

# THE EPOCH TIMES LIFE & TRADITION

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People used to think Newport's thoughts on social media were 'eccentric if not downright dangerous.' A lot has changed since then.

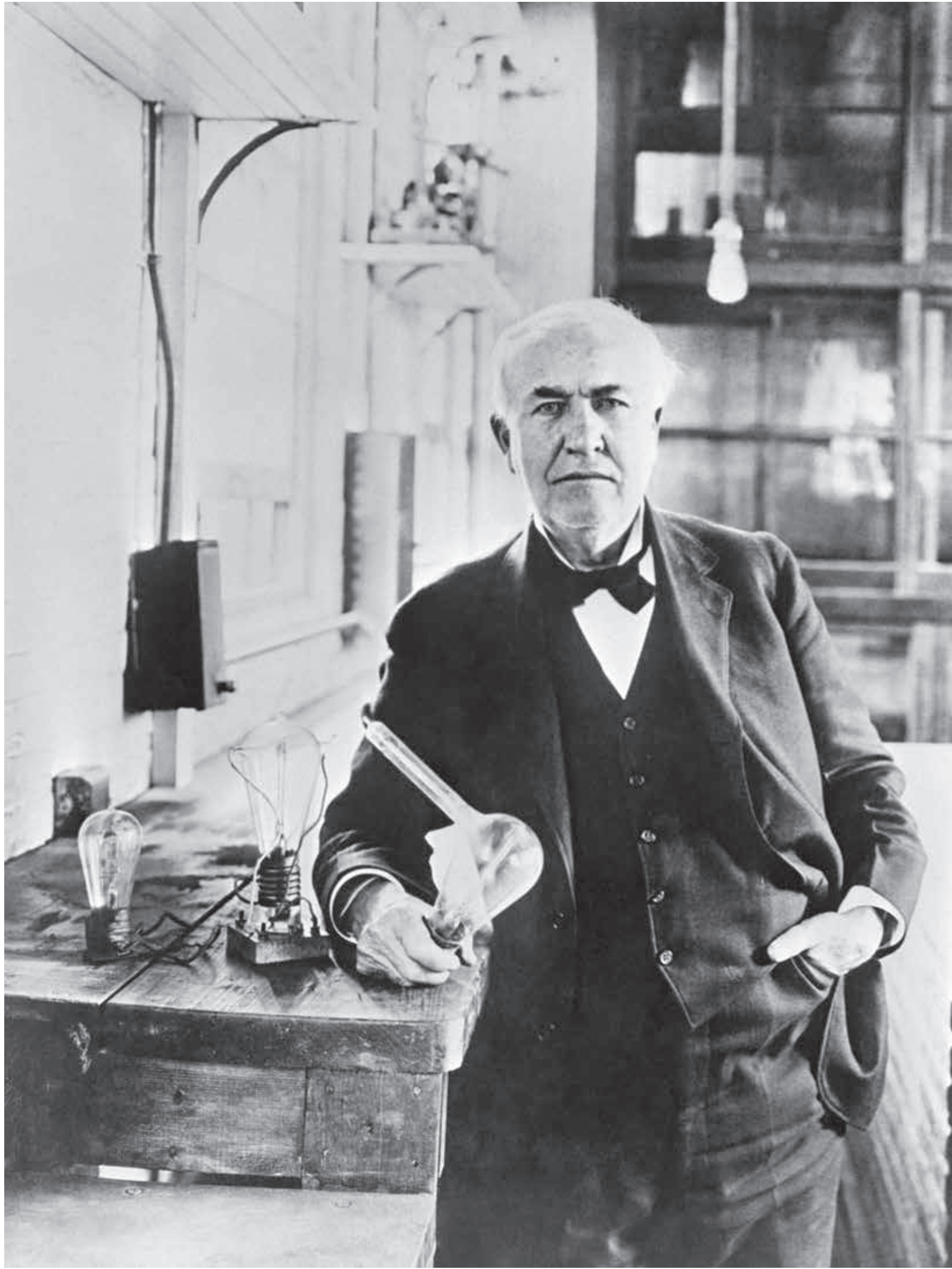
# Cal Newport

ON ATTENTION IN AN AGE OF DIGITAL DISTRACTION

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Thomas Edison was famous for not letting failure deter him.



## It's a Hard Knock Life: Teaching Resiliency to Our Young People

JEFF MINICK

I was in the public library browsing Sam Weinman's "Win at Losing: How Our Biggest Setbacks Can Lead to Our Biggest Gains," when one chapter stopped my fingers dead in their tracks. I found a chair, read for a few minutes, and remembered Susan Lucci.

From 1970 to 2011, Lucci played Erica Kane on the soap opera "All My Children." While I never watched this show, Susan Lucci was a household name, not because of her role on television but because for 18 years, she received an Emmy nomination for the "Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series" and for 18 years, she walked away from the ceremony without a trophy. Her losing streak became a measuring stick of failure, a national metaphor applied to other losers. As Weinman writes, the Chicago Cubs were the "Susan Lucci of baseball," the Buffalo Bills "the Susan Lucci of football," and Martin Scorsese "the Susan Lucci of the Oscars."

And then, in year 19, Lucci won that coveted Emmy. In this brief chapter, Weinman introduces us to a woman who, though bitterly disappointed by failure, never gave up and rarely let others witness her sorrow. Year after year, she returned home from the Emmys, closed her bedroom door to hide her tears from her children, wept, and then returned to work the next day, determined to perform to the best of her ability. According to Weinman, Lucci's example deeply influenced her children, especially her son Andreas, who "maintains that his mother's experience proved instructive in how to handle setbacks, even if it wasn't something she sought to teach explicitly."

Which brings me to today's young people. Most of us have children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews, and other young people in our orbit who undergo disappointments. John, who spent hours training over the summer, gets cut from the football team. Julie spends

her soccer season warming the bench. Second-grader Amanda comes home from school sobbing because she got demerits for talking too much in class. Ten-year-old Becky isn't invited to a birthday party attended by her friends. Her older brother Doug earns unacceptable grades of C in math quizzes. Samantha has spent years hoping to attend State, but is refused admission.

When these troubles occur, most of us want to rush to the defense of our children. We tell John and Julie their coaches are blockheads. We meet with Amanda's teacher to complain about her punishment, and we telephone the birthday party mom to ask why Becky was left off the invitation list. We console Doug and Samantha, telling them they are just as good as anyone else.

This desire to protect our children is a natural instinct.

But is it good for them in the long run?

Google "Are students socially and emotionally pre-

Resiliency comes to us from the Latin 'resilire,' meaning 'to rebound' or 'leap back.'

pared for college?" and up pops a chorus of negative replies. When failure comes knocking at the door, as it does for so many freshmen, these stressed and anxious students don't know how to handle the consequences. They're strangers to that awful sensation known as "falling on your face."

They're missing a key ingredient for success in school and in life: resiliency.

Resiliency comes to us from the Latin "resilire," meaning to "rebound" or "leap back." Students heading off to university who have never studied in that other classroom—"the school of hard knocks"—are missing a tool more vital to success than an AP Chemistry course or a straight-A average. Even a minor setback can beat them to their knees.

### Our Responsibility

Part of their lack of resiliency is our responsibility. Those of us who deal with the misfortunes of our young people walk a rough road. When something

goes wrong, our protective instinct kicks in, and we want to ward off the blows life throws at them.

This mama bear/cub approach can have long-term consequences. Once, for example, a grown man, now deceased, told me his parents always took his side against the teacher, no matter what the circumstances. He was proud of their defense.

Probably a bad idea. Given this man's history, definitely a bad idea.

No—if we wish to build resiliency in our young people, we must sometimes resist this urge to remove all obstacles from their path, to become what some now call "lawnmower parents." We can offer help, but must then step away and allow them to grapple on their own with the trouble at hand. This wrestling match with hardship, with expectations and plans gone awry, can build in them a sense of independence, a realization that failure is not an enemy so long as we learn from the experience.

In "The Obstacle Is the Way: The Timeless Art of Turning Trials Into Triumphs," Ryan Holiday writes that "obstacles are actually opportunities to test ourselves, to try new things, and, ultimately, to triumph." We overcome these obstacles using many tools, particularly resilience and perseverance, which, as Holiday tells us, the Germans call "sitzfleisch"—staying power.

Holiday recounts dozens of examples of human beings who possessed sitzfleisch, figures ranging from Amelia Earhart to Erwin Rommel, from Abraham Lincoln to the boxer Jack Johnson. My favorite of Holiday's examples was an anecdote about Thomas Edison, who one evening raced from his home to his research and production plant when he learned it had caught fire. Fueled by chemicals in the various buildings, the flames were soon shooting up seven and eight stories high.

"Edison calmly but quickly made his way to the fire, through the now hundreds of onlookers and devastated employees, looking for his son. 'Go get your mother and all her friends,' he told his son with childlike excitement. 'They'll never see a fire like this again.'"

That is resilience in spades.

And if we become adept at resiliency, failure can be a great teacher. The history student who pulls an all-nighter, dashes off 800 words on Napoleon, and hands the essay to the teacher in the morning, only to have it returned splashed with red ink and a grade of D, may absorb a lesson as well as a poor grade. He rebounds, and begins his next paper a week ahead of its due date.

The next time your high school sophomore fiddles around on the Xbox all evening and then flunks his biology test, or your daughter forgets to bring to school that math homework the teacher checks daily, pause and think before you decide whether to intervene.

Learning to take responsibility and to rebound from failure can be painful, but possession of it is one of the keys to a great life.

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](http://JeffMinick.com) to follow his blog.

# Break Out of Depression by Focusing on These 4 Pillars of Health

Balanced eating, sleeping, activity, and relationships support positive mental health

MICHAEL COURTER

Jessica and Bill came to my office with their daughter, who has entered into a deep depression since she graduated from high school two months ago. Amber, a straight-A student, is about to move away to start her freshman year at her top-choice university in three weeks. She hasn't been out of bed in almost a week, and she still seems to be going downhill. Bill says that Amber has always been wound tightly and she's just feeling nervous about leaving home.

"She didn't get all of those A's sitting around relaxing all day," Bill chuckles. Jessica says that Amber has had a few "dark months" as she called them, but has always bounced back. It's never been this bad. She doesn't even think Amber can make it to school like this. Amber insists that she hasn't been using any drugs or alcohol and isn't having second thoughts about moving out. So what is going on?

Depression is a biological, psychological, social, and spiritual condition. While depression includes a depressed mood, it also affects sleep, eating, energy levels, self-image, motivation, concentration, and the experiencing of emotions.

According to researchers, some form of depression affects about 16 million Americans in a given year, and about 25 million Americans take antidepressants regularly. Depression is the way that some people react to chronic stress, loneliness, relationship conflicts, trauma, or other types of environmental stresses.

However, it can also be caused or made worse by a consistent lack of structure, purpose, and meaningful activity. Addressing that aspect of depression is the purpose of this article.

### The Importance of Structure

Work and school create a schedule and structure for most people. Frankly, some people will start to fall into a depression within a few weeks if they don't have a regular schedule or consistent activities planned in their day. That's one of the reasons why many people will become depressed when they're out of work or school or when they retire. They lose the activities that used to



anchor their day, and they don't re-create a schedule for themselves.

In the above example, I started asking Amber about her lifestyle since school got out. She said that she had worked so hard in school she just wanted a break for the summer to relax before starting college. She told her mom she wanted to take the summer off and she wished she could just sleep for a week. Since she didn't have anything to do, she slept later and later each day and stayed up later each night. She laid around the house all day relaxing, binge-watching shows on Netflix, eating junk food, and scrolling through Instagram.

She also had a tendency to go into depression, as indicated by "dark months" her mother described, and her highly anxious approach to school.

### Pillars of Mental Health

When I assess people who say they're depressed, I focus on five major factors that I think of as the pillars of mental health: eating, sleeping, activity, relationships, and stress. In analyzing Amber's situation, a big picture of her life began to emerge—a common, self-reinforcing pattern with people who have depression. She was sleeping late into the day and couldn't fall asleep at night. She didn't start eating until later in the day and didn't participate in any meaningful activities. She felt guilty that she wasn't being more productive or useful and anxious that she wasn't completing the small number of responsibilities she had.

To break out of a depression that's caused or made worse by a lack of structure, follow these steps.

**1. Develop a regular sleep pattern.** Start by making the change to your morning waking time and don't take a nap. You can't fall asleep at night if you haven't been awake and active enough during the day. Decide on a time that you will wake up every day, but don't try to do that on the first day. You might have to gradually move your waking time back by 15 to 30 minutes per day until you reach it. Once you have a regular sleep pattern, maintain it as often as you can. The best way to have a sleep routine is to fall asleep and wake

Schedule activities for yourself. You need to be physically and socially active for at least four or five hours per day.

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

## Psychoanalyst: Forget Political Correctness, Kids Need Both Parents

ANNIE HOLMQUIST

When I was a young college student trying to feel my way through classes and take assignments seriously, I dutifully weighed in on an online discussion board with a few thoughts on the disadvantages faced by children raised in single-parent homes.

Big mistake. I was lambasted with emotional responses, the essence of which can be summarized as, "I was raised by a single mom! I turned out just fine!" Over the years, I've learned such responses aren't limited to college students. I get it. Single mothers have rough lives and do yeoman's work, many sacrificing constantly to give the best to their children. They need all the love and support we can give.

But giving love and support doesn't mean that we should ignore the fact that children raised with only one parent—Mom or Dad—face various life disadvantages. Psychoanalyst Erica Komisar understands this.

Writing in The Wall Street Journal, Komisar says that "Political Correctness Is Bad for Kids," citing a new poll in which nearly 70 percent of those with a liberal political affiliation disagree with the idea that "marriage is needed to create strong families." Those who think this way are wrong, says Komisar. "It's a shame that political correctness inhibits discussions of what's best for children."

She lists three disadvantages that come from growing up without a father and a mother. I repeat them here because they illuminate several head-scratching trends we've seen among millennials and those in Gen Z.

### The past several years are full of stories about a generation that can't seem to make it on its own. They don't know how to cook, or clean, or do 'adulting' tasks.

#### 1. Losing the Apron Strings

"Children need a balance of secure attachment and healthy separation, and the traditional two-parent structure provides it. Mothers are uniquely suited for sensitive nurturing, which helps regulate distress and is critical to early development. Fathers provide balance by teaching children to regulate their aggression and become independent. In my practice, I have seen an increasing number of moms who are single by choice. Although the mothers have the attachment part down, they don't

have a man around to help the separation process, and the kids struggle as a result."

The past several years are full of stories about a generation that can't seem to make it on its own. They don't know how to cook, or clean, or do "adulting" tasks. They have trouble going to college interviews or navigating their first real job without Mom playing advocate and running interference for them. There could be other factors at work, but is it possible the increasing absence of fathers has gotten our kids into this mess?

Is the current generation of young people unable to spread their wings and fly because Dad is so often the one who helps them cut the apron strings?

#### 2. Marriage Decline

"Children of single parents also lack the opportunity to observe a loving relationship between two adults, and that can interfere with their ability to form relationships when they grow up. These losses

can be repaired only if they are acknowledged."

Another trending topic in recent years is the inability of young people to properly date, marry, and raise a family. Theories abound—it's video games, or social media, or the explosion of choices on dating apps that keep young people from settling down like they once did. What if they just don't know how? We learn by example. If the example of a father and mother loving each other is absent, or if those stories of "how I met your mother" aren't there, won't it be much harder for young people to make their way to the altar?

#### 3. Behavioral Issues

"Traditional family structures have fostered a division of labor in which the father earns money and the mother cares for children. That

balance has become more difficult even for two-parent families, but single parents have far more difficulty. Along with the emotional challenges, this can contribute to a cycle of poverty. Children in single-parent families are likelier to have emotional and behavioral problems, to drop out of school and to be poor as adults."

The worsening behavior of children is a topic of conversation in almost every generation. But with tales of violence and disrespect against teachers proliferating in the last few years, it seems safe to say that the current generation wins the prize for having the most emotional and behavioral problems.

Would today's teachers have more time to spend on instruction if they didn't have to deal with the emotional fallout from America's broken homes?

Annie Holmquist is an editor at *Intellectual Takeout*. This article was originally published on *Intellectual Takeout*.



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# Cal Newport

## ON ATTENTION IN AN AGE OF DIGITAL DISTRACTION

CATHERINE YANG

Only a few years ago, Cal Newport's ideas about digital distraction and social media made him an outlier. He was a millennial who read a print newspaper and never had a social media account, during a time when every small business was starting, if not an account, a whole department.

And even though no one could give Newport a compelling argument for using social media, they asked without a hint of irony, but what if by not having an account, he missed out on a potential opportunity?

"People used to think my thoughts on social media were eccentric if not downright dangerous," he said. "When I wrote an op-ed in *The New York Times* in 2016 that said social media was not as important for their careers as many young people think, the outrage was so strong that the paper commissioned a response op-ed for the next week to argue against my points."

Less than a year later, the tide was turning. "Starting around early 2017, I noticed this reaction begin to change. People were increasingly receptive to this idea that there might be something rotten about our relationship with our digital devices," Newport said.

Newport is the author of several books, including "Deep Work" and most recently "Digital Minimalism," which both deal directly with our relationship with digital distraction.

He's a computer scientist at Georgetown University and grapples with mathematical theorems for a living—exactly the kind of field that requires deep work, or pushing your cognitive capabilities to their limit. He has published more than 60 peer-reviewed papers that have been cited more than 3,500 times. So he was, in fact, incredibly aware of the sort of cognitive noise that can immediately have a negative, and accumulated, impact on your ability to focus and concentrate.

**Better**  
In 2008, Newport titled an introspective journal entry, "Better."

In it, he laid out a vision for his personal and professional life, and ended it with the earnest request to "accept only excellence from myself." By the end of the year, he had an entry titled "The Plan," in which he listed his values in the categories of relationships, virtues, and qualities.



Newport shows that if you spend enough time fragmenting your attention, you can permanently reduce your capacity to even do deep work.

The digital minimalists Newport interviewed had felt they were losing their autonomy and time to their devices. They redirected their energy to pursuits that mattered to them.

## About That Che T-Shirt

Think twice about adding a Guevara T-shirt to your Christmas giving this year

LAWRENCE W. REED

Let's say that all you knew about Adolf Hitler was that he painted scenic pictures, postcards, and houses in Vienna, loved dogs, and named his adorable German Shepherd "Blondie," and frequently expressed solidarity with "the people." You might sport a T-shirt adorned with his image if you thought such a charismatic chap was also good looking in a beret.

But your education would be widely regarded as incomplete. If you later found out that the guy on your T-shirt was a mass murderer, you might ask your oppression-studies professor why she left

out a few important details. This hypothetical resembles a real-world phenomenon seen today on numerous college campuses. Fifty-two years after his demise in Bolivia—on Oct. 9, 1967—the maniacal socialist Ernesto "Che" Guevara is still making headlines and spoiling perfectly good clothes.

In film and pop culture, Guevara comes off as an adventurous motorcyclist, a humble-living commoner, a romantic egalitarian revolutionary, and a swashbuckling sex symbol. His ghastly history as one of Fidel Castro's favorite thugs routinely gets whitewashed because, in spite of all the murders, he supposedly had good intentions (read: hate the rich, concentrate

power, eliminate dissent, help the poor by creating more of them).

In his remarkable 2007 volume, "Exposing the Real Che Guevara and the Useful Idiots Who Idolize Him," acclaimed journalist Humberto Fontova contrasted the fiction with the facts in these terms:

"Who Was Ernesto 'Che' Guevara?  
"Myth: International man of the people. Humanitarian. Brave freedom fighter. Lover of literature and life. Advocate of the poor and oppressed. Reality: Cold-blooded murderer. Sadistic torturer. Power-hungry materialist. Terrorist who inspired destruction and blood-

shed through Latin America."

Here are some lesser-known info bits about the psychopath-on-the-T-shirt, drawn from Fontova's book and other sources:

- He publicly applauded the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 and denounced the student protesters battling Soviet tanks in Budapest as "fascists."
- Upon the victory of the 1959 communist revolution in Cuba, Guevara commandeered for himself one of the most luxurious mansions in Havana—complete with a yacht harbor, monster swimming pool, seven bathrooms, sauna and massage

salon, and five television sets.

- Guevara played a leading role in the Cuban Literacy Campaign of 1961 and, at the same time, helped direct the regime's brutal policy of crushing dissenting opinion and opposition media. As Fontova documented in his biography, he "promoted book burning and signed death warrants for authors who disagreed with him." Communist despots routinely teach reading and writing but work even harder at making sure you only read and write what they want you to. Guevara's first public book-burning set more than 3,000 books ablaze on a Havana street.
- Even Guevara's adoring hagiog-

"In my professional life, I've always been surrounded by people who do high-impact work at elite levels, so I've always been driven to understand how I can get better and better at what I do," Newport said. "This mindset of continual improvements was simply in the air around me at that stage of life, and seemed as natural as breathing."

It was, in many ways, a natural progression. In 2006, Newport had published his first book, "How to Win at College," for students, which includes the tip "always be working on a 'grand project.'"

Newport was a student himself at the time and had found college advice books written to be too fluffy, or talking down to students. Before the books, he had actually been the humor columnist for the student newspaper at Dartmouth.

"Once I started down the path of writing, I found I had a knack for it, and so I kept going long after I moved beyond my student years," Newport said.

He published "How to Become a Straight-A Student," and then started blogging about study hacks, and published "How to Be a High School Superstar." In 2010, he got interested in the idea of "Simplicity 2.0," or the power of specialized craftsmanship in our age of general-purpose computing, and the danger of passion-driven career planning. These ideas are explored in length in his last three books.

With "So Good They Can't Ignore You: Why Skills Trump Passion in the Quest for Work You Love," Newport debunked the passion hypothesis ("do what you love," or "follow your dreams") showing that it's not only wrong, but dangerous. He compares it to the "craftsman mindset," which instead "focuses on what you can offer the world" while "the passion mindset focuses instead on what the world can offer you." The latter has a track record for leading to disappointment and unhappiness, as he shows through interviews and stories. This book focused on the importance of skill, the beginnings of his attention capital theory.

If his ethos seems clear and unwavering, as he writes in his books, it's because he has carved out the solitude necessary to form his ideas and values. He describes a stack of 12 black Moleskine notebooks, accounting for roughly one per year, with one more in his work bag.

It turns out, knowing yourself is the beginning of an antidote to digital distraction.

**Connected 24/7**

"Deep Work" begins with psychiatrist Carl Jung writing away in a locked private office in a village by the lake.

It goes on to share stories of other acclaimed individuals who eschew email and instant messaging in order to have long stretches of uninterrupted time, during which they churn out sometimes groundbreaking work in a relatively short period of time. Newport aimed to show the reader how to do that.

The book was published in 2016, and he has since many times had to explain that he isn't, in fact, a neo-Luddite (in fact, he's excited about new developments in artificial intelligence and virtual reality).

"Deep work is necessary to wring every last drop of value out of your current intellectual capacity," he wrote in the first chapter. Many professions require nothing short of this, for one to stand out. But Newport found that with the rise of email and other methods for constant communication, even workers in these fields were working longer hours, dedicating more time to messaging and relegating the actual work to early or late hours outside the office. Knowing this, it's hard to make a case for email's ability to aid productivity.

There's a bigger cost than merely wast-



It's important to have a physical hobby. "Our brains are wired to crave manipulating our physical world with our hands," Newport said.

ing time. Newport shows that if you spend enough time fragmenting your attention, you can permanently reduce your capacity to even do deep work.

After publishing "Deep Work," Newport planned to write about what the workplace might look like going forward if we actually got rid of email and Slack. He wanted to explore this idea of attention capital theory, that in modern knowledge work, the primary capital resource is the human brain.

But feedback from readers of "Deep Work" took him in another direction.

People kept asking, what about our personal lives? How can I apply these principles outside of the workplace?

Later that year, Newport was on a beach in the Bahamas when he finally found the words: "digital minimalism."

That was essentially the philosophy he was advocating for, to take the principles of minimalism and apply them to how you use technology. Rather than trying to make a case for whether Facebook or Twitter is good or bad, he outlines a broader philosophy, asking whether an app or platform adds positive value to your life (and making very specific arguments for elements that don't).

**Autonomy Versus Convenience**

Instead of social media, Newport has an "interesting" inbox, a public-facing email where his readers and followers can send him links to articles, books, studies, and other things that may be of interest to him.

"I love my interesting inbox," he said. "I learn a lot from what comes through that channel."

"In this way, it provides the same value to me that social media does for many others, but does so without any engineered addiction."

In preparing to write the book, Newport had reached out to his readers to ask if anyone would be interested in trying out a "digital declutter." He expected maybe 40 or 50 brave souls to venture forward; 1,600 signed up.

The results were interesting: people old enough to remember life without the internet talked about reconnecting with old hobbies and interests that were perhaps lost to them with their time sunk into scrolling on their phones. But people who had practically grown up with smartphones felt like they had stepped out into the void. There was real existential fear because they didn't have anything to fill the void, or know how to go about beginning.

It solidified Newport's theory that the tips and tricks and weekend digital detoxes weren't enough. Especially if those tips relied on depriving oneself of something we had before. People needed an underlying philosophy and values to have a staying

reason to use tech in a way that would only improve their lives. "Digital Minimalism" contains not just philosophy, but a practical 30-day guide. He even presents a philosophy for socializing in the digital age.

Newport also interviewed digital minimalists who actually live a variety of lifestyles. Some use social media in a clever and intentional way, some find they don't miss it after all. What it really came down to was reclaiming autonomy.

"Most of the digital minimalists I encountered were people who became fed up with how much of their time they felt they were losing to their devices. They felt like they were losing autonomy, so went looking for ways to redirect their energy back to what really mattered to them," he said.

In a podcast interview, he used heavier terms to describe what he was hearing: "People were getting the sense that their humanity itself was being degraded."

This was a huge shift in public opinion from when he was writing "Deep Work."

**Work, Leisure, and AI**

In one book, Newport interviews a talented 16-year-old professional banjo player who lives a monastic lifestyle and derives fulfillment from spending hours on improving technique. In another, he tells the story of a craftsman of handmade furniture who wrote a book subtitled "Creative Focus in the Age of Distraction."

These types of stories demonstrate the importance of concentration and skill, but they also help Newport make a point about the importance of having a physical hobby.

"Our brains are wired to crave manipulating our physical world with our hands; to see intentions made manifest concretely," he said. "Physical crafts satisfy this craving in a way that no amount of digital memes can approach."

"In my own life, recently, I've been getting into soldering together circuits—usually for little toys or gadgets for my kids. I'm also struggling to get a cool drip irrigation system up and running in our gardens."

Newport writes about the difference between low-quality leisure and high-quality leisure, the kind Aristotle identified as crucial for human happiness. These are pursuits he recommends people develop before they try to quit social media or declutter their digital life, not after, in order to prevent that miserable feeling of the void.

Part of this advice includes creating a "leisure plan," a strategy for committing to high-quality pursuits. It can be seasonal or weekly, and ideally consists of both objectives and habits you intend to honor for that period ("Attend one cultural event per week").

Newport has three young children, so the family's leisure plan tends to center around activities appropriate for them. "Interesting museums, nature centers, hikes, visits to relatives, games, and family movie nights," he said.

Despite his work on the dangers of the attention economy, with companies like Facebook and Twitter making money off your eyeballs and having every incentive to press forward, Newport is an optimist.

"Right now, in the world of knowledge work, we are making very poor use of the brains we employ. This is going to shift," Newport said. This is the subject for his next book, "World Without Email," set for publication next year. "We will look back at our current workflows—which depend on frenetic communication—with puzzlement."

Newport also thinks AI will ultimately help solve some of these problems, and "minimize unproductive busyness in the workplace—which is making whole sectors of our economy miserable."

COURTESY OF PENNY GRAY PHOTOGRAPHY



Author Cal Newport.

“Deep work is necessary to wring every last drop of value out of your current intellectual capacity.”

Cal Newport



People pass by a flag depicting Argentine-born revolutionary leader Ernesto "Che" Guevara during the 84th edition of the annual "Fete de l'Humanite" music festival in the Paris suburb of La Courneuve on Sept. 14, 2019.

nomics minister" and president of the country's National Bank. Within months, the Cuban peso was practically worthless. Castro appointed him minister of industries, too. In that job, Guevara proved equally incompe-

tent. Once he bought a fleet of snowplows from Czechoslovakia because he thought they would make excellent sugar cane harvesters, but sadly the machines simply squashed and killed the plants.

Guevara was Castro's economic czar, although he knew nothing about economics beyond Marxist bumper stickers. His former deputy, Ernesto Betancourt, said he was "ignorant of the most elementary economic principles." Nonetheless, he actually wrote communist Cuba's agrarian reform law, limiting the size of all farms and creating state-run communes. Production plummeted and is still lower today than before the revolution.

The Soviet missiles in Cuba that nearly precipitated a world war in 1962 were Guevara's idea. When the Soviets were pressured by the Kennedy administration to remove them, Guevara publicly declared that if the missiles had been under Cuban control, they would have been fired at the U.S. because the cause of socialism was worth "millions of atomic-war victims."

Guevara left Cuba in 1965 to fo-

ment violent insurrections first in Africa and then back in Latin America. He was captured by the Bolivian military on Oct. 8, 1967, and was administered a dose of his own summary medicine the next day.

Bottom line: Think twice (actually, just once ought to be enough) about adding a Che Guevara T-shirt to your Christmas giving this year.

Lawrence W. Reed is president emeritus, Humphreys Family senior fellow, and Ron Manners ambassador for Global Liberty at the Foundation for Economic Education. He is also the author of "Real Heroes: Incredible True Stories of Courage, Character, and Conviction" and "Excuse Me, Professor: Challenging the Myths of Progressivism." This article was originally published on FEE.org





MATT SEYMOUR/UNSPLOASH

aren't being spent on high-paying jobs. Furthermore, cutting your monthly expenses will help you to afford doing things you love while paying off your debt. Unfortunately, young people today aren't as good at saving as the last generations, so finding ways to stop spending so much might not be all that easy—at first.

So how do you live frugally in a potentially difficult economy and with the price of everything on the rise?

If you live in a big city, explore the idea of having roommates, especially if you're close to a college campus.

Former college colleagues might be in the same boat and might be more than willing to share an apartment with you. But if that's not an option, how about finding current students who are looking to save some money by sharing a place?

When budgeting for food, remember to keep it simple and cheap by not going out to eat.

There are countless online accounts that teach you how to cook simple and cheap meals at home. They provide recipes, shopping lists, and even video tutorials. This is a great way to learn and save money. Also, consider slashing Starbucks and other side expenses that aren't a necessity from your monthly budget. You will be surprised to know you could be saving over \$2,000 per year!

Whatever you save, put it toward paying off your debt. Remember, making more than the minimum payment each month is the best way to get rid of debt rapidly.

**3: Explore Tax Deductions and Other Credits**

When working on your tax returns, keep in mind you might be eligible for student loan interest deductions even if you don't itemize your taxes. While some requirements must be met, this could easily deduct up to \$2,500 on your taxes yearly, helping you to keep more of your money and put it toward paying off debt.

While taxation is a drag on our efforts to make ends meet, it's important to take advantage of any and all tax deductions we can get. Especially if we're in the red.

**4: Make Extra Payments**

Sounds like a no-brainer, right? And that's because it is. But simply sending the financing company an extra check every month won't do. After all, many firms simply apply any extra payment to the next month's bill, and this won't help you pay your loan faster.

The right way to send extra payments monthly is to contact your service provider in advance and instruct them to apply any extra payment to that month's due balance without changing anything about the next month's due date. By following this strategy, you could be debt-free years ahead of schedule.

**5: Refinance (But Only if You Meet Requirements)**

The idea of refinancing is to be able to bring your interest rate low enough that your student loan debt will be faster to repay. Unfortunately, not everyone is eligible to take this shortcut, since it requires good credit and steady employment.

Before considering taking this route, check your credit. If it's in the high 600s and you have a history of on-time debt payments and solid, steady income, then you're a good candidate for refinancing.

For instance, if you have \$50,000 in debt and you refinance it, lowering your 8.5 percent interest rate to 4.5 percent, you could end up paying off your debt two years earlier than you originally expected.

Think ahead, friends, and you will go far.

Another advantage of refinancing is that it replaces several student loans with one private loan. You pay to one service provider at a lower rate, and you can choose new loan terms that are shorter and that will help to save you big bucks in the end. While this may drive your monthly payment minimums up, it will save you money in the long run and make your everyday life easier—even if you have to hustle a bit for a few years before being able to relax and enjoy your hard-earned money!

However, if you have a federal loan that offers benefits such as income-driven repayments, refinance won't be the best option.

So what are you waiting for? Should be debt-free and ready to even start saving for retirement! Think ahead, friends, and you will go far.

*Chloe Anagnos is a professional writer, digital strategist, and marketer. This article was originally published on FEE.org*

**Making more than the minimum payment each month is the best way to get rid of debt rapidly.**

**2: Find Yourself a Side Gig**  
Side gigs are in style these days, and that has a lot to do with student loan debt repayment. A lot of people find that their single-job income isn't enough. Like others who found themselves in need of extra work, you, too, might have to take on a side gig.

If you have a car, you might want to join Uber or Lyft and do a little hustling a few days here and there. You could even rent your car to others who don't have one. But if neither of those options will work for you, using sites such as Fiverr and TaskRabbit to make some extra spending money, or even renting a room in your home on Airbnb, could do the trick. You could also be part of mock juries for extra cash, as lawyers are always trying to test their cases to mock juries before going to court. To those living near law schools, this might be extra easy.

In addition to gigs that don't require any special skills, there are also side gigs you might be qualified for that could help you pay off your debt sooner.

If you like dogs, you can become a pet sitter using sites such as Rover, Petsitter.com, or even looking for opportunities on Craigslist. And if you have special skills, such as knowing other languages, you can work as a translator on Gengo or Upwork or find companies looking for part-time remote workers.

You can also use Amazon Mechanical Turk to do easy tasks such as visit websites, identify objects on photos or videos, fill out surveys, write content, and others that don't require much time.

Whatever you do, keep it simple. There are plenty of opportunities, especially if you can work online and from home in your spare time.

of thousands of dollars in the red the moment they step out of school. And if alumni aren't careful, that reality could affect their credit and their chances to own a home or even buy a car.

So how do you speed up the process of paying off your student loan without putting everything you earn toward your debt? And how can you follow through before turning 30?

Here are five practical tips that literally everyone can follow to put an end to student debt quickly.

**1: Live Frugally**

Sounds like your grandpa's advice, right? That's because it is. And you know what? He was right: trimming your budget never fails. Especially if your first years as a professional

# 5 Tips on How to Pay Off That Student Loan Before You're 30

CHLOE ANAGNOS

College isn't the best option for everyone. Some will do just as well, if not better, by learning their craft through apprenticeships or by simply enrolling in a trade school. But when college is part of your calling and you simply can't juggle a part-time job and school, taking on student loans might be your only option. If this is your case, don't despair. It's true that the government's long history of getting involved with the student loan industry made the situation worse. But despite the evidence, regulators don't seem ready to get out of the picture just yet, meaning the cost of a college education will continue to rise. To many, this means tens

# US Teachers Take Hands-On Approach to Financial Literacy

NEW YORK—There are a lot of hard truths about money, but here is one of the hardest: We're really bad at passing along money smarts.

As it stands, only 57 percent of American adults can be considered financially literate, according to a global survey by Standard & Poor's. A new initiative from fundraising website DonorsChoose.org and the Charles Schwab Foundation is aiming to change that with a new hands-on approach. Rather than kids reading about starting a business, why not actually open a school store? Rather than reading about concepts like supply and demand, why not start making T-shirts, and see if they can sell them? The "Innovation Challenge" prompts teachers to craft creative FinLit projects, helps them get funded, and then monitors which ones pay off. "Experiential learning is so important, especially for lower-income families," said Casey Cortese, managing director of Schwab's

community services, which is taking a new hands-on approach to teaching financial literacy. "If you make lessons tangible and real, it really cements learning."

This year's overall winner of an online fan vote: Students of Rapunzel Galang in Lanham, Maryland, undertook virtual-reality field trips to different historical landmarks through time. They did that using VR headsets—but first, they had to plan, budget, and pay for such trips, by researching about the places they wanted to visit.

Another innovative project: Xavier Lewis in Dayton, Texas, combined financial literacy with a "Mission to Mars" STEM project. Students earned money in their virtual bank accounts with attendance, class participation, and completing assignments. They could then spend that money to buy supplies to assemble rockets, rovers, and hovercrafts for a simulated flight to Mars. Other projects included creating a virtual-reality bank, filming

a how-to video series on personal finance, using dinosaurs to pass along money lessons, and teaching the idea of "wants versus needs" via dramatic play.

**Keep It Going**

While 92 percent of teachers say financial education is important, only 12 percent actually undertake it—because they just don't have the resources, said Cortese. To combat that with the Innovation Challenge, 15 of the top projects were developed into full lesson plans. Teachers across the country could then download them for free and use them in their own classes. The first 200 teachers who did so, and submitted a report on how it went, got a \$250 credit to apply to future projects on the site. The initiative has encouraged educators to think bigger and more creatively than just using a crowdfunding site like DonorsChoose to cover things like basic supplies. Since the Innovation Challenge



MLADEN MITRINOVIC/SHUTTERSTOCK

You can teach young children about money smarts today, but you won't know for years whether those habits have actually taken root.

first got started, "There has been a 66 percent increase in FinLit projects posted," said Rianne Roberts, partnerships manager for the fundraising site. Financial literacy is a long game, though. You can teach a third grader about money smarts today, but you will not know for years whether those habits have actually taken root. When the Schwab Foundation first started partnering with the site in 2017, 350 teachers participated in its financial literacy campaigns,

reaching 36,000 students. In 2019, by comparison, they have already reached 1,600 teachers and 250,000 students. So far this year, Schwab donated \$375,000 to the Innovation Challenge, and \$500,000 total to DonorsChoose. Of those teachers who used the resulting materials, 98 percent said they plan to keep teaching financial literacy in schools. By Chris Taylor From Reuters

# FOR KIDS ONLY

THE EPOCH TIMES

WEEK 44, 2019

**Select Rhyming Riddles**

Courtesy of The Society of Classical Poets

by Evan Mantyk  
I am a net for catching intruders,  
A weapon for a cold blooded murder  
An elegant plate for eating supper  
And a mode of transport that is super,  
Have a try,  
Who am I?

by Mike Munsell  
The prankster's favorite home decor,  
Clockwise or counter, the choice is yours.  
Never eaten, found in bowls.  
Around I go, I'm on a roll.  
What am I?

by Evan Mantyk  
A part of a book, a hair off a tree,  
Come to my hot tub, I'll make you some tea!  
What am I?

ANSWERS: A SPIDER WEB, TOILET PAPER, A LEAF

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

**WHERE DO GHOSTS LIKE TO GO ON VACATION?**

MYTHJA/SHUTTERSTOCK

**I'm so glad I live in a world where there are Octobers.**

L.M. MONTGOMERY, AUTHOR (1874-1942)

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA (C-0111298 (PORTRAIT)); SARMS/SHUTTERSTOCK (LEAVES)

# This Week in History

**WALL STREET CRASHES**

The crowd outside the New York Stock Exchange on Oct. 24, 1929.

On Oct. 24, 1929, stock prices on the New York Stock Exchange collapsed, losing a record 13 percent of its value in one day—a day that became known as Black Thursday. Losses continued until the next Tuesday (Black Tuesday). It was the most significant stock market crash in U.S. history.

The crash was preceded by a crash of the London Stock Exchange the month before and marked the beginning of the Great Depression—a devastating, worldwide financial crisis that lasted over the decade following the Great Crash.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

By Aidan Danza, age 13

# ANIMALS OF HALLOWEEN

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

**Bats, owls, and black cats—what do they all share?**

It's Halloween time, and these animals are the stars of the show, often featured on holiday decorations. But why are these particular animals supposed to be so scary? Why isn't the pigeon the meanest, most terrifying animal out there?

**OWLS**  
Owls have a very mixed reputation. The ancient Greeks revered the little owl as their goddess Athena's pet. Athena was the goddess of wisdom in Greece, and so owls were said to be very wise (sound familiar?). On the other hand, the Romans believed that owls were messengers to witches, and that witches would turn themselves into owls and suck people's blood. Some also believed that owl hoots symbolize death. There are other spooky owl stories. For example, it is said if an owl makes a nest in a vacant house, it's haunted, because owls are the only creatures that can live with ghosts.

**BLACK CATS**  
Black cats are associated with witches, because according to medieval European legend, witches turned into them and back. In Greek mythology, the Greek queen of the gods, Hera, was planning one of her many spiteful plots. This plot was foiled by a servant. Hera turned her into a black cat as punishment, and the cat eventually became the servant of the Greek goddess of witchcraft, ghosts, the moon, and death. The Norse goddess of love and war, Freya, rode in a carriage, pulled by black cats. When Freya freed them from servitude she turned them into witches. In 1232, even the Pope, Pope Gregory IX (the Ninth), said that black cats were really the devil in cat form.

**BATS**  
Some bats, in Central and South America, do drink the blood of cattle and other animals. Unsurprisingly, bats have thus been a subject of many spooky stories. A book by Bram Stoker, "Dracula," written in 1897, talks about vampires that shapeshift into bats, and this has only furthered the bat's bad reputation.

**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 X 3) + 1 = 28 and 1 + (7 X 3) + 6 = 28

**Easy puzzle 1**  
4 4  
11  
1 4  
+ - x ÷

**Medium puzzle 1**  
11 18  
51  
8 13  
+ - x ÷

**Hard puzzle 1**  
11 33  
45  
3 29  
+ - x ÷

**Solution For Easy 1**  
1 + 7 + 3 = 11  
1 + 7 + 3 = 11

**Solution for Medium 1**  
11 + 8 + (3 - 1) = 51

**Solution for Hard 1**  
6 × (82 - 11 + 6) = 45

**Maze**  
START

**Down**  
1 "Gimme a break!" bar (6)  
3 Candy that "Makes Mouths Happy" (9)  
4 "Pieces" candy brand (6)  
6 Chocolate-coated peanutty bar (12)  
7 Chocolate-coated movie theater candy (11)  
8 These kids aren't sweet! (13)  
10 Coconut bars without almonds (6)  
11 Chewy, chocolaty treats in a yellow box (8)  
12 The candy, not computer geeks! (5)

**Across**  
2 Chocolate-coated toffee treats (9) 13 Chocolate with a snap (9)  
5 "Pause like you mean it" candy (4) 14 3 Musketeers alternative (8)  
8 Sweet/sour multi-colored treat (8) 15 Bigmouths (8)  
9 120-year-old candy (11)

**Crossword**

# American Values. Traditional Journalism.

“  
It’s the only sane newspaper  
amidst all this insanity.”  
Stan Krzyston, pastor



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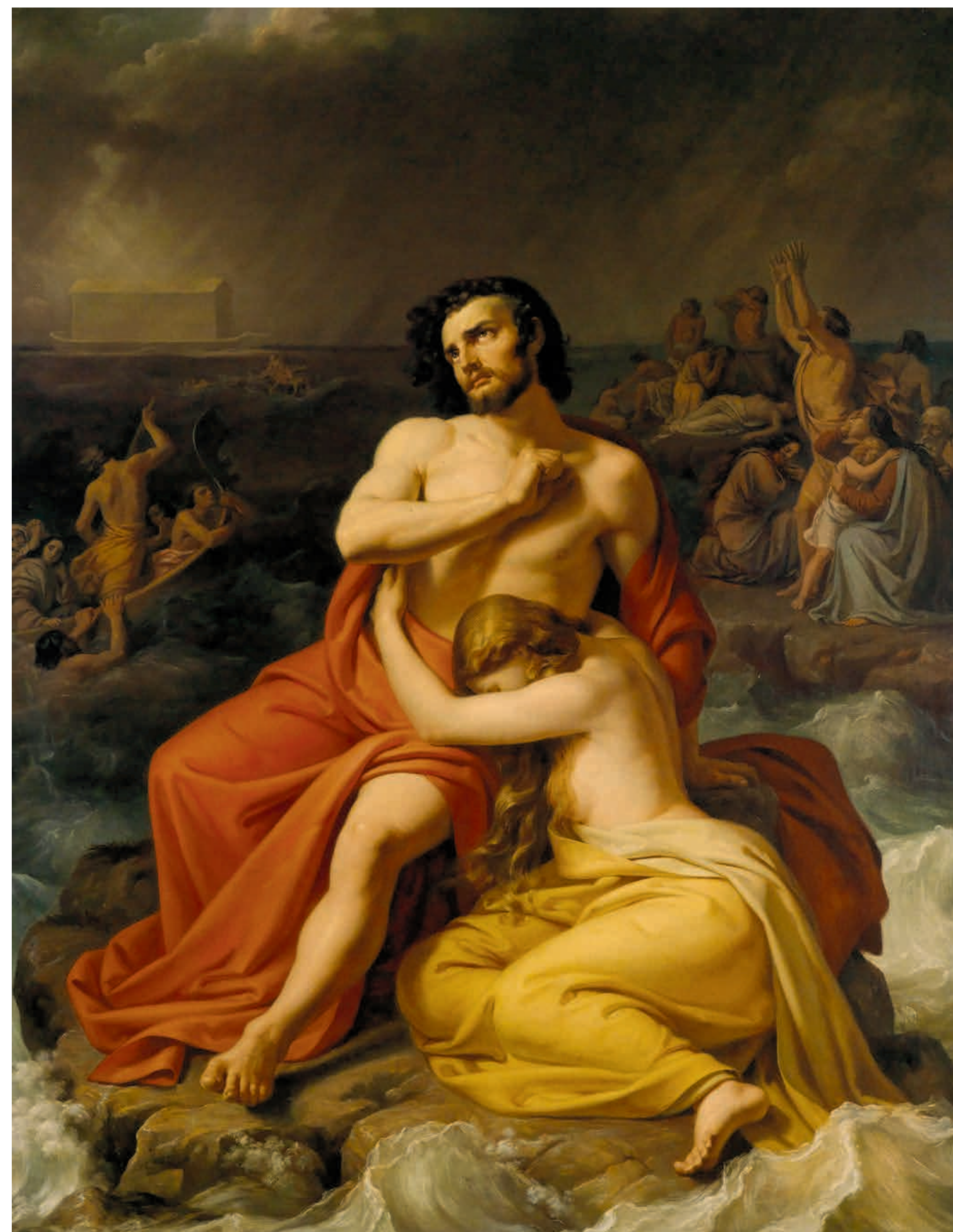
# THE EPOCH TIMES

TRUTH AND TRADITION

COMMENTARY

# The Great Flood and What It Tells Us

How is the biblical Great Flood different from the one currently predicted? "The Flood," 19th century, attributed to Friedrich Matthäi.



JAMES SALE

Perhaps no myth—if myth it be—is more relevant today than the myth of the Great Flood that nearly destroyed humanity at some unknown point in the past.

We colloquially use the term myth, of course, to refer to things that never happened in an historical sense, though in the case of the Flood, there is some doubt because it seems that virtually all cultures and races have some recollection of this event: the ancient Assyrians, Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks, Chinese,

Aboriginals, Andean, and many more. Indeed, the only culture that I am aware of that does not have a Flood myth is, ironically given its current location near tectonic plates, the Japanese.

The point is that the testimony of mankind from earliest times, and so nearer that point of origin, is more telling than scientists, usually for ideological reasons, trying to discredit the story.

The Assyrian King Ashurbanipal (668 B.C.–627 B.C.) whose greatest achievement (according to himself) was the library at Nineveh, which was found and

excavated in the 19th century, wrote that he made himself master of all types of writing, including the “dark Akkadian language which is difficult to rightly use”; and then he adds, “I took my pleasure in reading stones inscribed before the flood.”

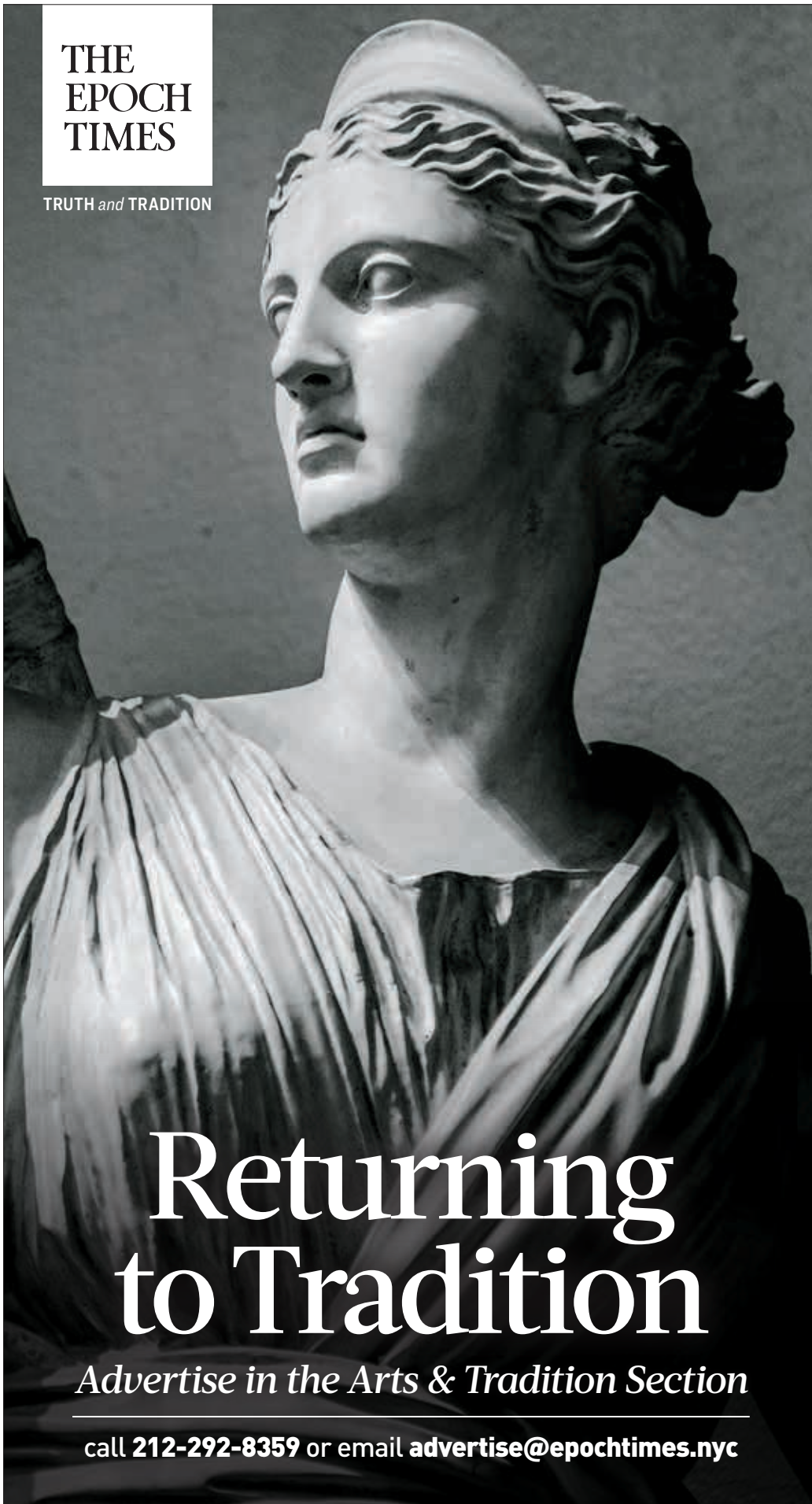
This seems an astonishing remark and a highly credible one, too: He knew how to read the language before the Flood. Certainly, something of an extraordinary and catastrophic nature occurred which indelibly marked the memory of mankind—so that even 2,700 years ago it

was a source of awe and wonder to King Ashurbanipal.

And, incidentally, it was the discovery of this library that led to the recovery of the specific Babylonian Flood myth.

There are, then, various versions of this Flood story from across the world, which differ in all sorts of ways, but my favorite is the biblical one of Noah and his ark. It is instructive to compare it with the wonderful—and seemingly older—version that was uncovered at Nineveh.

Continued on Page 16



THE EPOCH TIMES  
TRUTH and TRADITION

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POETRY

# Well Done, John Donne

A look at a master of metaphysical poetry

JEFF MINICK

“John Donne—Anne Donne—Undone.”  
Fledgling poet John Donne (1572–1631) wrote these words in 1601 after his secret marriage to 16-year-old Anne More was discovered. A young man with promise, Donne was then working as secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton, the wealthy Lord Keeper of the Great Seal of England. Unfortunately for the enthralled Donne, Egerton was also Anne’s uncle. Both Egerton and Anne’s father, George More, strongly opposed this marriage, refused to grant Anne a dowry, and even had Donne briefly imprisoned.

So much for that promising career. For nearly a decade, the Donnes lived in poverty, supported by friends and sympathizers, and by whatever money Donne could scrape together from his writing and practice of law. Eventually, Anne’s father paid the dowry, and Donne’s prospects improved.

In 1617, after giving birth to their 12th child, who was stillborn, Anne died, and Donne, who had converted from Catholicism to Anglicanism, became dean of Saint Paul’s Cathedral in London, where he became famous for his sermons and devotional meditations. Perhaps most renowned of his prose of this period is a paragraph from Meditation 17, which some moderns have rendered as poetry.

“No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if

a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend’s or thine own were; any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”

Donne’s poetry was as varied as his fortunes. In his younger years, when he studied law at London’s Inns of Court, traveled about Europe, and served with English forces fighting the Spanish at Cadiz, and even after his marriage, Donne devoted himself to love poetry and satire in forms ranging from epigrams to sonnets, from songs to elegies. After his beloved Anne’s death, and with his appointment to Saint Paul’s, he turned his energy toward religious verse and meditations on the Divine.

**Donne’s poetry was as varied as his fortunes.**

**A Metaphysical Poet**

Like other metaphysical poets, Donne employed paradox and the use of conceits, unlikely extended metaphors that are intellectually imaginative and emotionally engaging. Here Donne was, and is, a master of this device.

Let’s look at two of his best-known poems structured on this idea of conceit or, as it was called in the early Renaissance, “wit.” In Holy Sonnets, a collection of 17 poems with religious themes, we find “Batter my heart, three-person’d God.”

Batter my heart, three-person’d God,  
for you  
As yet but knock, breathe, shine,  
and seek to mend;  
That I may rise and stand,  
o’erthrow me, and bend  
Your force to break, blow, burn,  
and make me new.  
I, like an usurp’d town to another due,  
Labor to admit you, but oh, to no end;  
Reason, your viceroy in me,  
me should defend,  
But is captiv’d, and proves weak  
or untrue.  
Yet dearly I love you, and would  
be lov’d fain,  
But am betroth’d unto your enemy;  
Divorce me, untie or break that  
knot again,  
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,  
Except you enthrall me,  
never shall be free,  
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

Examine the unusual comparisons Donne constructs in the poem. First, he asks that God assault him, “that I may rise and stand, o’erthrow me.” He then compares his soul to a town captured by another, in this case, by evil. With the words “am betroth’d unto your enemy,” Donne introduces a final conceit, asking to be freed of this engagement, to be instead imprisoned by the Divine, and even ravished with love. By such powerful and strange images, Donne seeks to waken our sensibilities to sin and repentance, and to the power of the Divine.

In “Death, be not proud,” Donne turns our conventional fear of dying on its head. Death is not a master but a “slave to fate.” It dwells with ugly condiments—“poison, war, and sickness”—and has less power of sleep than “poppy or charms.” Resurrection strips Death of its powers, and Death itself, ironically, will die.

Death, be not proud, though some  
have called thee  
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;  
For those whom thou think’st thou  
dost overthrow  
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst  
thou kill me.  
From rest and sleep, which but  
thy pictures be,  
Much pleasure, then from thee



The funeral effigy of the metaphysical poet John Donne in London’s Saint Paul’s Cathedral, where he was the dean from 1621 until his death.



The John Donne Memorial outside of St. Paul’s Cathedral in London.

much more must flow,  
And soonest our best men  
with thee do go,  
Rest of their bones, and soul’s delivery.  
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings,  
and desperate men,  
And dost with poison, war,  
and sickness dwell,  
And poppy or charms can make us  
sleep as well  
And better than thy stroke;  
why swell’st thou then?  
One short sleep past, we wake  
eternally  
And death shall be no more;  
Death, thou shalt die.

**Looking Into the Nature of Things**

Though we may take pleasure in reading Donne’s poems for their beauty and their lyricism, meaning his poems express strong personal emotions, they also offer other gifts to us: boxed packages which, when unwrapped, may open our eyes and bring us insights into rerum natura—the nature of things.

This metaphysical poet and some of his contemporaries put the profound questions of existence under the microscope, then tug at our sleeves and invite us to have a look as well. They steer our minds, if just for a short time, away from the busyness of living to contemplate the possible meanings hidden beneath that frenetic activity.

In addition, the metaphysical poets, who are a bridge in time between a world of medieval faith and a new world of “enlightenment,” remind us that beyond science, data, polls, and statistics is a kingdom we moderns have forgotten, a different reality. They point us to abstract concepts concealed by our craving for the empirical and our belief that only what we can feel, taste, touch, hear, and see is real.

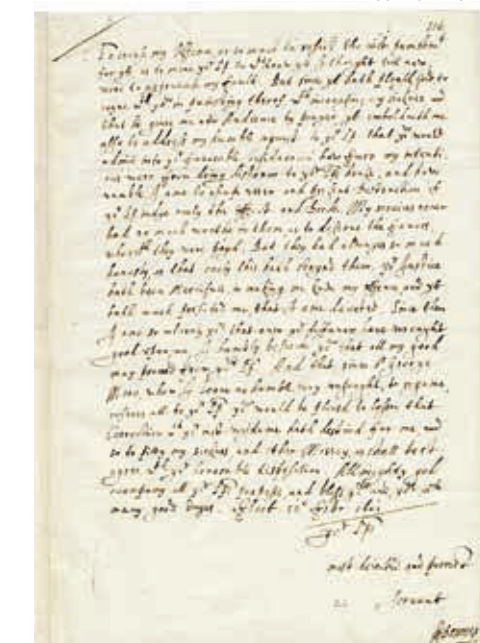
Finally, this idea of conceit itself, radical comparisons offering a sort of gymnasium for the mind, can spark our own employment of metaphor. Do we see ourselves as lions or lambs? Do we compare ourselves metaphorically to Ulysses Grant at Galena, a failure awaiting the summons of a trumpet of glory, or are we Theodore Roosevelt, striving always for excellence at whatever we undertake? Do we equate the Divine with the storms and gentle winds of nature, or find it in

the face of a homeless man or in the bond between mother and infant? By such metaphorical exercises, we deepen our comprehension of the world and of our interior selves.

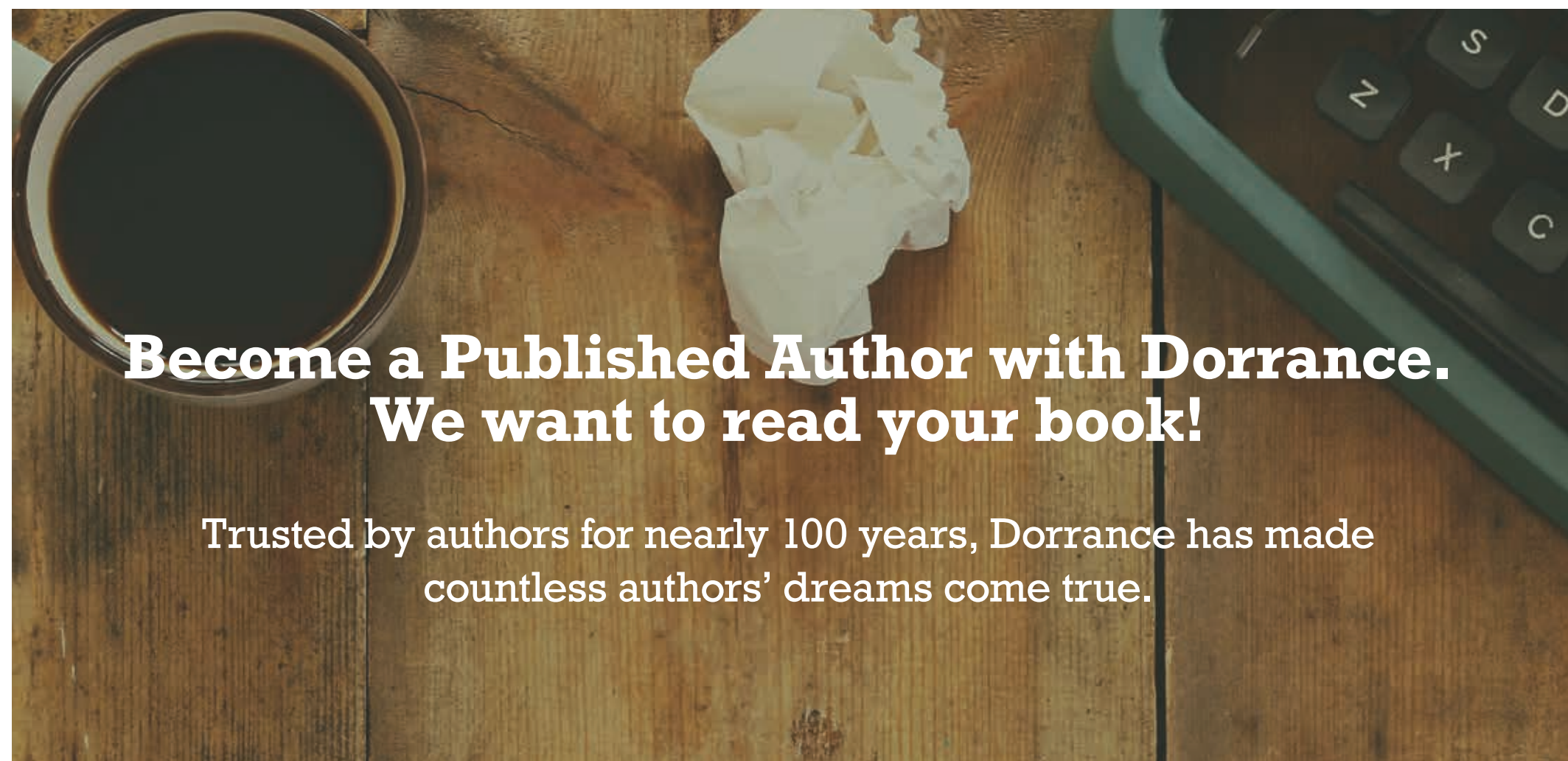
Metaphor artfully employed can also be a powerful incentive to others. It opens doorways, releases emotions, and leads us to hear or see in a different way. Here is a simple and humorous example: Once at a tense moment of play during a soccer game, I heard a homeschool mom, Jill, shout to her son, “Be a nightmare, Sawyer!”

That was effective use of metaphor. That afternoon, Jill and John Donne were shaking hands.

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](http://JeffMinick.com) to follow his blog.




Autograph letter from John Donne in Fleet Prison to Sir Thomas Egerton, Feb. 12, 1601/1602. Folger Source call numbers: L.b.526 & L.b.528. Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.



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"Flood Destroying the World," 1866, Gustave Doré. Engraving.



"Noah's Ark," 17th century, by Theodoros Poulakis after an engraving by J. Sadeler.

## COMMENTARY

# The Great Flood and What It Tells Us

Continued from Page 13

## Which Flood Story?

What is significant to me is what the popular theologian of the 20th century J.B. Phillips once termed the "ring of truth." This idea is difficult to quantify, but it centers around the idea of plausibility. If we look at the Babylonian myth, for example, in "Epic of Gilgamesh," the Great Flood ends with his hero, Utnapishtim, being rewarded by the gods with immortality.

The story with Noah ends quite differently, for there are some highly discordant notes. First, that he gets drunk, and as a result of it one of his sons, Ham, gets cursed; Noah does live a long time, but he, too, dies eventually—there is no reprieve from death. The contrast, then, is that the Babylonian myth does end like a fairy story, whereas the biblical account seems to contain—as most biblical stories do—a kind of gritty realism that recalls something that actually happened. In the context of a worldwide flood killing virtually everybody, why recall the fact that somebody got drunk afterward? Unless it actually happened, it appears inconsequential. So this "mythical" story is the one we should mine for meaning.

Why, then, is this story more relevant today than virtually any other myth? Two words might point to some sort of answer: Extinction Rebellion. As I write this now, London is being besieged by activists seeking to virtually shut the city down for a fortnight with protests. It claims to have a presence in 72 countries and some 200,000 supporters, including some well-known public figures. And its message is that unless we reverse climate change, billions—if not the whole planet—will die.

How we will die is almost certainly going to be the result of floods and flooding, as the ice caps melt and all that released

## Is the warning from Extinction Rebellion and the pro-climate scientists really a message from the gods or God?

water raises the sea level. Radical action is needed, they claim.

What is less understood by the population at large, however, is firstly that some of their extreme claims for this cataclysm aren't actually founded in science itself. Which is ironic, since most scientists don't believe in the Great Flood, and some don't believe in the next one!

Second, the prime agents of this movement are possibly as much motivated by their anti-capitalist agenda, as they are by the impending disaster. Put simply, they want to overturn the governments of the world. Their Declaration of Rebellion states that "The wilful complicity displayed by our government has shattered meaningful democracy and cast aside the common interest in favor of short-term gain and private profits." The rank and file may well not hold these anti-capitalist views, but the leaders do.

## Upsetting the Enlightenment Mindset

Setting these points aside, however, what else is important about this myth for today? The first thing, I think, is truly to realize what its historicity actually means for us now. The nature of the Great Flood and how it happened we cannot tell for certain now, but given its nearly universal acceptance by ancient cultures, that it happened and that most of humanity was wiped out I think we can be sure of.

The thing to understand here is its discontinuity and disruptive nature. Jesus exactly understood this: "In those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand." (Matthew 24:38-39). One day, it's all bright and sunny, but the next is total devastation.

We in the West have gotten used to a phi-

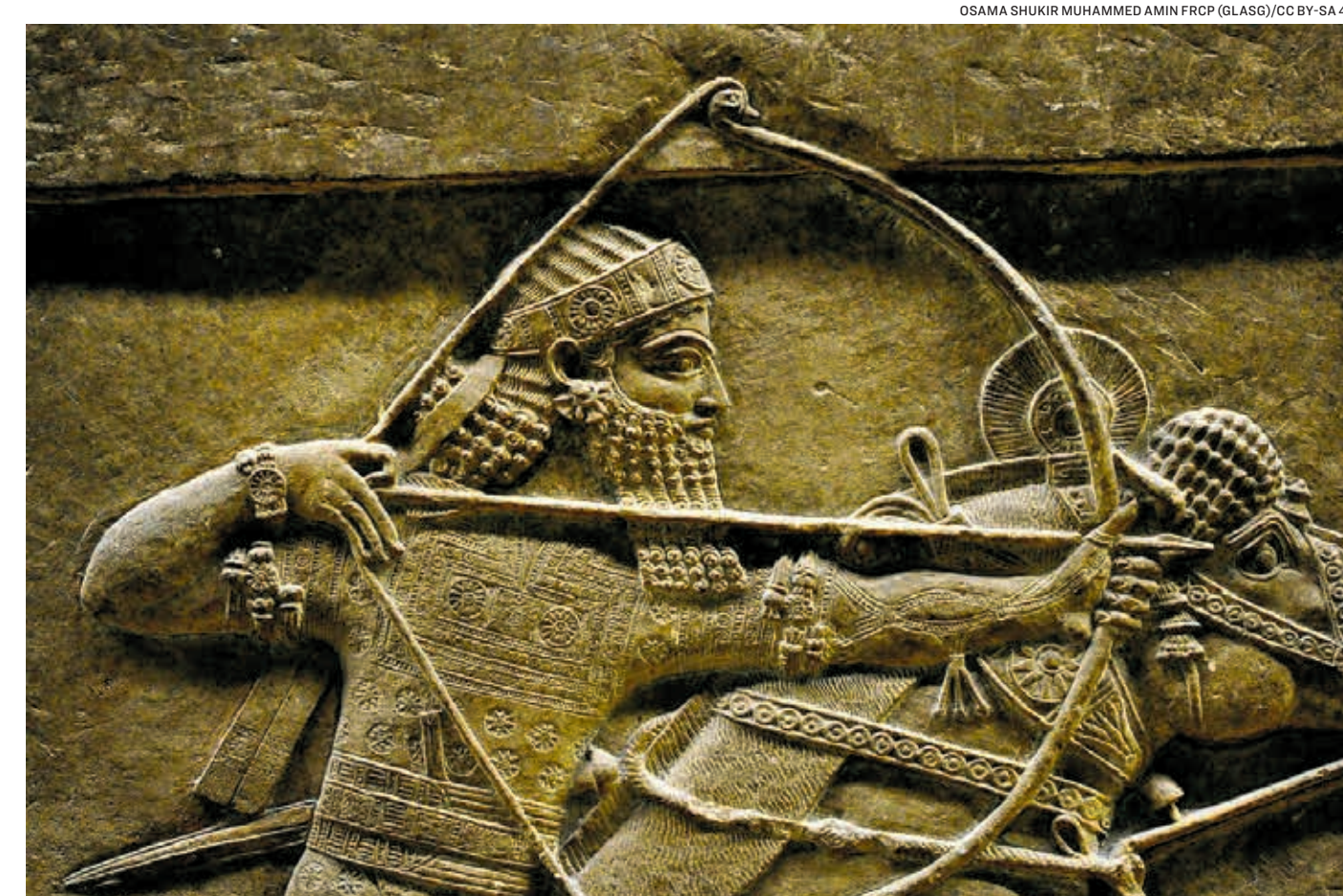
losophy from the Enlightenment, which preaches endless human progress and possibilities that nothing can or will stop. Today this is manifested in the Silicon Valley mindset whereby artificial intelligence (AI) is going to solve all our problems, and whatever problems we have here anyway, no need to fret as Elon Musk is going to help us all settle on Mars—as if, of course, we wouldn't scramble that planet, too!

But suddenly, we understand, the idea of the Great Flood and the fear of an upcoming flood upsets the status quo and changes all that. The myth—the facts of the myth—warn us against such complacency, and warn us to walk with humility, not arrogance or hubris, before God or, if we aren't monotheistic, the gods and invisible forces that are above us.

## Two Sides, One Coin

Secondly, we need to grasp that Extinction Rebellion and the science of the status quo are really two sides of the same coin, although they appear diametrically opposed. Whereas the latter can only conceive of an existence of plenty that runs on forever, in which science cures cancer, and people live to 150 years old, and so on, the former see that the whole world order needs changing and that this second flood cataclysm needs to be prevented.

The latter is hopelessly complacent and smug, the former desperate and earnest. How are they two sides of the same coin? They are two sides of the same coin because at root they both embrace the same philosophy: The "complacents" think nothing and no one can interrupt their "progress," whereas the rebels believe they have the power to prevent the second flood through their own political machinations first and foremost, and possibly with some science second (new greener



King Ashurbanipal, from the North Palace at Nineveh, seventh century B.C. The British Museum, London.

technologies). In short, mankind is entirely able to control the situation; both are saying this, one passively, one actively.

It seems we will, at all costs, avoid thinking about the will of the gods, or God, if you prefer. Recently, Warren Buffett's friend Charlie Munger captured this sentiment exactly when he said: "A great nation will, in due time, be ruined... our turn is bound to come. But I don't like thinking about it too much." Yes, we don't like thinking about it too much.

The final thought, then, about the Great Flood that engulfed the world all that time ago is to ask, why? Humans didn't will it or want it, and only one—with his family—anticipated it. Why did God destroy the world? This, too, is a highly unpalatable thought.

In Genesis 6:5, we learn that "the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil

continually." My point here isn't to try to institute some facile moral crusade, but to ask, in the age of social media and mass communication on a scale barely conceived of in the past, how do human beings seem to you?

## A Lot of It About

There are many, many people doing very good things to help others, but if one takes a snapshot of the world as it is, I think the word "evil" would appropriately describe it. As Pink Floyd commented on being "down and out" in their '70s album "Dark Side of the Moon": "There's a lot of it about!"

Why, as I write this, Turkey has just invaded Syria and attacked the Kurds; doubtless for its own "good" reasons, but the reality seems to be that the world is constantly throwing up aggressions of one sort or another, if not here, then there and elsewhere, too.

In some sense, the Flood myth captures for us now that sense that—as with that other great topic, Armageddon—we can be distracted from our own personal evil and divert all our attention onto the big cause that is the "problem," which at the same time avoids our own responsibility for the state of the world.

For the myth of the Great Flood reminds us that we are not in control, and that there is a higher power, and we are answerable to it. Indeed, it seems as if freedom of the will is of a paramount importance in the spiritual cosmos beyond where we can legitimately probe. Noah warned the earth of what was coming, but they didn't believe him—eating, drinking, and marrying were clearly much more enjoyable than considering the destiny of mankind. They freely chose to ignore the warnings, and then Noah entered the ark.

Where does this leave us? Is the warning from Extinction Rebellion and the pro-climate change scientists really a message from the gods or God, or is it a false prophecy? I don't know, but there is another great myth relevant here: Jonah preached to Nineveh and the city repented, and so God didn't destroy it. The hearts of the leaders and the people turned in a different direction from the evil they had been pursuing. If that were to happen, then perhaps a new and spiritual energy might turn the tide, and instead of some socialistic commune of oligarchs telling us what to do, we might all cooperate as free peoples for the common good. And that just might make the difference.

All biblical quotes are from the *New American Standard version of the Bible*.

*James Sale is an English businessman whose company, Motivational Maps Ltd., operates in 14 countries. He is the author of over 40 books on management and education from major international publishers including Macmillan, Pearson, and Routledge. As a poet, he won First Prize in The Society of Classical Poets' 2017 competition and recently spoke at the group's first symposium held at New York's Princeton Club.*

**The myth of the Great Flood reminds us that we are not in control, and that there is a higher power.**



FILM REVIEW

# A Satirical Sendup of Societal Ultra-Conformism

IAN KANE

The trailer for Taika Waititi's new satirical war dramedy, "JoJo Rabbit," is gasp-inducing. It features Hitler Youth, knee socks and all, practicing Nazi salutes, war games, ambush techniques, and other martial maneuvers. It also shows a bedraggled Jewish girl secreted in someone's attic. All this accompanied by cheery songs such as "I'm a Believer" by The Monkees—only in German.

Normally, "holocaust" and "comedy" don't go together. There are a few exceptions: Roberto Benigni pulled this combination off with success in the excellent tear-jerker "Life Is Beautiful," and filmmaker Ferne Pearlstein explored this unlikely coupling in her fascinating documentary "The Last Laugh."

However, keeping in mind that Waititi wrote and directed the film (based on a novel written by Christine Leunens), I figured that it had more than a fighting chance. After all, he directed one of the more hilarious comedies of the last decade, 2014's "What We Do in the Shadows," which was a horror mockumentary about four vampires sharing a flat together.

## A Young Soul at the Crossroads

The titular young protagonist of the film is Jojo (newcomer Roman Griffin Davis), a 10-year-old boy who is enrolled in the Hitler Youth program. At first glance, Jojo is quite enthusiastic (almost overly so) about serving his country and carrying out whatever dastardly deeds the Nazis have planned for him. So committed to the ideals of their regime is Jojo that he has fabricated Adolf Hitler (Taika Waititi himself) as his imaginary personal sidekick and confidant.

The youth camp Jojo is assigned to is presided over by Captain Klenzendorf (Sam Rockwell), an iron-fisted soldier whose stringent policies root out any weak links. Jojo soon discovers that he isn't up to the training's standards and suffers an almost fatal accident that sends him to the hospital. There, he has a talk with his mother (Scarlett Johansson), who encourages him to spend more time at home instead of engaging in the camp's martial training regimens.

Back at home, Jojo soon discovers something else: Elsa (Thomasi

## 'Jojo Rabbit'

**Director**  
Taika Waititi  
**Starring**  
Roman Griffin Davis,  
Thomasi McKenzie,  
Scarlett Johansson  
**Running Time**  
1 hour, 48 minutes  
**Rated**  
PG-13  
**Release Date**  
Oct. 18, 2019



**Director Waititi skillfully weaves a tale of how easy it is for certain forces to beguile certain folks into joining their conformist hate groups.**



Scarlett Johansson and Roman Griffin Davis in "Jojo Rabbit."



Adolph (Taika Waititi, center, above), the imaginary friend of Jojo (Roman Griffin Davis) in "Jojo Rabbit."

McKenzie), a teenage Jewish refugee whom his mother has stealthily secreted in the house. Elsa's bargaining chip with Jojo is that if he alerts the authorities to her presence, not only will she perish, but his family will as well.

Her ploy works, and in between the usual talks with ol' Adolf, Jojo begins to spend more and more time with Elsa. Over the course of his visits with her, Jojo sees her as less of a threat and more as the gracious and good-natured though utterly frightened person she is. And his preconceived notions of Jews, in general, begin to erode.

Once Jojo comes to peace with the idea of sharing his family's home with Elsa, and as Germany begins to lose its ground against the Allies, the film takes on a more serious, dramatic tone. The film's comedic moments are mostly replaced by grittier, thought-provoking

scenes, as Waititi reminds moviegoers about the high cost of mindless bigotry and having blind faith in the wrong ideals.

## Excellent All Around

The film's casting is superb, with the standouts being the two younger actors. Davis is excellent as the young Jojo, who convincingly portrays a child's shift from becoming a potential mass murderer to blossoming into one who questions the "Bizarro World" status quo, along with its fake news.

Likewise, McKenzie lends some emotional depth along with a gentle, yet sly, comedic touch to the proceedings. Despite the extreme adversity that her character has endured, she still offers up a relatively cheerful disposition. She even has the wherewithal to systematically dismantle the racial prejudices that Jojo was taught.

Not surprisingly in this sort of over-the-top satire,

all of the Nazi characters are over-exaggerated cardboard cutouts. From being totally convinced that all of the fake news being fed to them is indeed real, to trying to outdo one another in their Nazi salutes, there are some clever modern-day parallels that deserve more than passing guffaws. After all, we live in an age when unquestioning ultra-conformists devour Big Media drivel as sacrosanct insights.

"Jojo Rabbit" is a superb film. Waititi skillfully weaves a tale of how easy it is for certain forces to beguile certain folks into joining their conformist hate groups. Remember, the ones usually babbling about things such as "hate speech" and casually labeling others as "racists" are usually projecting themselves onto others.

*Ian Kane is a filmmaker and author based out of Los Angeles. To see more, visit DreamFlightEnt.com*



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