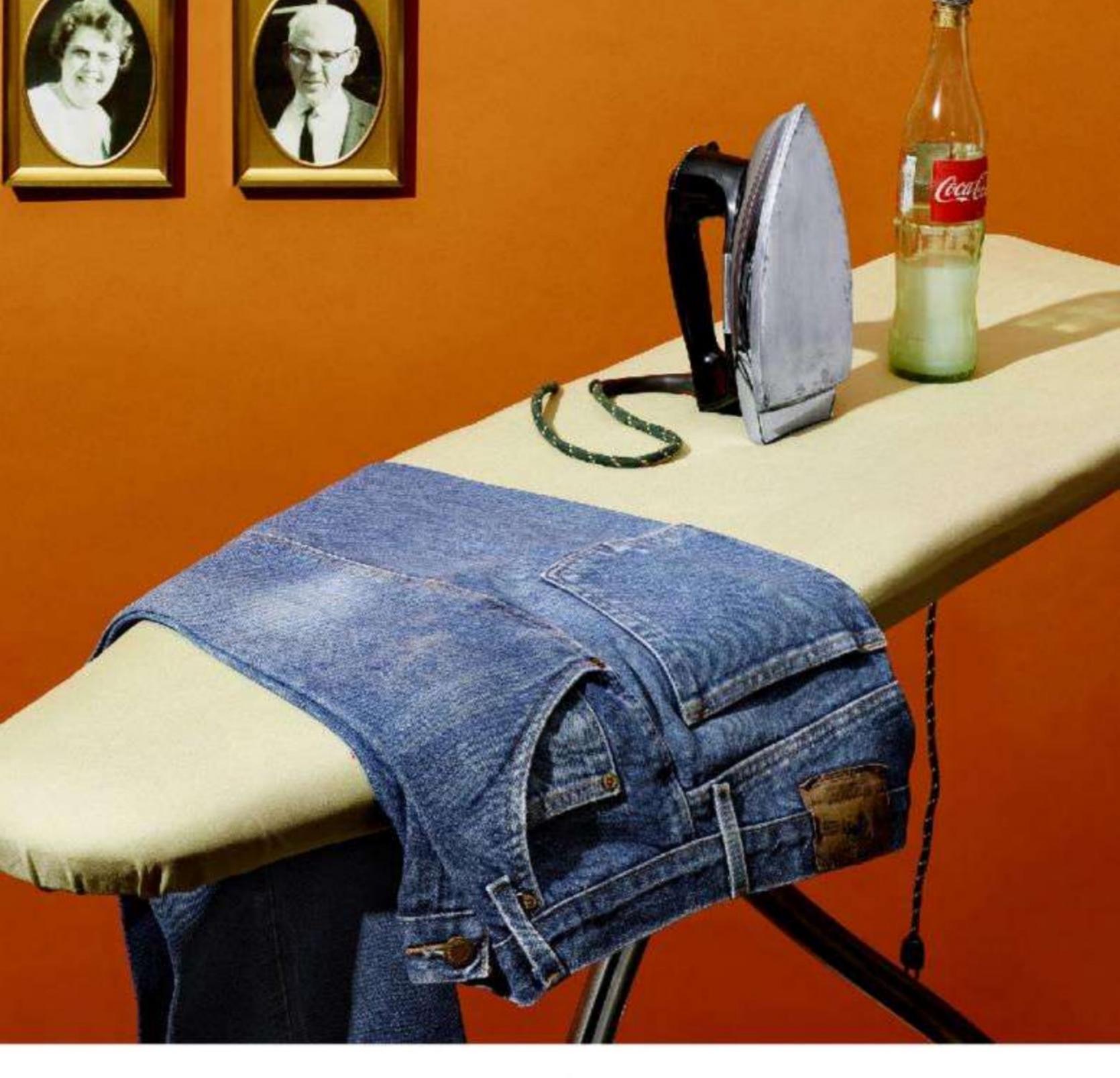
DR. BO BROCK is a veterinarian in Lamesa, Texas, sometimes referred to as "the middle of nowhere."

EVEN THOUGH my grandfather, whom I called Papaw, was a farmer, my mamaw would iron his work clothes every day. Mamaw mixed up her own starch in a glass Coke bottle topped with a metal cap that had a multitude of holes in it, like a saltshaker. She would sprinkle Papaw's pants with the starch, hang them over a chair for a few minutes so they could dry a bit, and then apply the heat of the iron to them.

Because I watched her do this through my childhood, I figured every old woman in the world did it. But as the years passed, I began to question this practice. Why in the world did Papaw need his work clothes ironed? Most days, he never saw anyone but me and maybe a few other crusty farmers.

One day when I was about 13, I asked Mamaw about it. I wanted to know why she thought it necessary to invest time and effort to press clothes that were rarely seen and would be filthy in just a short time.

Her reply was as sweet a sentiment as I have ever heard. She told me that Papaw was the most handsome man in the world. She said he was her best friend and the love of her life. She loved every chance she got to show him off and make the rest of the world jealous that he was hers.



She went on to say, "You just never know when Papaw might run into someone, and I want him to look the part of the most handsome man God ever made."

Later that day, I looked closely at Papaw. He sure didn't look all that handsome to me. He was a short, skinny man with a relatively big fanny compared with his shoulders. His hair was thin on top, and his false teeth didn't line up too good when he smiled. He wore horn-rimmed glasses that were much too big for his face because all he cared about was being able to see. I really didn't see how anyone could consider this man the most handsome one God ever made.

So I asked Mamaw about it again a few days later. I informed her that I had closely observed ol' Elmo Brown and most certainly didn't see him as the most handsome man on earth.

She giggled and gave me a girlish smile, the kind you don't expect grandmothers to be able to express at their age.

"You just aren't looking in the right light,
Turdhead [my grandparents' fond nickname for me]. He is the most beautiful man God ever made. Those eye wrinkles haven't always been there. I remember when he had real teeth. He has the most beautiful blue eyes I have ever

seen. They are exactly the same color as the sky just before the sun goes down. His entire face lights up when he smiles, and his voice is so calming and full that everyone in nine counties wants to hear him talk."

Say what? My papaw had always

been an old man as far as I was concerned. Was Mamaw actually wanting me to consider that Papaw used to be young? Ha ha ha, no way!

She continued, "I want him to feel beautiful. I iron his clothes every day because for all these years, he has made me feel beautiful. He is a

man worthy of respect.

I want him to look the part every day. I wouldn't have it any other way."

I heard what she said and was kinda grossed out. I decided to forget I had ever asked. How could this old woman think that an old man with false teeth was beautiful? Sheesh, I

thought. Old people.

The years went on, and I watched Mamaw and Papaw grow old together. I was probably 30 when it dawned on me what beauty really was—it was Mamaw ironing Papaw's pants with starch from a Coke bottle.



to consider that
Papaw used to
be young? Ha ha
ha, no way!

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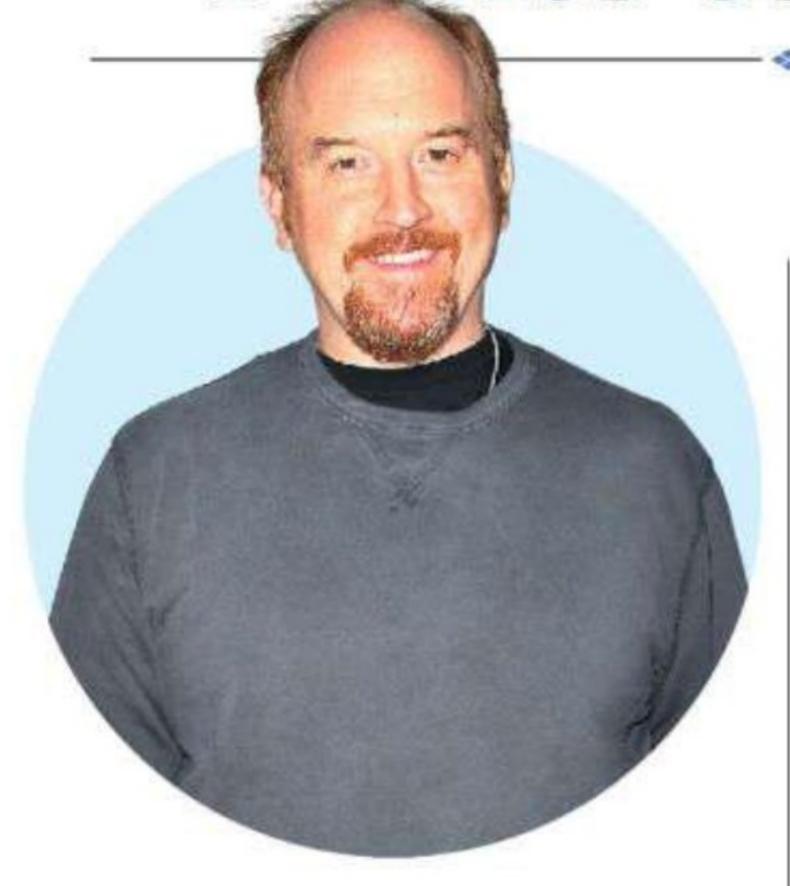


RAISE A GLASS TO SPACE

Scientists at California's Allen Telescope Array always keep a bottle of champagne in their office fridge—just in case they ever find signs of extraterrestrial life.

Source: CBS News

Points to Ponder



If you went back and fixed all the mistakes you've made, you'd erase yourself.

LOUIS CK, comedian,

on The Late Show with Stephen Colbert

HISTORY ISN'T just part of our civic responsibility. To me, it's an enlargement of the experience of being alive.

DAVID MCCULLOUGH,

historian, in an interview with the National Endowment for the Humanities YOU DON'T have to be famous. You just have to make your mother and father proud of you.

MERYL STREEP,

actress, in a commencement speech

LOYALTY DOES NOT necessarily produce happiness and can even be painful, but we all require devotion to something more than ourselves for our lives to be endurable.

ATUL GAWANDE,

surgeon, in his book Being Mortal

MY MOTHER SAYS, "The reward for hard work is hard work," and that's the truth. It's satisfying to finish something and feel like it's the best you can do.

ALISON KRAUSS,

musician, in Garden & Gun

ALL KIDS ARE scientists, and all kids are artists. They all read. How is it that we give up such big things?

JANNA LEVIN,

astrophysicist, on quantamagazine.org

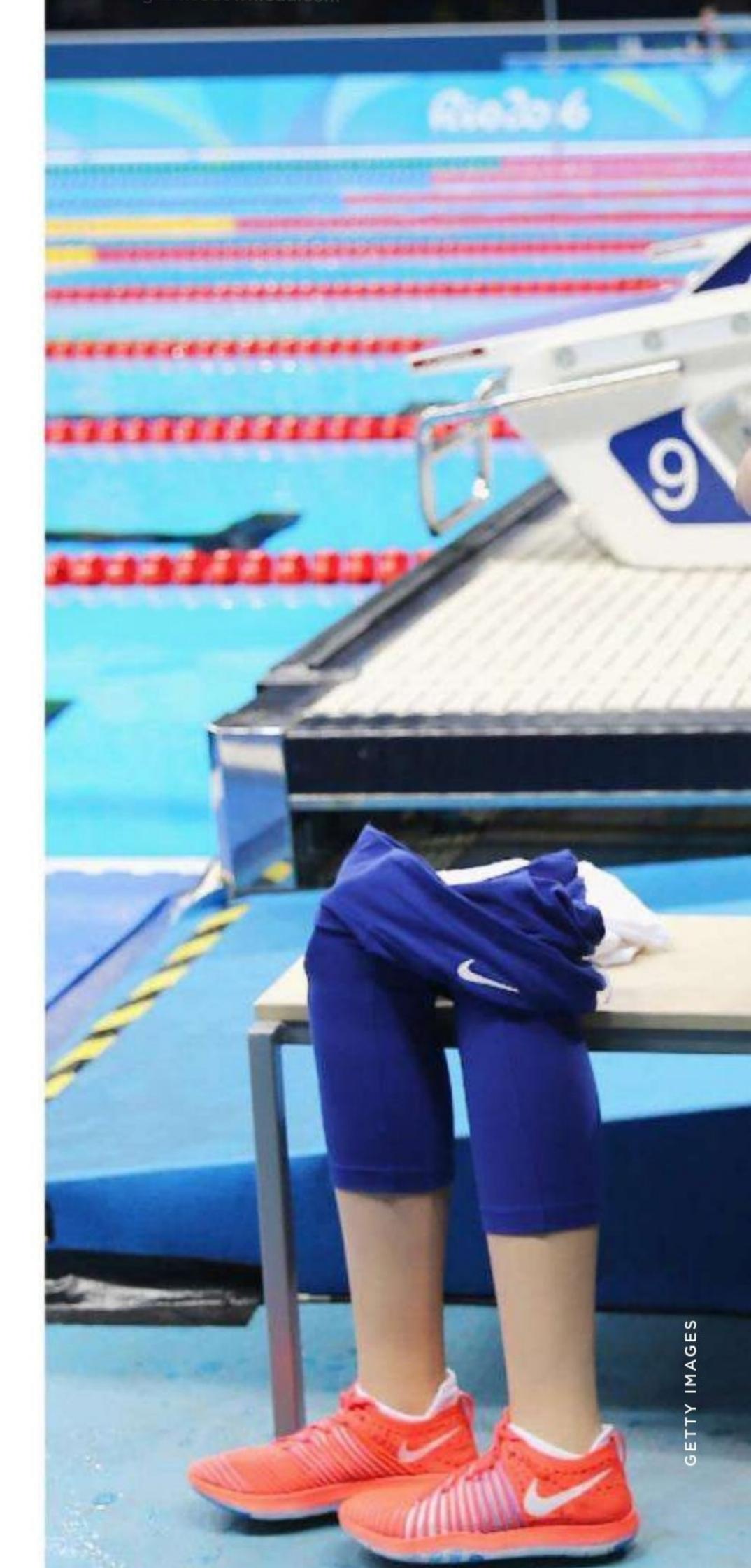
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A Jewel in the Pool

American Jessica Long has been collecting gold medals for more than half her life, and she's not about to start taking pity on her opponents now. Long, 25, a double amputee who was born without bones in her lower legs and feet, competed in her first Paralympic Games at age 12 and came home with three gold medals. This month she's heading to the World Para Swimming Championships in Mexico City, a follow-up to her six-medal performance at last year's Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro. That's Long in the black suit, sitting by her prostheses and being congratulated after one of those gold wins in Rio. As the second-mostdecorated U.S. Paralympian in history, she has become a worldchampion hugger too.

PHOTOGRAPH BY BUDA MENDES





My favorite

Whippersnapper,

because I can still remember being one and how fun it was.

STEVE BUCKLES

Antidisestablishmentarianism,

because my friend, who suffered from a stroke as a kid, still knows how to spell it and he's nonverbal. It's our favorite word!

CINDY PLANTE

Las Vegas, NV

Lake Havasu City, AZ

Serendipity,

because it opens the door to wonderful discoveries.

CAM CAMBURN

Poop,

because it makes my granddaughter laugh uncontrollably. TAMI SIMPSON

Momma,

because my son is ten now and soon I'll just be "Mom."

APRIL GRIESENBECK

Helotes, TX

W01d 1S...

Absolutely,

because it portrays determination, enthusiasm, and conviction. **ANNE LIEBBE**

Velocipede,

because it makes me smile when I think of my father calling my tricycle that when I was a child.

ALICE SELFRIDGE

Montgomery, NY

Middleburg Heights, OH

Waterloo, IA

Rock Island, IL

Kansas City, MO

Hon,

because I call my wife "my hon." She is everything to me.

RAY HERZOG

High Point, NC

No,

because it gives me control over my life. **GWEN FORD**

We,

because it represents inclusion and union. **BETTYE SLEDGE**

Crystal Springs, MS

Kitchen,

because it's the best place to be with family and friends.

JAMES DIEHL

Go to facebook.com/readersdigest or join our Inner Circle Community at tmbinnercircle.com for the chance to finish the next sentence.

Sun City Center,



IN THESE UNITED STATES



"It says the cost of the flight went up because we acknowledged its existence."

MY SIX-YEAR-OLD'S school

assignment was to draw a challenge she thought she could overcome. So she drew herself teaching me how to use the TV remote.

MY WIFE SUFFERS the most when rosacea breaks out on my face—after all, she has to look at it. Still, she's always quick with a kiss and a hug, no matter how awful it gets. So I told her how thankful I was for the

affection. "No problem," she said.

"I close my eyes." JIMMIE LYON HARRIS,

Spokane Valley, Washington

DURING A CONFERENCE, my

high school principal insulted my immigrant mother's English. Mom didn't get upset. Instead, she smiled politely as she delivered this punch to the gut: "I'm sorry. Sometimes I get English mixed up with the other six languages I speak."

Source: reddit.com

THE GAME CARD SAID: "Name three wars." My teenage daughter's response: "Civil War, Revolutionary War, and *Star Wars.*"

AMY CASSELLA, Leesburg, Florida

AT HIS ANNUAL PHYSICAL, my neighbor Jim was asked, "Are you

eating plenty of fruits and vegetables?"

"I ate eight apples yesterday," he said.

"You did?" asked the doctor.

"Yes. That's how many apples it took to make the apple pie."

ROBERT ARTKOWSKY, Lower Burrell, Pennsylvania

Got a funny story about friends or family? It could be worth \$\$\$. For details, see page 3 or go to rd.com/submit.



STORIES THAT PUT THE "GRAND" IN GRANDPARENTS DAY (SEPTEMBER 10)

My grandson came home from kinder-garten in tears. "What's wrong?" his mother asked.

"The teacher told us to eat the popcorn and then we could read," he said.

"So?"

Now sobbing, he said, "I ate the popcorn, and I still can't read!"

> BARBARA MURPHY, Lake Ronkonkoma, New York

When I get home from work, I like to relax with a magazine.

My three-year-old granddaughter, Olive, will often come and sit on my lap while I do so. One day, my daughter saw us together. "What are you doing, Olive?" she asked.

Olive said, "I'm hanging out with your dad."

Reader LEONARD ADAMS

My granddaughter put my three-year-old great-grandson on the phone. After a few minutes of chatting, I told him I loved him. He replied that he

loved me too. And then, as an afterthought, he asked, "Aren't you the one who passed away?"

PATSY FRYE,

Mount Juliet, Tennessee

Our family was playing the game Outburst.
One of the topics was the Ten Commandments. Everyone shouted over one another as we called out answers, including my eight-year-old grandson, who yelled, "Thou shalt not admit adultery!"

Reader BARBARA STEVENS

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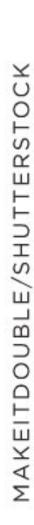




Hydration isn't just vital when it's hot. Drink enough every day and your whole body will benefit. (Your brain too.)

Water— To Your Health!

BY MARISSA LALIBERTE AND LINDSAY TIGAR



IF YOU'VE EVER been pummeled by the gut-wrenching pain that comes with a kidney stone, your doctor probably handed you a surprisingly benign prescription to avoid another one: water. Stones often form when urine doesn't have enough fluid in it to dissolve calcium and other substances the body regularly processes. When the body tries to move them along the conveyor belt of the excretion process, they get stuck—and it hurts. Doctors sometimes prescribe medication to keep stones from forming, but for many people, proper hydration is the first line of defense. As some urologists say to those patients, water is your medicine.

If the notion of simply hydrating yourself to health seems like magical thinking, consider the research that produced the claim. Study after study shows that drinking enough water fends off problems from head to toe. "Water is a basic need for cellular health," says Ronald Navarro, MD, an orthopedic and sports medicine surgeon at Kaiser Permanente South Bay Medical Center in Harbor City, California.

How much water depends on many factors: your weight, the climate where you live, how often you exercise. The old rule of thumb of eight 8-ounce glasses a day is not a bad place to start, but the Institute of Medicine actually recommends more for most people living in temperate climates. The clearest sign that you're well hydrated is pale yellow urine. If yours is dark yellow, down more H₂O.

An even better gauge may be how you feel overall. In fact, water can be a potent elixir for your mind *and* body. So pour yourself a nice big glass, sit back, and take a look at the

many ways being well hydrated can help your health.

■ YOU'LL HAVE LOTS OF ENERGY

Water helps keep up a steady flow of nutrients into your cells, which boosts your energy. When you're dehydrated, cell membranes become less permeable and hamper this flow, affecting your physical and mental performance and making you feel sluggish, according to a review of hydration research conducted by scientists at the University of North Carolina and Tufts University.

YOU'LL WORK UP A SWEAT

A damp forehead during physical activity shows that your body is doing its job of maintaining a normal temperature, and water is key to that task.

■ YOU MIGHT LOSE WEIGHT

A new study from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign involving more than 18,000 adults found that when people increased their daily water intake by one to three 8-ounce cups (on top of the four they already drank on average), they ate less: Their food intake dropped by as much as 205 calories a day.

YOUR MEMORY MAY IMPROVE

Your brain is hugely dependent on fluid—all those synapses and neu-

rons need liquid to fire properly. According to a review published in the journal *Nutrients*, studies have consistently found that memory and attention improve in children after they take a drink of water. The research is less clear on whether this pattern holds true for adults.

Your brain is dependent on fluid—all those neurons need liquid to fire properly.

flushing out pathogens. That means your cells need more fluid to keep up with the demands. Drinking water also helps loosen mucus and keep your nose and throat moist.

■ YOU'LL KEEP THINGS REGULAR

"Water interacts with dietary fiber in

the digestive tract to bulk stools," says Jordan J. Karlitz, MD, FACG, professor of clinical medicine at Tulane Cancer Center. By staying hydrated, you can reduce the risk of constipation.

■ YOU'LL BE IN A BETTER MOOD

When women in a

small study from the University of Connecticut lost just 1.36 percent of their body mass through sweat (and didn't drink enough water to replace it), their moods soured and they were more likely to experience headaches and fatigue.

YOU'LL FEEL STRONG WHEN YOU WORK OUT

Water helps your muscles keep the right balance of electrolytes, such as sodium, potassium, and magnesium, to function properly. Without water, muscles can be more prone to cramping. Research suggests that even low levels of dehydration may impair physical performance.

YOUR SKIN WILL GLOW

According to research, skin is at least 30 percent water. If your skin cells don't get the water they need, they'll start to wither and shrink. But if you drink enough water, your skin cells will plump up, minimizing the appearance of wrinkles.

■ YOU'LL MORE EASILY KICK COLD SYMPTOMS

There's a reason your doctor tells you to drink more when you're coming down with something. Your body has to launch an attack against germs when you're sick—your runny nose, for instance, is your body's way of

35

TRICKS TO MAKE SURE YOU'RE GETTING THE WATER YOU NEED

- Set alerts on your phone to remind you to drink.
- Use a permanent marker to draw water levels and specific deadlines on your water bottle.

■ Refrigerate it. Although temperature preferences vary from person

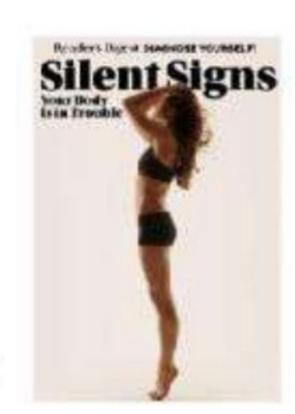
to person, you're likely to drink more water if it's cold, according to Joanne Larsen, MS, RD, LD, a Denver-based dietitian and creator of the nutrition website Ask the Dietitian (dietitian.com).

■ Drink a glass before you eat anything.

If you get tired of good old-fashioned H₂0, consider upping your hydration game by making your "brew" sparkling or flavored. Water with

bubbles offers the same benefits as regular water, and fruit adds taste. (But steer clear of tonic water, which has added sodium and sugar.) You can also munch on fruits and vegetables with high water content, such as watermelon, cucumbers, tomatoes, grapes, and cherries.

Herbal teas, milk, and sports drinks can help you stay hydrated as long as they're not overly caffeinated or sugary. Caffeine may have a mild diuretic effect, stimulating your kidneys to excrete water, while sugary soda, explains Larsen, "will pull water from your surrounding tissue to dilute the concentrated sugar in soda, thereby reducing your hydration."



Look for our special issue on silent signs of your body's health on sale next month.



"I DO MY BEST THINKING IN THE SHOWER"

Social networking site reddit.com asked its users to share their most inspired "shower thoughts." The results are dripping with genius.

My present self wants me to do my work later, but my future self wants me to do it now.

PARADOXWATERMELON

■ Right now, *Friends* could be rebroadcast as *That '90s Show*.

JACPHLASH

Cats probably think we are cleaning our ice cream.

CUNITINGTHEWORLD



HIGH PROTEIN COMPLETE NUTRITIONAL DRINK*

Chocolate Sensation Strawberry

BUSS

Vanilla Delight



All beaned out? These vegetarian options are also great sources of this weight-controlling ingredient.

Protein Surprises in The Produce Section

BY JAMIE SCHMID AND MARY SAUER

HEMP SEEDS 3 TBS. = 10 GRAMS OF PROTEIN These little brown seeds (pictured) add a healthy boost to any baked good. Sprinkle some over that birthday cake—you won't even taste them.

POTATOES 1 LARGE = 7 GRAMS

Potatoes get a bad rap as carbohydrate kings, but prepare them without loads of butter and you have a vegetable low in fat but high in protein, vitamin C, and potassium. Try baking instead of doing the usual mash.

PEAS 1 CUP = 8 GRAMS

Peas contain a lot of lutein, an antioxidant that can help heart health by lowering cholesterol and preventing plaque buildup. Pile them on top of a salad, or serve a side of these green goodies with dinner.



Buckwheat flour is a complete protein, meaning it contains all the essential amino acids (the building blocks of protein) that we need from food. Use buckwheat flour to make pancakes, crepes, or muffins, or look for Japanese soba noodles.

SUN-DRIED TOMATOES 1 CUP =

6 GRAMS Sun-dried tomatoes also contain almost 30 percent of your recommended daily value of magnesium, plus a good amount of vitamin K. They're great in salads and on pizza.

SPINACH 1 CUP COOKED = 5 GRAMS

This leafy green is like a multivitamin in vegetable form. Spinach is a wonderful source of vitamins K, A, and C. Add some to your next spaghetti dish or to your morning scrambled eggs.





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The contacts list in a smartphone is convenient, but it can't hold memories the way a handwritten directory can

The Joys of Keeping An Address Book



MY GRANDDAUGHTER visited last weekend, and while she was here, I asked if she had her brother's new address, as I had something I wanted to send him. She scrolled through her phone, and I marveled again at the convenience of technology. A phone, not an address book?

While I'm not entirely techno-illiterate—I type, after all, on a laptop—I find it hard to grasp the changes that happen so quickly.

"Here, Gran," said Carly when she found the address. "I'll write it down for you."

"Will you put it in my book?" I asked, pointing her to the

phone table in the hall. They probably don't have phone tables anymore, either, I mused.

Carly picked up the well-worn address book and looked inside, a curious expression on her face. "There's hardly any room left to write numbers," she said with a laugh as she wrote what I needed in the margin. "And it's full of names you've scratched out."

"Well, dear, those are people who've passed on," I explained.

"Dead?" said Carly.

"Dead," I echoed. "I can't press 'delete,' so I just scratch out the names."

"Oh," she said, looking a little horrified. "That's so sad." After Carly left, I picked up my address book and took it into the living room with a cup of tea.

I flipped the pages to the beginning and found a date, 1955. That's a lot of years, I thought, and while I never considered this book as being sad, I also never looked at it as any-

thing more than a place to store information.

But opening the pages, I could see the stories it represents, a repository of lives lived and lost, marriages, births, friendships, changes.

I'm 91 years old, and I've outlived all my siblings. Two sisters and five brothers, with

a history of where they lived and how to contact them neatly written, then gradually scratched out as they succumbed to whatever ailment took them to the next world.

But their offspring live on, and the *K* pages, for Kirkpatrick, bleed over into the *L* pages, as there are so many nieces, nephews, grandnieces, and grandnephews to carry the family name. So much for the *L*'s; it's lucky I don't know many of them.

Here's my youngest daughter ... Oh, how I remember how her dad and I fretted when she moved to that apartment in New York.

She was just 18, but she was determined to make it in the theater world.



Opening the pages, I see a repository of lives lived and lost, marriages, births, changes.

41

Jay, my husband, took a trip a few months later to make sure she was OK and phoned home with the proclamation that "no daughter of his was going to live in such a rat-infested dive!"

I'm sure the rats were an exaggeration, but West 11th Street was scratched off the page and a new apartment was found, along with a little monthly allowance from home to make it work.

There follows a page of crossed-out entries, tracing her moves to Hoboken, New Jersey (scratch); Weehawken (scratch); West Orange (scratch); West Caldwell (scratch); Lincoln, Massachusetts (scratch); and Bedford,

Massachusetts—each with a story.

Turning the pages, I find my best friend, June, who died three years ago but whom I miss every day still. We had such fun when we were younger and living in Vancouver, British Columbia (Address 1), so when she moved to Salt Spring Island (Address 2), I wasn't sure how I would get along without her.

That move is a smudge in my book; perhaps I cried as I wrote her new address. I certainly remember feeling bereft.

As fate would have it, I also left Vancouver for Salt Spring after my

husband died, and June and I shared ten more happy years as friends. That was before Address 3 signaled her move to a nursing home and the end of life as we knew it.

There are no active entries for friends I knew from my old life in Vancouver; it's inevitable someone

> will be the last "man" standing, I guess. Ours was once a very social life with a large circle of friends, but no one exists anymore outside of a memory and a crossed-out name in an old book.

More recent entries herald a different kind of life, albeit a much slower one. They paint a

picture of the community I found on this little island in the Pacific. Fewer friends, perhaps, and those I do have are all younger, though I don't mind being the "grande dame."

My handwriting is a little shakier than the bold strokes that marked the addresses I included 60 years ago (oh my, has it really been that long?), but the stories are as vivid.

I close the book and feel the wellworn leather cover. A smartphone is convenient—I keep thinking I should buy one if my grandchildren will have the patience to teach me—but it can't replace the memories held in R these pages.

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One move

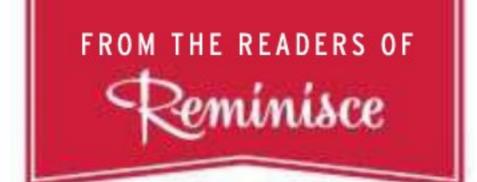
is a smudge in

my book.

Perhaps I cried

as I wrote her

new address.





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DENA OCAC DI



Hail the most American of rooms—the one that holds all our *stuff*. But unless it's insulated, don't store these items there.

6 Things You Should Never Park in Your Garage

BY BROOKE NELSON

PAINT Freezing and thawing can ruin paint, even if it's sealed (especially latex paint, which is water-based). Be particularly careful with spray paint and any other aerosol cans, which can explode in extreme heat.

2 SEASONAL CLOTHING

Car fumes and dust easily settle into fabric, organizing expert Emma Gordon told

Real Simple. In the garage, insects and vermin can get at clothing too. It's best to store off-season items loosely in plastic containers indoors.

A SPARE REFRIGERATOR
Refrigerators work best in
rooms kept at 70°F; much higher or
lower, and they have to work harder,
using more energy. Save on your utility
and grocery bills by investing in a large
energy-efficient fridge. If you must
have a spare, keep it in the basement.

CANNED FOOD

That aluminum may seem impervious, but the contents can spoil quickly if the temperature

hits 100°F. The USDA recommends storing canned food at 85°F or less.

> GAS TANKS FOR THE BARBECUE

If the propane leaks

into an enclosed, unventilated area, simply starting your car or lighting a cigarette could ignite a fire. Always keep propane tanks outdoors, and make sure they're screwed tightly shut.

WINE Fluctuations in temperature allow air into the bottle, which can alter or ruin the flavor, explains Fine Wine Reserve, a wine storage company. While the ideal temperature may vary by type, a general rule of thumb is to store your wine at 52°F to 57°F.



*vs. Depend Fit-Flex Small/Medium, Maximum absorbency. Depend is a trademark of Kimberly-Clark Worldwide.

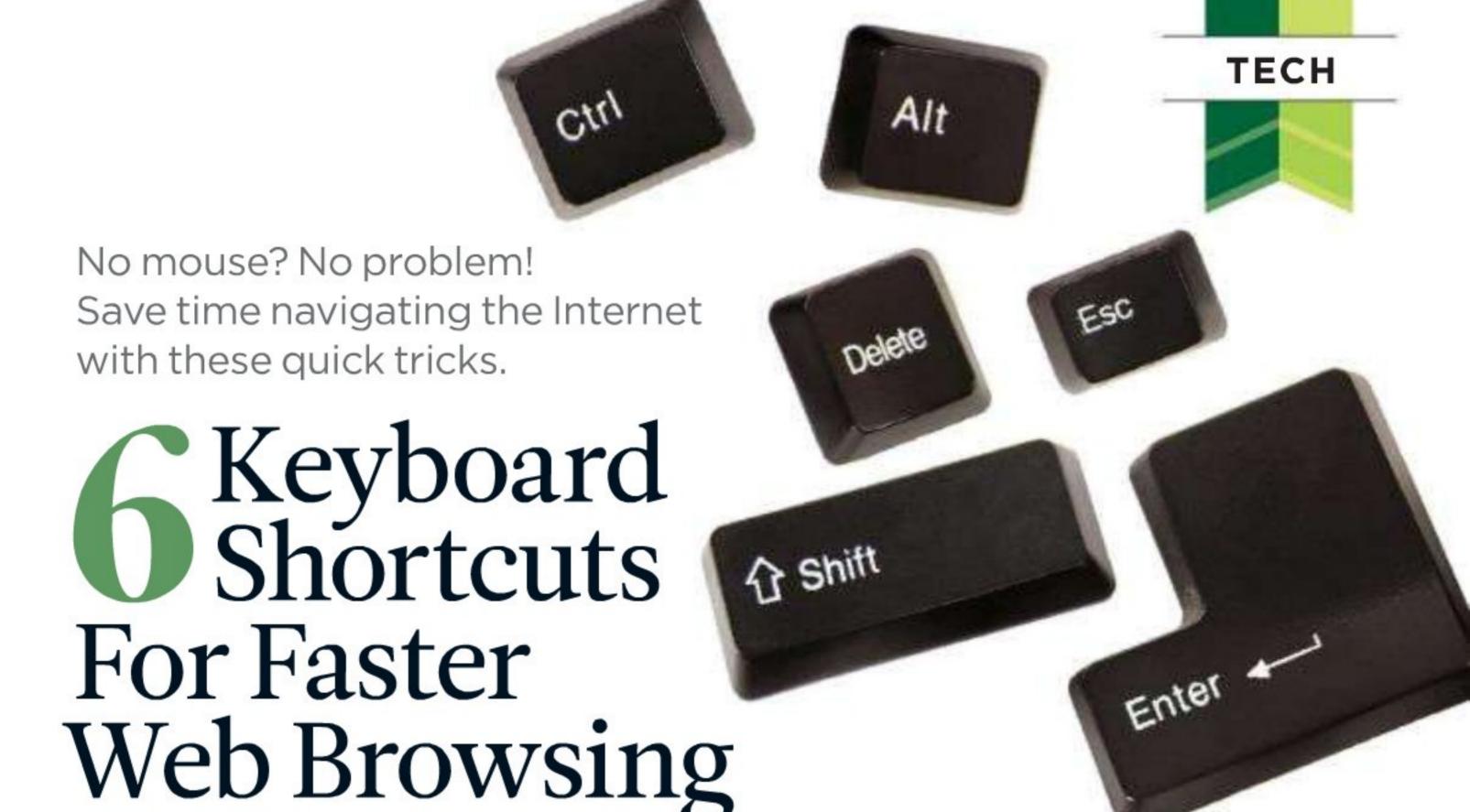


Food, Fun & Festive Flavors

We're hitting the road again! Come see us live this fall to learn how to reinvent classic recipes, make your holiday cooking effortlessly gorgeous, and get the inside scoop on our Test Kitchen's hottest holiday how-to's.

Tour dates, tickets & more at TASTEOFHOME.COM/LIVE





SCROLL DOWN A PAGE

Don't be a slave to the scroll wheel. The next time you reach the bottom of the screen while reading, hit the **Space Bar** to jump one screenlength down. Hit it by accident? **Shift+Space Bar** gets you back to where you were.

GO BACK TO THE PREVIOUS WEBSITE YOU WERE BROWSING

Alt+Back Arrow is your mouse-free way of going back in time with most browsers. Didn't mean to do that? Hit Alt+Forward Arrow to go forward one page.*

JUMP TO THE URL BAR

If you know the name of the website you're heading to, **Control+L** will put you right into the URL bar on the top of a web page. How to remember it? Think *L* for URL.*

OPEN, CLOSE, AND REOPEN TABS

To open a new tab, hit Control+T, and to close a tab, use Control+W. If you want to reopen the tab you closed most recently, use Control+Shift+T. The more you press it, the more closed tabs will pop up.*

BOOKMARK A PAGE

Digging around for the "add bookmark" option in your browser toolbars is a waste of time that could be spent looking at kitten pictures. Instead, hit **Control+D** to bookmark your current page.*

ZOOM IN OR OUT

Type too small? **Control+Plus Sign** zooms in; **Control+Minus Sign** zooms out on any web page.*

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^{*}Mac users: Substitute the Command key for the Control or Alt key.



An innovative program reunites transplant patients with their former organs

They Held Their Own Hearts



TRANSPLANT RECIPIENT John Bell knows exactly where to find his first heart—the damaged one he lived with for 72 years. It's floating in a three-gallon jug of formaldehyde at a large storage facility at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas, Texas, along with hundreds of other human hearts. When he returns to the hospital for a checkup with his cardiologist, Bell contemplates stopping by to pay his old heart a visit. Why? Because at Baylor, the retired sales and marketing professional can do something almost no one else in the world has ever done. He can hold his heart in his hands.

"It was fairly emotional, that first encounter," says Bell, who lives in Fort Worth. "I can't actually explain why."

Bell is one of more than 70 heart-

transplant patients who have participated in Baylor's Heart-to-Heart program. It was launched in 2014 by William C. Roberts, MD, a cardiac pathologist and the executive director of the Baylor Heart and Vascular Institute. Baylor is unique in allowing transplant patients to "meet" their old hearts. "Probably 99.5 percent of hospitals throw the hearts away after they send out a report," Dr. Roberts says. "We keep them all." They are used for further research: performing second pathological examinations, comparing the progress of different diseases among individual organs, and doing long-range studies.

The Heart-to-Heart program happened almost by accident. With all those organs stored on the hospital's shelves, Dr. Roberts would

sometimes take a curious patient to visit his or her old ticker. But the doctor discovered that the visits could provide a kind of teachable moment. "Many of the patients are overweight, and I show them the fat on the heart," says Dr. Roberts. "Some people have so much fat on their hearts that they float in a container of water."

There's a larger, almost existential lesson too. "I try to stress to these

people that they are very lucky. They are one of the few that get a heart," he says. There are an estimated six million Americans living with heart failure, but only 2,000 to 3,000 receive hearts each year in the United States.

Bell had suffered 25 years of heart problems, beginning with triple-bypass surgery at the age of 50. Then, in March 2014, he underwent trans-

plantation because of congestive heart failure, in which the heart is unable to sufficiently circulate oxygenated blood throughout the body. While recovering, he asked if he could view a video of the operation. Bell was even more thrilled to find out he could see his old organ in person.

He remembers carefully holding his heart in front of his chest at approximately the same place it had lived just 12 days prior, though it had since been sliced into pieces as part of the operation and for further study. He was expecting something more akin to a bright red heart you'd see in a valentine, he says. Instead, the flesh was a pale gray. The whole organ was covered in yellow adipose tissue, or fat.

Bell was shown the original vein and artery grafts from the bypass surgery he'd had in 1993 and how two grafts were carrying the load of a third that had not worked properly



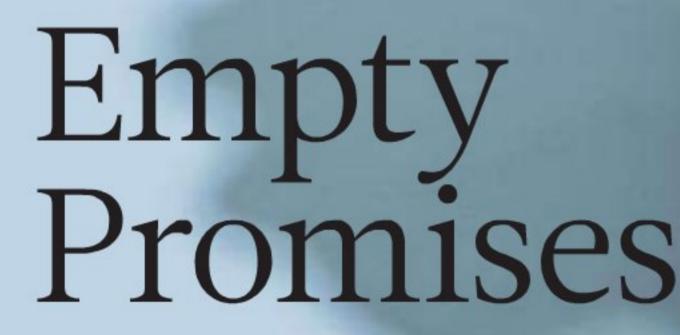
John Bell, far left, with other transplant patients: "I just wanted to get a last look at it."

from the start. His family members also got to see his heart, and the experience had a dramatic impact on his son, who vowed to start making healthier lifestyle choices. Bell had a similar reaction. He now exercises as much as his age allows and maintains an almost vegan diet. Holding his heart also gave him much-needed closure.

"It had caused so much pain and misery," he says. "I guess I just wanted to get a last look at it and say, 'Hey, I won.'"



Some allegedly healthy habits may not be so helpful after all. Here are nine you can stop right now.



BY CHARLOTTE HILTON ANDERSEN

A FIRM MATTRESS

People have been told that sleeping on a firm mattress can prevent or reduce back pain, but in reality, if the mattress is too firm, it puts more pressure on heavy points like the hips and shoulders. Conversely, a mattress that is too soft could lack the support necessary to allow proper movement. In both cases, the person wakes up stiff and in pain. Studies show that

a medium-firm mattress offers an ideal amount of support to help prevent further injury.

NEEL ANAND, MD, clinical professor of surgery and director of spine trauma at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center

ORGANIC JUICING

Juicing has an undeserved health halo. Sure, you can drink your vitamins and minerals, but you also

get a lot of sugar. The worst aspect of juicing is that it strips fruits and vegetables of their fiber, which mediates blood sugar response, contributes to satiety, and promotes bowel regularity. Just eat the produce.

EMILY BRAATEN, MS, RD, LD, a registered dietitian in Washington, DC

ANTACIDS AFTER MOST MEALS

Just because you have acid reflux does not always mean you have high stomach acid. It's more common than people think to have low stomach acid, which can contribute to a weakened lower esophageal sphincter, compounding the problem. Some antacid medications, including proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) such as Prilosec or Prevacid, may relieve the symptom, but they do not address the problem. And if they are used for a year or more, they may increase your risk of heart attack, chronic kidney disease, infections, bone fractures, dementia, and reduced absorption of vitamins and minerals. However, if you are on a PPI, go off that medication only under the supervision of your doctor.

> KAREN BRENNAN, MSW, NC, nutrition consultant and owner and founder of Tru Foods Nutrition Services, LLC

CALCIUM SUPPLEMENTS

A recent analysis performed by researchers at Johns Hopkins Medicine suggests that although a diet high in calcium-rich foods appears to be protective, taking calcium in the form of supplements may be associated with increased risk of plaque buildup in the arteries. Bottom line: Eat calcium-rich foods such as dairy products and leafy greens and skip the pills.

ANDREW D. ATIEMO, MD, FACC, a cardiologist in Flagstaff, Arizona

DAILY MULTIVITAMINS

People in the United States spend about \$6 billion per year on vitamins. Virtually all of that money is wasted, since there's growing evidence that these additions to our diet are not effective in preventing chronic disease and may be harmful if taken in large doses. Foods contain trace elements and fiber that supplements don't have, so try to maintain a healthy diet and eat your fruits, vegetables, and dairy products rather than taking supplements.

STEVEN J. HAUSMAN, PHD, former research scientist for the National Institutes of Health and president of Hausman Technology Presentations

WASHING YOUR FACE TWICE A DAY

This is standard skin-care advice, but it doesn't work for everyone. If you have very oily skin, then yes, you can probably wash your face twice a day. If you have dry skin, however, washing your face twice daily may dry it

out even more. People should keep in mind that there is such a thing as over-washing your face, and twice a day isn't the magic number for everyone. The one time you should definitely wash it, however, is after a workout.

ALAN J. PARKS, MD, dermatologist and cofounder of DermWarehouse

BODY MASS INDEX

BMI is an outdated way to measure someone's health, creating confusion and even misrepresentation of body composition. When determining BMI, the only factors that are taken into consideration are height and weight, and [that] completely excludes bone density and muscle mass. This means a muscled bodybuilder could easily end up in the overweight/obese category according to the BMI table. It can lead to unnecessary weight-loss attempts and create unrealistic expectations.

JESSICA CIFELLI, MS, a personal trainer in New Jersey

STATIONARY STRETCHES

Static stretching before exercise was once thought to be important for preventing injury and increasing performance. However, new research has not proved it to decrease injury, and it may actually decrease muscle force. Dynamic stretching, in which you stretch muscles through controlled movements, is a good alternative to loosen the body before exercise.

NARESH C. RAO, DO, sports medicine specialist at Sports Medicine at Chelsea

ANTIBACTERIAL SOAP

Using antibacterial soaps may increase the risk of bacteria's resistance to certain ingredients in those types of soap. The best way to clean your hands is with regular soap and water, making sure to clean in between your fingers.

ROB DANOFF, DO, osteopathic family physician and program director of the Family Practice/Emergency Medicine Residency programs at Aria-Jefferson Health



ANALYZE THIS

In 1967, John Lennon received a fan letter from a student at Quarry Bank High School whose English teacher had been making the class analyze Beatles lyrics. Lennon responded by writing the most confusing, nonsensical lyrics he could think of—and released them as the song "I Am the Walrus."

Source: John Lennon: In My Life by Pete Shotton and Nicholas Schaffner

Notice: Medical Alert

Dear Reader,

Medical related emergencies are on the rise. More seniors are seeking an independent lifestyle and better quality of life. Over 1 in 3 people over the age of 64 will fall this year. Nearly half will not be able to get up without support.

Medical expenses can escalate when a person is not given timely support. You can prevent a medical catastrophe with our 24-hour emergency response system. Our solution is <u>highly recommended</u> by doctors, healthcare professionals, and hospitals.

We are offering a **FREE Medical Alert System** to seniors or their loved ones who call now. For a limited time, there will be no set-up fees and the medical monitoring starts at less than a dollar a day. The system is Top-Ranked and easy-to-use. The pendant is 100% waterproof and it can travel with you. Our new system can detect falls automatically.

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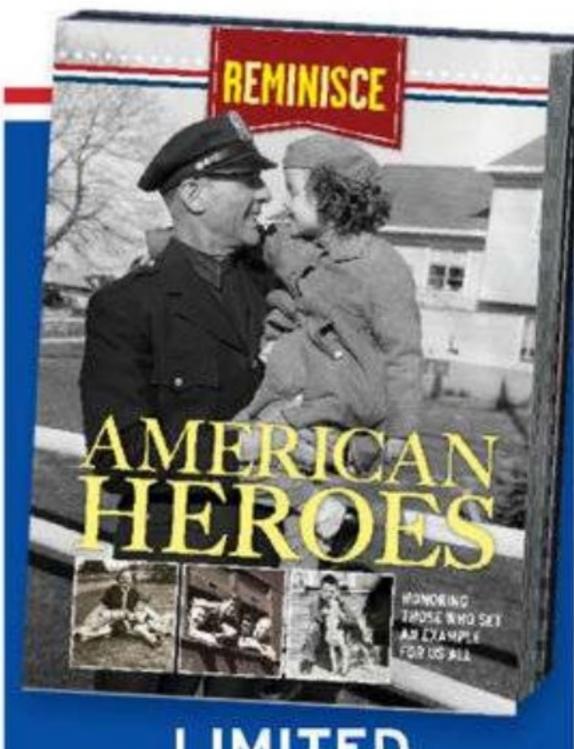


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World of Medicine

BY SAMANTHA RIDEOUT

Stairs vs. Caffeine

Falling asleep on the job? Follow this familiar if underused advice: "Take the stairs." In a study in *Physiology and Behavior*, sleep-deprived female college students were asked to either walk on a staircase for ten minutes or ingest 50 milligrams of caffeine (about the amount in a cup of black tea). Both groups felt more energetic than participants who took a placebo, but the stair walkers reported a bigger energy boost. They also said they felt more motivated to work.

Pets and Your Baby's Health

Having a furry friend not only amuses your baby but also protects his

or her long-term health, according to Canadian re-

searchers. In a study of

746 three-montholds, those who lived

with dogs, cats, or

other furry pets were twice as

likely to be carry-

ing high levels of *Oscillospira* and/or

Ruminococcus.

Exposure to these two

types of gut microbes in the first few months of life (probably passed to infants via dirt in the animals' fur or paws) is associated with lower risks of childhood allergies and obesity.

A Video Game That Fights PTSD?

Visual memories are seared into
the brain in the first few hours after
a traumatic event and can resurface
as disturbing flashbacks—a key feature of post-traumatic stress disorder.
To prevent those repercussions,
researchers in Europe experimented
with a novel kind of distraction: the
colorful, shape-shifting video

was that because Tetris is highly visual,
playing it might
disrupt the formation of traumatic
memories. The
researchers
asked people
who arrived at
an emergency
room after a
car accident
to recall their

worst memory of that accident; then half played Tetris while the other half logged their activities at the hospital. Over the following week, the Tetris players had nine distressing memories, on average, while members of the other group had 23.

Lower Diabetes Risk by Eating More Fruit

In a seven-year study of half a million Chinese adults, nondiabetics who ate fresh fruit every day had a 12 percent lower risk of developing the disease compared with those who rarely ate fresh fruit. For those who had been diagnosed with type 1 or type 2 diabetes before the study, eating fresh fruit more than three times a week led to a 13 to 28 percent reduction in the risk of developing complications such as heart disease and neuropathy. This refutes the belief that it's dangerous for people living with diabetes to eat fruit.

Drug-Free Migraine Treatment

If you are one of the many migraine sufferers who are concerned about the potential side effects of migraine drugs, you may want to try two devices recently approved by the FDA. Cerena, which you hold against the back of your head when you feel a headache coming on, emits a short, magnetic pulse to stimulate the brain's visual cortex. (Inactive neurons in that part of the brain are

believed to be one cause of migraines.) Cefaly, a slender, plastic band worn across the forehead, uses an electrical current to stimulate the trigeminal nerve, another potential migraine trigger. Both technologies may still cause side effects, but they tended to be minimal for most users.

Food Safety at Home

Armed with a checklist inspired by restaurant inspections, Drexel University researchers audited a representative sample of 100 home kitchens in Philadelphia and learned that almost all of them would have earned "critical code violations." Among the most common dangers: In 64 percent of kitchens, the dishcloths and sponges harbored harmful bacteria. (One easy solution: Microwave them to kill pathogens.) And in kitchens where raw meat was present, it was stored on shelves above ready-to-eat food in 97 percent of the homes, increasing the chance that leaking packages might spread contamination.

Hormone Replacement Therapy and Hearing Loss

A new study of more than 80,000 women indicates that those who undergo oral hormone therapy may increase their risk of hearing loss by 15 percent. Ask your doctor about hearing issues as you weigh hormone therapy for menopause symptoms or for any other reason.



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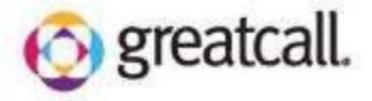
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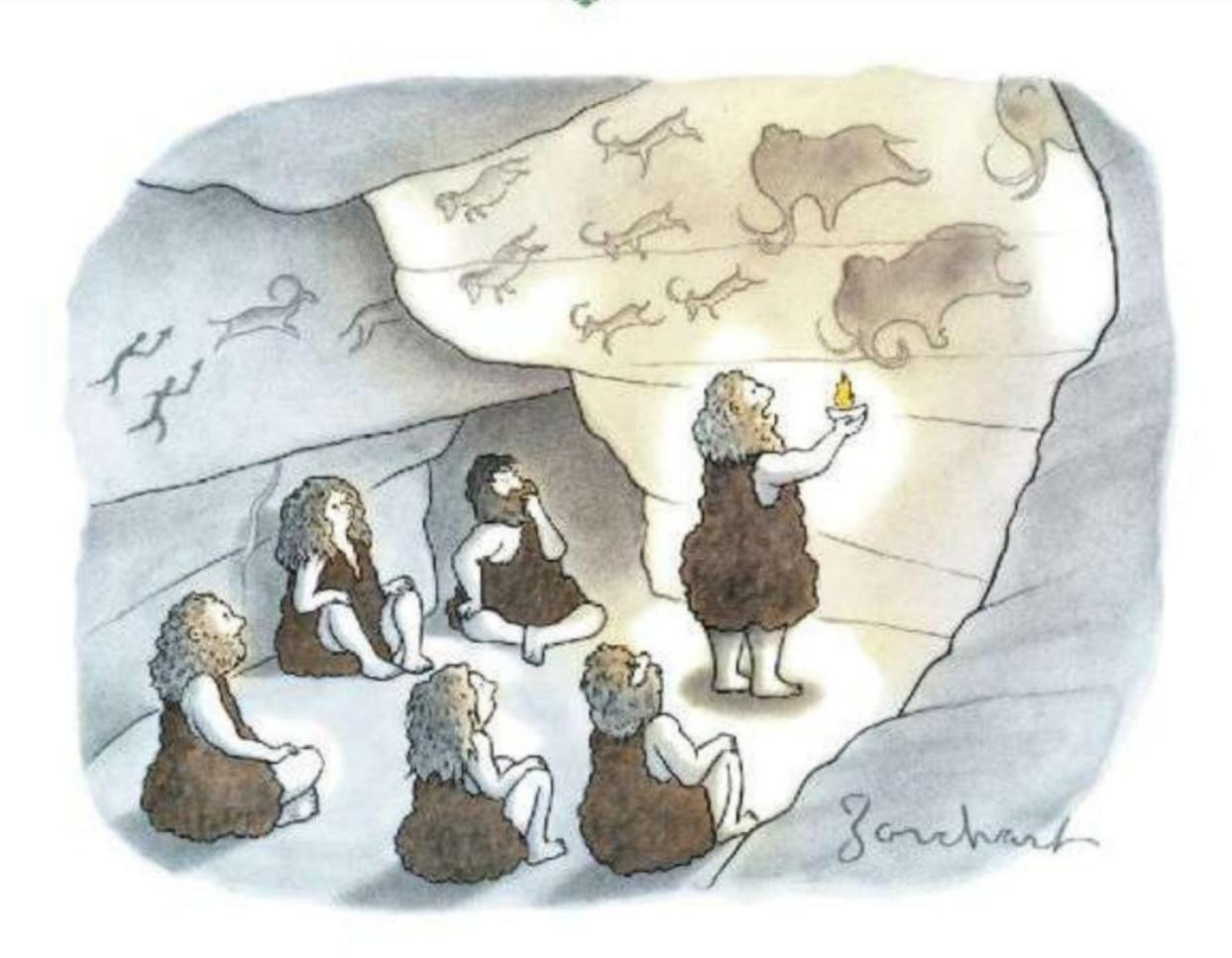




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ALL IN

A Day's Work



"Let's look at the projected earnings for next quarter."

THE MOTHER OF one of my high school students sent me this note: "My daughter will be absent from September 27 to October 3. She is going on an educational trip to the Holy Land, where she will learn history and geography."

I called the parent and said, "Wow, what an opportunity for your daughter. The Holy Land! You're traveling to Israel?"

"No," she responded. "Disney World." TIM MCROBERTS, Danville, Indiana

THESE BIZARRE excerpts from medical charts will make you think twice about getting sick:

- Patient will need rehab upon disposal.
- Patient did, in fact, have a left lower extremity.
- Patient's height is 1 foot & 79 inches.
- He remained in stale condition.
- He is allergic to wives.
- Her mood was $3 \times 9 = 27$ plus 1 is 28.

Source: gigglemed.com

NICEMONKEY/SHUTTERSTOCK

auto mechanic, a cup of herbal tea, then asked how it was.

"Excellent," he said. "It smells just like transmission fluid."

MARY MININNI, Anthem, Arizona

MY BOSS, who lives in a pre-Civil War home, mentioned to her friend that she didn't use city water. Instead, when it rained, the water on the roof drained into gutters, which led to a

cistern. "What do you do if there's a drought?" her friend asked.

"I call a water-hauling company to bring me water," she said.

The friend looked perplexed.

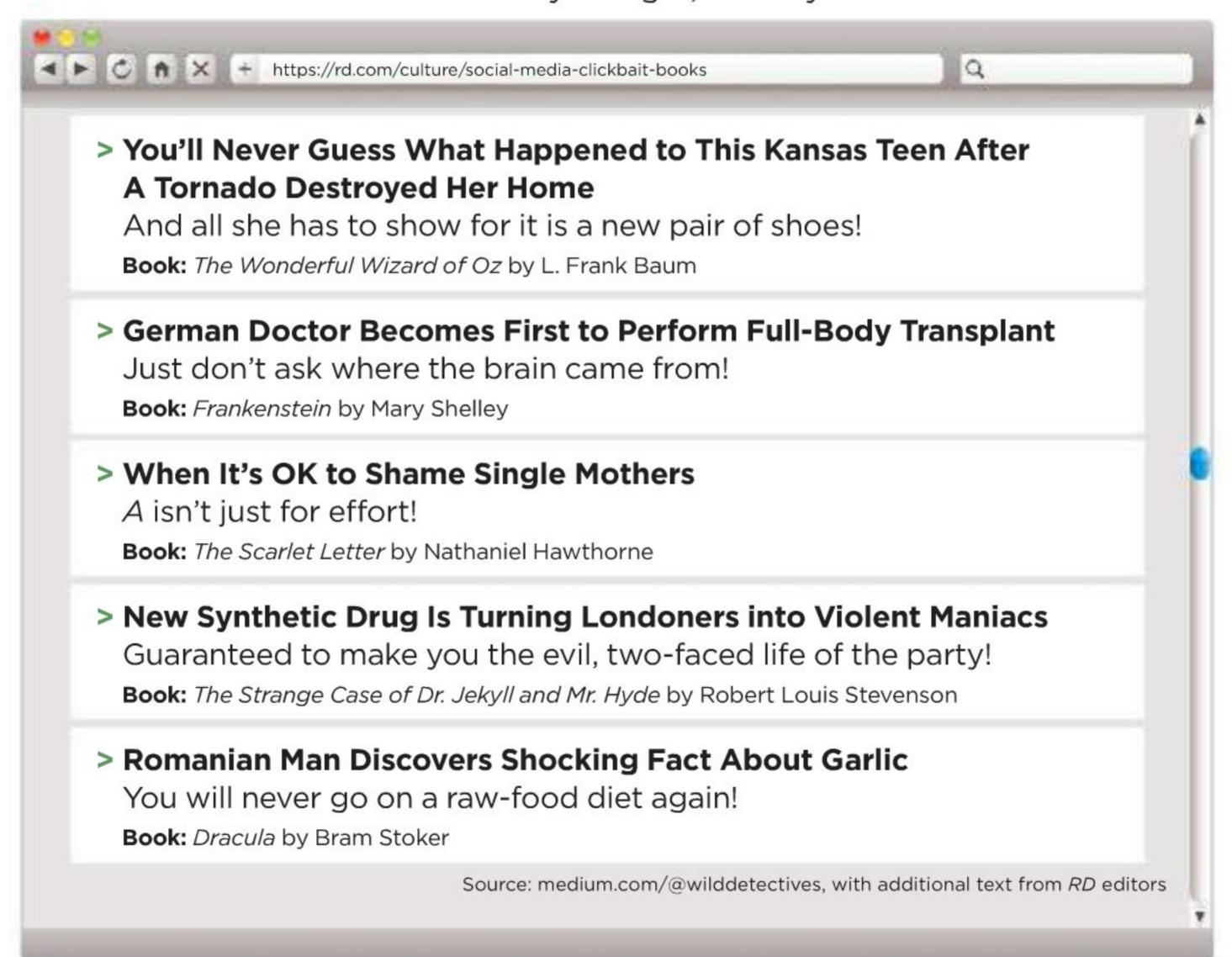
"How do they get the water from the truck onto the roof?"

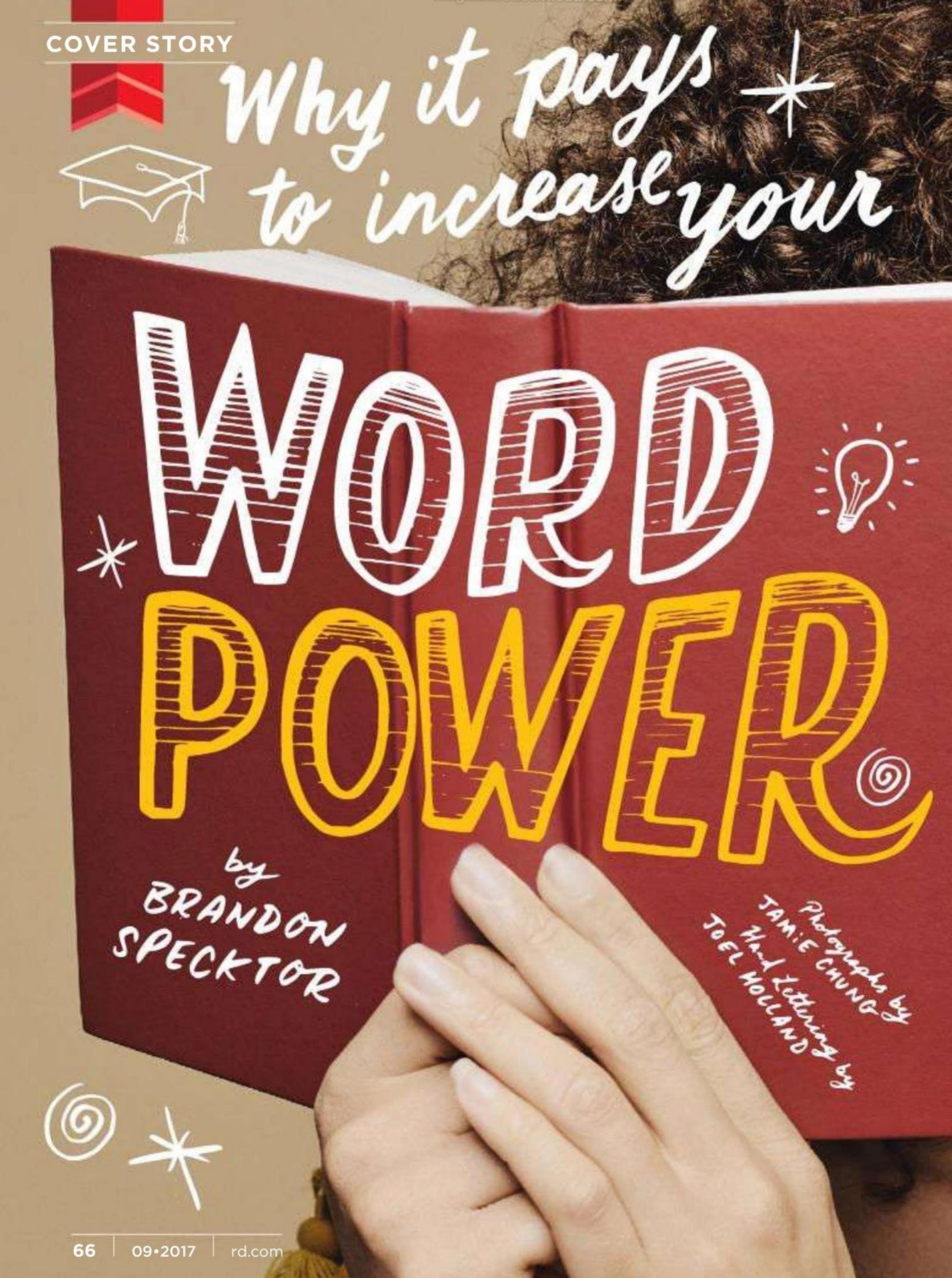
CHRISTY ROLF, Erlanger, Kentucky

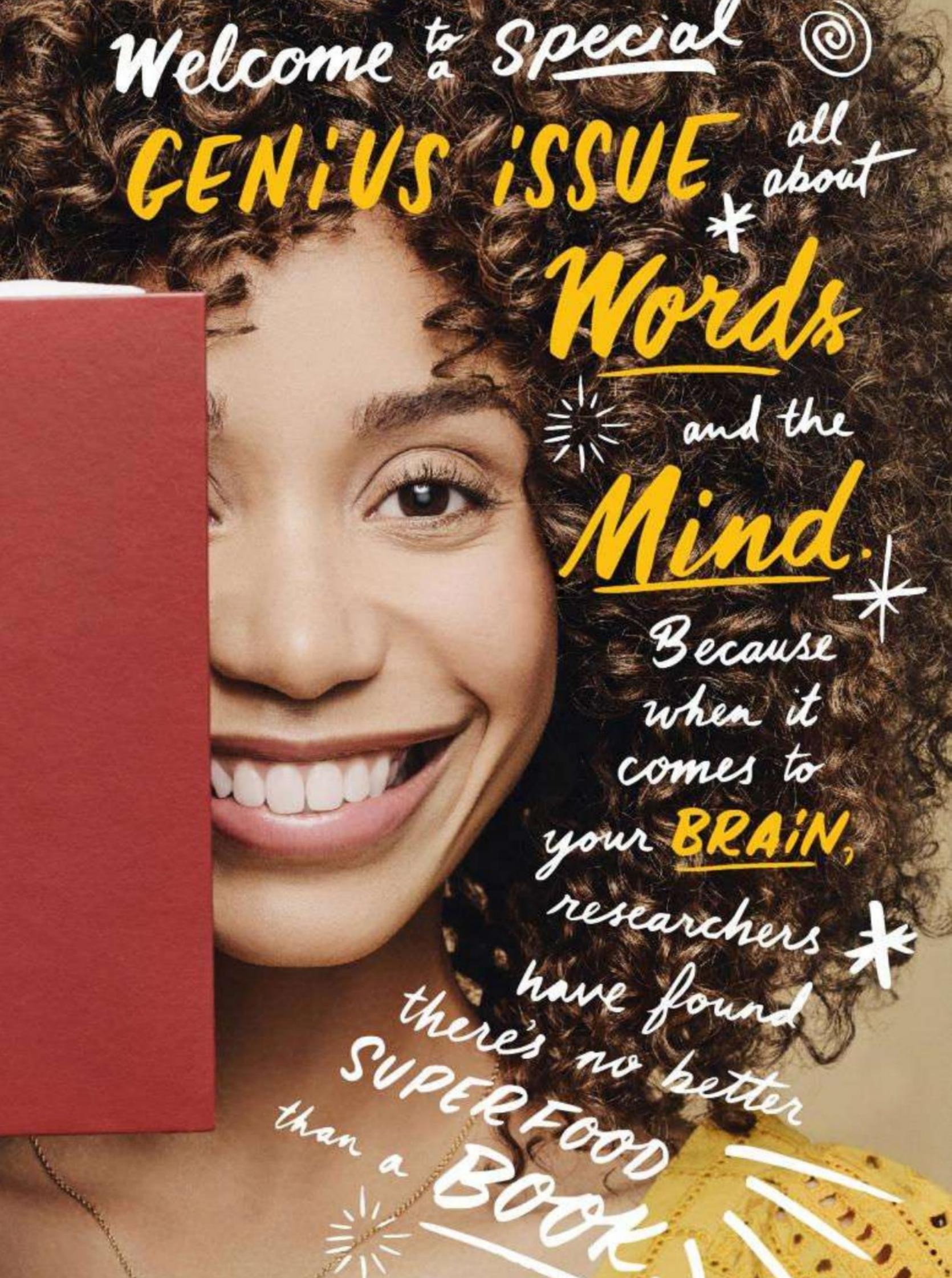
Anything funny happen to you at work lately? It could be worth \$\$\$. For details, see page 3 or go to rd.com/submit.

IF CLASSIC BOOKS BECAME CLICKBAIT

Workers at the Wild Detectives bookstore in Dallas know that catchy headlines lure online viewers. So they thought, Let's try it with literature!









ere's a simple question—answer it honestly, because your response could boost the amount of pleasure in your daily life, delay dementia, and even help you live longer:

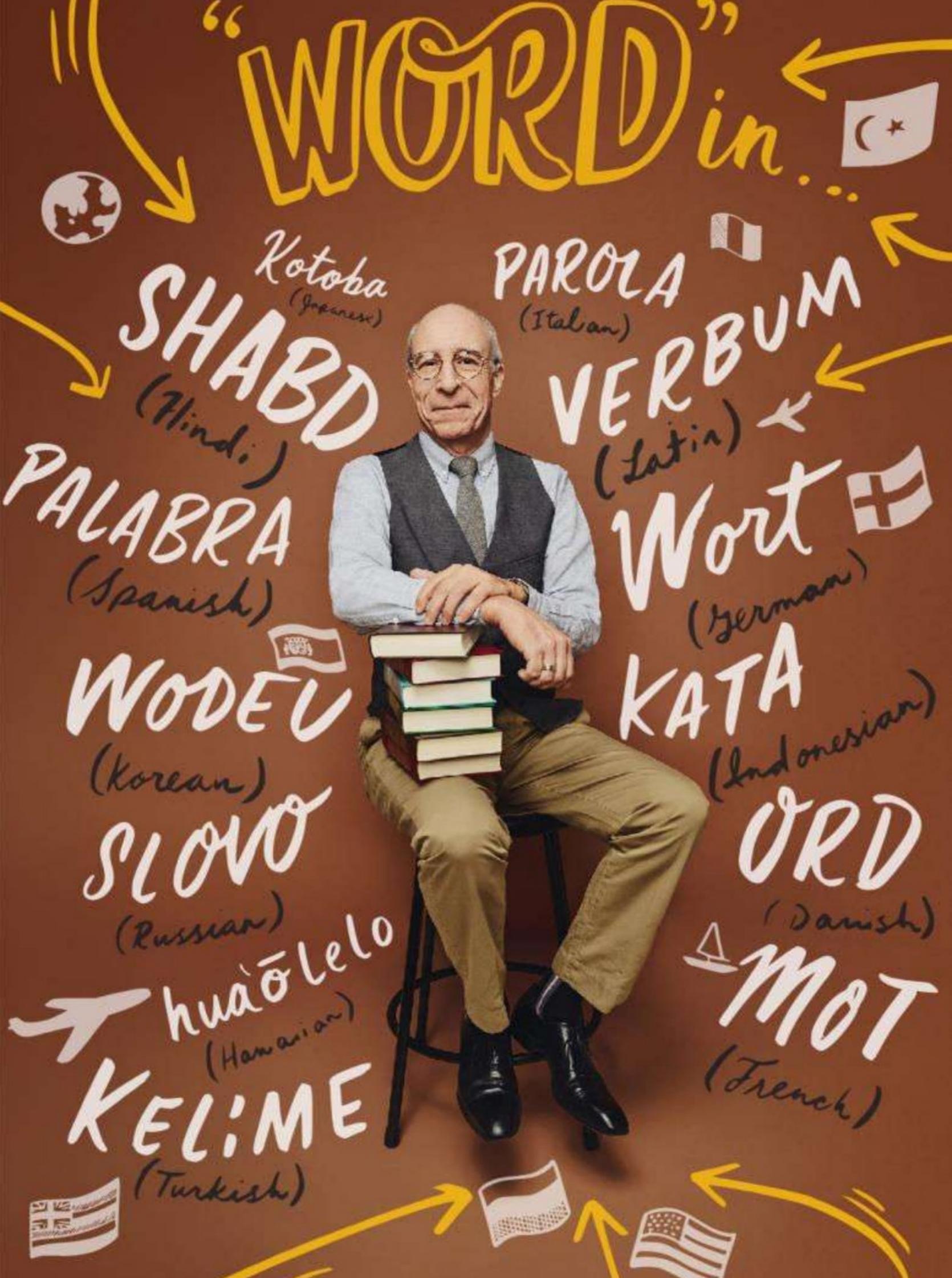
How many hours did you spend reading books last week?

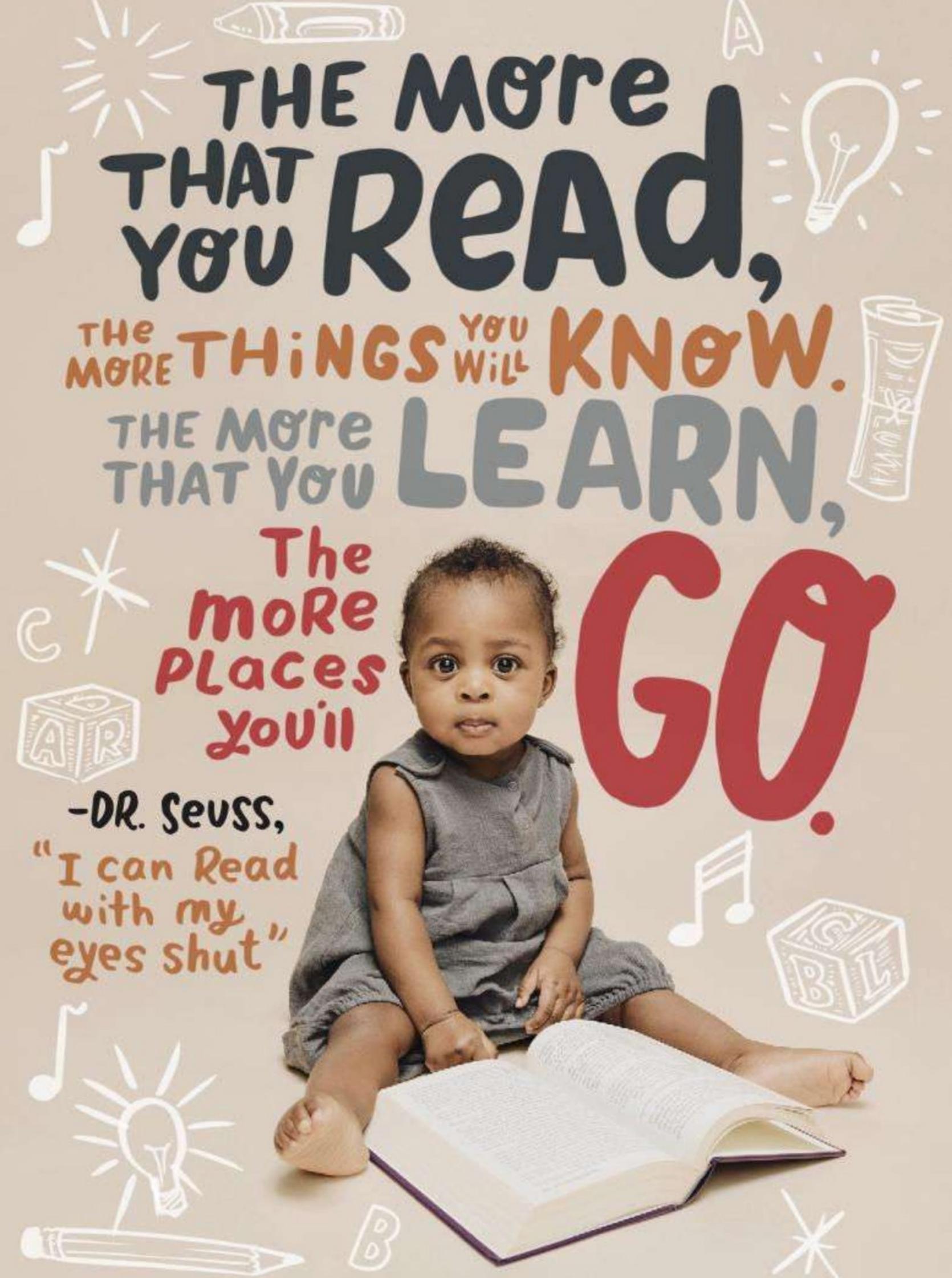
This question has arrived in thousands of U.S. homes every other year since 1992 as part of the University of Michigan's Health and Retirement Study (HRS). A minor item on a massive survey of more than 20,000 retirees, it had long gone ignored in the analysis of elder brain health. But in 2016, when researchers at the Yale School of Public Health dug into 12 years of HRS data about the reading habits and health of more than 3,600 men and women over the age of 50, a hopeful pattern emerged: People who read books—fiction or nonfiction, poetry or prose—for as little as 30 minutes a day over several years were living an average of two years longer than people who didn't read anything at all. Odder still, book readers who reported more than three hours of reading each week were 23 percent less likely to die between 2001 and 2012 than their peers who read only newspapers or magazines.

If you're reading this, it's safe to assume you don't need to be sold on the merits of the written word. You may already be familiar with recent

findings that suggest children as young as six months who read books with their parents several times a week show stronger literacy skills four years later, score higher on intelligence tests, and land better jobs than nonreaders. But recent research argues that reading may be just as important in adulthood. When practiced over a lifetime, reading and language-acquisition skills can support healthy brain functioning in big ways. Simply put: Word power increases brain power.

To understand why and what each of us can do to get the most out of our words, start by asking the same question the Yale team did: What is it about reading books in particular that boosts our brain power whereas reading newspapers and magazines doesn't? For one, the researchers posit, chapter books encourage "deep reading." Unlike, say, skimming a page of headlines, reading a book (of any genre) forces your brain to think critically and make connections from one chapter to another, and to the outside world. When you make connections, so does your brain, literally forging





new pathways between regions in all four lobes and both hemispheres. Over time, these neural networks can promote quicker thinking and may provide a greater defense against the worst effects of cognitive decay.

Secondly, reading books, especially fiction, has been shown to increase empathy and emotional intelligence. One 2013 study found that participants who read just the first part or chapter of a story showed a noticeable increase in empathy one week later,

while news readers showed a decrease. These findings may sound trivial, but they're not; developing social tools such as empathy and emotional intelligence can lead to more (and more positive) human interaction, which in turn can lower stress levels—both of which are proved to help you live longer and healthier.

That's not to say that magazines, newspapers, and Web articles are without merit. Reading anything that fills your mind and exposes you to new words, phrases, and facts seems to carry mental benefits. New research indicates that a large vocabulary may lead to a more resilient mind by fueling what scientists call cognitive reserve. One way to think about this reserve is as your brain's ability to adapt to damage. Just as your blood cells will clot to cover a cut on your knee, cognitive reserve helps your brain cells find new mental pathways

around areas damaged by stroke, dementia, and other forms of decay. This could explain why, after death, many seemingly healthy elders turn out to harbor advanced signs of Alzheimer's disease in their brains despite showing few signs in life. It's their cognitive reserve, researchers suspect, that may allow some seniors to seamlessly compensate for hidden brain damage.

So how does one build up cognitive reserve? That's more good news for word lovers. Vocabulary is notoriously

BOOK READERS WHO
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NEWSPAPERS OR MAGAZINES.

resistant to aging, and having a rich one, according to researchers from Spain's University of Santiago de Compostela, can significantly delay the manifestation of mental decline. When the team analyzed vocabulary test scores of more than 300 volunteers ages 50 and older, they found that participants with the lowest scores were between three and four times more at risk of cognitive decay than participants with the highest scores.

Learning foreign words also offers important cognitive nutrients. In fact, research shows that learning

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an instrument or speak a second language, is one of the best things you can do for your brain at any age. Remember that powerful network of brain connections we get from reading? Successfully learning a second language grows that network even more. As a result, polyglots have been shown to be stronger at multitasking, superior at memorizing, and better at focusing on important information than monolingual speakers. A 2013 study in

PEOPLE WHO SPOKE TWO OR MORE LANGUAGES **DEVELOPED DEMENTIA AN AVERAGE OF 4.5 YEARS LATER** THAN MONOLINGUAL PATIENTS. "JUST HAVING THE BASICS" OF A SECOND LANGUAGE CAN HELP.

Neurology discovered that patients who spoke two or more languages developed dementia an average of 4.5 years later than monolingual patients. And while a brain that learns a second language earlier in life will likely see more cognitive advantages than a late-life learner, it is never too late to open the phrase book. You don't need to end up a fluent speaker, either. "Just having the basics of those linguistic connections can delay dementia," Dr. Thomas Bak of the University of Edinburgh told the *Atlantic*.

Of course, learning a new language

is no quick feat. Luckily, the payoff of a single lesson can provide instant gratification. Researchers from Germany and Spain had 36 participants read two sentences containing the same foreign word: "Every Sunday the grandmother went to the *jedin*" and "The man was buried in the *jedin*." When asked what *jedin* means, the folks who correctly guessed "graveyard" showed reactions in the same pleasure-sensing parts of the brain you'd expect from food, sex, gambling, and other satisfy-

ing stimuli. (Though when it comes to words, over-indulgence *is* encouraged.)

It's in that spirit of brain building that we bring you a special Genius Issue devoted to all things philological. You'll find a story about the people who write dictionaries, the narrative tricks that "super memorizers" use to

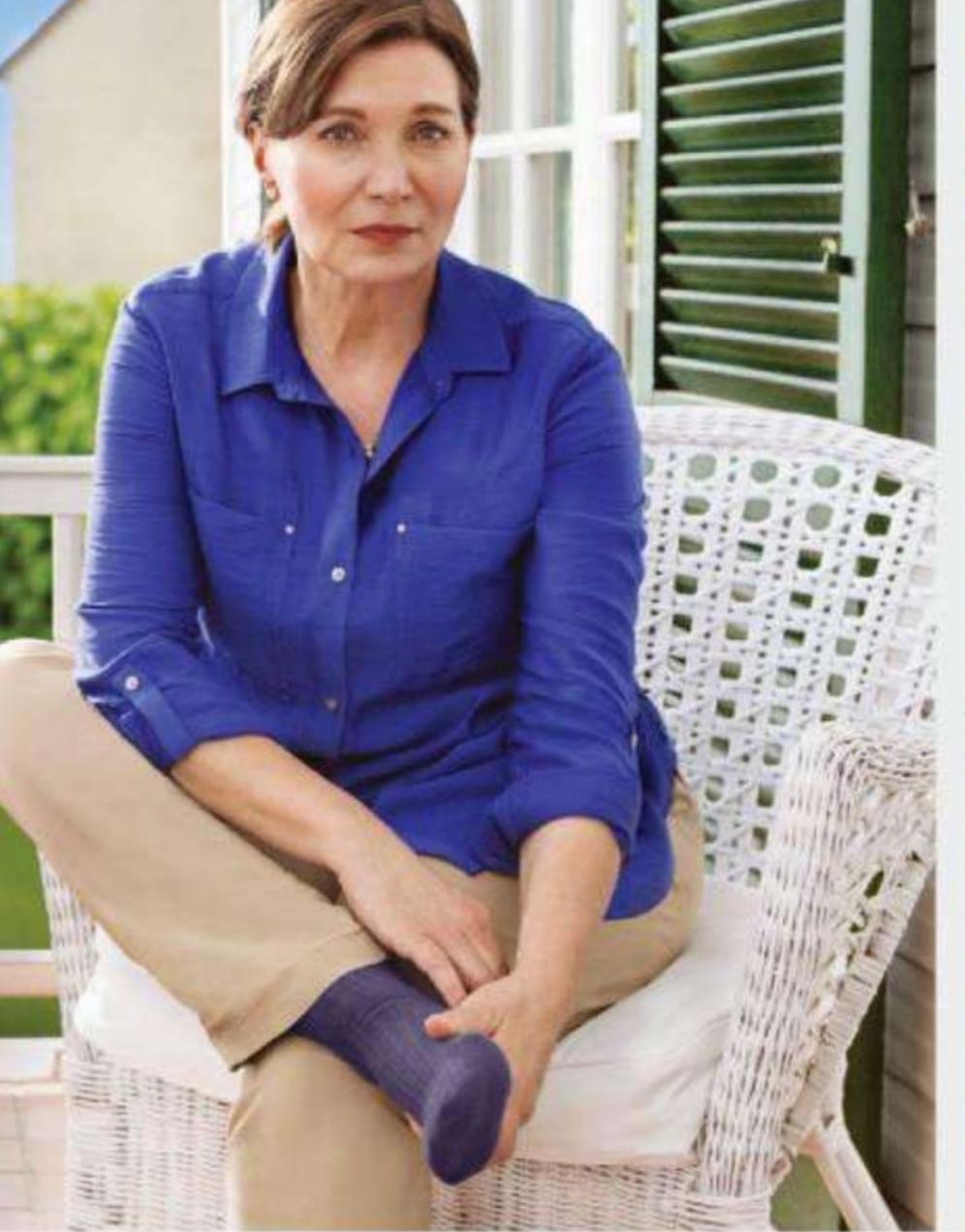
recall massive amounts of information, and an essay that wonders if our fiction tastes are becoming simpler. There are heartwarming stories, too, such as the tale of how a young German girl learned a few words of English from an American soldier during World War II and a "Drama in Real Life" about a man who lost all ability to communicate—and almost died because of it. Wherever you land, we hope you'll be inspired to turn the page. Because, as science reminds us, it pays to increase your word power—today, tomorrow, and for the rest of your life. R

The difference s shetween the ALMOST RICHT WORD WORD is really a large matter. it's the difference between the BUG the LIGHTNING BUG the LiGht Ming. Mark Twair



Prescription LYRICA is not for everyone. Tell your doctor right away about any serious allergic reaction that causes swelling of the face, mouth, lips, gums, tongue, throat, or neck or any trouble breathing, rash, hives or blisters. LYRICA may cause suicidal thoughts or actions in a very small number of people. Patients, family members or caregivers should call the doctor right away if they notice suicidal thoughts or actions, thoughts of self harm, or any unusual changes in mood or behavior. These changes may include new or worsening depression, anxiety, restlessness, trouble sleeping, panic attacks, anger, irritability, agitation, aggression, dangerous impulses or violence, or extreme increases in activity or talking. If you have suicidal thoughts or actions, do not stop LYRICA without first talking to your doctor. LYRICA may cause swelling of your hands, legs and feet. Some of the most common side effects of LYRICA are dizziness and sleepiness. Do not drive or work with machines until you know how LYRICA affects you. Other common side effects are blurry vision, weight gain, trouble concentrating, dry mouth, and feeling "high." Also, tell your doctor right away about muscle pain along with feeling sick and feverish, or any changes in your eyesight including blurry vision or any skin sores if you have diabetes. You may have a higher chance of swelling, hives or gaining weight if you are also



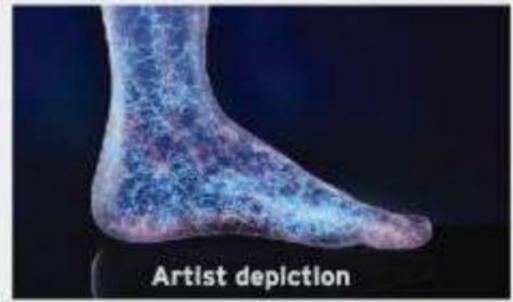


FOR SOME PATIENTS, LYRICA CAN PROVIDE SIGNIFICANT RELIEF FROM DIABETIC NERVE PAIN.*

*Individual results may vary.



Diabetes damages nerves, which may cause pain.



LYRICA is FDA-approved to treat diabetic nerve pain.

Important Safety Information (continued) taking certain diabetes or high blood pressure medicines. Do not drink alcohol while taking LYRICA. You may have more dizziness and sleepiness if you take LYRICA with alcohol, narcotic pain medicines, or medicines for anxiety. If you have had a drug or alcohol problem, you may be more likely to misuse LYRICA. Tell your doctor if you are planning to father a child, if you are pregnant, or plan to become pregnant. Breastfeeding is not recommended while taking LYRICA. Talk with your doctor before you stop taking LYRICA or any other prescription medication.

Please see Important Risk Information for LYRICA on the following page.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.FDA.gov/medwatch or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Ask your doctor about LYRICA and visit LYRICA.com or call 1-888-9-LYRICA (1-888-959-7422).



IT'S SPECIFIC TREATMENT FOR DIABETIC NERVE PAIN

IMPORTANT FACTS



(LEER-i-kah) (pregabalin)

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION ABOUT LYRICA

LYRICA may cause serious, even life threatening, allergic reactions.

Stop taking LYRICA and call your doctor right away if you have any signs of a serious allergic reaction:

Swelling of your face, mouth, lips, gums, tongue, throat or neck

· Have any trouble breathing

· Rash, hives (raised bumps) or blisters

Like other antiepileptic drugs, LYRICA may cause suicidal thoughts or actions in a very small number of people, about 1 in 500.

Call your doctor right away if you have any symptoms, especially if they are new, worse or worry you, including:

suicidal thoughts or actions

new or worse depression

new or worse anxiety

feeling agitated or restless

panic attacks

trouble sleeping

new or worse irritability

· acting aggressive, being angry, or violent

· acting on dangerous impulses

an extreme increase in activity and talking

other unusual changes in behavior or mood

If you have suicidal thoughts or actions, do not stop LYRICA without first talking to your doctor.

LYRICA may cause swelling of your hands, legs and feet.
This swelling can be a serious problem with people with heart problems.

LYRICA may cause dizziness or sleepiness.

Do not drive a car, work with machines, or do other dangerous things until you know how LYRICA affects you. Ask your doctor when it is okay to do these things.

ABOUT LYRICA

LYRICA is a prescription medicine used in adults 18 years and older to treat:

- Pain from damaged nerves that happens with diabetes or that follows healing of shingles, or spinal cord injury
- Partial seizures when taken together with other seizure medicines
- Fibromyalgia (pain all over your body)

Who should NOT take LYRICA:

Anyone who is allergic to anything in LYRICA

BEFORE STARTING LYRICA

Tell your doctor about all your medical conditions, including if you:

Have had depression, mood problems or suicidal thoughts or behavior

Have or had kidney problems or dialysis

Have heart problems, including heart failure

Have a bleeding problem or a low blood platelet count

- Have abused prescription medicines, street drugs or alcohol in the past
- Have ever had swelling of your face, mouth, tongue, lips, gums, neck, or throat (angioedema)
- Plan to father a child. It is not known if problems seen in animal studies can happen in humans.

 Are pregnant, plan to become pregnant. It is not known if LYRICA will harm your unborn baby. You and your doctor will decide whether you should take LYRICA.

 Are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. LYRICA passes into your breast milk. It is not known if LYRICA can harm your baby. Breastfeeding is not recommended while taking LYRICA. Tell your doctor about all your medicines. Include over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. LYRICA and other medicines may affect each other causing side effects.

Especially tell your doctor if you take:

BEFORE STARTING LYRICA, continued

 Angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors. You may have a higher chance for swelling and hives.

 Avandia[®] (rosiglitazone)*, Avandamet[®] (rosiglitazone and metformin)* or Actos[®] (pioglitazone)** for diabetes. You may have a higher chance of weight gain or swelling of your hands or feet.

 Narcotic pain medicines (such as oxycodone), tranquilizers or medicines for anxiety (such as lorazepam). You may have a higher chance for dizziness and sleepiness.

Any medicines that make you sleepy.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF LYRICA

LYRICA may cause serious side effects, including:

See "Important Safety Information About LYRICA."

- Muscle problems, pain, soreness or weakness along with feeling sick and fever
- · Eyesight problems including blurry vision
- · Weight gain. Weight gain may affect control of diabetes and can be serious for people with heart problems.
- · Feeling "high"

If you have any of these symptoms, tell your doctor right away.

The most common side effects of LYRICA are:

Trouble concentrating

DizzinessBlurry vision

Swelling of hands and feet

Weight gain

Dry mouth

Sleepiness

If you have diabetes, you should pay extra attention to your skin while taking LYRICA.

HOW TO TAKE LYRICA

Do:

- Take LYRICA exactly as your doctor tells you. Your doctor will tell you how much to take and when to take it. Take LYRICA at the same times each day.
- Take LYRICA with or without food.

Don't:

- Drive a car or use machines if you feel dizzy or sleepy while taking LYRICA.
- Drink alcohol or use other medicines that make you sleepy while taking LYRICA.
- Change the dose or stop LYRICA suddenly. If you stop taking LYRICA suddenly you may have headaches, nausea, diarrhea, trouble sleeping, increased sweating, or you may feel anxious. If you have epilepsy, you may have seizures more often.
- Start any new medicines without first talking to your doctor.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

- Ask your doctor or pharmacist. This is only a brief summary of important information.
- Go to www.lyrica.com or call 1-866-459-7422 (1-866-4LYRICA).

Need help paying for your Pfizer medicines? Pfizer RxPathways" is here to help.

One program—a range of prescription assistance services



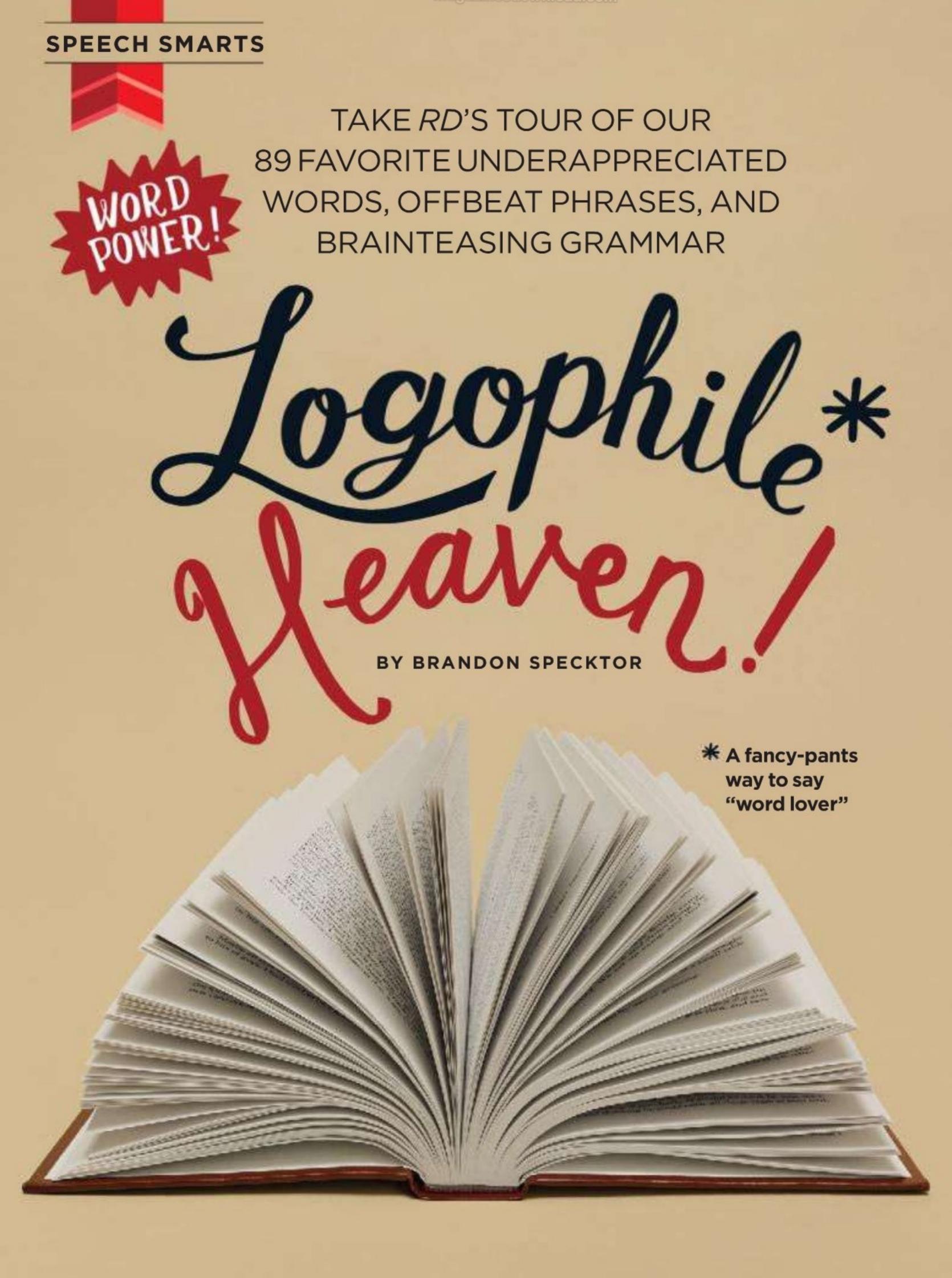
Rx only



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LATIN

YOU USE EVERY DAY (WITHOUT REALIZING IT)

Don't call Latin a dead language. Chances are you speak it all the time! By some estimates, more than 60 percent of English words have Latin roots. Some words, such as the five below, have been lifted completely.

Audio

Audire is a Latin verb meaning "to hear." The first-person conjugation audio means "I hear." (And video? That's "I see.")

Doctor

How can someone be a doctor of philosophy? Because doctor means "teacher" in Latin.

Exit

In Latin, the verb exire means "to go out." So exit means "he/she/it goes out." As with so many words, we can partly thank Shakespeare for bringing exit to English, via the celebrated stage direction in A Winter's Tale: "Exit, pursued by a bear."

Minus

Latin is as simple as four minus two equals two.
Seriously: *Minus* means "less" in Latin.

Plus

As you may have guessed, plus is Latin for "more."

DO YOU HATE THIS PHRASE? WHATEVER.

In 2016, **whatever** was voted the most annoying word in English in a poll by the Marist Institute for Public Opinion for the eighth year running. Thirty-eight percent of Americans reported that *whatever* annoys them more than any other conversational word or phrase, with 20 percent loathing *no offense but*, 14 percent despising *ya know, right?* and *I can't even*, and 8 percent saying they can't take any more of the word *huge*.

WHY IS THERE AN R IN MADS

Mrs. wasn't always the abbreviation used for a married woman. Centuries ago it stood for mistress, which at the time meant the woman of the household. But the abbreviation stuck even as the title for married women changed to a word without an r in it: missus.

79



They sounded new when we first heard them. But the earliest cited uses of these words all date back to 1917:

- advertorial
- chowhound
- cootie
- gaga
- lounge lizard
- OMG (yes, as an abbreviation)
- pep pill

TEN-HUT! PHRASES COINED BY THE MILITARY

Blockbuster During World War II, this modern-day term for a box-office hit had a more sobering definition: a bomb big enough to take out most of a city block.

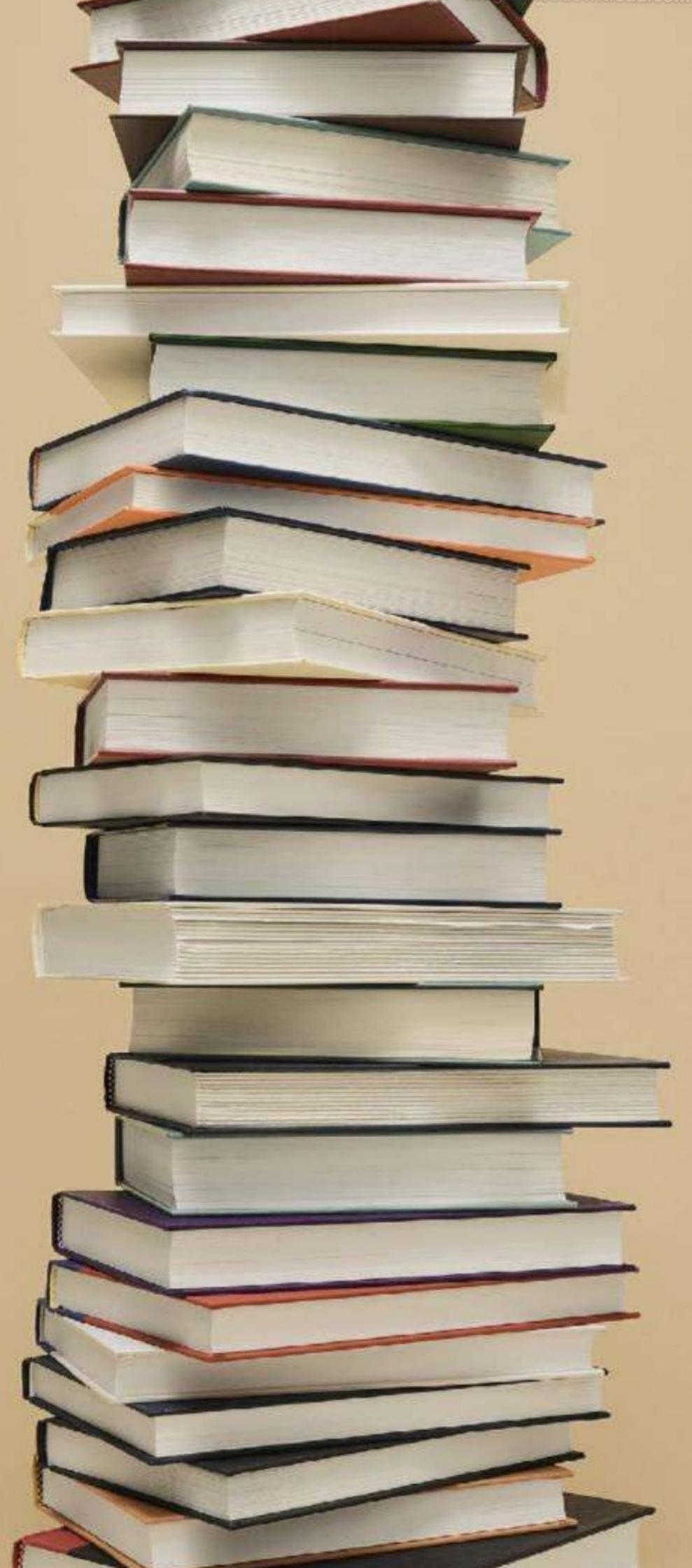
Cup of Joe When Josephus Daniels was appointed secretary of the Navy in 1913, he abolished alcohol from military ships. Legend has it that sailors began to refer to the hardest drink available to them—coffee—as a "cup of joe."

Deadline Now a synonym for *due date*, *deadline* was originally used much more literally. During the Civil War, POWs were confined and surrounded by a "deadline," so called because if a prisoner were to cross it, he could be rightfully shot dead.

Grunt Work During the Vietnam War, American infantrymen took to calling one another "grunts." One likely theory says *grunt* refers to the sound a soldier made when picking up heavy combat gear; another (less likely) says it was an acronym for "general rifleman, usually not trained." In any case, *grunt work* became synonymous with tedious, thankless labor.

Loose Cannon Theodore Roosevelt once told a journalist he didn't "want to be the old cannon loose on the deck in the storm." He referenced a time before fixed-turret guns, when ship cannons were mounted on wheels to roll between gun ports. A "loose cannon" could break free in choppy waters, endangering sailors.

With Flying Colors If a naval ship returned to its home port after battle with its flags—or "colors"—still flying, that indicated victory. Today the phrase means to do something well.



THE MAN WHO TRIED TO MAKE ENGLISH ... ENGLISHER

In the 1800s, William Barnes, a poet and minister, tested an unusual question: What would the English language look like if it were stripped of all Greek and Latin root words? This new language, Barnes thought, would make more sense to speakers who lacked a classical education. For example, instead of the word photograph (from the Greek words meaning "light" and "writing"), we would say sunprint. Some of the entries in Barnes's proposed "pure English" dictionary make perfect sense. Others produce chuckles and need some translating:

- ayesome = affirmative
- folkdom = democracy
- inwit = conscience
- muchness = quantity
- naysome = negative
- overthwartings = opposites
- suchness = quality
- sundersome = divisible
- thwartsome = contrary
- unfrienden = alienate
- word-book = dictionary
- wortlore = botany
- year-day = anniversary

12 Little-Known Punctuation Marks We Should Be Using

Why risk boring your friends and followers with a mere period at the end of your texts, posts, and e-mails? Clarify your message with these handy inventions, used or advocated by punctuation mavericks around the world.

INTERROBANG

While the combination question mark and exclamation point can be effectively replaced by using one of each ("She did what?!"), that somehow lacks the punch of throwing them on top of each other to finish your thought. Besides, who among us doesn't want to say "interrobang" more often?

IRONY MARK

The irony mark, first printed in the mid-1800s, precedes a sentence to indicate its tone before it is read (much like some Spanish punctuation). The intent: Beware of crafty double meanings and arched eyebrows to follow. While this backward question mark is relatively young, writers have been proposing irony symbols since the 1600s.

SNARK MARK

Need to indicate you're being a petty jerk? Add a snark mark to your correspondence by typing a period followed by a tilde. Example: "Nice shoes. I bet you got a deal on them."



LOVE POINT

The equivalent of punctuating your prose with an emoji heart, the love point is two canoodling question marks sharing a period. Try it after sentences such as "Happy anniversary" and "I love my cat" (Only a cynic would note the subtext of using question marks to express ardor.)



PERCONTATION POINT OR RHETORICAL QUESTION MARK

The backward question mark was proposed in the late 1500s as the ending to a rhetorical question. So clever! Who knew?

CERTITUDE POINT

A mom favorite, the certitude point
conveys total
conviction, as
in, "We are
not going to the zoo
and that's FINAL!"

DOUBT POINT

The opposite of the certitude point, this zigzag adds skepticism: "You think you're going to the zoo"



ACCLAMATION POINT

The French author who proposed this mark in 1966 described it as "the stylized representation of the two small flags that float at the top of the bus when a head of state visits." Acclamation is a "demonstration of goodwill or welcome," so you could use it to say, "I'm glad you could make it!" or "God bless America!"

SARCMARK



The SarcMark (short for "sarcasm mark") is actually the trademarked creation

of a man named Douglas Sak, who markets it as "the official, easy-to-use punctuation mark to emphasize a sarcastic phrase, sentence, or message." Yeah, the world needs more ways to be sarcastic

ASTERISM

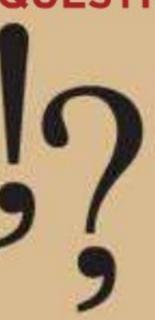


This triangular pile of asterisks has

been used to divide subchapters in books and to indicate minor breaks in long text. (Look no further than our very own end-of-article fillers to see them in action!) Sadly, most books these days just use three stars in a row for breaks within chapters (***) or

EXCLAMATION COMMA & QUESTION COMMA

simply skip an extra line.



Want to show delight or confusion without ending your sentence? Slip in one of these bad boys! Once

patented, like the SarcMark, these comma cousins have been free since 1995.

Words That Mean the DOSITE Of What They Sound Like

ENERVATED People think it means "energized." But it really means "weakened." The word nervus originally referred to sinews and tendons, but around the 1600s it became a byword for strength and vigor. *Enervate* first meant "to cut the nerves or tendons" and later came to mean "to lessen the vitality or strength of."

FACTOID People think it means "a fun, trivial fact." But it originally meant "a fun, false fact." Coined by Norman Mailer in 1973 to describe "facts" invented by reporters, this word can (confusingly) describe both true and false information. But for Mailer's intended meaning, look to the suffix: -oid. If a humanoid resembles a human (but isn't one) and a planetoid resembles a planet (but isn't one), it follows that a factoid resembles a fact—but isn't one.

INFLAMMABLE People think it means "fireproof." But it really means "easily inflamed." Yep, *flammable* and *inflammable* mean the same exact thing. Make sure your home is equipped with a fire extinguisher (and a dictionary).

NOISOME People think it means "noisy." But it really means "obnoxiously smelly." While a "noisome neighbor" will offend your senses, it's not your sense of hearing you need to worry about. *Noisome* actually comes from the same root word as *annoying*—the Anglo-French *anui*.

NONPLUSSED People think it means "undisturbed." But it really means "utterly baffled." The word comes from the Latin *non plus*, meaning "no more," as in, "I am in a state where I can say, think, or do no more. I am nonplussed."

The Most Complicated Word in the English Language Has Only Three Letters

Let's run this by you: With more than 645 potential meanings, run gives its chief competitors, set and put, a run for their money as the most complex word in English. According to one Oxford English Dictionary editor, it took nine months of work to record all possible uses. How long of a list can you run up?

Can a Word Be Its Own Opposite?

Yes! There are actually dozens of examples.
They are called contronyms—words that are their own antonyms, depending on usage.

Here are a few for starters:

Dust can mean "to add fine particles" or "to remove fine particles."

Left can mean both "remaining" and "departed."

Off can mean both "activated" (as an alarm) and "deactivated."

Oversight means both "watchful care" and "an inadvertent error."

Screen can mean both "to show" and "to hide."

Simple Words with Devious Pronunciations

COMPTROLLER She doesn't troll computers; she *controls* finances, which is why this management title is technically pronounced "con-tro-ller."

GALA You won't get kicked out of one for saying "gal-luh," but do know that "gay-luh" is preferred.

GYRO It may have the same root word as *gyroscope*, but this spinning Greek meat deserves a proper Greek pronunciation: "yee-roh."

STATUS The Brits and the dictionary say "stay-tus." (In America, "stat-us" gets by.)

VALET Downton Abbey got it right. It's not a French word, so no need to pronounce the last syllable as "ay." It should be sounded as "val-it."

VICTUALS This dated term for food rhymes with *whittles*, not *rituals*.

For more commonly mispronounced words, check out Word Power on p. 137.

"Buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo" is a real sentence. How?

Let's break it down, starting with a simple phrase:









Monkeys from Pisa bully deer from London.

OK, admittedly it's an implausible scenario, but it's a grammatically fine sentence. In English we can use place names as adjectives, so let's shorten the sentence a little.













Pisa monkeys bully London deer.

Now we'll throw in some giraffes from Paris to even the score with those mean monkeys.















Pisa monkeys, whom Paris giraffes intimidate, bully London deer.

English is peculiar in that you can omit relative pronouns, e.g., "the person whom I love" can be expressed as "the person I love." Let's do that to this sentence.

















Pisa monkeys Paris giraffes intimidate bully London deer.

This kind of pronoun removal can be a little more difficult to grasp when written than when spoken. Saying the above sentence with pauses after monkeys and intimidate can help. Now we need to replace both of the verbs, intimidate and bully, with their (admittedly uncommon) synonym, buffalo:

















Pisa monkeys Paris giraffes buffalo buffalo London deer.

Again, pauses help keep the meaning in mind: Put a pause after monkeys and the first buffalo. Now we'll replace all the worldwide place names with the second-largest city in New York State, Buffalo. (That's Buffalo's tallest building, One Seneca Tower, below.)

















Buffalo monkeys Buffalo giraffes buffalo buffalo Buffalo deer.

You can probably guess what the next step is. But before we replace all the animals with the common name for the American bison, note how the capital letters in the above sentence help you keep the place names separate from the other usages of the word. OK, here goes:

















Buffalo buffalo buffalo buffalo buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo.

One last thing to note: This exceptional sentence is possible because the plural of the animal buffalo is buffalo, not buffalos, otherwise all the words wouldn't be identical. English is strange and wonderful! prooffreader.com

WHICH AUTHOR COINED THAT?

- Dr. Seuss named one of his oddball creatures a nerd in 1950's If I Ran the Zoo.
- Charles Dickens coined the word flummox in The Pickwick Papers and boredom in Bleak House.
- Geoffrey Chaucer first used the word **twitter**, which meant "to chirp continuously" (and still does, in a way).
- Lewis Carroll invented the mash-up words **chortle** and **galumph** in his nonsense poem "Jabberwocky."
- John Milton coined pandemonium, combining classical words for "all" and "evil spirits," in *Paradise Lost.*
- Jonathan Swift invented Yahoos as a term for the dregs of humankind in Gulliver's Travels.
- H. G. Wells first used the term atomic bomb in his 1914 novel The World Set Free. A physicist patented the idea for a nuclear reactor after reading it.
- Stephen King put piehole (slang for "mouth") in print for the first time in his 1983 novel Christine.

THERE'S A WORD FOR THAT!

If you want to sound like a genius, you're supposed to know how to describe even the most recondite situations. (Recondite: dealing with something obscure.) Don't worry: We've got your back with this compendium of common things you probably didn't know even had names.

aglet: the plastic coating on a shoelace **ferrule:** the circular metal part holding the eraser to a pencil

glabella: the spot between your eyebrows **lunule:** the white, crescent-shaped part of the fingernail

peen: the round or wedge-shaped end of a hammer—i.e., the part that doesn't hit the nail petrichor: the way it smells when rain falls on parched earth

philtrum: the little groove between your nose and upper lip

phosphene: the light you see when you close your eyes and press your fingers to them **punt:** the indentation in the bottom of a wine bottle

rasceta: the lines on the inside of your wrist

soufflé cup: a paper or plastic cup for ketchup, mustard, and other condiments **Snellen test:** the test during an eye exam involving reading smaller and smaller letters **tittle:** the dot over a lowercase *i* or *j*

wamble: stomach rumbling

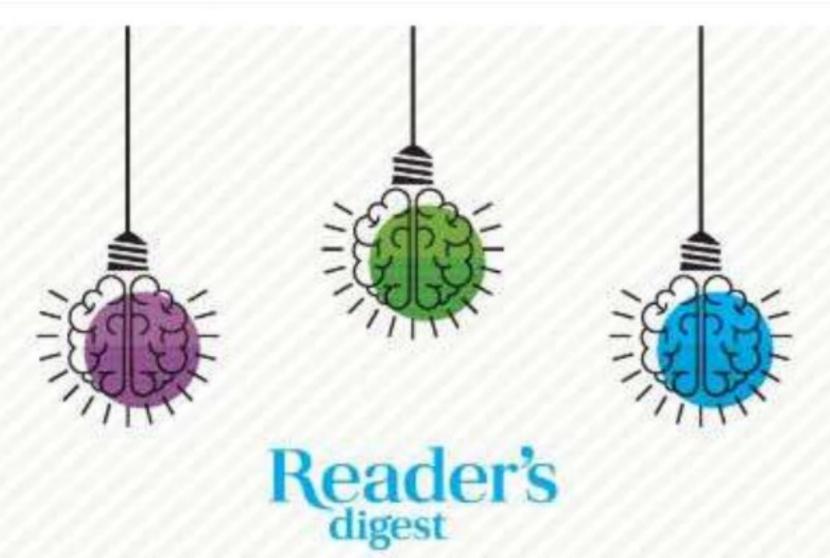
zarf: the cardboard sleeve on a disposable R coffee cup



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Choose our covers, share ideas with staff, and judge what stories merit publishing by joining our exclusive inner circle of readers.

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You may be able to get your first prescription at no cost with *Momentum*.* Visit Myrbetriq.com.

USE OF MYRBETRIQ (meer-BEH-trick)

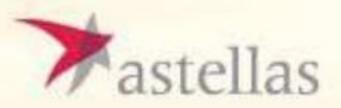
Myrbetriq® (mirabegron) is a prescription medicine for adults used to treat overactive bladder (OAB) with symptoms of urgency, frequency, and leakage.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

Myrbetriq is not for everyone. Do not use Myrbetriq if you have an allergy to mirabegron or any ingredients in Myrbetriq. Myrbetriq may cause your blood pressure to increase or make your blood pressure worse if you have a history of high blood pressure. It is recommended that your doctor check your blood pressure while you are taking Myrbetriq.

Please see additional Important Safety Information on next page.

*Subject to eligibility. Restrictions may apply.



Myrbetriq® is a registered trademark of Astellas Pharma Inc.
All other trademarks or registered trademarks are the property of their respective owners.
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IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION (continued)

Myrbetriq may increase your chances of not being able to empty your bladder. Tell your doctor right away if you have trouble emptying your bladder or you have a weak urine stream.

Myrbetriq may cause allergic reactions that may be serious. If you experience swelling of the face, lips, throat or tongue, with or without difficulty breathing, stop taking Myrbetriq and tell your doctor right away.

Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take including medications for overactive bladder or other medicines such as thioridazine (Mellaril™ and Mellaril-S™), flecainide (Tambocor®), propafenone (Rythmol®), digoxin (Lanoxin®). Myrbetriq may affect the way other medicines work, and other medicines may affect how Myrbetriq works.

Before taking Myrbetriq, tell your doctor if you have liver or kidney problems. The most common side effects of Myrbetriq include increased blood pressure, common cold symptoms (nasopharyngitis), urinary tract infection, constipation, diarrhea, dizziness, and headache.

For further information, please talk to your healthcare professional and see Brief Summary of Prescribing Information for Myrbetriq® (mirabegron) on the following pages.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch or call 1-800-FDA-1088.





Myrbetriq® (mirabegron) extended-release tablets 25 mg, 50 mg

Brief Summary based on FDA-approved patient labeling

Read the Patient Information that comes with Myrbetriq® (mirabegron) before you start taking it and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This summary does not take the place of talking with your doctor about your medical condition or treatment.

What is Myrbetriq (meer-BEH-trick)?

Myrbetriq is a prescription medication for **adults** used to treat the following symptoms due to a condition called **overactive bladder**:

- urge urinary incontinence: a strong need to urinate with leaking or wetting accidents
- urgency: a strong need to urinate right away
- frequency: urinating often

It is not known if Myrbetriq is safe and effective in children.

Who should not use Myrbetriq?

Do not use Myrbetriq if you have an allergy to mirabegron or any of the ingredients in Myrbetriq. See the end of this leaflet for a complete list of ingredients in Myrbetriq.

What is overactive bladder?

Overactive bladder occurs when you cannot control your bladder contractions. When these muscle contractions happen too often or cannot be controlled, you can get symptoms of overactive bladder, which are urinary frequency, urinary urgency, and urinary incontinence (leakage).

What should I tell my doctor before taking Myrbetriq?

Before you take Myrbetriq, tell your doctor if you:

- have liver problems or kidney problems
- have very high uncontrolled blood pressure
- · have trouble emptying your bladder or you have a weak urine stream
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if Myrbetriq will harm your unborn baby.
 Talk to your doctor if you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. It is not known if Myrbetriq passes into your breast milk. You
 and your doctor should decide if you will take Myrbetriq or breastfeed. You should not do both.

Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take, including prescription and nonprescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Myrbetriq may affect the way other medicines work, and other medicines may affect how Myrbetriq works.

Tell your doctor if you take:

- thioridazine (MellarilTM or Mellaril-STM)
- flecainide (Tambocor®)
- propafenone (Rythmol®)
- digoxin (Lanoxin®)

How should I take Myrbetriq?

- Take Myrbetriq exactly as your doctor tells you to take it.
- You should take 1 Myrbetriq tablet 1 time a day.
- You should take Myrbetriq with water and swallow the tablet whole.
- · Do not crush or chew the tablet.
- You can take Myrbetriq with or without food.
- If you miss a dose of Myrbetriq, begin taking Myrbetriq again the next day. Do not take 2 doses of Myrbetriq the same day.
- If you take too much Myrbetriq, call your doctor or go to the nearest hospital emergency room right away.

What are the possible side effects of Myrbetriq?

Myrbetriq may cause serious side effects including:

increased blood pressure. Myrbetriq may cause your blood pressure to increase or make your blood
pressure worse if you have a history of high blood pressure. It is recommended that your doctor
check your blood pressure while you are taking Myrbetriq.

Find more feeting of

- inability to empty your bladder (urinary retention). Myrbetriq may increase your chances of
 not being able to empty your bladder if you have bladder outlet obstruction or if you are taking
 other medicines to treat overactive bladder. Tell your doctor right away if you are unable to empty
 your bladder.
- angioedema. Myrbetriq may cause an allergic reaction with swelling of the lips, face, tongue, throat with or without difficulty breathing. Stop using Myrbetriq and tell your doctor right away.

The **most common side effects** of Myrbetriq include:

- increased blood pressure
- common cold symptoms (nasopharyngitis)
- urinary tract infection
- constipation
- diarrhea
- dizziness
- headache

Tell your doctor if you have any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away or if you have swelling of the face, lips, tongue, or throat, hives, skin rash or itching while taking Myrbetriq.

These are not all the possible side effects of Myrbetriq.

For more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

How should I store Myrbetriq?

- Store Myrbetriq between 59°F to 86°F (15°C to 30°C). Keep the bottle closed.
- Safely throw away medicine that is out of date or no longer needed.

Keep Myrbetriq and all medicines out of the reach of children.

General information about the safe and effective use of Myrbetriq

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in the Patient Information leaflet. Do not use Myrbetriq for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give Myrbetriq to other people, even if they have the same symptoms you have. It may harm them.

Where can I go for more information?

This is a summary of the most important information about Myrbetriq. If you would like more information, talk with your doctor. You can ask your doctor or pharmacist for information about Myrbetriq that is written for health professionals.

For more information, visit www.Myrbetriq.com or call (800) 727-7003.

What are the ingredients in Myrbetriq?

Active ingredient: mirabegron

Inactive ingredients: polyethylene oxide, polyethylene glycol, hydroxypropyl cellulose, butylated hydroxytoluene, magnesium stearate, hypromellose, yellow ferric oxide and red ferric oxide (25 mg Myrbetriq tablet only).

Rx Only

PRODUCT OF JAPAN OR IRELAND – See bottle label or blister package for origin

Marketed and Distributed by:

Astellas Pharma US, Inc.

Northbrook, Illinois 60062



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057-1474-PM



THE BEST MEDICINE



"It had better be twins!"

ON HER FIRST DAY of rounds at an Australian hospital, a visiting American nurse meets an old man packing up. "I'm going home to die," he says.

She quickly checks his chart. "Not according to your chart."

"I'm going home to die," he insists.

"Who told you that?"

"My doctor."

"Well, it's not true. You are not going home to die!"

"Yes, I am! I was supposed to go home yester-die, but instead, I'm going home to-die!"

DOROTHY SMITH, Overland Park, Kansas

TWO LOSERS, Tom and Al, are in a bar sipping beer when a man orders ten shots of booze and shouts, "I got \$500 that says no one here can drink all of these in one minute."

Tom says, "My buddy will take the

92 09°2017 rd.com CARTOON BY NAF

bet!" and pushes Al in front of the shots. Al stares at all that liquor, then runs out the door. The man laughs. "I knew you lightweights couldn't do it."

Five minutes later, Al returns and slams down all ten shots in 50 seconds. He grabs the money and sits back behind his beer.

"Where'd you go?" asks Tom.

"I wasn't sure I could drink ten shots in a minute, so I went to the bar next door and tried it first."

Source: copytechnet.com

PUNS MAY BE THE LOWEST form of comedy, but if you call them wordplay, they sound clever. So here are clever "wordplays" from the United Kingdom Pun Championships:

- Me and my buddies at the gun club often go to the cheese shop just to shoot the Bries.
- I've got a friend who's obsessed with completing his Beatles collection. He needs *Help*.
- Supposed to be chauffeuring a female vicar, but I drove pastor.
- My Roman friend won't go and see the film *Poison Ivy* until he's been to see the films *Poison I, Poison II* ...
- It wasn't much fun having a broken neck, but now I can look back and laugh.

 Source: mirror.co.uk

BEFORE I GOT MARRIED, I didn't even know there was a wrong way to put the milk back in the fridge.

№ @IWEARAONESIE (JOSH)



SCHOOL'S STARTING! BUTTER UP YOUR ENGLISH TEACHER WITH THESE GRAMMAR JOKES

■ Q: What should you say to comfort a ruffled grammar fanatic?

A: There, their, they're.

- Did you hear the one about the pregnant woman who went into labor and started shouting, "Couldn't! Wouldn't! Shouldn't! Didn't! Can't!"? She was having contractions.
- Q: Which word becomes shorter after you add two letters to it?

A: Short.

- When I was a kid, my teacher looked my way and said, "Name two pronouns." I said, "Who, me?"
- Q: What's the difference between a cat and a comma? A: One has claws at the end of its paws, and the other is a pause at the end of a clause.
- Never leave alphabet soup on the stove and then go out. It could spell disaster. Source: rd.com

Your funny joke, list, or quote might be worth \$\$\$. For details, see page 3 or go to rd.com/submit.

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THE STRANGER WHO CHANGED MY LIFE

A reader shares her first foreign words. Learned from an American soldier during World War II, they have stayed with her all her life.

HEN I WAS in second grade, my friend Resi and I walked to school together every morning. We lived across the road from each other in a village in the mountains of Bavaria, Germany. We were supposed to walk to a certain corner and link up with some of the other village children. It was 1945, and I suppose this was a safety thing because of the war.

Most mornings we did as we were instructed, but sometimes Resi and I took a shortcut, a little path across a meadow. One day, on one of those detours, we saw a young man, a stranger, in the side yard of a house. He was chopping wood and whistling. We stopped and stared, then walked away quickly, wondering who he was.

The next morning, we purposely

took our secret shortcut to school, curious to see whether the whistler would be there again. And there he was. He didn't seem to notice us, though we were only a few feet away, on the other side of a short fence that enclosed the yard. Again we stared at him, then ran away. We had never seen a foreigner before. To us, he was like someone from outer space.



"Do you think he is one of those Americans?" Resi asked. We had heard the adults talk of a small group of Americans being held in a vacant house in the village. During the day, the men worked around town doing chores, as most of the local men were away at war. Each night, a guard col-

lected them and took them back to the house. Resi's older sister told her that the men were prisoners of war who had been captured by the German army, waiting to rejoin the Allies at the imminent end of the war.

"Probably," I replied.

"Let's keep walking, or we will be late for school."

We weren't afraid, just curious. Resi kept talking. "He looks just like everybody else," she said. The man was tall with blondish hair that stuck up all over and a big curl falling into his eyes. He looked nice. He had a friendly face, and he smiled all the time, except when he whistled.

"Well," I said, "people look the same everywhere, don't you think?"

By unspoken pact, Resi and I took our shortcut from then on. But we didn't tell anyone. It was our secret.

One morning, after about a week of us walking by, staring, and scampering away, the American looked up from his woodpile. He smiled and said, "Hi." Was he talking to us? we wondered. What did he say? We had no idea; we didn't know any English. So, as usual, we ran away.

The next morning, Resi greeted me with the mysterious "Hi," and I did the same in return. We broke into giggles and continued on our way. From then

on, whenever we passed by the house, we would find the American working in the yard, almost as if he was waiting for us. Every day, he waved and repeated his "Hi." We waved back and said "Hi" in return.

After another week, as we turned to leave one morning, he waved

and said, "Bye-bye." Another mysterious English word. We giggled and parroted it back: "Bye-bye."

I said to Resi, "Maybe we should walk the other way again." But I didn't mean it. By now, we were hooked. Having our little secret made us feel special.

After another week or so, the man came a little closer to the fence, pointed at his chest, and said, "Frankie."

"Frankie," we repeated. Was that his name? He laughed and went back to his work. Frankie was really nice, we decided.

Each of these encounters lasted only a minute or two before Resi and I would hurry on to school, brazen little second graders that we were, learning



SUNSHINE,"
HE SANG
OVER AND
OVER, UNTIL
WE COULD
REPEAT IT.

foreign words from an American POW. We weren't supposed to talk to strangers, and my mother would surely have walked us to school from then on if she had known our secret. I was an only child, and she was very protective, especially since my father was away in the war. He had been drafted, and we didn't know it at the time, but he was also a POW, being held by the Russians. Even after he returned home, I didn't mention these encounters with the American.

Resi and I became quite comfortable with our "Hi, Frankie; byebye, Frankie" morning routine. Sometimes he would be singing, and we would stand mesmerized, listening to the strange language. "You are my sunshine …" he sang over and over, slowly, until we could repeat it.

We learned one line after another, and soon we could sing the whole song, not knowing the meaning and not caring.

One morning, Resi and I arrived at the house, but there was no Frankie. We stood on the path alongside the fence, wondering if he was inside the house. No Frankie. We never saw him again. Someone said that the men had rejoined the advancing American forces, which, within days, had occupied that part of Germany. We felt sad, but we kept singing our song.

Resi and I often spoke of Frankie, hoping he was well. I wished that I knew more about him, especially after

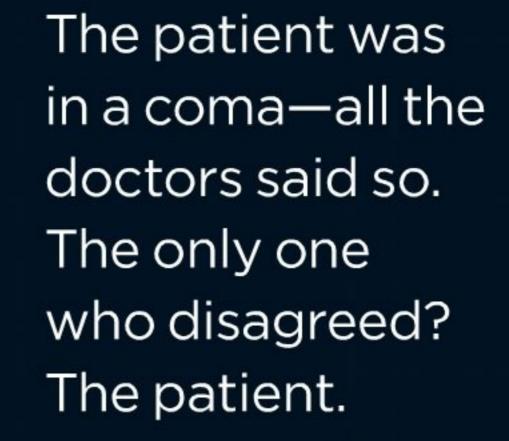


The author in 1945, around the time she met Frankie

my family moved to Denver, Colorado, when I was 15. Where was he from? Did he have a sister, perhaps around our age, or even a little girl of his own? I will never know, but Frankie left Resi and me a wonderful legacy: our first English lesson and many happy memories.

Years later, at a picnic with our American relatives, someone started singing, "You are my sunshine ..." Of course I remembered the words, and I happily joined in. My mother looked at me, surprised. So I told her about Frankie. And to this day, I remember him whenever I hear the song he taught us.

DRAMA IN REAL LIFE





BY TOM HALLMAN

ICHARD MARSH awakened to the rhythmic beeping of a machine. Something was lodged in his throat. He couldn't cough. He couldn't sit up. He couldn't move.

What's going on?

He tried to move his legs, arms, and fingers. Even his eyeballs, he realized, wouldn't budge. He felt someone put drops in them to keep them moist, but he couldn't make out who it was.

What's wrong with me?

He could only stare in one direction—straight ahead.



With his peripheral vision, Richard could see his wife off to his right. He heard her talking to a man next to her, a man who seemed to be in surgical scrubs.

"It doesn't look good," the man said. What doesn't look good?

"His chance of survival is very small." They're talking about me.

Richard willed his body to respond: with his voice, his eyes, his hand. Nothing.

"You need to prepare for the worst," the man in scrubs told Richard's wife,

Richard heard the blunt diagnosis: a 2 percent survival rate.

Liliana Garcia. Though somber, she didn't cry. A registered nurse at a hospice center, she quickly turned professional, asking the doctor clinical questions as if the man in the bed were just another patient, not the love of her life.

I'm in here.

And then his world faded to black.

E HADN'T FELT well two mornings before. Liliana noticed he looked a little pale. But Richard didn't want her hovering and fussing over him as if he were her patient. He said he'd be fine and insisted she go to work. That was his

way. Once alone, Richard relaxed on the couch before he had to leave for school. He taught forensic science and economics near his home in Napa, California, and he was considered one of the high school's popular teachers.

He stood up, ready to leave for work, when he felt as if he were on the deck of a small boat in choppy seas. He grabbed the edge of a table and made his way to the telephone. He called his wife's office and left a message for her to call him.

Richard sat back in a chair at his desk. Something was wrong with him. He rarely drank, never smoked, and he really was in great shape. At 60 years old, he stood six feet two inches tall and weighed 215 pounds. He pumped iron at the gym,

a habit he'd started during his first career, as a police officer.

The phone rang—Liliana calling him back. "Come home," he told her.

All Liliana heard was a garbled voice. Then she called 911.

Minutes later, Richard was rushed to the hospital in an ambulance. Numbness had started in his feet and crept up his legs to his waist. He felt himself losing control of his muscles. He couldn't swallow. To save him, an ER team put him under and inserted a breathing tube down his throat. He was then given medication to fight a stroke that doctors believed was being caused by a clot.

READER'S DIGEST

After doctors did what they could, nurses wheeled Richard to intensive care. And then they waited.

even though he was paralyzed, Richard felt sensations when doctors and nurses touched him.

I don't feel sick. I just can't move.

Slowly, he realized he was trapped in a prison that was his body. He heard the doctor explain to Liliana that her husband was in a coma. Richard heard the blunt diagnosis: a 2 percent survival rate. "If he lives, expect severe brain damage ... Little hope ... Best outcome is that he survives but lingers in a vegetative state ... You need to consider taking him off life support," Richard recalls hearing the doctor say.

He remembered the conversation he and Liliana had had three years earlier, when they got married. They discussed end-of-life scenarios. They agreed that if, God forbid, either of them required life support for whatever reason, the other spouse needed to pull the plug, out of compassion and love.

Richard heard his daughters' voices. Distant. Perhaps in a hallway? Liliana told the doctor she needed to discuss the issue with her husband's daughters, adult children from a previous marriage.

I guess I'm dying.

Liliana returned. The family, she told the doctor, had agreed to wait



a few days to see how Richard progressed. The girls, she explained, weren't ready to let their father go. Nor was she prepared to lose her husband.

Throughout the day, friends came and stood by Richard's bed. They talked about old times. They told him they loved him and how good he looked.

His daughters came with the grandkids. As they leaned toward his face,

"Has anyone checked to see if he's in there? Rich, if you can hear me, blink."

Richard saw the tears in their eyes, even as they shared words of encouragement.

No. I'm here!

He felt lips on his forehead. A character in a macabre scene in a horror movie, Richard had only his thoughts to keep him occupied. He'd never go home again, teach, or kiss his wife. He'd lie in a hospital bed—the ultimate solitary confinement—for years. Or his family would sign the papers and wait by his side as the doctors did what was necessary to let him slip away.

Richard heard the staff talking and laughing in the hallway. Life, the everyday life he'd taken for granted, was so close and yet so far away.

Perhaps death would be a blessing,

he concluded. Richard accepted the inevitable. He resigned himself to the end.

If it's going to happen, let it happen.

The next morning, a neurologist stopped in the ICU and huddled with other doctors at his bedside. Richard heard part of the conversation: "Has anyone checked to see if he's in there?"

The neurologist leaned over, so

close that Richard could feel the man's breath on his cheek: "Rich, if you can hear me, blink your eyes."

Blink ... Try ...

When Richard was a cop, he was trained to deal with scary events head-on. But

now ... What if he couldn't blink? He drew on the cop inside, the strong man, the rock. He was good with victims, those suffering tremendous loss. In this instance, Richard Marsh was the victim.

Blink!

And then ... a blink so excruciatingly slow that the neurologist couldn't be sure what he'd seen.

"Rich, blink your eyes again. Can you hear me?"

 $A \dots blink.$

They knew.

that Richard had suffered from a congenital anomaly in one of two arteries in his brain. One artery was fully formed but blocked. The

READER'S DIGEST

other artery had never formed, an undiagnosed birth defect that hadn't caused Richard problems until now.

With the blood supply compromised by that blockage, Richard had suffered a brain stem stroke. The stem, which connects the brain to the spinal cord, controls nearly all bodily functions. His heart was beating, but there was virtually nothing that Richard could voluntarily will his body to do.

With Liliana by his side, doctors explained that Richard suffered from "locked-in syndrome," meaning he was literally locked in his body.

They asked him questions: Blink once for yes, twice for no. It took extraordinary effort for Richard to get his eyes to work.

Up to 70 percent of people diagnosed with the syndrome die within a short period of time. Of those who do survive, only a handful recover enough to lead a normal life.

But before he could even hope for such an outcome, Richard would have to endure new terrors.

the ICU to a hospital where specialists would let his body decide the course of the treatment. Because he could not swallow, doctors performed a tracheotomy, making an incision in his windpipe and inserting a tube so Richard could breathe and nurses could suction out the saliva that would otherwise drain into his lungs.



Horrible. But they know I'm here.

To help Richard communicate more easily, Liliana bought a letter board for the family to hold in front of him. The board had four quadrants, each containing several lines with five letters in each line, and an empty box in the middle to write his message in. Richard would look at the board. His

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As each person leaned toward him, Richard saw the tears in his or her eyes.

family would have to follow his eyes to the correct quadrant.

This corner? A blink.

First line? Two blinks.

This letter? Two blinks.

Second line? Blink.

This letter? Two blinks.

Every word, slowly spelled out.

As tough as the days were, the nights, after his family had gone home, were hell. The staff didn't use the board, nor were they constantly around to take care of his every need. Trapped, Richard was alone and scared. Fluids built up in his throat, choking him, and no one was around to suction them out for him. His roommate heard him struggling to breathe and used his call button to get the nurses to help.

When his family arrived one morning, Richard looked wildly at the letter

board. Slowly, he made his wishes known: *Get me out of here*.

Days later, his wife moved him to a hospital closer to their home. Physical and occupational therapists started to work with him more aggressively, trying to get his body to function fully again.

Days passed.

There's no returning to normal.

Then weeks.

Hardest thing I've done in my life.

Then one day it happened—Richard moved the big toe on his left foot.

Two weeks later, he moved his head side to side. Days later, he wiggled a foot. After another day or two had passed, he could shake his legs. His family members cried, laughed, and hugged one another with each new victory.

More than two months after his locked-in diagnosis, Richard did something he'd taken for granted his entire life—he raised his hand and touched his nose. And then he walked, a big toddler taking the first few wobbly steps, rocking from side to side with his walker to keep his balance as he slowly made his way from his bed to the door of his room and back, a therapist close by his side in case he fell.

Exactly four months and nine days after the stroke, after more painful and painstaking rehab, Richard Marsh

READER'S DIGEST

walked through the front door of his home under his own power. He sat in his chair. He was back.

changed. He'd lost 50 pounds of muscle, and when he came home he was so weak that he couldn't lift a carton of milk. Physically, he rebuilt his life. It took a year, but he returned to his fighting weight, back pumping iron at the gym.

Emotionally, Richard no longer got easily irritated or worried over the little things. He became less controlling. He even retired from teaching and took over the household duties while Liliana continued to work. He found pleasure in life's simplicity.

Someone gave him the book *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*, the memoir of Jean-Dominique Bauby, a journalist who suffered a stroke and remained locked in for the rest of his life. Bauby dictated his story to his publisher's editorial assistant by blinking his one good eye in response to an alphabet rearranged by how often letters are used. He died two days after the book was published. Richard read two chapters and promptly gave the book away. Unlike Bauby, Richard was very much alive.

He would never forget waking up in the ICU and the long journey to escape his prison. He'd been given a second chance, a precious second chance. He vowed, daily, to never squander the gift.





WHO CAN REMEMBER HUNDREDS OF WORDS OR NUMBERS? JUST A FEW TRICKS AND A LITTLE BIT OF MENTAL TRAINING.

BY ANDREA AU LEVITT





N AN AGE when your refrigerator can help you manage your shopping list and your phone can answer almost any question, you don't really need to remember anything anymore. Which makes the feats of memory

champions—who can recall hundreds of names and faces, random strings of numbers or words, or the order of with visual and spatial learning and the regions associated with memory lit up in a specific pattern. In the regular people's brains, these regions were activated differently.

Why is that important? Because we learn by seeing, and the more we see, the better we remember things. These super memorizers have perfected a method to convert items they want to remember (numbers, faces, cards, even abstract shapes) into pictures

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MEMORY CHAMPIONS' BRAIN STRUCTURES ARE ESSENTIALLY THE SAME AS THE REST OF OURS.

multiple decks of cards—seem more superhuman than ever.

But here's a nifty little secret about folks with phenomenal recall: In a study recently published in the journal Neuron, researchers found that super memorizers don't have unusually large cerebral regions that allow them to absorb and retain prodigious amounts of information. Their brain structures are essentially the same as the rest of ours. Comparing brain scans of 23 memory champions (who had placed in the top 50 at the World Memory Championship) with those of 23 regular folks of the same age, gender, and IQ, the scientists found only one difference: In the memory champs' brains, the regions associated they "see" in their minds. It's a process called building a memory palace.

Here's how it works: First, you transform your target items into an image—anything you'll remember. For instance, to remember card sequences, Ed Cooke (recognized as a Grandmaster of Memory by the World Memory Sports Council) told author Tim Ferriss that he assigns each card a celebrity, an action, and an object; each three-card combination then forms a unique image with the celeb from the first card, the action from the second, and the object from the third. So "jack of spades, six of spades, ace of diamonds" becomes the Dalai Lama wearing Lady Gaga's meat dress and holding Michael Jordan's basketball.

(Yes, that sounds weird, but Cooke's esoteric system is built on the idea that your memory hangs on to unusual cues better than mundane ones.)

Then, mentally place that picture somewhere familiar to you: in your house or at some point along your commute, for instance. Finally, make up a story about the items, which will help you connect them in the correct order.

Journalist Joshua Foer used the memory-palace technique to become a USA Memory Champion, an experience he chronicled in his book Moonwalking with Einstein. As he demonstrates in an online video, to memorize the first 100 digits of pi, he translates the numerals "141" to "DRD," or "druid"; "592" to "LBN," or "Libyan"; "653" to "ShLM," or "shalom." (To do this, he used the Major System, a mnemonic device that assigns each number a consonant sound, but you can use any system that makes sense to you.) Next, he imagines a druid sitting on the front lawn of his childhood home. He walks through the door to see Libyan leader Mu'ammar Gaddhafi sitting on the couch next to a dwarf shouting "Shalom!"

Sound like a lot of work? Indeed, it is. It's no accident that many of the competitors on the World Memory Championship circuit call themselves mental athletes. Just like athletes, they train to hone their skills. That said, the *Neuron* study also reports that researchers taught a group of university students

the memory-palace technique via daily half-hour lessons. After just six weeks, the students' brain scans looked more like those of the memory champions.

But you don't have to train like an Olympian to improve your memory. Here are a few of our favorite tricks that can help in your everyday life.

Memory Target: YOUR PIN Technique: COUNT IT OUT

You could use your birthday, of course, or your phone number, but identity thieves have a way of ferreting those out. Instead, try this tip from Dominic O'Brien, an eight-time World Memory Champion. Write a four-word sentence, then count the number of letters in each word. For instance, "This is my PIN" = 4223.

Target: NEW VOCABULARY WORDS

Technique: SWITCH UP YOUR STUDY ROUTINE

In a classic study conducted at the University of Michigan in the 1970s, a group of students studied a list of words in two separate sessions. Some studied in a small cluttered room and some in a space with two windows and a one-way mirror. One group of studiers spent both sessions in the same room, while the other split the sessions between the two environments. During a test given in a completely different room, the students who studied in multiple places recalled 53 percent more than those who studied in just

one room. Subsequent studies showed that varying other aspects of your environment (the time of day, the music in the background, whether you sit or stand, etc.) can also help recall. The theory is that your brain links the words (or whatever you are learning) to the context around you, and the more contextual cues you associate with the words, the more your brain has to draw upon when it's trying to remember them.

he could learn the same number of words equally well by repeating them a total of 38 times over the course of three days. More recent research has demonstrated optimal intervals for study sessions: If your exam is in a week, study today and then again in a day or two. If it's a month away, study today and then wait a week before your second study session. Three months off? Wait three weeks to restudy. The further away your exam, the longer the

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THE MORE CONTEXTUAL CUES YOU ASSOCIATE WITH THE WORDS, THE MORE YOUR BRAIN HAS TO DRAW UPON.

Target: FACTS AND

FIGURES

Technique: SPACE OUT YOUR STUDY SESSIONS

Mom was right: Cramming is not the best way to memorize things. To learn and recall statistics (or foreign vocabulary, historical dates, scientific definitions, lines for a play—pretty much any kind of factual information), reviewing the material periodically over a longer span of time is far more effective than repeating it in a shorter one. This technique dates as far back as 1885, when psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus discovered that he could learn a list of nonsense words if he repeated them 68 times in one day and seven more times before being tested the next day. But

optimal interval between your first two study sessions. (A final review the day before the test is also a good idea.)

Target: A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Technique: LISTEN WHILE YOU READ

In a study conducted at the University of Puerto Rico, 137 Spanish-speaking students were separated into two groups. Over the course of eight weeks, one group read a book in English while simultaneously listening to an English audio version; the other just read the book silently. Each week, all the students took a quiz. Those who both read and listened outscored the reading-only group on all eight quizzes.

Target: FACES

Technique: FOCUS ON

NOSES

While some super memorizers specialize in associating names with faces (one of the disciplines in the World Memory Championships), the memory-palace technique doesn't work as well if the image of the face is cropped, normalized for color, or changed in any other way. Remembering faces and recognizing them in different contexts may be a special skill that several studies have linked to personality: Extroverts are much better at recognizing faces than introverts, for example. One trick that may work: Rather than focusing on

someone's eyes, as most people do, focus on the center or to the left of the nose. The theory is that doing so allows you to take in the whole face at once.

Target: YOUR GROCERY LIST Technique: USE THE BODY SYSTEM

How often have you written your list—and then forgotten where you put it? In this variation on the memory palace, picture the items on your list with different parts of your body. For instance, imagine balancing a package of cheese on your head, an egg on your nose, and a bottle of milk on your shoulder.

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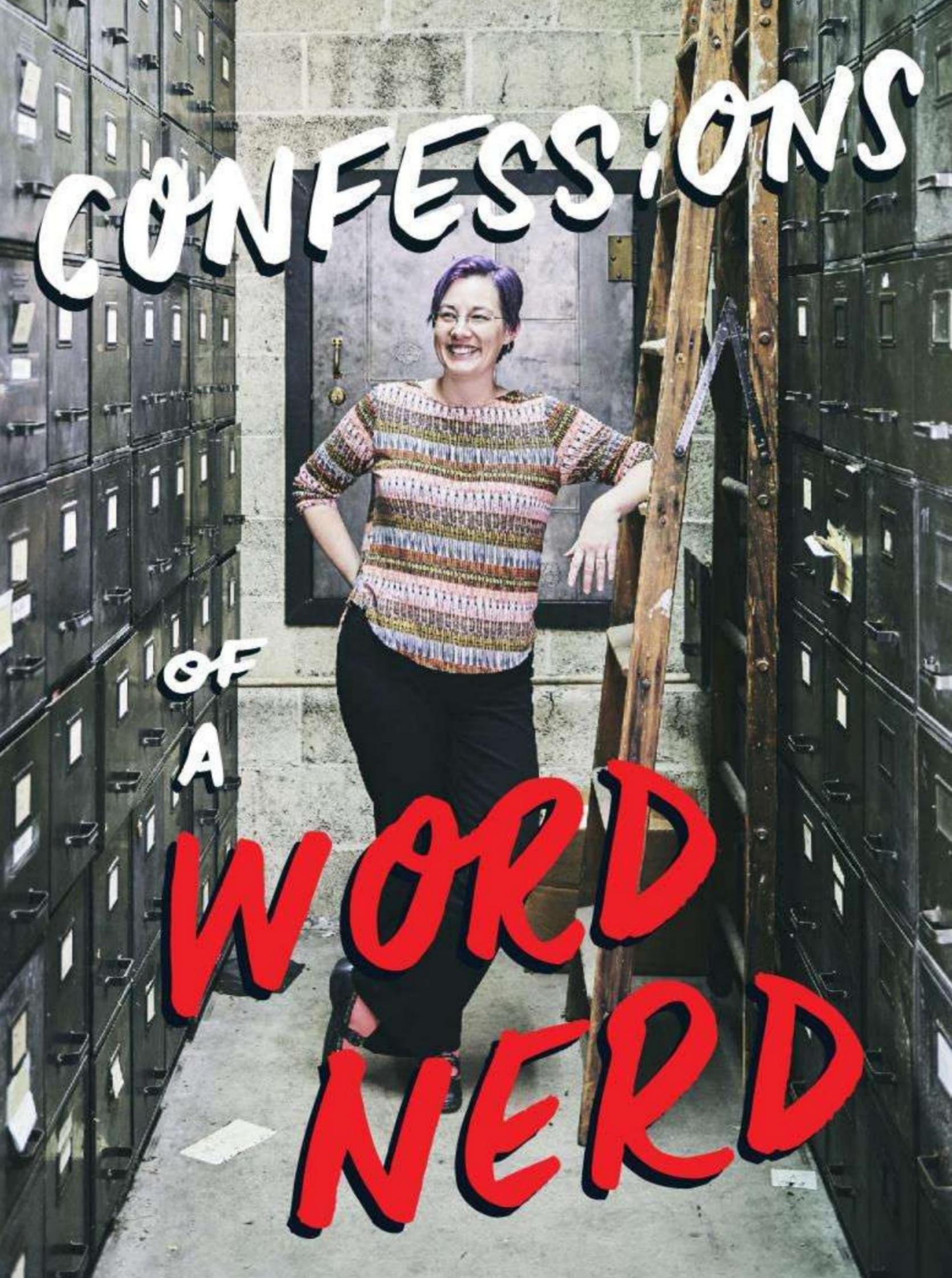
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INSPIRATION



FROM THE BOOK WORD BY WORD

HE VAST MAJORITY OF PEOPLE give no thought to the dictionary: It merely *is*, like the universe. To one group of people, the dictionary was handed to humanity *ex coeli*, a hallowed tome of truth and wisdom as infallible as God. To another group of people, the dictionary is a thing you picked up in the bargain bin, paperback and on sale for a dollar, because you felt that an adult should own a dictionary. Neither group realizes that the dictionary, whether online or

leather-clad, is a human document, constantly being compiled, proof-read, and updated by actual, living, awkward people.

In what is euphemistically known as a "transitional neighborhood" (drug deals occasionally happen in the parking lot, and there are bullet holes in the safety glass at the back of the building) in Springfield, Massachusetts, there are a couple dozen people who spend their workweek doing nothing but writing dictionary definitions—for Merriam-Webster, to be exact—sifting the language, categorizing it, describing it, alphabetizing

it. They are word nerds who spend the better parts of their lives thinking deeply about adverbs and slowly, inexorably going blind. They are lexicographers. This is the song of my people.

At Merriam-Webster, there are only two formal requirements to be a lexicographer: You must have a degree in any field from an accredited four-year college or university, and you must be a native speaker of English.

People are surprised (and perhaps slightly appalled) to hear that we don't require lexicographers to be linguists or English majors. The reality is that a diverse group of drudges

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will yield better definitions. Most lexicographers are "general definers"; that is, they define all sorts of words from all subject areas, from knitting to military history to hot-rodding. And while you don't need expertise in every field conceivable in order to define the vocabulary used in that field, there are some fields whose lexicon is a little more opaque than others.

Consequently, we have a minyan of English and linguistics majors on staff, but we also have economists, scientists of every stripe, historians, philosophers, poets, artists, you must be possessed of something called *sprachgefühl*, a German word we've stolen into English that means "a feeling for language."

Sprachgefühl is a slippery eel, the odd buzzing in your brain that tells you that "planting the lettuce" and "planting misinformation" are different uses of *plant*, the eye twitch that tells you that "plans to demo the store" refers not to a friendly instructional stroll on how to shop but to a little exuberance with a sledge-hammer. Not everyone has sprachgefühl, and you don't know if you are

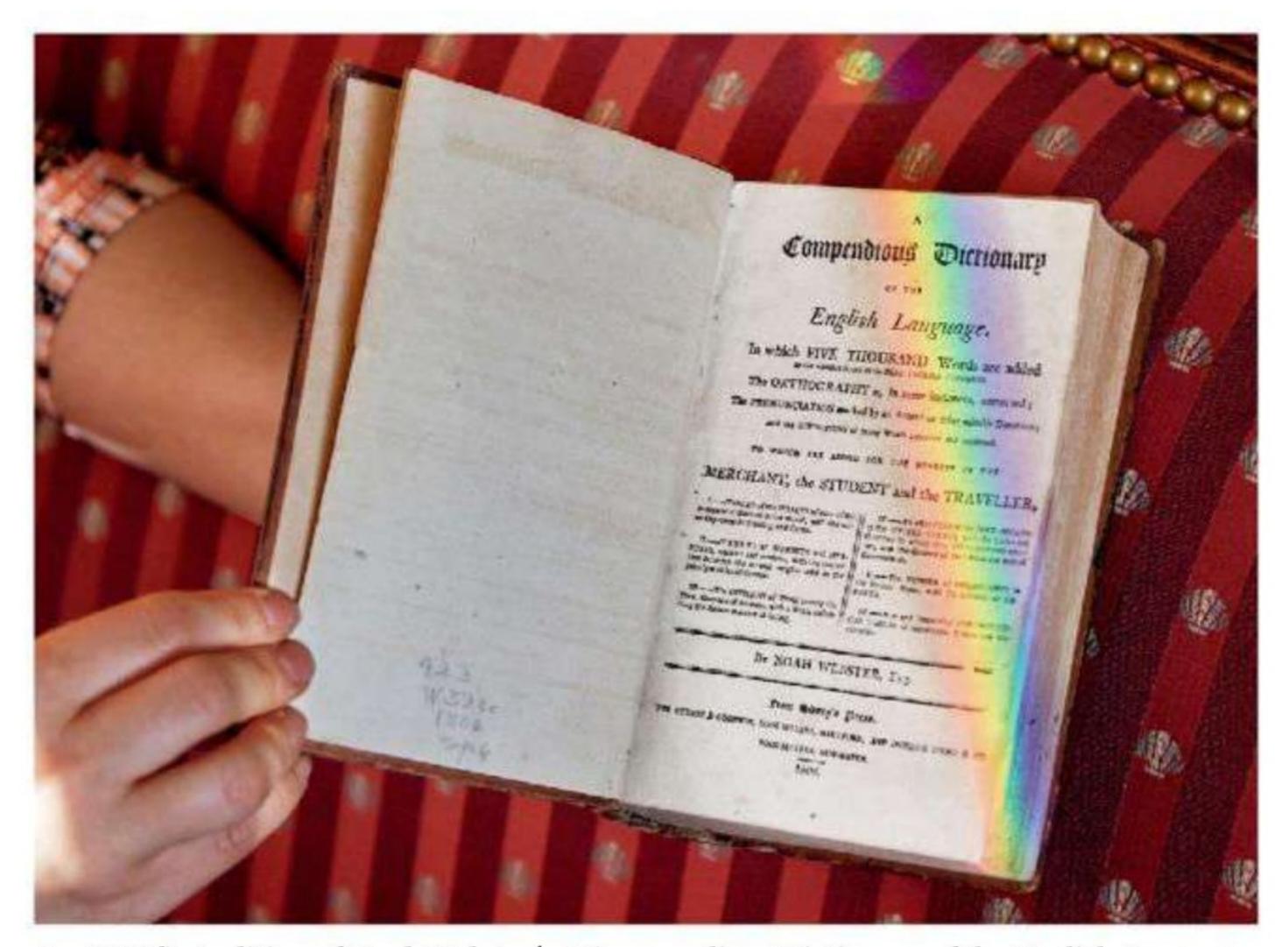
"YES, I WANT TO SIT ALONE ALL DAY AND THINK ABOUT WORDS. SOUNDS GREAT!"

mathematicians, international business majors, and enough medievalists to staff a Renaissance Faire.

We require that our lexicographers be native speakers of English for a very practical reason: That's the language we focus on, and you need mastery over all its idioms and expressions. It is a sad reality that in your daily work as a lexicographer, you will read some good writing and a lot of mediocre and terrible writing. You need to be able to know, without being told, that "the cat are yowling" is not grammatically correct whereas "the crowd are loving it" is just very British.

There are some additional unmeasurable and unstated requirements to be a lexicographer. First and foremost,

possessed of it until you are kneedeep in the English language, trying your best to navigate the mucky swamp of it. I use "possessed of" advisedly: You will never have sprachgefühl, but rather sprachgefühl will have you, like a Teutonic imp that settles itself at the base of your skull and hammers at your head every time you read something like "crispy-fried rice" on a menu. The imp will dig its nails into your brain, and instead of ordering take-out Chinese, you will be frozen at the take-out counter, wondering if "crispy-fried rice" refers to plain rice that has been flash fried or to the dish known as "fried rice" but perhaps prepared in a new and exciting way. That hyphen, you think,



An 1806 first edition of Noah Webster's A Compendious Dictionary of the English Language

could just be slapdash misuse, or ... And your Teutonic imp giggles and squeezes its claws a little harder.

You must also be temperamentally suited to sitting in near silence for eight hours a day and working entirely alone. There will be other people in the office—you will hear them shuffling papers and muttering to themselves—but you will have almost no contact with them. In fact, you are warned of this over and over again.

When I interviewed for my first job, as editorial assistant, I met with Fred Mish, Merriam-Webster's theneditor-in-chief. He cast an eye over my résumé and asked with some incredulity if I enjoyed interacting with people, because if I did, then I should

understand this job promised nothing of the sort. "Office chitchat of the sort you're likely used to," he grumped, "is not conducive to good lexicography and doesn't happen."

Emily Brewster, who has been an editor at Merriam-Webster for more than 15 years, sums up the secret longing of every lexicographer: "Yes, this is what I want to do. I want to sit alone in a cubicle all day and think about words and not really talk to anybody else. That sounds great!"

There's a good reason for the quiet. Lexicography is an intermingling of science and art, and both require a commitment to silent concentration. Your job as a definer is to find the exact right words to describe a word's

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meaning, and that takes some serious brain wringing. Measly, for example, is often used to mean "small," and you could get away with simply defining it as such and moving on. But there's a particular kind of smallness to measly that isn't the same sort of smallness associated with the word *teeny*. Measly implies a sort of grudging, grubbing smallness, a miserly meagerness, and so as a definer you begin wandering the highways and byways of English looking for the right word to describe the peculiar smallness of measly. There is nothing worse than

not just that defining itself is repetitive; it's that the project timelines in lexicography are traditionally so long they could reasonably be measured in geologic epochs. Our last printed unabridged dictionary, Webster's Third New International, took a staff of almost 100 editors and 202 outside consultants 12 years to write.

Lexicography moves so slowly that scientists classify it as a solid. When you finish defining, you must copyedit; when you finish copyediting, you must proofread; when you finish proofreading, you must proofread

THERE'S A SORT OF GRUBBING SMALLNESS TO *MEASLY* NOT ASSOCIATED WITH *TEENY*.

being just a syllable's length away from the perfect, Platonic ideal of the definition for *measly*, being able to see it crouching in the shadows of your mind, only to have it skitter away when your coworker begins a long and loud conversation that touches on the new coffee filters. (Measly is defined in the Collegiate Dictionary, 11th Edition, as "contemptibly small." Brewster thinks it might be the best definition in the whole book.)

There is actually a third personality quirk required to do lexicography: the ability to quietly do the same task until the universe collapses in on itself like a soufflé in a windstorm. It's

again, because there were changes and we need to double-check.

The process is magical, frustrating, brain wrenching, mundane, transcendent. You must set aside your own linguistic prejudices about what makes a word worthy or beautiful to tell the truth about language. It is ultimately a show of love for a language that has been called unlovely and unlovable. When a dictionary does surface, there is no grand party or celebration. (Too loud, too social.) We're already working on the next update, because language has moved on. There will never be a break. A dictionary is out of date the minute that it's done.

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Laugh Lines

WORDS FOR THE WISE

My writing teacher told me she thinks I could be the next J. D. Salinger. She's encouraging me to stay out of the public eye for 50 years.

© KILEYNOODLES (BRIAN KILEY)

When I buy a new book, I read the last page first. That way, in case I die before I finish, I know how it ends.

HARRY (BILLY CRYSTAL)

in When Harry Met Sally

A chrysanthemum by any other name would be easier to spell.

Attributed to WILLIAM J. JOHNSTON

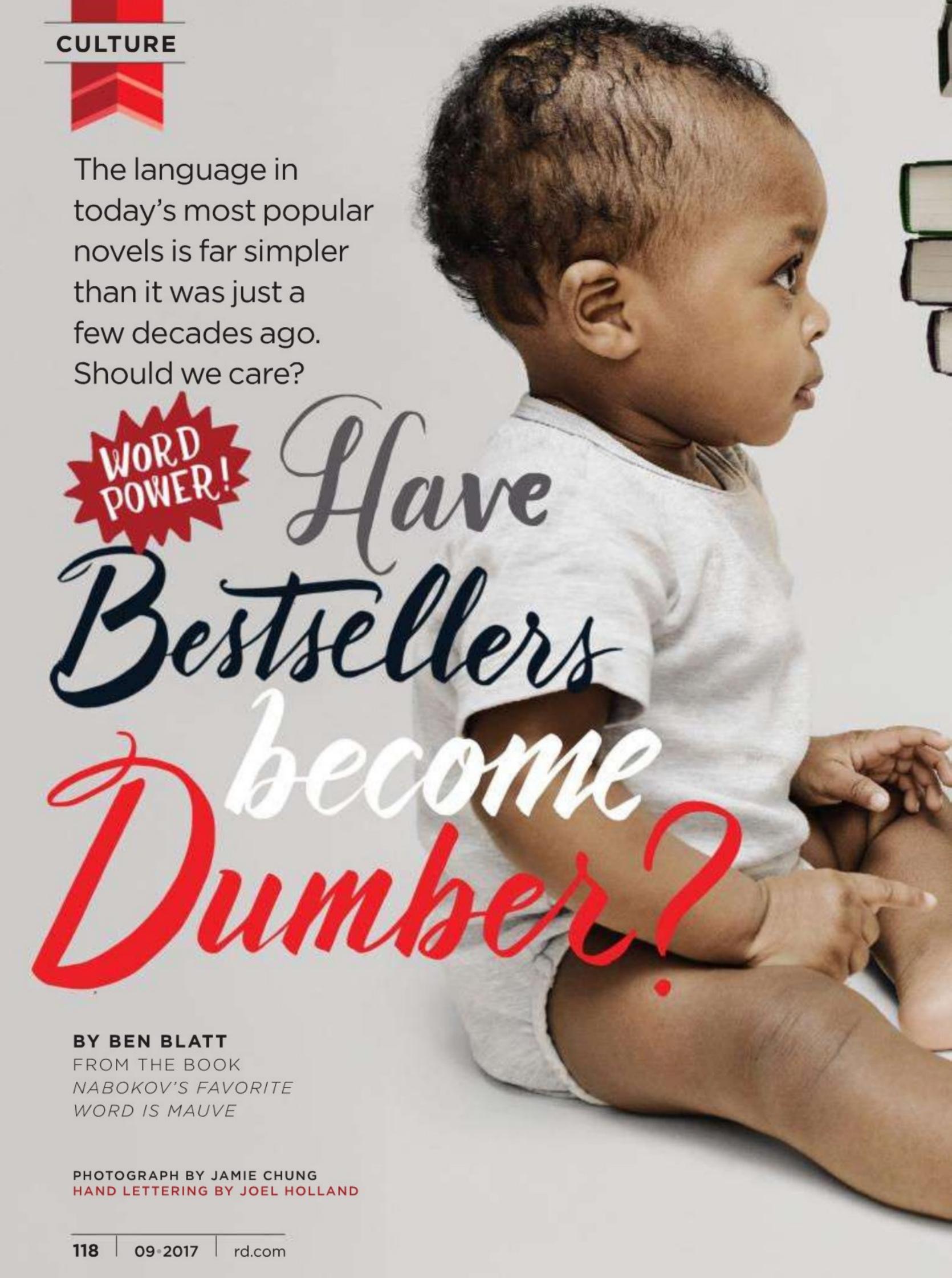
Instead of saying "like" I now say "such as" because I such as to sound smart.

I was an English major, in case there's ever an emergency involving a comma.

@JULIUSSHARPE



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f you've ever read a Dr. Seuss book, you may be familiar with words such as Fizza-ma-Wizza-ma-Dill, Fiffer-feffer-feff, and Truffula. You may also be familiar with these words: a, will, the.

Besides made-up words and rhymes, Dr. Seuss's biggest trademark is simple writing. We can partly thank William Spaulding, his Houghton Mifflin editor and the director of its educational division at the time, who wanted Seuss to go after an even younger audience than he had reached with his first books, Horton Hears a Who!, And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street, and If I Ran the Zoo. Spaulding's challenge: "Write me a story that first graders can't put down!"

Spaulding sent along a list of about 350 words with the instructions to make a book out of them. The result, *The Cat in the Hat*, clocks in at 236 words and ranks as the second-highest-selling book of Seuss's career. The book ahead of it? *Green Eggs and Ham*, which uses just 50 words—all but one of them one syllable. (The long one: *anywhere*.)

Seuss's word selection came from lists created by readability experts such as Rudolf Flesch, who argued in his seminal 1955 book *Why Johnny Can't Read* that literacy education in America needed reform. It was Flesch who introduced the nation to phonics, which enabled students to

sound out words rather than having to memorize them. He also helped to create a mathematical formula, the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level test, to measure the complexity of military training manuals. It and another similar test are now commonly applied to insurance policies and other official documents, but it makes for a handy literacy scale as well.

The formula itself is fairly simple:

$$0.39 \left(\frac{\text{total words}}{\text{total sentences}} \right) + 11.8 \left(\frac{\text{total syllables}}{\text{total words}} \right) - 15.59$$

The resulting score is the grade level required to understand the text. If a book gets a 3, that means you'd need at least a third-grade education to understand it.

For instance, *Green Eggs and Ham* actually yields a score of –1.1. On the other end of the spectrum: *Absalom, Absalom!* Because William Faulkner frequently disregards punctuation, it contains one "sentence" composed of 1,288 words, earning that passage a grade-level score of 503.

As part of my research, I collected every digitized number one *New York Times* bestseller from 1960 to 2014 and ran the Flesch-Kincaid test on

all 563 of them. Most books meant for a general audience will fall within the fourth- to eleventh-grade range, as did all of these bestsellers. If you look at the scores over the decades (see chart below), an unmistakable trend becomes clear: The bestseller list is full of much simpler fiction today than it was 40 or 50 years ago. In the 1960s, the median book had a grade level of 8. Today the median grade level is 6.

On the upper end, James Michener's 1988 novel *Alaska* had a grade-level score of 11.1. Of the books I analyzed, 25 had a grade level of 9 or higher. But just two of these were written after 2000.

On the low end, eight books tied for the lowest score of 4.4. All were written after 2000 by one of three highvolume writers: James Patterson,

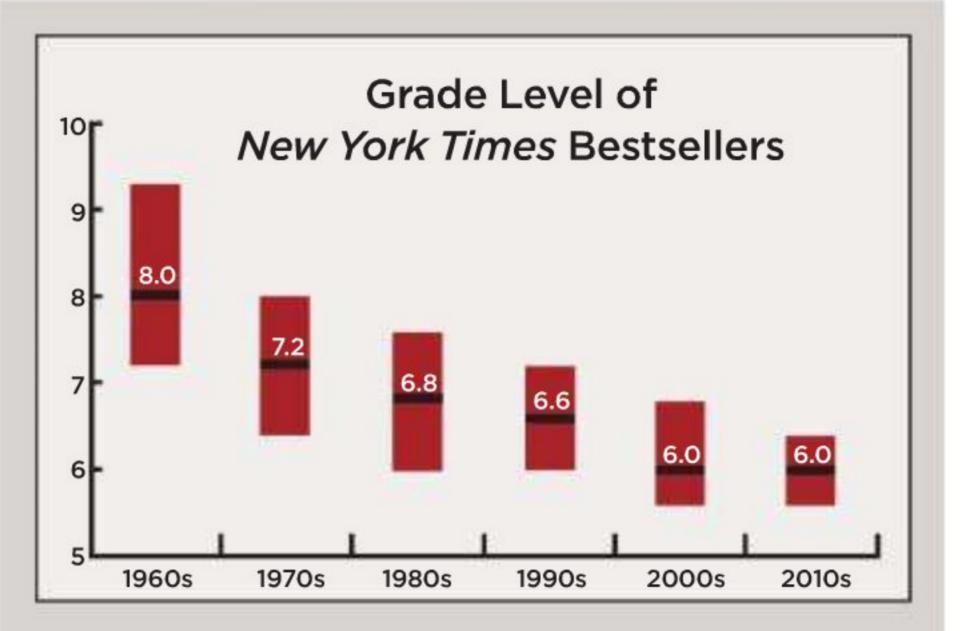
Janet Evanovich, and Nora Roberts.

There's no way around it: While prizewinning literary novels such as Jonathan Franzen's The Corrections make the number one spot on occasion, overall, the books we're reading have become simpler. They aren't the only example of words that seem less wise today. For instance, presidential State of the Union addresses have gone from a 17th-grade

level pre-1900 to a 12th-grade level in the 1900s to below a 10th-grade level in the 2000s, prompting a *Guardian* headline to declare, "The state of our union is ... dumber." Does that mean that books—and therefore their readers—are getting "dumber" too?

It is true that today's bestsellers have much shorter sentences than the bestsellers of the past, a drop from a median of 17 words per sentence in the 1960s to 12 in the 2000s. Also, today's list is much more often topped by commercial novels than in the past.

This supports my "guilty pleasures" theory. Of course, there have always been "guilty pleasure" books on the list. In the 1960s, it was *Valley of the Dolls*; in the 1970s, *The Exorcist*; in the 1980s, the Bourne books; and



This chart shows the difficulty of *New York Times* bestsellers, indicated by the grade level needed to comprehend the text. The black bar represents the median book in each decade. The shaded region represents the middle 50 percent of all books analyzed.

in the 1990s, the *Jurassic Park* sequel, *The Lost World*.

But if we break down bestsellers by genre, we find that there has been a long-term shift within these guilty pleasures. Thrillers have become "dumber." Romance novels have become "dumber." There has been an across-the-board "dumbification" of popular fiction. Among current authors who have written at least five number one bestsellers, most, including Stephen King, Danielle Steel, and

Harlan Coben, rank at or below the sixth-grade level.

It would be easy to lump in the New York Times list's reading-level decline with the rise of knee-jerk arguments that the country's intellect is at an all-time low, but I don't think this is fair.

Writing doesn't need to be complicated to be considered powerful or literary. The winner of the 2014 Pulitzer Prize for fiction, *The Gold-finch*, was also a bestseller and has a

SIMPLE AND SATISFYING

A good story keeps the reader wondering what's going to happen next, and straightforward writing is the best way there. The editors of Reader's Digest Select Editions, James Menick and Amy Reilly, have rounded up some of their favorite writers who keep it simple, along with first lines that let you sample their less-is-more literary styles.

AGATHA CHRISTIE

Her novels are direct and unadorned, even when the hero is a fussy Belgian. Her language couldn't be simpler, but her plots continue to fool readers generation after generation.

Murder on the Orient Express: "It was five o'clock on a winter's morning in Syria."

MICHAEL CONNELLY

There's nothing in the pages of his crime

novels but simple, get-going writing.
No froufrou, no distractions, just the facts, making him perhaps the best procedural writer in the business. Ever.

The Black Echo:
"The boy couldn't see in the dark, but he didn't need to."

JANET EVANOVICH

Her books are short, sharp, and funny. That's rare in any kind of writing, and she's prolific in a variety of genres.

One for the Money:

"There are some men who enter a woman's life and screw it up forever."

STEPHEN KING

It's his ideas and imagination that are superior; his writing, while uniquely his, pulls readers from page one with its accessibility.

The Dark Tower—The

Gunslinger: "The man

reading level of 7.2. While many classics have high scores (*The Age of Innocence* at 10.4, *Oliver Twist* at 10.1, *The Satanic Verses* at 10.1), just as many have surprisingly low scores: *To Kill a Mockingbird* at 5.9, *The Sun Also Rises* at 4.2, and *The Grapes of Wrath* at 4.1. These books are revered, but they are also accessible enough to be taught in middle and high school.

It's logical that our bestselling books

are not complex—by definition, popular means they appeal to the masses. For what it's worth, plenty of successful "literary" writers have embraced the beauty of "easy" writing.

As one bestselling writer put it, "One day I will find the right words, and they will be simple." His name: Jack Kerouac. By the way, Kerouac's most popular book, *On the Road*, scores a reading level of 6.6.

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REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION BY SIMON & SCHUSTER, SIMONANDSCHUSTER.COM.

in black fled across the desert, and the gunslinger followed."

SOPHIE KINSELLA

Through her conversational writing, she creates wonderfully sympathetic narrators: average young English women who are full of quirks and always funny.

Confessions of a
Shopaholic: "OK. Don't
panic. Don't panic.
It's only a Visa bill. It's
a piece of paper; a few
numbers. I mean, just
how scary can a few
numbers be?"

ELMORE LEONARD

His prose is lean and easy, even when the action is hard and fast.

His mysteries and westerns pick you up and carry you along and never sound like writing.

Out of Sight: "Foley had never seen a prison where you could walk right up to the fence without getting shot."

WALTER MOSLEY

Deliberately bringing black male heroes into the mainstream, Mosley's Easy Rawlins detective stories revive the classic Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett style.

A Little Yellow Dog:
"When I got to work
that Monday morning,
I knew something
was wrong."

J. K. ROWLING

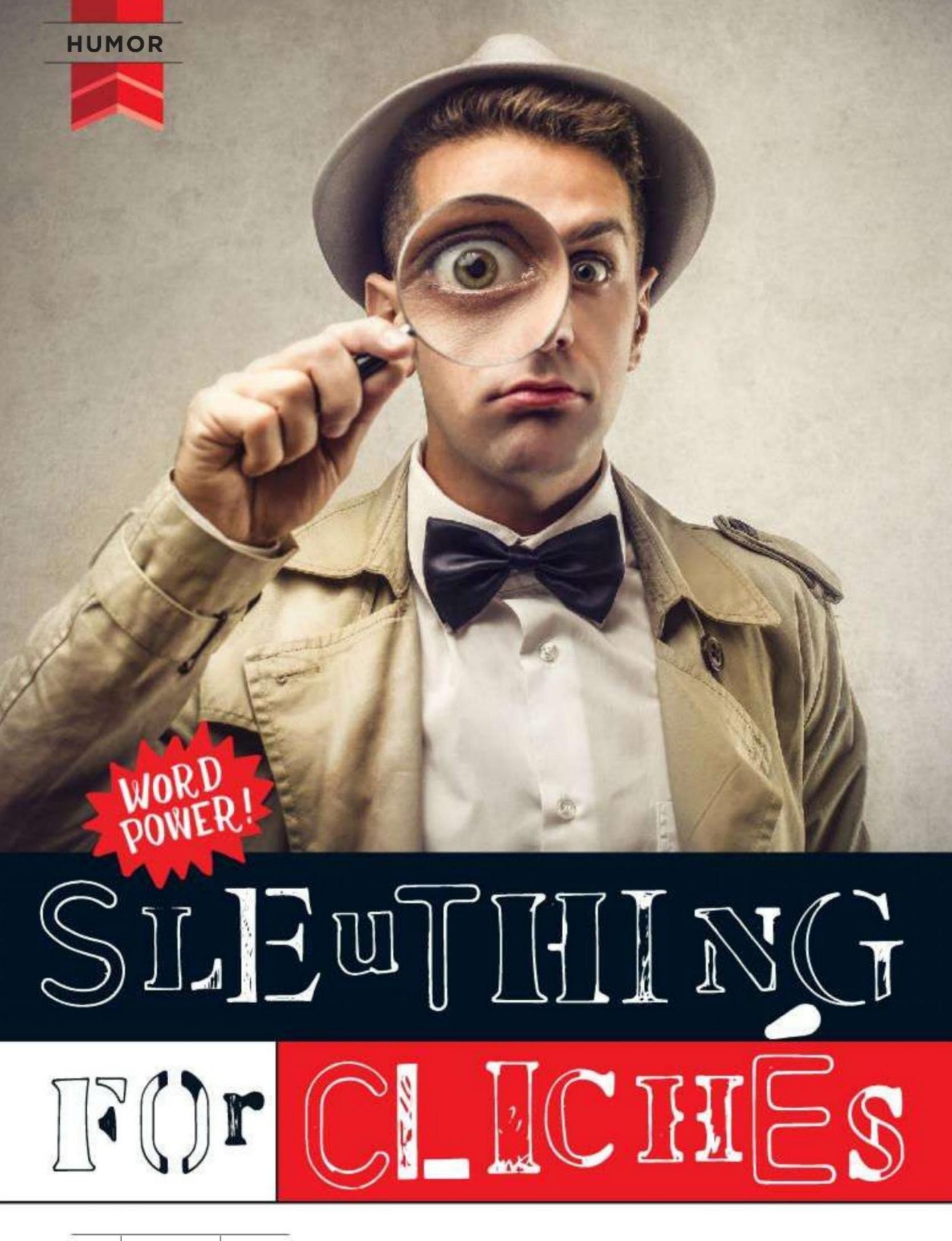
Yes, the Harry Potter books are ostensibly for children, but many adults read them for their sheer joy.

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone: "Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much."

NICHOLAS SPARKS

This penner of tearjerkers writes in the affectless voice of the heartland, creating authentic characters every time.

The Notebook:
"Who am I? And how, I wonder, will this story end?"



OUTRAGEOUS! A CIA AGENT'S HUMOROUS SECRET FIELD GUIDE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S MOST BEASTLY PHRASES

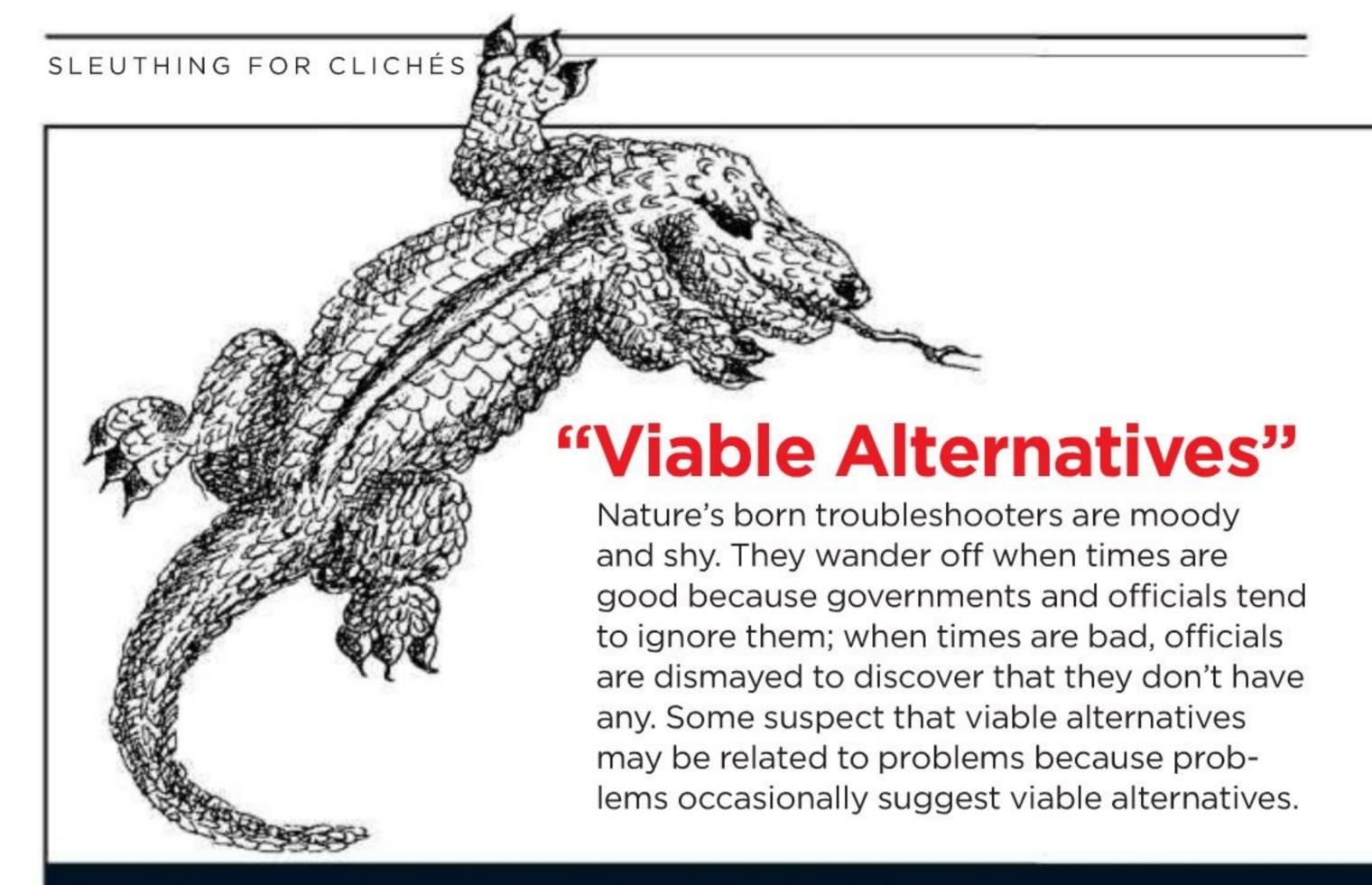
enemy of plain English, is a language that has annoyed Americans since the days of King George III. It turns out that among those peeved are our nation's spies. In these excerpts from a declassified 1982 CIA internal newsletter, an unidentified analyst for the

agency mocks Washington's love affair with worn-out jargon and confounding double-talk. To add even more bite to his or her sarcasm, the author included drawings of imaginary beasts to represent the "strange fauna" of these "specimen samples of clichés and misused or overused word combinations that CIA editors have encountered frequently over the years."



"Overwhelming Majority"

The overwhelming majority is the best known of a species of draft animal used by many analysts to carry the burden of their argument and analysis. Garrulous and with an opinion on just about everything, overwhelming majorities are frequently cited by polling organizations to support their conclusions. Overwhelming majorities seldom respond that they "have no opinion" or "don't know."



DIRE STRAITS ARE AN EXTREMELY SOCIAL SPECIES; THEY ALWAYS ARE OBSERVED IN GROUPS OF TWO OR MORE.



"Available Evidence"

One of the most awe-inspiring creatures is the available evidence, which intelligence analysts frequently use to support shaky conclusions. This vital and difficult task is accomplished with utmost tact—"Available evidence suggests ..." As the name implies, available evidence is always nearby, whereas regular evidence may be off somewhere, unaware that its presence is needed. A shy creature, the available evidence always slips away quietly once regular evidence arrives either to solidify the conclusion or sweep it away.



or dangerous.

"Dire Straits"

Dire straits are notable primarily for their voracious appetites and penchant for ambushing the unwary. Dire straits come in several genders, but dire economic straits are more common than the political, military, or social varieties. Dire straits are an extremely social species; they always

and never as a single strait.



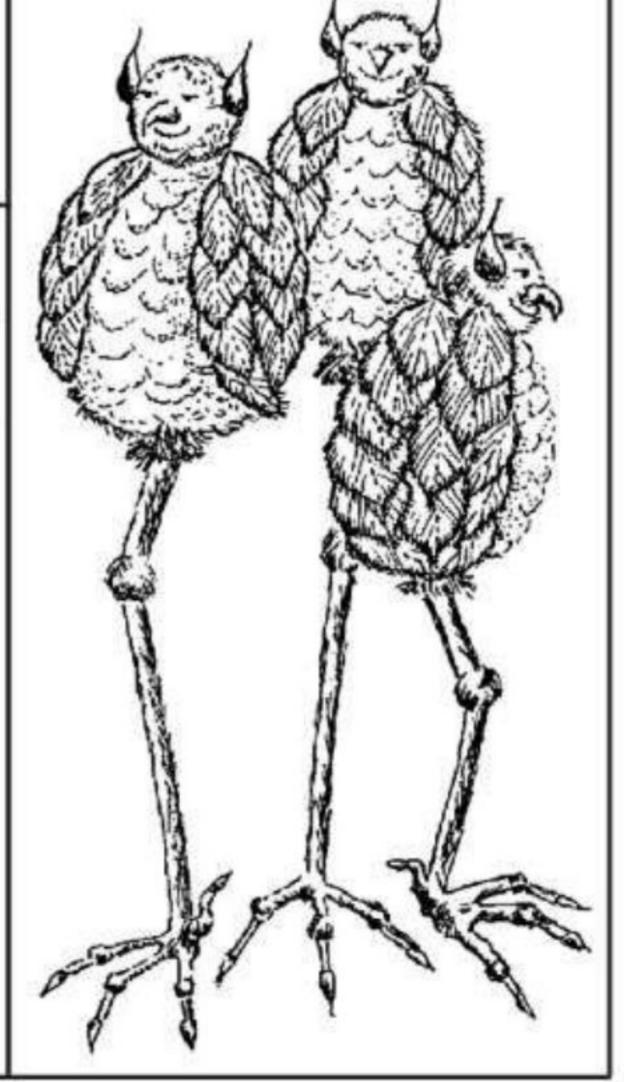
continually surprised to discover

a far-reaching implication reach-

ing for something embarrassing

"Heightened Tensions"

Easily recognized by their elongated shape, heightened tensions are conventional tensions teetering about on stilts. In the previous century, heightened tensions were almost always military and observable only in the narrow no-man's-land on the borders between countries. Their growth potential appears unlimited, and some analysts have reported heightened tensions heightening again and again.



"Foreseeable Futures"

Foreseeable futures are the favorite pets of political and economic forecasters. No forecaster dares to be caught without one, and a forecaster with an obedient foreseeable future is admired by all. They are moody and dangerous animals, however, and frequently turn upon their masters, causing them great public humiliation, derision, and grief.



Analysts are fond of ferreting out nonstarters, those unfortunate beasts that because of their physiognomy are destined never to enter, much less win, a contest. Their desire to compete is intense, however, and because of their marvelous faculty for disguise, they love to mingle with genuine starters and confuse the unwary. Journeyman analysts can quickly distinguish between starters and nonstarters: Genuine starters have brass grommets so that they can be R run up a flagpole and saluted.



WHEN GEOGRAPHERS PLAGIARIZE

Texas County, Missouri, is shaped exactly like Utah. It was named to honor the Republic of Texas in 1845, the same year Texas was annexed by the United States. The shape is pure coincidence.

Source: worldatlas.com

That's Outrageous!

WORDS FAIL US

Fiscal

"IT'S LIKE NAILS

on a chalkboard,"
Missouri state
representative
Tracy McCreery
said. What is?
Grinding gears?
Silverware scraping
on a plate? No—her
colleagues' propensity
to use the word *physical*every time they mean to

say fiscal. McCreery even introduced a resolution urging members to speak correctly. "There are a lot of reasons to be depressed about the Missouri legislature, and this just kind of piles on," McCreery said.

Source: Riverfront Times

A PENNSYLVANIA MAN was

arrested on burglary charges after he was recognized on the store's security video as a former employee. "The face looked familiar," said the store's owner. But it was seeing the thief's sweatshirt that clinched it the crook's name was stenciled on it.

Source: wtae.com

THE MORNING SENTINEL in

Illinois ran this correction in 2011: "Saturday's story on local artist Jon Henninger mistakenly reported that Henninger's bandmate Eric Lyday
was on drugs. It
should have read
that Lyday was on
drums." source: the Sun

A CALIFORNIA

attorney tried to dig his client out of trouble when he described the

woman, who had been arrested on murder charges, as well-liked in the community. Things went south, however, when he gave the reason for her popularity. She was, he said, "a straight shooter."

Source: Los Angeles Times

and the flubber is ... What is it about an award ceremony that leaves stars tongue-tied? John Travolta made a stellar flub at the 2014 Oscars when he introduced the "one and only Adele Dazeem"—known to the rest of the world as Idina Menzel. At the 2017 Golden Globes, Michael Keaton introduced the nonexistent film Hidden Fences—a conflation of Hidden Figures and Fences. And accepting her trophy at the 2015 BET Awards, Nicki Minaj stopped her speech to ask, "What was this award for?"

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WHO KNEW

13 Mind-Blowing Discoveries

Scientists Made

This Year

BY MICHELLE CROUCH

Three Earth-size planets
that could sustain life.
Astronomers found not just
one but seven planets outside our solar system that
circle a tiny star called
TRAPPIST-1, about 40 lightyears away. Three are in what
NASA calls the habitable zone, which
could be right for water to exist and
possibly for extraterrestrial life.

2 Shrimp so loud, they were named after a rock band. On the Pacific coast of Panama, scientists discovered a new type of pistol shrimp that uses its large pink claw to

create a noise so loud it can stun—or even kill—small fish. In fact, the boom created by the animal's snapping claw can reach 210 decibels. (For comparison, a loud concert is about 110 to 140 decibels.) The team members dubbed it *Synalpheus pinkfloydi*, inspired by their love of Pink Floyd.

A therapy that reverses aging in mice. As we age, senescent, or damaged, cells build up in our tissues, possibly promoting age-related diseases. Scientists from the Netherlands developed a molecule that purges those cells. When tried on elderly mice, their fur regrew, their kidney function improved, and they could run twice as far as untreated mice. One scientist called it a landmark advance in the field of aging.

A Spray-on skin for burn victims. Biomedical scientists have created a device that sprays stem cells onto wounds, helping them grow a new, healthy layer of skin in as few as four days. Biotech firm RenovaCare recently obtained a patent for the SkinGun and has used it to successfully treat dozens of burn patients in trials. While the device still needs FDA approval, it's a game changer that could help eliminate the painful and scarring process of skin grafting.

5 Spider venom that may halt stroke damage. A bite from an Australian funnel-web spider could kill you in 15 minutes if not treated promptly. But scientists discovered that a peptide found in the venom of one species may protect brain cells from being destroyed by a stroke,

even when given eight hours after the event. If the treatment fares well in human trials, it may become the first drug that can protect against stroke-induced brain damage.

The Ghostbusters dinosaur.
Scientists in Toronto identified a new species of dinosaur and named it Zuul, after the doglike monster in the 1984 film Ghostbusters. Like its namesake, the dinosaur had horns behind its eyes, spikes on its face, and a barbed, sledgehammer-like tail. The dinosaur's fossilized skeleton, unearthed in Montana, is one of the most complete ankylosaurs—armored, lizard-like dinosaurs—ever found, with skull and tail club intact.

Flu-fighting frog mucus.
Scientists discovered that the slime covering the skin of a frog from southern India contains antimicrobial peptides that destroy bacteria and viruses—including key strains of the human flu—while protecting normal cells. So far, the therapy has been used only in the lab.

Pragon blood that kills infections. Scientists found a new antimicrobial compound in the blood of Komodo dragons, the world's largest lizards. In the lab, the substance healed infected wounds on mice faster than existing options, potentially giving doctors a new tool to fight antibiotic-resistant infections.

A "new Stonehenge" in Brazil.
Researchers using drones identified more than 450 Stonehenge-like formations in the remote northwestern part of Brazil, indicating settlers lived in the area far earlier than scientists originally thought. While it's unclear how prehistoric peoples used the stone enclosures, they date back at least 1,000 years, long before Europeans arrived.

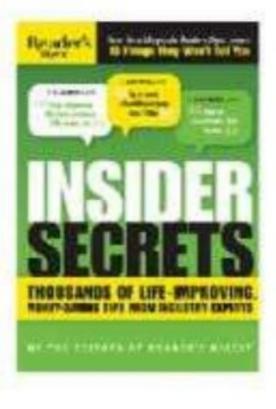
An artificial womb to nurture preemies. Marking what could be a huge breakthrough in treating premature babies, scientists successfully built an artificial womb that was able to keep premature lambs alive and developing normally. The lambs lived for four weeks inside the device, which looks like an oversize plastic bag filled with synthetic amniotic fluid. The faux womb could one day help bring human preemies to term outside the uterus.

An eighth continent—hidden under the ocean. Scientists presented evidence for a new continent in the southwest Pacific beneath New Zealand, called Zealandia. Even though the landmass is 94 percent underwater, geologists say it meets all the important criteria to be recognized as Earth's eighth continent. As no scientific body formally recognizes continents, it remains to be seen whether Zealandia will appear in future geography textbooks.

12 A tool to repair DNA in embryos. Chinese scientists devised a gene-editing tool that may eliminate certain disease-causing mutations in the DNA of human embryos. It is the first such technology to be used on viable human embryos and could one day help prevent babies from inheriting serious genetic diseases. But it has already raised ethical concerns about the potential to effectively design children—and alter the genetic heritage of humankind.

A "living drug" that can kill cancer. An immunotherapy drug that turns a patient's own blood cells into cancer killers is on the fast track to FDA approval. In an ongoing clinical trial, the treatment was administered to advanced lymphoma patients who had not responded to standard treatments or continued to relapse. At three months, 37 percent of patients showed no signs of cancer. As trials progress, scientists hope the therapy could be the next big step forward in cancer treatment.

Our thanks to the editors of sciencenews.org for their help with this list, and to the scientists who made it possible.



For more life-changing secrets from the 13 Things column, check out *Insider Secrets*, available now at rdstore.com/insidersecrets and wherever books are sold.

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Here's Why Seven Is Most Likely Your Favorite Number

But if you favor 42, you are also in surprisingly good company

BY BRANDON SPECKTOR

ONE is the loneliest number that you'll ever do, according to the consortium of scholars known as Three Dog Night. But what if there is a number (or many numbers) even less popular than one?

For reasons totally unrelated to classic rock, author Alex Bellos set out to find the world's favorite numbers. His online survey swiftly received more than 30,000 votes from numberphiles around the world. Voters gave many reasons for their favorites, though they usually corresponded to an important date or age or other positive association.

Overall, odd numbers outperformed

evens. And Bellos suggests that numbers ending in zero were too, well, round for most tastes. "When we say 100, we don't usually mean exactly 100; we mean around 100," Bellos told *Nautilus* magazine. "Why would you have something as your favorite that is so vague?"

Numbers that stake a claim to a higher purpose did well. For instance, 42—the "Answer to the Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything" from *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*—landed in 11th place. The lovely, symmetrical number eight, which is pronounced "bā" in Chinese and rhymes with the Chinese

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character "fā," signifying prosperity, came in third. Second place went to the number three, perhaps for its many appearances in nature and culture: the number of leaves on a typical clover, little pigs pursued by a certain wolf, musketeers in the Dumas novel, and wishes offered by genies.

Very specific numbers with regular gigs in geometry also proved popular. More than 400 people voted for pi (3.14), and 103 voted for 1.618, which in mathematics is known as the golden ratio or the divine proportion and is commonly seen in nature and design.

But the clear winner is the number

seven, raking in nearly 10 percent of the total vote. Shocked? If you've ever been to a casino, probably not. But seven's triumph also reaffirms a human fascination that goes back thousands of years. Bellos points out that ancient Babylonian tablets were riddled with sevens. There are also seven dwarfs, seven samurai, seven deadly sins, and seven days of the week. We even

THE TOP 10 NUMBERS 1) 3 2) 3) 8 4) 4 5) 5 6) 13 7) 8) 6 2 9) 11 10)

speak of seventh heaven as the ultimate happiness.

But all of this, Bellos suspects, is the effect and not the cause of our sevenfold obsession. He posits that seven is a stone-cold rebel that follows no rules but its own.

"Seven is the only number among those we can count on our hands, one to ten, that cannot be divided or multiplied within the group," Bellos explains. One, two, three, four, and five can each be doubled to reach two, four, six, eight, and ten. Nine is divisible by three. Seven, then, is the only number between two and ten that is neither a multiple nor a factor

of the others. In this way, "lucky number seven" stands alone.

"It's unique; it's a loner, the outsider. And humans interpret this arithmetical property in cultural ways," Bellos says.

As for the real loneliest number? It isn't one, which came in 21st. The smallest whole number that didn't receive a single vote, 110, is in a solo class of loneliness all its own.

* *

MYSTERIES OF THE UNIVERSE

Science question: Why is there no such thing as enough pizza?

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Word Power

Do you ever toss off an impressive-sounding word at a cocktail party only to wonder: Did I get that right? The terms in this month's quiz, inspired by the book You're Saying It Wrong by Ross and Kathryn Petras, will make you sound like the smartest person in the room—if your pronunciation is correct. See the next page for answers.

BY EMILY COX & HENRY RATHVON

- **1. detritus** *n*.—A: subtracted amount. B: debris. C: falsified claim.
- **2. prerogative** *n*.—A: educated guess. B: first choice. C: special right.
- **3. segue** *v*.—A: transition. B: completely surround. C: begin a court case.
- **4. hegemony** *n.*—A: domination. B: smooth blend. C: large family.
- **5. dais** *n*.—A: group leader. B: garden fountain. C: raised platform.
- **6. kefir** *n*.—A: verbal skirmish. B: fermented milk. C: painting technique.
- **7. peremptory** *adj.*—A: allowing no disagreement. B: coming first. C: walking quickly.
- **8. quay** *n*.—A: wharf. B: small island. C: dram of brandy.

- **9. machination** *n*.—A: study of robotics. B: talkativeness. C: scheme.
- **10. slough** *n.*—A: soft breeze. B: heavy club. C: swamp.
- **11. spurious** *adj.*—A: hasty. B: fake. C: livid.
- **12. nuptial** *adj.*—A: just starting. B: relating to marriage. C: present during all seasons.
- **13. coxswain** *n*.—A: innkeeper. B: secret lover. C: sailor in charge.
- **14. geoduck** *n*.—A: earth tremor. B: wooden footstool. C: large Pacific clam.
- **15. plethora** *n*.—A: person not of noble rank. B: abundance. C: spiritual journey.
- To play an interactive version of Word Power on your iPad, download the Reader's Digest app.

Answers

- **1. detritus** (dih-'try-tuss)—[B] debris. People on our block are still picking up *detritus* from Billy's birthday bash.
- **2. prerogative** (prih-'rah-guh-tiv)— [C] special right. If Dad wants to regift his dinosaur tie, that's his *prerogative*.
- **3. segue** ('sehg-way)—[A] transition. But enough about you; let's *segue* to the topic of snakes.
- **4. hegemony** (hih-'jeh-muh-nee)— [A] domination. Brian has complete *hegemony* over this Monopoly board.
- **5. dais** ('day-iss)—[C] raised platform. The crowd threw tomatoes at the *dais* as the mayor began her press conference.
- **6. kefir** (keh-'feer)—[B] fermented milk. Beth always eats the same breakfast: *kefir* mixed with nuts and fruit.
- 7. peremptory

(puh-'remp-tuh-ree)—[A] allowing no disagreement.
"I am not going to bed!" the toddler yelled in a peremptory tone.

8. quay (kee)—[A] wharf. Passengers waiting on the quay prepared to board the ferry.

- **9. machination** (ma-kuh-'nay-shun)—[C] scheme. Despite all his *machinations*, Wile E. Coyote can't catch Road Runner.
- **10. slough** (sloo)—[C] swamp. The *slough* is home to a variety of species, including salmon, ducks, and otters.
- **11. spurious** ('spyuhr-ee-us)—
 [B] fake. So that UFO sighting in Central Park turned out to be *spurious*?
- **12. nuptial** ('nuhp-shuhl)—[B] relating to marriage. I've attached a string of tin cans to the *nuptial* sedan.
- 13. coxswain ('kahk-suhn)—
 [C] sailor in charge. It's traditional for a winning crew to toss its coxswain overboard.
- 14. **geoduck** ('goo-ee-duhk)—
 [C] large Pacific clam. A *geoduck* can weigh over ten pounds—and

live for more than 150 years!

DULL AS WHICH WATER?

People often say a boring thing is as dull as dishwater. But before the phrase was misspoken, it was actually as dull as ditchwater. Most dictionaries now accept either, but here are a few phrases that are just plain wrong: butt naked (for buck naked), hare's breath (for hair's breadth), and road to hoe (for row to hoe).

15. plethora

('pleh-thuh-ruh)—
[B] abundance.
Joe claims a
plethora of
proof that Bigfoot
exists.

VOCABULARY RATINGS

9 & below: mumbling 10-12: well-spoken 13-15: eloquent

Humor in Uniform



"And this one's for being a good boy."

I WAS DOING GREAT on the rifle range until I was positioned 200 yards away from the target. I didn't hit it once—all my shots just scattered the dirt next to it. I thought I'd failed, but the range sergeant assured me that I'd qualified, saying, "You would have suffocated anyone with all the dust you kicked up."

NELSON GOUD, Indianapolis, Indiana

NEVER ADVISE ANYONE to go to war, or to marry. **SPANISH PROVERB**

WHILE I WAS AT THE local VA for a checkup, my counselor asked if I was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. I said I thought was.

"Are you having nightmares?" he asked.

"Yes."

"What are they?"

"That I reenlisted in the Navy."

THOMAS HENSLEY, Whitefish, Montana

Send us your funniest military anecdote or news story—it might be worth \$\$\$! For details, go to rd.com/submit.

CARTOON BY SUSAN KONAR rd.com 09-2017 139

Quotable Quotes

Tell the truth, or someone will tell it for you.

STEPHANIE KLEIN,

writer

I'M LUCKY THAT THE ADVENT OF CAMERA PHONES HAPPENED WHEN I WAS 43 YEARS OLD.

GEORGE CLOONEY, actor



I want to thank my parents for somehow raising me to have confidence that is disproportionate with my looks and abilities. TINA FEY, actress

TWO OPPOSING
THINGS CAN BE
EQUALLY TRUE ...
I LOVE TO TRAVEL
AND I LOVE MY HOME.

TSH OXENREIDER, author



GENIUSES HAVE VERY LIMITED TOOL SETS. THEY HAVE A HAMMER, AND THEIR GENIUS IS IN LOOKING FOR NAILS. ADAM ROBINSON, Chess master

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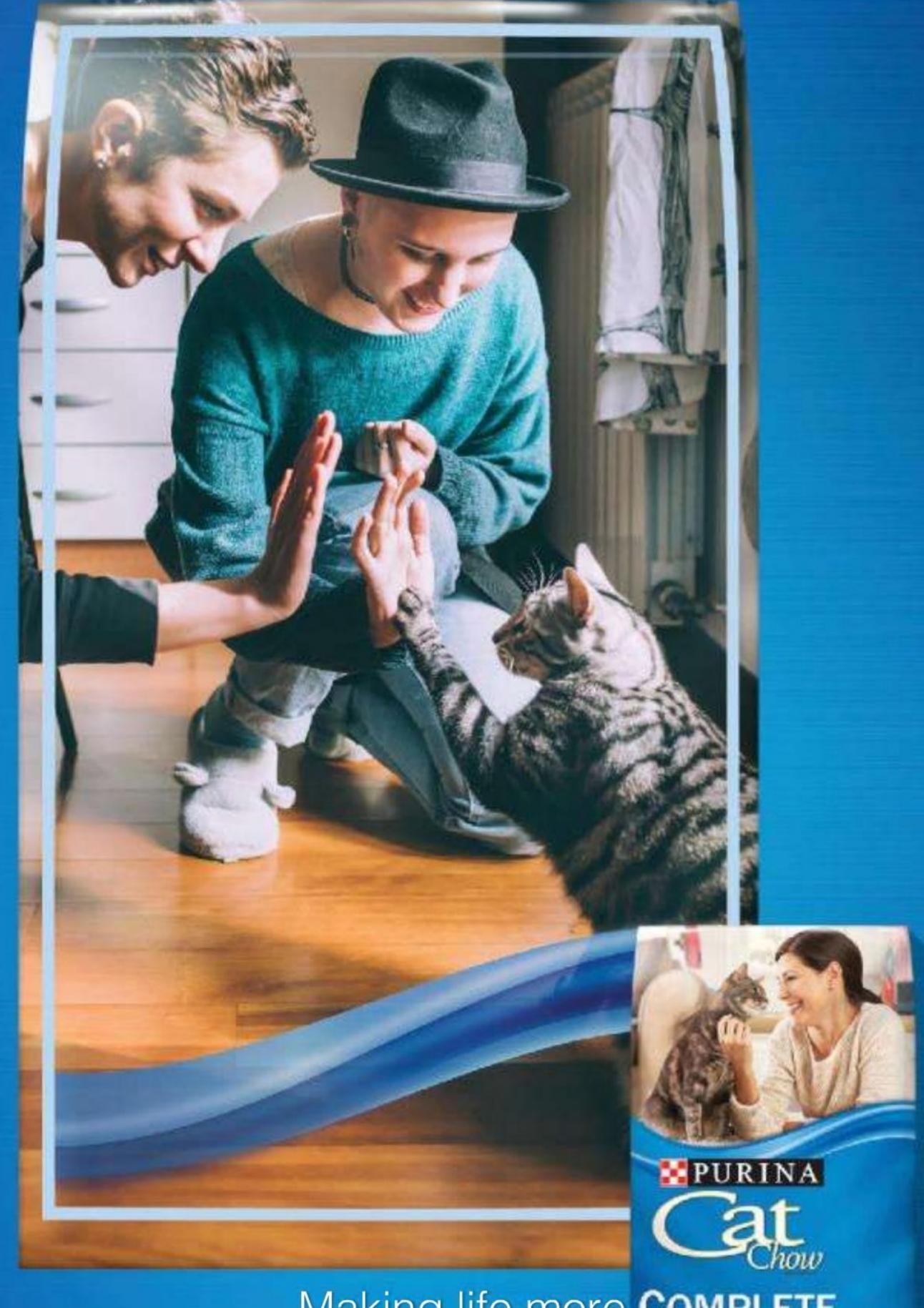






DOCTOR[†] RECOMMENDED FOR 10 STRAIGHT YEARS AND IT'S STILL RECOMMENDED TODAY

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