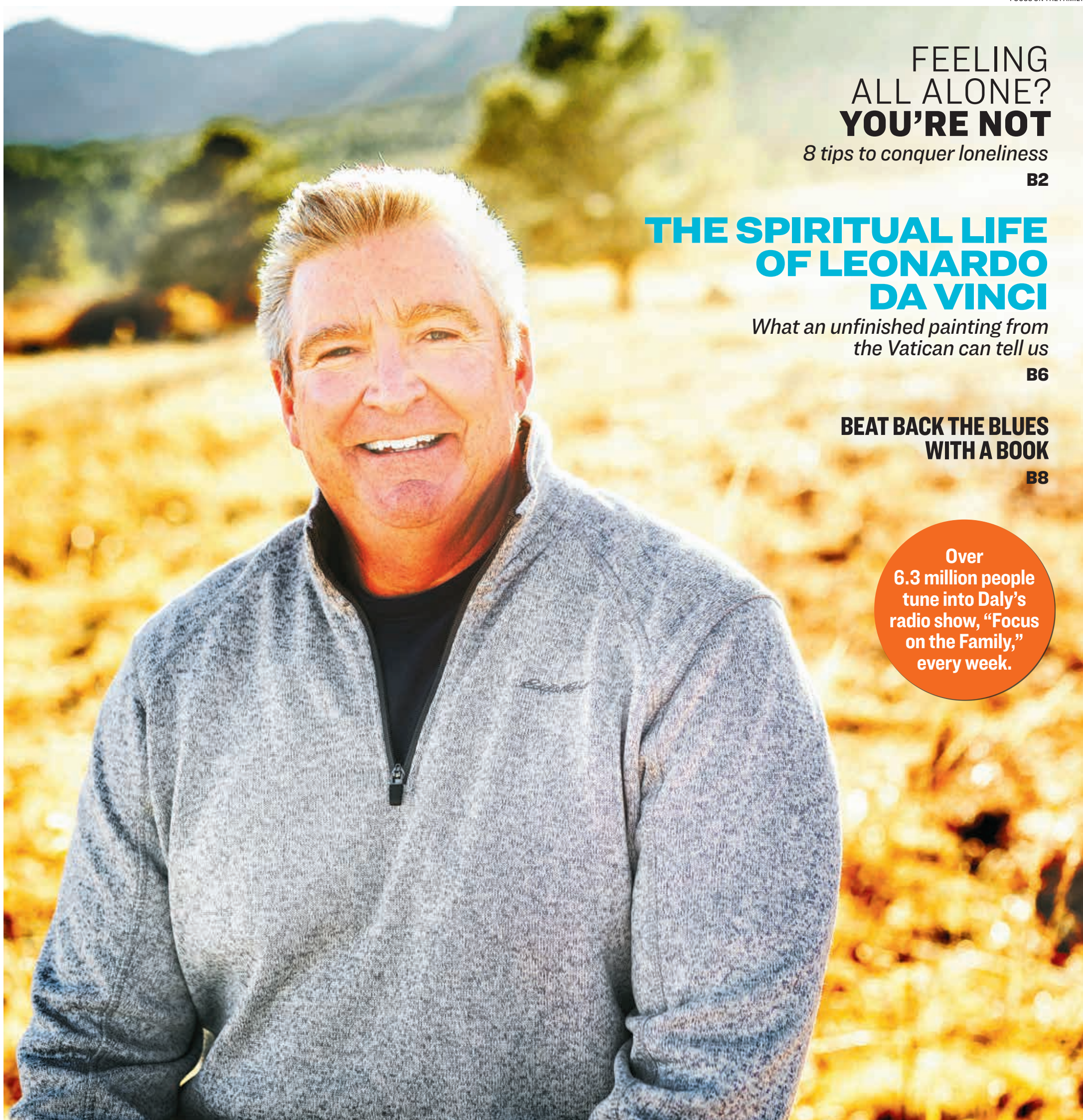


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THE EPOCH TIMES LIFE & TRADITION

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY



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ALL ALONE?
YOU'RE NOT

8 tips to conquer loneliness

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Over
6.3 million people
tune into Daly's
radio show, "Focus
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every week.

Jim Daly on Building and Strengthening Families

A DIFFICULT CHILDHOOD PRIMED HIM FOR HIS ROLE TODAY—OFFERING ADVICE TO FAMILIES

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Feeling All Alone? You're Not

8 tips to conquer loneliness

JEFF MINICK

Loneliness.

In "Millennials and the Loneliness Epidemic," Forbes contributor Neil Howe reports that tens of millions suffer from this affliction—and not just Millennials—in such countries as the United States, France, and England. In Japan, Howe tells us, more than half a million people don't leave their homes or interact with others for six months at a time. In one 2016 poll, 42 percent of British female Millennials claimed to be more terrified by the possibility of loneliness than by being diagnosed with cancer.

Explanations for this increased sense of isolation abound. In her excellent article "Alone: The Decline of the Family Has Unleashed an Epidemic of Loneliness," Kay Hymowitz points to falling birth rates, childlessness, divorce, reduced dependence on families for care and welfare, and other changes in the family as contributing to this pandemic of feeling detached and unloved.

Other commentators blame this undesired solitude on the widespread use of social media and a consequent reduction in face-to-face interactions, the drastic slide in membership in certain service organizations and amateur sports teams, both of which once provided avenues for comradery and friendship, and the effects of a transitory society on long-term relationships.

Many of these articles also point out that feelings of isolation can lead to severe depression, a decline in cognitive ability, and even early mortality. WebMD rates the effects of loneliness as detrimental to our health as obesity and smoking. Here in America, the 21st century has seen a decline in American life expectancy, a phenomenon not witnessed since the flu epidemic a century ago. This drop in life expectancy is due not to disease, but is instead the result of increased deaths by suicide, alcoholism, and opioids, which some cite as pathologies of loneliness.

So what can we do? If we feel, as vast numbers of people apparently do, that we have few or no intimate contacts with other people, how can we set off in a different direction? Here are some ideas.

But first a personal note. Since the death of my wife 15 years ago, I have spent great swaths of time alone, hours and hours of necessary and desired isolation, in large part because of my work as a writer and teacher. (Teaching involved lesson planning and, in my case, evenings spent grading essays.)

I was often alone, but rarely lonely. The two are in no way equivalent. For me, however, that happy circumstance may change. My daughter

Soup kitchens, schools, certain fire departments, and charitable organizations: all of these and more are usually in dire need of volunteers.



If you are alone and miserable, if you are looking for human contact, extend the hand of friendship. You may be pleasantly surprised who steps into your life.

with whom I live, her husband, and their seven children have moved to a city four hours away, leaving me to tend the house until it sells. I have no close friends here, and though I have other children and grandchildren, none are within immediate proximity. The advice I offer is therefore intended for me as well as for my readers.

Let's begin.

Recognize Your Loneliness

The first step to conquering any problem is recognition. Try to identify reasons for your isolation. Is the cause something temporary, like a move to a new city? Or do you feel cut off from human contact because of some painful wound, a divorce or the loss of a loved one? How long have you experienced this sense of separation from others? Does your isolation often leave you lethargic or depressed? Ask such questions and seek the answers.

Use Technology as a Weapon Against Isolation

Though some blame social media as a cause for loneliness, our electronic devices can strengthen human ties. Instead of texting your daughter on the West Coast or that friend who moved to Florida, make the call. Talk to a human being instead of a machine. Seek out email relationships with family and friends. Look up organizations like Meetup online and discover whether there are groups near you with interests similar to your own. In Front Royal, Virginia, where I live, I found Meetup groups featuring a diversity of activities: hiking, beer tasting, book clubs, and more.

Get a Pet

Dogs and cats can't replace human

beings, and I'm not a pet guy myself, but I have a friend who, without his two cats, would be a basket case. One plus for dogs: they give you the opportunity to amble the streets of your neighborhood, giving you a bit of exercise, which reduces stress, and the opportunity to meet some of the neighbors.

Volunteer

Soup kitchens, schools, certain fire departments, and charitable organizations: all of these and more are usually in dire need of volunteers. One retiree I knew helped out with his local school's reading program and founded a chess club. He felt engaged and useful, and the kids loved him. By helping others, you'll be helping yourself.

Become Involved in Some Community Activity

Local theaters can often use help with play productions. Many libraries now offer lecture series, and film and book clubs for adults. Explore your community, and you might be surprised by what is available to you.

Take Classes at a Community College

Want to learn French cooking? Auto repair? The history of the Renaissance? Most community colleges offer an abundance of courses to young and old at affordable rates. Here you may not only add to your skill set, but you may also meet people who will become friends.

Seek Professional Help

If you're alone and in a black hole of depression, seek professional counseling. Unfortunately, isolated people who suffer from severe depression

are often incapable of recognizing the need for such assistance. If you know someone in this condition, talk to that person. If they respond positively, then encourage them to talk to a counselor.

Reach Out to Others

You live alone in an apartment and need some human companionship. So ask that young couple who just moved into the building over for cheese and wine. Invite that elderly widow who lives above you to supper. If you are alone and miserable, if you are looking for human contact, extend the hand of friendship. You may be pleasantly surprised who steps into your life.

This last piece of advice, at least for me, is the most important of the lot. The old maxim "To have a friend you must be a friend" applies. Friends rarely come floating ghost-like through our front doors. Often we must make the effort to approach others, to take the first step, and to try again with someone else if we are rebuffed.

After reading those last words, I'm making a promise to myself. If after a few weeks I am stricken by loneliness, I will invite some people I know from our local coffee shop—a barista and her friend, the manager who roasts the coffee, another writer and his wife who patronize the place—for supper or a glass of wine. We'll see how it goes.

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Jim Daly on Building and Strengthening Families

A DIFFICULT CHILDHOOD PRIMED HIM FOR HIS ROLE TODAY—OFFERING ADVICE TO FAMILIES

CATHERINE YANG

Jim Daly, president of Focus on the Family and host of its daily radio show, likes to give pragmatic advice in a straightforward manner.

The world of relationship and parenting advice is filled with a million and one strategies and plenty of noise, but perhaps, here, people find some consistency and clarity. Over 6.3 million people tune into these broadcasts weekly; messages from advice-seekers and grateful listeners alike pour in by the thousands every week.

"We're pretty straightforward. We believe in marriage, we believe in healthy child-rearing, and so that's what we try to do every day," Daly said. "The stability of the family is core to the stability of the culture."

"I want to be authentic. I don't want to project some kind of phony perfection. I think that's been, you know, one of the detrimental legacies of the previous generation," Daly said. "And I think we're broken people, all of us. We're not perfect parents, and we're not perfect in our marriages, but trying hard to do the best we can."

Sometimes he would come home, and his wife Jean would say, "That was a great broadcast! So what should we implement?" Daly said with a laugh.

This March marked Daly's 30th year with the organization, which was started in 1977 by Dr. James Dobson.

Every Family Type

Daly, married for 33 years and father of two, can now reflect on how his difficult childhood must have primed him for the position he is in today. He knows very personally just how important family is.

He was the youngest of five children, a latchkey kid too young by too many years to play with his older siblings. He passed the time alone watching television shows of ideal families. His biological father was an angry alcoholic; Daly remembers him taking a hammer to the wall in a drunken stupor, beating holes into the wall, muttering about how he was going to kill his wife.

Daly sometimes only saw his biological mother a minute or two a day, while he was coming home and she was leaving to work. Despite the endless hours, and despite that some weeks there was no milk in the fridge or bread on the table, Daly vividly remembers the moments he did have with her;

he remembers her larger-than-life personality that instilled in the Daly kids a sense of humor and the ability to shake off their pain—which would be essential for survival the next several years.

His mother eventually remarried to a former drill sergeant, a harsh man who did not want children. At age 9, Daly's mother died, and their stepfather packed up and abandoned them the day after the funeral.

Daly spent some time in foster care, with a family whose head of house reported out of the blue to their social worker that the 9-year-old had tried to kill him by pushing him off a cliff. Daly found safety in the structure of school and sports but otherwise tried to keep his head down and keep to himself.

"Many days that loneliness drove me to just cry, in elementary school. I'd walk out of class and sit against a brick wall or on a sand hill, and just cry because I was feeling so lonely and desperate," Daly said.

Later, his biological father showed up, and Daly spent some time living with him, and then later with one of his older siblings after his biological father was found frozen to death, drunk, in an abandoned building.

"I think when God kind of led me in this position, and kind of put me where I am—that was one of the big thoughts—I've experienced just about every family formation type," Daly said. "I think it helped me to do what I do today."

An important factor came into Daly's life at age 15. He was playing football, and a supportive coach sponsored him to go to a Fellowship of Christian Athletes camp.

"An NFL player was one of the speakers and talked about not having a dad, and what he had missed not having a dad, but what God makes up, being our Father and being a father to the fatherless," Daly said. He hadn't grown up in a religious household, though he was told his mother had become a Christian the day before she died, but he didn't understand it. Nevertheless, he connected immediately with what this athlete was saying.

Faith

Daly, who has probably heard every relationship question under the sun, writes that building a family is not like building a house; there is no blueprint



Jim Daly hosts the Focus on the Family daily broadcast. Over 6.3 million people tune in on a weekly basis.

or template, though so many people wish there were. And perhaps this fear of failure is stopping many people from starting families, or even engaging with the ones they already have. He speaks about the culture, and of dads backing away from fatherhood, sometimes even just by retreating to the garage, because they don't think they can get it right.

"I think when my first son was born, I mean, I stayed up all night with him the first night and just held him because I felt the enormity of it, the big responsibility of it," Daly said. "I didn't have a dad really involved with me in my life, so I thought I was ill-equipped to do it. But the reality is, nobody's a perfect parent; it doesn't come with a manual."

"For me, it was learning how to love my boys well, and learning how to love my wife," he said. "That, to me, is the core challenge and the core desire every day."

The broadcast is largely marriage and parenting focused with the occasional interview about culture and faith more broadly.

"Stable families produce a stable culture," Daly said. "For example, children do best in a home with a mom and a dad. And that's true, and that has not changed."

There are clear benefits from a public health level, economic level, and nearly every area of public life. If family has become politicized, it is a recent and unfortunate phenomenon.

One of the things that drew Daly to the organization was the syncing of social science

and faith. Data consistently show that children do better with both of their parents in a healthy home and that society does better when children do better, and this is completely in line with Christian beliefs. As a result, the interviewees, authors, and experts, and people who've lived through extraordinary circumstances, can speak from their heart and be understood on many levels.

Focus on the Family is a Christian organization, and the interviewees are Christians called to create loving families.

"[Faith] is the underpinning of everything we do," Daly said. "We can certainly give a family good advice on how to strengthen their marriage or help them with a parenting crisis. But at the core of all of it is our faith in Christ and what we believe to be the institution of the family being created by God for the purpose of nurturing and developing children."

It hasn't stopped their work from benefiting people in all walks of life.

"I read just last week from an atheist who listens to the program and appreciates it," Daly said. "She said some very nice things about the authenticity of the program, the fact that she's not a Christian, but she appreciates the input and the advice that we provide, it seems to be, as she said, practical and reasonable."

Daly once had a meeting with the head of a national organization who told him right off the bat that they looked at the Focus on the

Family website every single day, because they considered them their number one adversary. Shocked as he was by the statement, they had an open conversation and came to an understanding. Working with people who disagree with him doesn't prevent him from having conviction in his own beliefs, which include reaching out to others with love.

Focus on the Family has worked with both churches and governments to help further adoption of foster children in Colorado, with the Wait No More program, which reduced the number of children needing permanent homes by two thirds, around 600, in about two years. They've also worked together with the Gill Foundation to pass a nonpartisan bill to strengthen sex trafficking laws.

"As a Christian, I believe relationship is part of how we're formed and why we're formed. So I think job one is to have a relationship with people who disagree with you," Daly said. "I look forward to [the discussions] and I aim for them because I really enjoy them."

And as head of the international division previously, Daly had spent 12 years traveling through 70 countries.

"I think the biggest takeaway in that experience was the universal language of the family. I could go to any of these countries, and governments, and business leaders, and church leaders—all agreed that strengthening the family was one of the core jobs of the culture," Daly said.



There are many ways to connect to others, whether that's through volunteering, getting a pet, taking classes, or simply reaching out.

Jim Daly with his wife Jean and sons Trent and Troy.



LIFE RITUALS

Oh, the Places You'll Go: Notes and Tips on Moving

JEFF MINICK

Moving apparently tucks everyone out, including toddlers and felines.

Recently, my daughter and her family moved four hours away to Scranton, Pennsylvania. I remain in Front Royal, Virginia, to care for the yard, do some interior work on the house, and keep an eye on the property until the place sells.

Every year, 14 percent of Americans—about 40 million people—take to the highways with their household goods crammed into a truck or a van. They hire a moving company or load up their belongings themselves, and off and away they go.

The average American performs this ritual 11.7 times over the course of a lifetime. By contrast, Europeans move an average of four times.

Observers more knowledgeable than I offer theories as to our propensity to wander hither and yon, but I suspect at least part of our taste for such odysseys derives from our restless ancestors. Pioneers traveling West, Dust Bowl Okies bound for paradise in California, 20th-century blacks migrating north in search of jobs, retirees heading the opposite direction for the warmer temperatures of Florida and the Gulf Coast: hitting the road in search of greener pastures is as American as backyard barbecues.

People move for a variety of reasons: to upsize or downsize their living quarters, to be closer to relatives, or in some cases, to

be farther away, or to make their home in a more agreeable location or climate. Many, like my son-in-law and his family, pick up and relocate for job-related reasons.

A number of online sites list moving as one of the most stressful of life's events. To box up our belongings, haul them on and off a truck, and then unbox them causes disruptions in our routine, and disruptions in routine often bring attendant anxieties. In 2006, following the death of my wife two years earlier, my 11-year-old son and I exchanged a 22-room bed and breakfast for a two-bedroom apartment. Three yard sales later and 15 trips or more to the Salvation Army, and I could finally turn the key to the empty house over to the new owner. And yes, I was stressed.

In the 13 years since then, I have moved two more times. Both occasions offered the opportunity to rid myself of unnecessary belongings, which is one of the up-sides of shaking off an old home for a new one, but otherwise, I would never describe moving as anyone's favorite leisure activity. At any rate, if you're migrating to a new home this summer or in the future, and if you're planning to do the work yourself, here are some tips that may reduce your stress levels and make your move safer and easier.

First, if you have seen the house or apartment into which you are moving, try to envision where and how the furniture will fit into each room. Even better, measure each room, write



The average American moves 11.7 times over the course of a lifetime. By contrast, Europeans move an average of four times.

down those measurements, and use them in your calculations. When I moved from my emptied bed and breakfast, my apartment would not accommodate the battered, ancient, massive desk my wife had given me. Though that desk was precious to me, I was forced to leave it with the new owner of our former B&B. Two years later, when we moved to a more spacious apartment, I contacted the owner, discovered he still possessed the desk, paid him a small sum, and retrieved the desk on which I now write. My point here is that when looking at the first apartment, I failed to take into account space for the desk.

Before you even touch the first box, visit some websites like moving.com. There, you'll find plenty of sound advice on such topics as packing your belongings, loading the truck, and the equipment you'll need. If you're moving, as I did,

from a house to an apartment, remember to purchase some renter's insurance for your belongings.

Next, start your packing well in advance of your move. If you wait until the last minute, you'll add to your anxieties. You are also far more likely to pack poorly and so risk breaking the antique crystal punch bowl Aunt Sally gave you for your wedding. Label the contents of each box you pack and, if possible, the room to which the box goes. That way, those helping you know where to deliver the boxes. Few things during a move can be more frustrating than facing a cardboard mountain in your new home with no idea of what goes where.

Selecting the proper-sized truck for rental can be difficult. It's best to spend some extra dollars and go larger rather than smaller. You don't want your moving day to end with

the truck stuffed to the gills, but with furniture and boxes still sitting forlornly on the front lawn. Spend a little extra money when you rent the truck. Get plenty of pads, straps, and a hand truck, if needed.

Many hands make light work. Ask friends or family, or hire some workers to help load up and unload the truck. Loading, of course, requires more time and planning than unloading. In the case of my daughter's move, her father-in-law was an enormous asset. He has not only moved many times, but also once worked as a mover. Watching him oversee the loading of the truck, cigar in hand, brought to mind a General Patton directing his troops. By day's end, and thanks to his wise advice, we had stuffed an incredible amount of furniture and boxes into that 29-foot truck.

If you have such help, and if the day brings sauna-like temperatures, have lots of bottled water on hand. Serve the cold beer only when the truck is loaded.

Important reminder: Avoid injuries to your back by lifting from the knees and legs. Back strain and more serious injuries can occur from improper lifting.

Finally, as you undergo this ordeal, keep reminding yourself of the old adage: This too shall pass. One way or the other, everything will get done. As you pack your books in boxes, as you wrap china plates in newspapers, envision yourself in a month or so in your new home, reading a book, watching television, enjoying a glass of wine on the deck at sunset.

Inveniamus viam aut viam inveniemus: that's a tag the Romans attributed to Hannibal. "We will find a way or we will make a way." That maxim got Hannibal, his troops, his baggage train, and a few elephants across the Alps and into the Italian peninsula.

Under the banner of those same words, you can get your family and belongings from Biloxi to Boise.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.

PERSONAL FINANCE

Living the Dream: One Way to Financial Happiness

JEFF MINICK

Practice frugality. Work hard. Save and invest your money.

For Americans, these practices were the stepping-stones to a better life for the last three centuries

But are they still applicable? Can they lead to financial security and even wealth?

The recent death of my mother-in-law Dorothy brought those questions to mind.

Dorothy and her husband Jim were great believers in this trinity of thrift, work, and investment. Let's look at what they did and whether it benefited them.

Housing

For over 40 years, Jim and Dorothy lived in the same house, purchased during the boom that followed World War II. In this three-bedroom, one-bath home—Jim later added a second bath in the basement—they raised three daughters. They took care of the place, keeping the lawn immaculate, shoveling snow during the Milwaukee winters, paint-

ing and refurbishing when required. When Dorothy sold the house after Jim's untimely death, I'm guessing she received 20 times what she and Jim had originally paid for it.

Work

Jim, a veteran of World War II, remained in the Reserves and rose to the rank of colonel. He was a high school teacher and guidance counselor, and spent his summers coaching tennis and working at the Milwaukee Fairgrounds. Dorothy found employment off and on in various places as a nurse.

Frugality

Jim and Dorothy practiced the old New England axiom: "Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without." When they took vacations, Dorothy packed lunches to avoid spending money on the road. They frequently vacationed at a motel in Florida owned by friends, where they received a discount on the room rates. They purchased sale items whenever they could and saved coupons for the grocery store. They took the



When you are able, give freely of your self, your time, and your resources.

kids out for supper on special occasions or to the local ice cream stand, they encouraged piano lessons and dance, and all three girls were in Scouts, but they never spent money on items they regarded as unnecessary.

Entertainment

Their ordinary form of entertainment was playing cards with friends. Even after Jim's death, Dorothy continued these card games. She once told me she couldn't understand why more young people or married couples didn't get together and play cards, as the only cost was the expense to

the host for refreshments.

Savings and Investment

Jim and Dorothy used a broker to handle their money, but they also stayed on top of the market. Dorothy in particular took an interest in their investments, keeping her money long-term in such stocks as IBM, when that company was in its heyday. They were satisfied with slow growth rather than risky enterprises.

We might associate such restraint with misers, scowling pinchpennies hoarding their wealth and spending their days chasing down the bucks.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Like the knights of old who made a virtue of largesse, Dorothy and Jim were generous with both their time and their money. They regularly dropped money into the collection plate at their church, Mount Carmel Lutheran. They donated to certain causes and gave their time to school activities and organizations like the Scouts.

Most of all, they shared their wealth with their

children and grandchildren. They put braces on the teeth of the younger set, paid for family vacations at the coast, helped with college tuition, and were lavish with Christmas and birthday gifts. In the case of my own family, they helped on several occasions with loans and outright gifts when my wife and I were in desperate financial straits.

And like Dorothy and Jim, practice largesse. When you are able, give freely of your self, your time, and your resources.

If we live as Dorothy and Jim did, if we become living gifts to those around us, we will brighten the corner where we are. And that's one small step toward changing the world.

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Mike Mika (C) was a Green Beret who served in the Vietnam War. He is the first participant in the Special Forces Oral History Initiative.

VETERANS

The Green Berets An Oral History

ANDREW THOMAS

The Green Berets are one of the most elite units in the United States military and are known as the "quiet professionals," as most of their missions are classified. Now, one former Green Beret is on a mission to record oral histories of Green Berets and their declassified stories.

Lyle Hendrick is 63 years old and lives in Columbia, South Carolina. Hendrick earned his Green Beret in 1983, and was on active duty until 1987. He was part of the 1st Battalion 10th Special Forces and was stationed in Bad Toelz, Germany.

If the Cold War were to get hot, his unit was to parachute behind Soviet lines to collect intelligence and perform demolition operations.

Oral Histories

Years after Hendrick separated from the service, he decided to embark on a unique project called the Special Forces Oral History Initiative. The University of South Carolina's Department of Oral History had a showcase in December 2018, where students were paired with a veteran, and the students recorded an oral history about them.

Hendrick wandered around the showcase, and began to think that Green Berets deserved to share their stories as well.

"Each one of us has a story, and I thought to even capture that and then put it into the collection would be a great service to them, to their family, to the community, and to history," Hendrick told The Epoch Times.

The first participant, Mike Mika, had his oral history recorded with a tape recorder. In the future, Hendrick plans to use a tape recorder and a camcorder so that the words, emotions, and the expressions can be captured.

Furthermore, Hendrick hopes participants will share maps, photographs, and other historical documents to supplement the recordings.



(Top) Mike Mika was deployed in Vietnam from January 1969 until May 1970.

(Bottom) Lyle Hendrick was a Green Beret and was stationed in Bavaria, Germany, during the Cold War.

War Stories

Firstly, participants establish basic information such as hometown, family, where they've lived, and education.

Then the veterans explain their motivation behind joining such a tough unit like the Green Berets. Participants are free to share the experiences they had on active duty, such as a particular battle or conflict they were involved in.

Another subject veterans are encouraged to share is what is the greatest lesson they have come away with from their experience as a Green Beret.

"There are plenty of stories, but the thing is to go beyond just the story, go on to a point where it can be collected," Hendrick explained.

Hendrick is also keenly aware of the daily amount of veterans who commit suicide, and thinks that if a man's story is heard and shared that a suicide can be prevented whether it's the veteran himself or a veteran listening to the story.

A Green Beret in Vietnam

Mika is 76 years old, and is the first Green Beret to have participated in the oral history project. He and Hendrick are in the same Special Forces Association chapter in South Carolina, which is how Mika became involved.

"The nature of the things that we did and the way we reacted to them, we generally don't talk about anything that we do," Mika explained.

He and Hendrick discussed the fact that while Green Berets may be reluctant to talk about their experiences, they might be more comfortable sharing their stories with other Special Forces veterans.

Mika was in the United States Army for 21 years, and was a 27-year-old Green Beret who was deployed in Vietnam from January 1969 until May 1970.

He and his unit worked with an ethnic group called the Montagnards, a name the French gave them meaning mountain people.

The real name of the group is Degar, and there used to be about 21 different tribes that spanned Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Since 1961, the Green Berets had been advising and training the group. They would also often send a medic to treat the villagers.

The North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong frequently pilfered food and resources from the Montagnards, and would conscript the young men from the village.

If they demanded something from the village elder, and he didn't comply, they would kill him to intimidate the village.

The Green Berets fought alongside the Montagnards against the North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong. The mission was highly effective.

"We were able to raise about a 75,000 man army utilizing the Montagnards," Mika explained.

Archives

Hendrick hopes to expand the project nationwide, and wants to give more Green Berets the opportunity to share their stories. Furthermore, he hopes families will be able to learn more about their fathers' and grandfathers' experiences in the Special Forces.

According to Hendrick, Mika was quite pleased to be able to participate in the project. Furthermore, Mika is making a great effort to raise funds for the initiative.

Hendrick and Mika also hope to educate the public about these stories, and want to ensure they're not lost to history. "They've made sacrifices that we have built and continue to build our country on, and those should not be forgotten. Their names should not be forgotten," Hendrick said.

Today, the Green Berets operate combat missions in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Yemen. Furthermore, they work in any where between 70 and 90 countries at the request of the Department of State, the president, or an intelligence agency to advise and train allies.

"It's service. These guys are dedicated to what they do. They went into the military, they're professional soldiers, and so whatever the country says this is what you've got to do, they're going to go and do it," Mika explained.

ARTS

Artist Gustave Doré: Recognizing Hell on Earth

ERIC BESS

What is the worst thing you've ever done? Take a moment to think about it. What is the one thing you are so ashamed about that you refuse to tell anyone that you actually did it? What is the one bad thing that you wish you could take back, the one horrible deed you wish you never did? What caused you to do it?

We all have something we've done that we regret. Some of us learn to live with these regrets. Others grow from the negative effects of their actions and vow to never do them again. Still others can't help themselves and continue to knowingly hurt others and themselves.

The ninth circle, in its hatred of love and in the absence of the warmth love brings, is encased in ice.

Dante's 'Inferno' and Doré's Worst Circles of Hell

Dante Alighieri, a 14th-century Italian poet, sums up the medieval understanding of bad deeds and their consequences in a well-known poem titled "The Inferno," which is the first of three sections of a larger work titled "The Divine Comedy." "The Inferno" alone will serve our purposes here.

In "The Inferno," Dante, our protagonist, is led by the ancient Roman poet Virgil through the nine circles of hell. These circles of hell are set up like concentric rings, with the outermost ring (the first) housing the lesser sins, and the center (the ninth) housing Satan himself. Each ring represents a type of sinful, regretful action and its corresponding punishment.

The 19th-century Romantic artist Gustave Doré spent his life illustrating classical texts, with "The Divine Comedy" being one of them. Doré illustrated a scene from the eighth circle of hell. His engraving shows the plight of the sowers of discord, who spent their lives promoting discord within religion or politics. In the afterlife, they must walk a circle and endure punishments

at the hands of a demon.

Dorothy L. Sayers, in her book "Hell," expands on what Dante meant by this level of hell. She writes that the evil ditches in the eighth circle of hell represent "the image of the City in corruption: the progressive disintegration of every social relationship, personal and public. Sexuality, ecclesiastical and civil office, language, ownership, counsel, authority, psychic influence, and material interdependence—all the media of the community's interchange are perverted and falsified."

The eighth circle, then, represents the deliberate and deceitful attempt to destroy the moral and virtuous principles upon which cultures are founded. It represents the attempt to infiltrate society with evils and lies masked as good and truth.

The eighth circle of hell sounds hellish enough, but it is not the most hateful of the circles. The ninth circle is the cruelest of them all. The ninth circle houses those souls that hate love itself. This is why Satan is housed here: Satan is the exemplar of the evil that hates love, since Satan hates God and all that God represents.

The ninth circle, in its hatred of love and in the absence of the warmth love brings, is encased in ice. Doré, in his painting "Dante and Virgil in the Ninth Circle of Hell," depicts the suffering such absence of love brings. Souls are shown in agony. They scream and fight as ice engulfs their bodies. Doré has presented Dante and Virgil in the middle of it all, and only the area around them seems to be lit in an otherwise endless sea of darkness occupied by suffering souls.

The horizon seems to go on forever as it falls into darkness. This darkness looms over the top half of the canvas, but its reach goes further. In a way, the darkness stretches a cold emptiness into and in between the figures and the ice



PUBLIC DOMAIN

that keeps them prisoners of their own cold-heartedness.

Recognizing Hell on Earth

So what does this painting say about our contemporary society? What is our "ninth circle of hell"? To be honest, I don't know.

I do, however, see characteristics of the eighth circle of hell in Western society today: The Western traditions and

classics embodied by the humanities are constantly under attack.

The postmodern agenda has been consistent in its resistance against the classical notions of truth, goodness, and beauty, throwing them into a sea of darkness where their judgments hold no sway over personal preference.

Postmodernists would be happy to have the classic values stowed away in shadows that forever cast doubt upon



ART RENEWAL CENTER

(Left) "Dante and Virgil in the Ninth Circle of Hell," 1861, by Gustave Doré. Oil on Canvas, 10.3 feet by 14.7 feet, Musée municipal de Bourges-en-Bresse.

(Above) "The Inferno, Canto 28, Lines 69-72," 1890, by Gustave Doré. Engraving. Dante Alighieri's "Inferno" illustrated with the designs of Gustave Doré, Cassell Publishing Company.

them. They advocate the relativity of irrationality over measured restraint. They mask the attempts to deconstruct and destroy traditional culture by way of moral posturing.

That postmodern attempt at morality claims to protect people's feelings but instead prevents them from ever experiencing the growth that comes from engaging with those who differ in perspective. Basing judgments on feelings only leads to irrational relativism that, practiced absolutely, has ironically led to hostile absolutism. Everything can and will be seen as an affront to subjective feelings.

Thus, the result of a postmodern culture is people who are cold and hostile toward anything that doesn't affirm their own personal set of ideologies.

Where can this lead? I just hope we don't become so cold-blooded and hostile toward one another and toward those ideas that challenge our preconceived notions that we create our own ninth circle of hell, fashioned by a new set of shameful acts we come to later regret.

Eric Bess is a practicing representational artist. He is currently a doctoral student at the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts.

'SAINT JEROME PRAYING IN THE WILDERNESS'

The Spiritual Life of Leonardo da Vinci

What an unfinished painting from the Vatican can tell us

J.H. WHITE

NEW YORK—Classical art is not about history—it's about today. Its transformative power can uplift us, and touch our spirits.

One such example is Leonardo da Vinci's "Saint Jerome Praying in the Wilderness," on loan from the Vatican Museums. It's the singular protagonist of The Metropolitan Museum of Art's new exhibition, "Leonardo da Vinci's St. Jerome," going on through Oct. 6. The exhibition commemorates the 500th anniversary of the artist's death.

It's the perfect piece to honor the late master for many reasons. While historians hotly debate the authorship of many of Leonardo's paintings, this work is one of only six that are not in question. It even has Leonardo's actual fingerprints on it; he'd often use his fingers and palms to smudge the paint to create a soft focus effect.

"There's something really pretty touching for a modern viewer to just know that the fingerprints of the artist are there," said the exhibition's curator, Carmen Bambach, in a phone interview.

In addition to Leonardo's literal touch, "St. Jerome" depicts his touching spirit; it may even suggest a different purpose of art altogether—to help us connect with the Creator.

"What is really important is to look

Like a spiritual devotee, always striving to be better, the painting is also unfinished and a work in progress.

at the painting of St. Jerome and allow the painting itself to tell us a great deal about the probable spiritual life of Leonardo," Bambach said.

Like a spiritual devotee, always striving to be better, the painting is also unfinished and a work in progress. Leonardo started the painting around 1483 and worked on it over the next three decades. From 1510 to 1511, Leonardo focused on sketching anatomical drawings, realistically illustrating the muscular and skeletal structure of a human being. These artistic developments can be seen in his "St. Jerome."

"[The painting] being unfinished brings us very close to the mind of the genius," Bambach said. Since St. Jerome was wearing only a ragged cloth, there was an opportunity for the maestro to showcase his command of anatomy. He does so brilliantly, especially in the saint's head, neck, and shoulders.

It's still unknown why he never finished the work. "One of the reasons may have been that he considered it very much a work in progress and that he simply became very attached to it himself," Bambach said.

Solemn Space

The exhibition's presentation and painting selection pay homage to an old custom. During the Renaissance, at the funerals of great Italian artists such as Michelangelo and Raphael, one of the

artist's devotional works would be displayed.

"Saint Jerome Praying in the Wilderness" is displayed alone in the exhibition, "starkly illuminated within an otherwise darkened space in order to heighten the picture's contemplative dimension, which Leonardo intended," the exhibition's press release states.

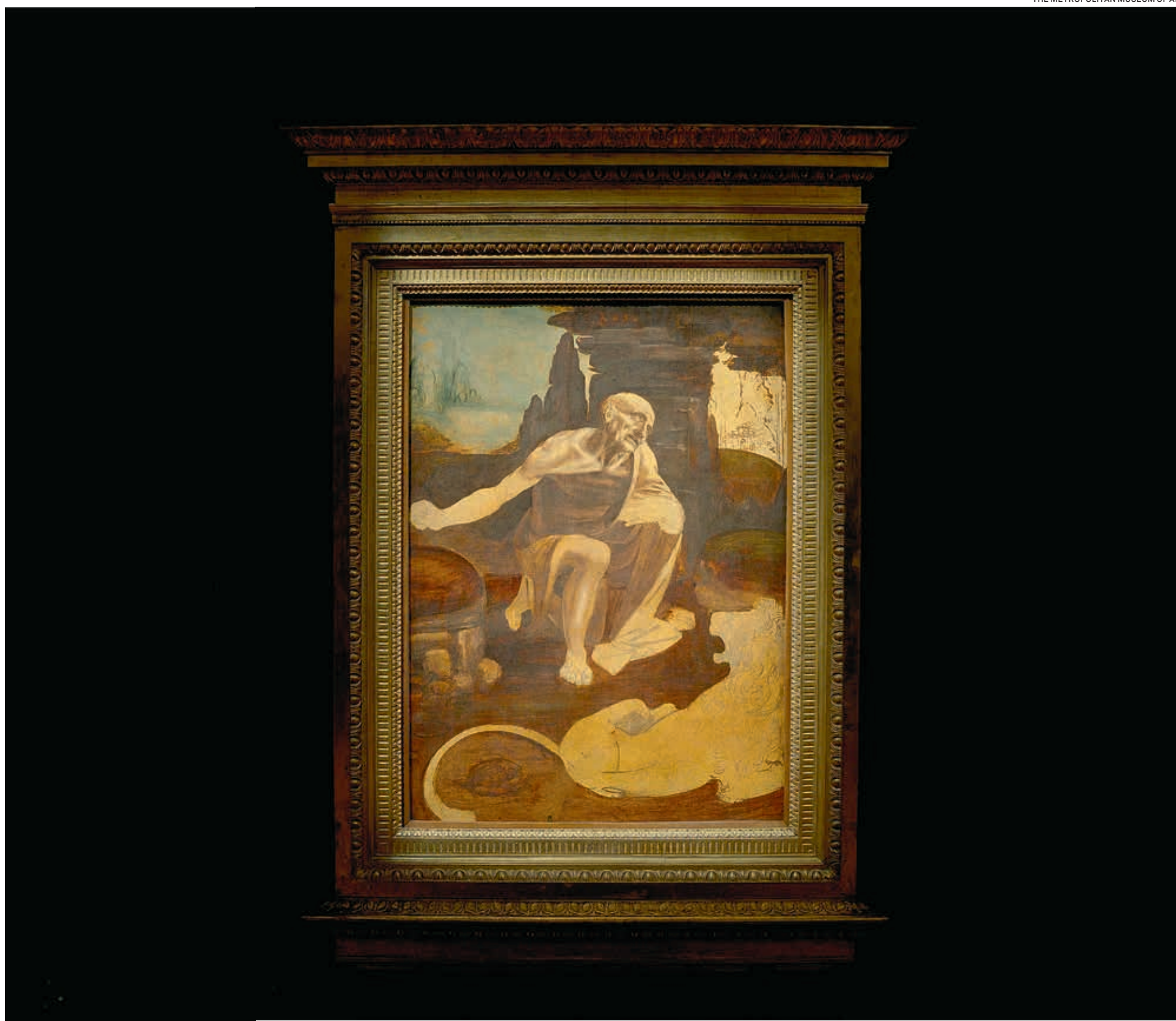
"The way that we've conceived it at The Met is all about creating a chapel-like setting that is a kind of sanctuary for the presentation of this work, which again alludes to the solemnity of a death anniversary," Bambach said.

The exhibition's intimate, solitary setting also reflects Leonardo's unique portrayal of St. Jerome, contrasting with how the saint was often depicted through history. The fourth-century saint is most well-known as an exemplar of Christian morality and for his translation of the Bible from Hebrew to Latin. Many artists, especially during the Middle Ages, would paint St. Jerome in his study, devoutly translating Scripture. He would often be wearing a red cardinal hat and clothing, even though the position did not yet exist in the Catholic order.

Leonardo, however, depicted St. Jerome from a story in the 13th-century text titled the "Golden Legend," a collection of hagiographies, or biographies of saints. From the text, St. Jerome wanders the desert as a gaunt ascetic; he comes upon a lion with a thorn in its paw. The saint removes the thorn and gains a companion for life.

In Leonardo's "Saint Jerome Praying in the Wilderness," St. Jerome sits inside a cave, beating his chest with a rock, a common practice of penitence. Such rituals were performed to remove sins of the flesh, which Jerome infamously indulged in before becoming a Christian. At his feet lies his companion, the lion. St. Jerome, in a semiconscious state, looks upward at a cross.

"What Leonardo decided to do was to pare down the story completely," Bambach said. "[It's about his] state of reverie



THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

PUBLIC DOMAIN



(Above) "A portrait of Leonardo," circa 1515-18, attributed to Francesco Melzi. Red chalk, 10.8 inches by 7.4 inches.

(Left) "Saint Jerome," by Leonardo da Vinci. Tempera and oil on walnut paper, 41 inches by 30 inches. Vatican Museums, Rome.

... It's this engagement with a crucifix that is the subject really of the saint's mystical vision."

What I see from Leonardo's artistic choice is a religious figure and sentiment, unfettered by the form of the Church. This is a depiction of St. Jerome in his most raw, naked state, figuratively and literally: He's not adorned in the Church's garb; and he's simply entranced by divinity, connecting directly with Christ. The saint's spirit, and connection to God, is gravitational and grounding. It speaks of the devotion of the painter, as much as to St. Jerome himself.

"Now, as a historian myself, it is difficult for me not to see that Leonardo was an intensely spiritual artist," Bambach said.

J.H. White is an arts, culture, and men's fashion journalist living in New York.

KINGA CICHOWICZ/UNSPLASH



BOOKS

Stressed? Beat Back the Blues with a Book

JEFF MINICK

“Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people’s hats off—then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can. This is my substitute for pistol and ball.”

While few of us set out to sea “whenever it is a damp, drizzly November” in our souls, most of us, at one time or another, identify with these sentiments of Ishmael, Herman Melville’s narrator in “Moby Dick.” We waken one morning, and an interior fog befouls the sunny day outside the bedroom window. The coffee lacks its usual zing, and our energetic colleagues at work seem as dull as dishwater. We slog through the hours as if up to our waists in a miasmatic swamp, and return home wanting nothing more than an extra glass of wine and the oblivion of sleep.

Often that sleep does the trick, and we kick off the sheets in the morning eager to embrace the world. Sometimes, though, Morpheus fails to work his magic: the coffee remains flat, the jokes at work stale, the day a haze of obligation and setbacks. We plod along not in some state of terrible depression, which Winston Churchill

Such linguistic gusto helped release my prison-pent self.

ALFONS MORALES/UNSPLASH



called his “black dog,” but for whatever reason, frequently indiscernible, we feel reduced to a worm, the lilt in our step reduced to a limp, the gleam in our eye dead as Scrooge’s doornail.

When these moods strike, some of us patiently wait for restoration. Some reach out to friends or family to lift their sails and escape the doldrums, some unwisely take to the bottle, some increase their time on the treadmill or the elliptical, some sink into a sofa with a beer and a bag of chips and attempt their escape by watching a movie or a football game.

And some of us open a book. Several times this past month, sometimes from exhaustion, sometimes for reasons hidden from me, like Ishmael, I found myself “growing grim about the mouth.” Sleep and a slower pace helped cure my fatigue and restore the balance in my mood, but on some days I needed stronger medicine, some way to vacation, to escape the grind of my daily routine.

As in the past, reading relieved this pressure and reduced the stress.

In “Captain Blood,” Rafael Sabatini whisked me off to late 17th century Barbados, where Peter Blood, a physician and former soldier of fortune, finds himself a

Books possess a magic all their own.

slave, falsely accused of treason against England’s King James II. Leading a band of fellow slaves, Blood manages to seize a Spanish ship come to raid the colony, and so takes on the mantle of daring buccaneer. Here are adventures galore, fully developed characters, fine writing, romance, and a study in courage, grit, honor, and wisdom. “Captain Blood” is a treasure chest of a novel, offering readers, particularly young men, a wealth of excitement coupled with lessons in the classic virtues.

In my public library, “Blotto, Twinks and The Intimate Review” snagged my attention both because of the outlandish title and the lovely cover depicting a 1920s couple watching a revue, a light theatrical entertainment. The much-honored British author, Simon Britt, breaks nearly every rule of fiction in this story of a kidnapping, unorthodox marriages, coincidences, and a bizarre plot to bring down English aristocrats. An affable son of that aristocracy, Blotto is missing more than a few marbles upstairs, but his sister Twinks more than makes up for his empty attic. Never—and I think I can literally say never—have I read such a daft story. Just when you think Britt can pile up no more absurdities, he adds another unlikely char-

acter or situation to his teetering mound of the preposterous.

I have written that Mr. Britt breaks nearly every rule of fiction, but two abide: he enchants with his language, and he makes his readers laugh. On a single page, representative of many, he writes that revue star Frou-Frou Gavotte is “an absolute eyewobbler” and “as English as a ham sandwich with mustard,” though with a “spoffing odd name.” Blotto makes a mistake and declares himself as “shimmying up the wrong drainpipe.” His friend Whiffler’s desire to marry Frou-Frou “could, by Blotto’s reckoning, cause an eruption comparable to that of Krakatoa.” Though Blotto is a “fluent fat-chewer, Whiffler’s announcement had momentarily robbed him of the power of speech.”

Such linguistic gusto helped release my prison-pent self. (It was also refreshing to read a “G-rated” novel.)

A last example of the saving power of the printed word: Years ago, I read William Manchester’s “The Last Lion: Visions of Glory,” the first book of three about Winston Churchill. (I read the others as they were published.) I hadn’t opened the book for several years, but after an exchange of emails about Churchill with an acquaintance who is an editor, I revisited the opening chapters of “The Last Lion” and remembered why both Manchester’s biography and Winston Churchill had the power to rouse my spirits. In these pages, Manchester breathes life into Churchill, giving us the man who found such zest in living while on occasion descending into despondency.

Books possess a magic all their own. They cast a powerful spell providing respite and escape when we feel imprisoned by circumstances, trials, or inexplicable dark moods. They take us away from that most monstrous jailor, the self, and free us from our prison of melancholy.

Ismael had the sea as his “substitute for pistol and ball.”

Some of us have books.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.

PARENTS AND EDUCATION

Yes, Parents Are Capable of Choosing How Their Children Should Be Educated

The idea that parents get in the way of children’s education and can halt their flourishing is nothing new. It’s also false.

KERRY MCDONALD

At the heart of debates around education freedom and school choice is the subtle but sinister sentiment that parents can’t be trusted. They are too busy, too poor, or too ignorant to make the right decisions for their kids, and others know better how to raise and educate children. Never mind that parents have successfully cared for and educated their children for millennia, ensuring the ongoing survival and continued success of our species.

Distrust of Parents

As economist Richard Ebeling writes in the introduction to Sheldon Richman’s book “Separating School & State”:

“The parent has been viewed—and still is viewed—as a backward and harmful influence in the formative years of the child’s upbringing, an influence that must be corrected for and replaced by the “enlightened” professional teacher who has been trained, appointed, and funded by the state.”

We see this distrust of parents play out in a number of policy areas, including most recently with the implementation of universal government preschool for four-year-olds (and increasingly three-year-olds) in cities like New York and Washington, DC, and in academic reports arguing for “Cradle to Kindergarten” government interventions. These efforts are nearly always framed as helping parents, taking the burden off of low- and middle-income families, and addressing inequality and achievement gaps. But the message is clear: parents, and especially disadvantaged parents, can’t be expected to effectively raise their children and see to their education without the gov-



Never mind that parents have successfully cared for and educated their children for millennia, ensuring the ongoing survival and continued success of our species.

KAVIER MOUTON PHOTOGRAPHE/UNSPLASH

ernment’s help.

Some researchers say this outright. In an article published in The Washington Post about alleged summer learning loss among schoolchildren, Kelly Chandler-Olcott suggests that to fix the problem, we need to stop expecting parents to nurture their children during the summer months and instead rely on experts to do it for them. She writes:

“Also troubling is the assumption that families, not educators, should promote learning in specialized areas such as mathematics, reading and science. Although families from all walks of life promote varied kinds of learning in everyday life, most parents lack preparation to address academic subjects, and their year-round obligations don’t end just because school is out for their offspring.”

This is during the summertime, mind you, when parents have long been responsible for the care of their children. Apparently now the academic crisis is so dire, particularly for low-income children, and parents’ “year-round obligations” are so huge, that we should entrust others to do throughout the summer months what seemingly didn’t work well during the academic year. As I wrote at NPR, we need to ask ourselves if kids can so quickly forget during summertime what they purportedly learned during the school year, did they ever really learn it at all? And if “most parents lack preparation to address academic subjects,” then what does that say about the education they received through public schooling?

‘Perennial Force’ of Parenthood

The idea that parents get in the way of children’s education and can halt their flourishing is nothing new. As he was designing the architecture for compulsory mass schooling in the 19th century, Horace Mann argued

that education was too important to be left to parents’ discretion. He explained that strong parental bonds are obstacles to children’s and society’s development, writing in his fourth lecture on education in 1840:

“Nature supplies a perennial force, unexhausted, inexhaustible, re-appearing whenever and wherever the parental relation exists. We, then, who are engaged in the sacred cause of education, are entitled to look upon all parents as having given hostages to our cause.”

Mann goes on to say that “just as soon as we can make them see the true relation in which they and their children stand to this cause, they will become advocates for its advancement,” supporting the complete shift in control of education from the family to the state. It’s for the good of all, Mann said—except for parents like him who homeschooled his own children while mandating forced schooling for others.

The solution is for parents to push back against creeping government control of education and child-rearing. Don’t be wooed by the siren song of feigned empathy for your burdens of work and family. Don’t be convinced of the false belief that you are incapable of caring for your children and determining how, where, and with whom they should be educated. Don’t let your “inexhaustible” parental instincts be weakened by government guardians who think they know what is best for your child. Demand freedom and choice.

Parents are powerful. They are not perfect, and they do fail, but they are more perfect and fail much less than state agents and government bureaucracies intoxicated by authority and ego. They should take back control of their children’s education by advocating for parental choice and resisting efforts to undermine their innate capacity to care for their children’s well-being.

Place trust in the “perennial force” of parenthood, even when—or perhaps especially when—others distrust it.

Kerry McDonald is a Senior Education Fellow at FEE and author of “Unschooling: Raising Curious, Well-Educated Children Outside the Conventional Classroom” (Chicago Review Press, 2019). This article was originally published on FEE.org

KIDS’ BOOKS

Why Are Children’s Books Narrating Confusion?

MADELEINE AHLBRECHT

Did you know that crayons care about identity politics and race? I didn’t. I just thought they were great for coloring! Luckily I came across “The Day the Crayons Quit” by Oliver Jeffers.

Each crayon writes a note to a little boy, Duncan, with a complaint. Either Duncan colors with them too much or too little, he doesn’t appreciate them sufficiently, or he calls them the wrong name. This line from the Beige Crayon pretty much sums it up: “I’m tired of being called ‘light brown’ or ‘dark tan’ because I am neither. I am BEIGE and I am proud.”

In the end, Duncan takes all of their advice and uses his crayons to draw a picture that depicts almost no objects in traditional colors. He receives an ‘A’ from his teacher for such a creative drawing.

Don’t get me wrong, I’m all for whimsically drawing pink dinosaurs and green water. But I can’t help but wonder if there was an ulterior motive at play in this story.

These outraged crayons seem to be training Duncan to be a people pleaser. Nothing and no one should be unequally favored. Don’t assume that someone ascribes to traditional cultural structures. Only children who break free from the constraints of reality are good.

In a culture of political



Instead of heroic stories that give children role models, we find half finished books with a weird unease and decided lack of solutions.



“Madeline” teaches courage and kindness, rather than existential crises.

PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE

correctness, I didn’t spend much time wondering why the author took this route.

But at least the crayon book recognizes that there is a reality, even if it finds it objectionable. Other books abandon reality and embrace existential questions instead. Such is the path taken by Mac Barnett and Jon Klassen in a new series of children’s books, “Triangle,” “Square,” and “Circle.” Let’s take a look at “Circle”:

In “Circle,” Triangle, Circle, and Square are playing a friendly game of hide-and-seek. Circle is “it” and searches for her friends. Searching inside a cave so dark that only the whites of her eyes are visible, she finds Triangle ... and another set eyes. The two shapes assume that Square has followed Circle in and that these are his eyes. But upon exiting the cave, Triangle and Circle find Square waiting outside for them. He denies that he entered the cave at all. Innocently, they wonder what shape they might have seen in the darkness. The book ends with the narrator breaking the fourth wall by asking the reader, “If you close your eyes, what shape do you picture?”

As the reader, I assumed that either Square was lying, or there was a stranger lurking in the cave near their play area. I was half-expecting some stranger-danger instruction to follow. But I was wrong.

“Madeline” teaches courage and kindness, rather than existential crises. Why have we rejected classic children’s books for this chaotic mess? I’m a bit confused.

Madeleine Ahlbrecht is a recent graduate of Hillsdale College, where she studied Latin and Ancient Greek. This article was originally published on Intellectual Takeout.

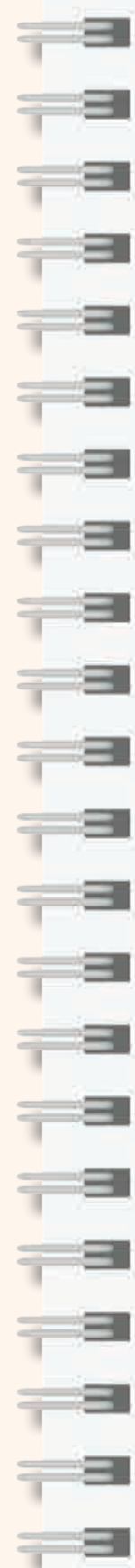
END OF SUMMER

Prepping Your Home for Back to School

BARBARA DANZA

As much as we'd love to pull our beach blankets over our heads and pretend that summer is not actually going to end, we know the truth. We're reaching the end

of summer, and soon it will be time to go back to school. Whether you're homeschooling your kids or sending them off to school in the fall, here are seven ways to prepare your home for the new season ahead.



Declutter

Clutter is an impediment to focus, peace, and well-being. Things can pile up fast: from papers to toys to knick-knacks, the stuff in our lives can easily transform from being a blessing to a burden if we don't keep it in check. Give back-to-school season that fresh-start feeling by kicking your clutter to the curb.

Assess Supplies and Gear

Once you've gotten rid of what you don't need, you need to assess what you do need. Check school supply lists, determine if last year's clothes and shoes still fit, determine whether a new lunchbox, backpack, water bottle, or other tool for school is needed. Make your list and get those items.

Shift Bedtime

If your sleep schedules have become slightly erratic this summer, now is the time to start reining them in. The body's rhythms help us perform at our peak when well regulated. Gradually begin to encourage earlier bedtimes and earlier wake times, aiming for regularity.

Set Up Stations

When life gets busy and things kick into high gear you want to set up your home so that it works for you. One way to do that is to set up stations.

To keep schedules on track and manage the inflow and outflow of papers, set up a central command station. This may include paper inboxes, a wall calendar, a bulletin board for reminders, a place to hold keys, backpacks and lunch boxes, and a clock.

To make packing lunches easy, set up a lunch station. Use separate bins for the different lunch items in the refrigerator and the pantry. Label the bins, and teach and encourage your children to pack their own lunches from the supplies in the bins. If you restock lunch items each week, lunch packing will be seamless all year long. Similarly, you can set up a snack station. The transition from school to home is one of the most important of the day. Have healthy drinks and snacks at the ready that can be managed by the children when they get home.

Create Checklists

How many times do you think you'll ask your children if they brushed their teeth, have their shoes on, packed their homework, or made their bed? Rather than repeat yourself thousands of times over the course of the school year, print each child a morning and evening checklist and insert it into a dry-erase sleeve. Keep the checklist in your command center and have the kids check it off each day.

Focus on Reading

If reading hasn't been a frequent activity this summer, stoke the flames a bit by embarking on reading-centered activities. Take the kids to the library or the bookstore. Forego television for an audiobook and some special snacks instead. Read to the kids at bedtime. Bring books to the pool or the beach. Enjoy reading.

Practice Math

Refresh those basic math facts with games or flashcards. Offer prizes to the kids who can solve challenging math problems. Have the kids solve math problems you encounter in your daily life—calculating the tip at the restaurant, measuring a room for a new piece of furniture, doubling a recipe, budgeting for groceries, or estimating travel time somewhere.

If reading hasn't been a frequent activity this summer, stoke the flames a bit by embarking on reading centered activities. Take the kids to the library or the bookstore.

SLEEP ROUTINES

Nurturing Good Sleep Habits

How to get back on track before going back to school

BARBARA DANZA

What time do your children go to bed in the summertime? What time do they wake up? If you're like most parents, the answers to these questions can be all over the place. One of the best aspects of summer is the lack of rules, routines, and schedules, right?

Well, if you've checked your calendar lately, you've probably noticed that this free-for-all is about to come to a screeching halt. Sad, but true.

In order to get ready for a more regimented lifestyle, where alarms are set and responsibilities are met, you and your family have to go into training mode. This is not one of those situations

where ripping off the band-aid in one quick blow is best. You'll want to gradually allow bodies and minds to slowly adjust to earlier bedtimes and earlier wake times and naturally acclimate to the new normal.

Limit Screen Time at Night If you want the kids to wake up earlier, they have to get to bed earlier. One habit that may be hindering their ability to fall asleep, and even the quality of their sleep, is the use of digital devices. Set up healthy boundaries around the use of screens. Consider implementing a cut-off time when all devices need to be put to bed long before anyone else gets tucked in. Oh, and Mom and Dad—you may want to follow suit.

Let Music Set the Mood The power of music can be easily overlooked, but using it as a cue during different parts of your day can add a lovely element to your family vibe. Create a special wind-down playlist with calm, beautiful, slow pieces of music that signal each night to one and all that it's time to begin to settle down. Turn off the television and turn on your playlist at a nice, low volume. Before long the first note will engender yawns.

Work the Lights Similarly, consider the lighting in your home. Close the shades earlier if the sun is still shining when you aim to have everyone settle in. Dim overhead lights in the evening and consider the use of candles

for a more soothing, natural light. A gradual darkening and softer lighting will signal to your family that it's almost time to close your eyes.

Get New Books for Bedtime Of course, make sure there's enough light to read by. A fun way to make bedtime more enjoyable is to bring some new books into the mix. Take a trip to the library or your favorite bookstore and allow the kids to choose some fresh reads for bedtime. This is one way to make the project of adjusting sleep schedules a cause for celebration.

Lower the Temperature at Night Another adjustment to the



environment is the temperature in your home. Cooler temperatures tend to be more conducive to sleep. It encourages one to snuggle in under the covers and drift off to dreamland undisturbed.

Set Alarms Once you've got the bedtime routine down pat, you'll want to aim for an earlier waking time. Each night, count eight to ten hours past the time everyone managed to get to sleep and set the alarm for that time. Choose a nice sound to wake everyone up. As summer break dwindles, aim for earlier bedtimes, resulting in earlier wake times and relieving the pressure on the first day of school.



FOR KIDS ONLY

THE EPOCH TIMES

Thursday, August 15, 2019



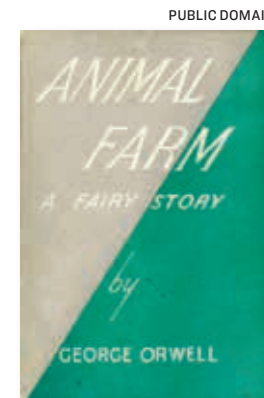
'ANIMAL FARM'

On Aug. 17, 1945, writer George Orwell published one of his most famous books, "Animal Farm." The novel reflects the events of the times, specifically those leading up to the Russian Revolution and the Stalinist era of the Soviet Union—a time of great suffering for millions of people.

It is an allegory—a story that has a deeper moral or political meaning than what's being depicted on the surface.

In "Animal Farm," a poorly run farm leads the animals to revolt against the humans. The animals hope to run the farm themselves by following their own commandments and ideals, such as, "All Animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others." In the end, however, the new rulers—the pigs—become cruel and tyrannical.

"Animal Farm" is considered a classic today.



The Boy Who Never Told a Lie

Anonymous

Once there was a little boy, With curly hair and pleasant eye— A boy who always told the truth, And never, never told a lie.

And when he trotted off to school, The children all about would cry, "There goes the curly-headed boy— The boy that never tells a lie."

And everybody loved him so, Because he always told the truth, That every day, as he grew up, 'Twas said, "There goes the honest youth."

And when the people that stood near Would turn to ask the reason why, The answer would be always this: "Because he never tells a lie."



“ He who has no inclination to learn more, will be very apt to think that he knows enough.”

SIR JOHN POWELL (1645-1713)

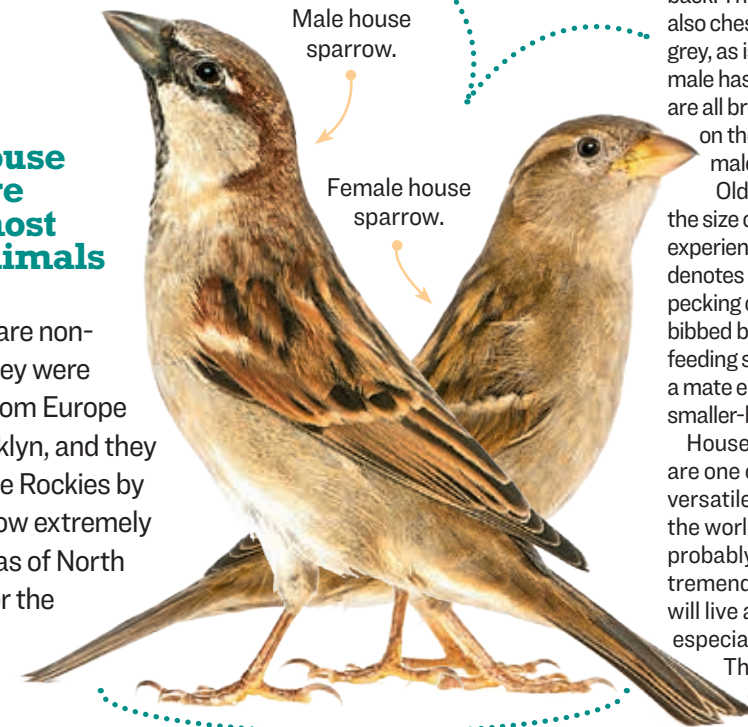


By Aidan Danza, age 13

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: HOUSE SPARROW

House Sparrows are one of the most common animals in America

even though they are non-native animals. They were introduced here from Europe in 1851 into Brooklyn, and they had spread into the Rockies by 1900. They are now extremely common in all areas of North America except for the far north.



Male house sparrow.

Female house sparrow.

ERIC ISSELEE/SHUTTERSTOCK

A male house sparrow, in the spring and summer, has a chestnut-and-black back. The back of the head and neck is grey, as is the sides, chest, and belly. The male has a black bill and bib. Females are all brown-and grey, with a tan stripe on the cheeks and wings. Wintering males look like females with the bib. Older males have bigger bibs, and the size of the bib (therefore, the age and experience of the bib's bearer) denotes the rank in the birds pecking order. Bigger-bibbed birds eat at safer feeding sites and find a mate earlier than smaller-bibbed birds.

House Sparrows are one of the most versatile birds in the world, which is probably the secret to their tremendous success. They will live anywhere, and they especially love us humans. They don't like extremely natural

habitats, however. In the far north, House Sparrows have only colonized the areas that the human race has colonized.

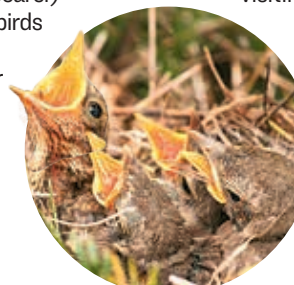
They eat mostly seeds, grains, birdseed, and handouts. In the summer, they will eat insects and feed them to their young for protein. They will catch insects out of the air, as a flycatcher would, by executing a raptor like pounce, or taking the easy way and visiting lights at night.

House Sparrows, as mentioned before, are invasive species, and they seem to take their status as invasives very seriously. They have been known to kick out other birds from birdhouses and take over, but this is not always what happens.

They have become almost completely dependent on us humans for nesting, and nest in any man-made cavity (i.e., birdhouses, lights, traffic lights, roofs, signs, etc.) but occasionally they will

nest in tree cavities. Their nest holes are stuffed with dry vegetation; then the nest is lined with finer materials such as feathers, strings, papers, and grass. House sparrows will build nests next to each other sometimes, and they are one of the only birds that might use both sides of a duplex birdhouse. They will lay 1-8 eggs, in 1-4 broods per season. The eggs are white to light green and light blue, spotted with gray and brown.

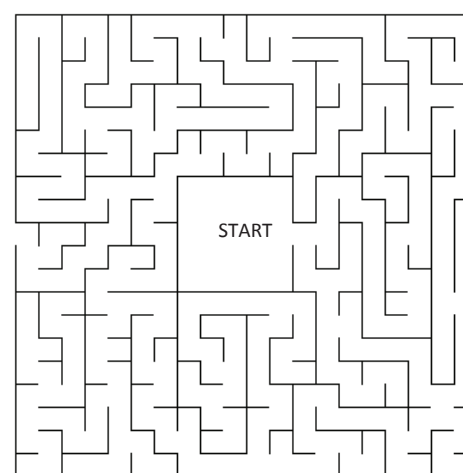
Just like humans, house sparrows behave in certain ways that reflect their mood. For instance, nervous birds will flick their tails, and angry ones will crouch, look down, roll their wings forward, and hold their tail straight up. When they get even more agitated they will lift their wings, raise their feathers on the top of the head and throat, fan their tail, and open their bill. When a male shows his interest in a passing female, he will puff out his chest, fan his tail, hold his wings slightly open, and hop in front of her, sometimes bowing. When this display is seen by another male, this rival will fly in and show off his display as well.



Hungry house sparrow offsprings.

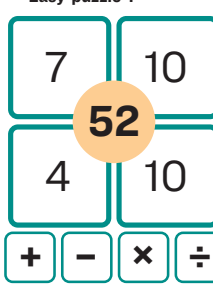
PETERPHOTO123/SHUTTERSTOCK

AMAZING ESCAPES!



USE THE FOUR NUMBERS IN THE CORNERS, AND THE OPERANDS (+, -, AND X) to build an equation to get the solution in the middle. There may be more than one "unique" solution but, there may also be "equivalent" solutions. For example: $6 + (7 \times 3) + 1 = 28$ and $1 + (7 \times 3) + 6 = 28$

Easy puzzle 1



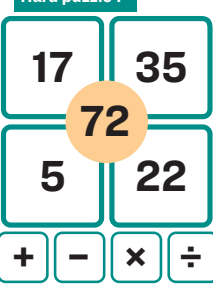
Solution For Easy 1
 $01 + 2 \times (7 - 01)$
 $7 \times (2 - 01 + 01)$

Medium puzzle 1

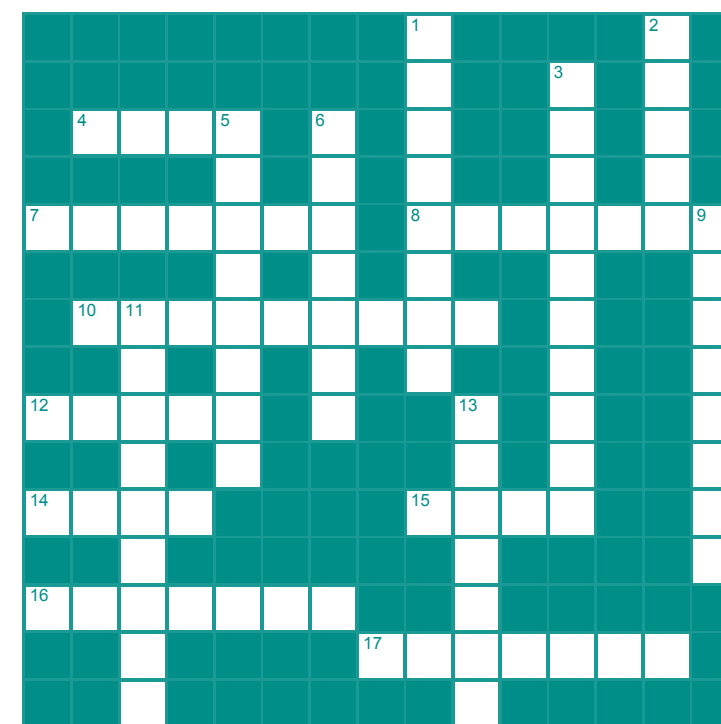


Solution for Medium 1
 $5 - 8 - 01 \times 11$
 $8 - 5 \times (01 + 11)$

Hard puzzle 1



Solution for Hard 1
 $36 - 22 + 5 \times 11$



Across

- 4 They use ink (4)
- 7 #2s, e.g. (7)
- 8 Old-fashioned "undo" buttons (7)
- 10 It's not a giant reptile (9)
- 12 Straight edge (5)

Down

- 1 Liquid "eraser" (8)
- 2 Looseleaf, graph, or computer (5)
- 3 Computer memory (10)
- 5 Artist's trimmer (8)
- 6 For cold season (7)
- 9 Permanent markers (8)
- 11 Handy tool to have when you're out of loose-leaf paper (9)
- 13 Paper holders (7)

- 14 One or two-sided (4)
- 15 Stickum (4)
- 16 Detachable covers (7)
- 17 "Magic" writing implements (7)

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Stan Krzyston, pastor



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