

A conversation with financial expert Gregg Murset

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#### **BARBARA DANZA**

ou'd think it'd be on the list of critical subjects taught in school, but managing money is one that largely eludes today's youth. Parents don't need degrees in finance, however, to pass on basic money know-how that will benefit their children for the rest of their lives.

I asked Gregg Murset, a certified financial planner and founder of BusyKid, an app that teaches kids the basics of personal finance, for his advice about teaching children about money. Here's what he said.

THE EPOCH TIMES: Today's levels of credit card debt, student loan debt, and insufficient savings reflect the need for us to better educate our children about managing finances. Overall, what key financial concepts should parents be teaching their children?

**GREGG MURSET:** Concepts are great, but for most kids, still way too complicated.

For younger kids, they should understand the difference between "wants" versus "needs" and that you should save more than you spend. You also want to help them understand the value of money by sharing experiences when you go shopping or pay bills online.

For teens who already understand money and the value of things, it's a bit different. Financial concepts tend to become real for the first time the moment they land their first job.

Did anyone ever explain taxes, Social Security, or retirement until you filled out the employment forms for the first time? By this time, your teen should have a bank account, debit card, and money in savings. If you never used a system like BusyKid, then talk to your child about the importance of breaking up their paycheck (after taxes) so 40 percent is spent, 10 percent is donated to charity, and 50 percent goes into savings.



You can think of chores and an allowance as your kid's first paying job, says Murset, with you as the employer.

THE EPOCH TIMES: The first thing parents often think of when it comes to teaching their kids about money is a weekly allowance. What chores and allowance strategy do you advise parents to follow?

MR. MURSET: Here's only one strategy: Kids do chores and earn an allowance for completing them.

We recognize there are many different views on these topics, but it's more important to focus on what chores and allowance give our kids. Chores teach work ethic, responsibility, accountability, and time management.

Allowance provides money, our kids need to begin learning how to manage it. Think of chores and allowance as your kid's first paying job with you (the parent) as the employer.

THE EPOCH TIMES: Your app BusyKid allows parents and children to manage their system of chores and allowance. What inspired you to create BusyKid? **MR. MURSET:** Real life inspired it.

I was looking for a way to get my six kids to understand how to manage the money they were earning from chores. They weren't learning anything about money in school, and as a certified financial planner, I see

firsthand how the lack of financial education hurts parents, so BusyKid was born. Now, kids get the hands-on experience they need in order to manage money the right way before facing overwhelming financial decisions as adults.

In BusyKid, kids earn an allowance and then make decisions on how to manage it, including saving, donating to charities, and investing in real stock. We believe kids using BusyKid regularly will develop a solid routine for managing money.

**THE EPOCH TIMES:** Once kids begin to accumulate money, how can parents best help them manage it?

MR. MURSET: Inside BusyKid, kids really do make the decisions on how to manage the funds, however, they still have a safety net-parents.

Parents have the final OK whenever money is moved outside the system for cash, a donation, to buy stock, or for how much money is placed on the BusyKid Visa Prepaid Spend Card. The best way for a parent can help a child manage money is by having a conversation on why the funds are being moved or what's the best use of the funds.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What are some of the biggest mistakes you see parents making with it comes to teaching their kids about money?

MR. MURSET: Probably the two biggest we see are parents thinking that their bad financial history doesn't qualify them to teach their kids, and parents that will stop doing whatever it is to teach about money because with the plan.

For the most part, parents today have about the same financial education as their kids, so it's not surprising that bad decisions have resulted in bad credit scores, large debt, and no

savings accounts. Still, we feel that children can learn valuable lessons no matter the parent's history, and parents should embrace the opportunity to share their history with kids old enough to understand.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What should families with teens consider when deciding whether or not to take on student loans? MR. MURSET: As children approach high school graduation, there's usually a conversation about college and how can they attend the college of their dreams. Many times, parents never stop to ask, "Does it really make sense?"

When it comes to college, maybe parents need to revisit the "want" versus "needs" discussion. Considering student loans is serious business, especially for the loan issuer.

I believe student loans should be a last option, just ahead of not going to college at all. If you presently have a young child, start putting money away now for when this time comes. If you must take a loan out for college, take the least amount possible, though it's tempting to take more. Also, make sure to take your future earnings into account. Should you really take \$80,000 in loans when you'll make about \$30,000 as a new teacher (depending upon where)?

**THE EPOCH TIMES:** For parents who'd like to begin teaching their kids about money, what's the very first thing you'd recommend they do?

MR. MURSET: Do somethinganything-and stick with it. Getting kids the hands-on

practice they'll need to learn managing money takes time Kids will be kids, so expect some pushback. However, if they see their savings account grow and have the ability to buy things with their own money, the motivation to keep going will be there.

FLOTSAM/SHUTTERSTOCK

### Holiday Planning: Making Your List and Checking It Twice

#### **BARBARA DANZA**

Ho ho-holidays already? Check your calendar, they're right around the corner.

Now is a great time to begin thinking about the details of your holiday plans. Or at least, to begin thinking about

The first thing you're probably going to need to do is make a list, right? I spoke to list-making expert and author of "Listful Living, A List-Making Journey to a Less Stressed You" Paula Rizzo about her advice for holiday planning. Here's what she said.

THE EPOCH TIMES: The holidays are a busy time, and waiting until the last minute to prepare can often lead to stress and anxiety. How do you recommend we begin to wrap our heads around the holiday season?

**PAULA RIZZO:** I always start thinking about the holidays early. That's the key. Don't let them sneak up on you. For instance, I make a list in August of everyone I need to buy gifts for during the holiday season. Then, throughout the year, I leave myself notes and ideas for gifts those people would really enjoy. That way I'm not overwhelmed when it

comes time to shop. I already have ideas. I like to keep ideas in my Evernote notebook throughout the year for times just like this when I can't think of what to get. In that folder, I keep ideas that I've found and notes on what people have told me through the year that they

You can do the same thing if you're hosting the holidays or traveling. Think in advance so you can add to your list throughout the year instead of cramming everything at

**THE EPOCH TIMES:** In what ways do you use lists during the holiday season? **MS. RIZZO:** The gift list is one that you should start early as

I mentioned. But also if you send holiday cards, that's a list you should be making in advance as well. I have a document that I update every year with everyone's addresses. Then I can refer back to it each year and know exactly who I need to send cards to this year.

I pride myself on being able to say no and not commit to every social event or gathering. It's taken time to perfect the skill and it's something I talk a lot about in "Listful Living: A List-Making Journey to

a Less Stressed You." It's difficult to do this over the holidays. It seems like everyone and anyone is inviting you to some holiday mixer! Take the time to pencil in the people you really want to see first. Then, you can be more decisive when other invites come in. If you really

want to be there, do it. If you don't, then kindly pass. It's important to be realistic with yourself and what you can and want to do.

**THE EPOCH TIMES:** What is the most important aspect of the holidays to intentionally organize? **MS. RIZZO:** Travel! If you're traveling for the holidays, it's important to get that planning out of the way early so you're not overextended.

Chart out the days you'll need to get to your destination in advance. I always like to leave an extra day of peace when I return from a trip. It's a good way to ease back into your regular routine. Traveling is stressful even if you do it all the time. And if you're doing it around the holidays, so is everyone else! Set yourself up for success. Maybe you can leave a few days earlier to beat the crowds and the added

When it comes to packing for a holiday trip, I also start in advance. Think through what gifts can be shipped ahead of time so you're not lugging endless bags through airport security. When you pack for a trip, it's a great idea to only

bring what you need. Map out every outfit you'll wear and then stick to that list. No need to overpack, and you'll want to leave some extra room for your gifts,

> THE EPOCH TIMES: How can we avoid overwhelm during the

MS. RIZZO: You should also be making a list of ways to keep yourself rejuvenated and refreshed during the holidays. Many people get self-care very wrong because they think it has to be a weeklong vacation or a \$300 massage. There are small things you can do throughout the day to give yourself a boost. But like

everything else, if you don't plan for it, it doesn't happen. Make a list of the things that make you happy. For me, it's drinking a cup of tea, reading a chapter in a novel, or going on (what I call in my book) a virtual vacation.

**THE EPOCH TIMES:** There will always be those of us who wait until the last minute. How would you recommend the procrastinators tackle the holidays?

**MS. RIZZO:** I'm a huge procrastinator myself. And I've found through the years that setting deadlines and working backward helps. Take a look at your calendar early in the year and set mini-deadlines for yourself. Put those tasks in your calendar and this will make you more accountable and help you get more done.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What final advice do you have for us as we approach the holiday season?

MS. RIZZO: Remember that you don't have to do everything yourself. Ask for help. A lot of the pressure that we feel is self-inflicted. Just because you can do something doesn't

# 

#### A Voice for the Voiceless

**JOCELYN NEO** 

eing a fashion model isn't just about walking the runways. For Pooja Mor, a model with a cause and the recipient of the "Young Achiever of The Year" award at Vogue Women of The Year 2019, she has become a voice for the voiceless. At the award ceremony, the supermodel fearlessly spoke about the worst genocide unfolding in the world–the persecution of Falun Gong in China.

Falun Gong is an ancient mind-body discipline based on the tenets of truthfulness, compassion,

and forbearance. Mor, who hails from Ahmedabad, India, is now based in New York. She took her first steps into the modeling world in 2012 after winning the "Clean & Clear Ahmedabad Times Fresh Face" event. Her international debut came in 2016 when she walked the runway at Nicolas Ghesquiere's Louis Vuitton Cruise 2016 show in Palm Springs, Califor-

Since then, the 27-year-old has gone on to work with the likes of Elie Saab, Alexander McQueen, Tory Burch, Dolce & Gabbana, Calvin Klein, and more. Mor received the "Model of the Year" award at

Vogue Beauty Awards 2016. In 2018, the fashion icon received a "NEW WAVE: Creatives" award by the British Fashion Council. Early this vear, Mor also gave a powerful talk on how adversity can be a good thing, at TEDx Talks.

Despite having all these achievements under her belt, it was only recently that Mor, who also holds a degree in computer engineering, realized the meaning of true achievement.

At the Vogue Women of

voiceless. The Year 2019 awards, which were held in Mumbai, India, Pooja Mor on Oct. 19, Mor shared her realization with an audience

composed of international and Bollywood celebrities.

"I recently realized what it is to truly achieve something. It was when I started working not only for myself but for others and becoming the voice for the voiceless," Mor said at her acceptance speech, a video of which was later uploaded to her Instagram account but is currently unavailable.

For the past few years, Mor has been focusing on a cause that is close to her heart-raising awareness of the persecution of Falun Dafa in China.

Mor was first introduced to Falun Dafa, also known as Falun Gong, in 2014. "I felt it was such a beautiful meditation practice, so peaceful and always made me

so positive," Mor told The Epoch Times

via email. Mor couldn't accept it when she heard that the Chinese Communist Party had banned the peaceful meditation practice in July 1999, after the number of people practicing it skyrocketed within five years from its introduction to the public

Since 1999, "millions of people who practice Falun Gong have been subject to wrongful imprisonment, 'brainwashing' sessions, and torture, with thousands of deaths, confirmed in custody," according to the Falun Dafa Information Center.

In recent years, media outlets have also

reported that the communist regime has been harvesting organs from prisoners of conscience, with the majority being from Falun Gong practitioners.

"A government is supposed to protect its people, and I was not able to believe such a thing could be happening, especially to a group of people who follow the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance," Mor said.

She said it wasn't easy for her to come to terms with it. She started doing her own research and watching documentaries on forced organ harvesting in China, and she came across many articles confirming that these things are still hap-

> So when her agent asked her if she had a cause she wanted to raise awareness about, the answer was obvious. She started writing articles and talking to people about the persecution. "Most of the people I talked to were shocked to know about it and couldn't understand why such a peaceful prac-

tice is being persecuted in

meditates in Central Park, China," she said. Manhattan, on April 19, 2016 While Mor has been ac-BENJAMIN CHASTEEN/THE EPOCH TIMES tively raising awareness about the persecution of Falun Gong in China on her social media platforms, she had never spoken in public

Fashion model Pooja Mor

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Dafa. The opportunity presented itself when she heard that Vogue India had chosen her as the "Young Achiever of The Year."

When Mor started to pen

about her own faith in Falun

her acceptance speech, it was just a regular speech thanking everyone related to her professional career. Then she asked herself, "What have I really achieved in life?" and "What makes

me an achiever in my own heart or consciousness?" She realized that "true achievement comes when [vou're] not only working for yourself, but more importantly, when you work for others and stand up for

people who don't have a voice, and to stand up for a bigger reason that needs light in this world."

"Once I completed the speech, a sweet contentment rushed through me, which made me a better person. That's a true achievement in my eyes.'

"By standing up for others, I realized what it means to truly achieve something in life," Mor concluded in her speech. Mor told The Epoch Times, "I remain

grateful for Vogue India's award, and when I gave the speech that night, I was touched by how everyone responded to it, wanting to learn more about the human rights violation."

But then, she said, "after I posted the video of the speech on Instagram, my agents were approached by Vogue India requesting to edit or take down the video because they 'don't encourage the use of their platform for personal political statements.' I think it's just an indication that a lot more awareness and clarification needs to be done in this industry, as well as many others."

Mor reaffirmed that she will continue to raise awareness of what is happening in China.

"I can't sit and watch millions of innocent people being wrongfully persecuted and their organs being taken without consent and without anesthesia. I have to stand up for it-it's my cause, and that is, to me, being a voice for the voiceless."



Pooja Mor received the "Young Achiever Of The Year" award at Vogue Women of the Year 2019 on

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Pooja Mor wearing a "Falun Dafa is

She asked herself, 'What have I really achieved in life?' and 'What makes me an achiever in my own heart?"

# The Power of Words

Written or spoken, they can make or break our day

#### **JEFF MINICK**

Long ago, when I was a kid, I watched a television advertisement for Anacin that remained stuck in my head all these years. A mother and grown daughter are working in a kitchen. The mother wonders whether the soup needs more salt, and the daughter retorts, "Mother, please! I'd rather do it myself." The voice-over then says, calmly and coolly, "Control yourself. Sure you've got a headache. You're tense. Irritable. But don't take it out on her."

Maybe one reason that ad rented a permanent apartment in my brain has to do with the power of words.

#### Strength, Inspiration, Love

Words can make or break our day. Whether written or spoken, they can buck up the disheartened, those beaten down by circumstances and failure, those for whom compliments are as rare as a snowstorm in July. If we find ourselves locked in some gloomy attic of the mind or spirit, words of encouragement can become candles illuminating the darkness, unlocking the door, guiding us down the shadowy stairwell, and escorting us into the sunshine. A simple "Well-done!" uttered by that usually taciturn boss can leave her assistant walking on air for the rest of the day.

Many coaches, teachers, motivational speakers, and others bring words into play to rally their listeners, infuse their hearts with pride and courage, challenge them, and point them to the uplands of greater accomplishments. The 14-year-old who receives a couple of sentences of praise from his teacher for his history essay finds himself striving even harder for excellence. In Kenneth Branagh's film "Henry V," when we listen to the speech the king delivers to his men before the Battle of Agincourt, some of us find ourselves as ready as any of those English knights to pluck up a shield, raise high a sword, and charge across the field.

Words also usher in romance and love. Few of us can write like William Shakespeare or Elizabeth Barrett Browning, but passion can transform even that inarticulate woodworker or that shy barista into rough poets, nakers of spoken verse or love letters whose fumbling rhythms and awkward meanings are treasured by the beloved.

A Pennsylvania dairy farmer I knew long ago used to rise well before dawn to milk the cows. In the kitchen, he often left little notes to his wife. One morning he scratched out a few lines telling her how much he loved her. When he was late returning from the barn, she went and found him collapsed of a heart



At the right moment, just a brief "I love you, you know" can flash across the heart like lightning in a stormblack sky.

Today, the **opportunities** to hurt others with words have grown immeasurably. attack, never to regain consciousness. That woman had lost her husband, but she kept his simple note until her own death some 20 years later.

At the right moment, just a brief "I love you, you know" can flash across the heart like lightning in a storm-black sky.

#### The Other Side of the Coin

Which brings us to the dark side of language. Words can heal, raise our spirits, and speak to us of love and affection, but they also have the power to cut us to the quick or leave a gaping wound. We may forgive the cruel remark of a friend, an employer, or a spouse, but forgetting is another matter altogether. An example: When I was a seventhgrader in a military school, a new cadet 200 miles from home, I asked an eighth-grader if I could borrow a pencil.

"Minick," he said, "I wouldn't give you the sweat off my back." I have long forgotten that cadet's name, and have no idea why he despised me, but that dismissal and the sneer on his face are as vivid to me as the day they were delivered.

The mother whose toddler goes into a meltdown where he screams "I hate you!" will probably forget that moment, but the mom whose 16-year-old shrieks the same words will likely find the moment emblazoned forever on her memory. That barb, those three simple syllables, will remain a wound in her heart for as long as she lives. (A note of consolation for moms with difficult teens: remain. To make sense, at least for me, that Odds are that the kid who curses you will nursery chant should run:

#### **Words Without Faces**

Today, the opportunities to hurt others with words have grown immeasurably. With our technology, we can debase a stranger thousands of miles away while hiding our identity behind a pseudonym, we can end a relationship with a short, cruel text, and we can revile those whose politics differ from ours without

fear of repercussion.

Liberated from uncomfortable face-to-face encounters, freed even from taking responsibility for our words, some hurl insult and obscene deprecation with utter abandon, ditching manners and decorum, and reveling in the role of bully.

Because of that technology, what we write can also come back to haunt us. The grown man who at age 15 wrote something stupid online about race or sex, the 30-year-old actress who sent out a private text message 10 years earlier about a director she despised, the politician who tweets out a remark that is later twisted by doxxers into sentiments he never intended: They and others can find themselves, stunned and shamed, at the center of a firestorm.

Most of us have heard that old chant from childhood:

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, But words will never hurt me."

Even when I was a child, this lesson from the playground made little sense to me. Far from never paining me, words possessed the power of a stick of dynamite, and the explosion could damage me far more than mere sticks and stones. Long forgotten are the aches and physical wounds of my childhood–the bruises from backyard football, the cuts and sores incurred in "dirt clod battles," the knees scraped riding a bike and the fingers jammed playing baseballbut many of the lacerations rent by words

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, But words ... words can break my heart."

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.

**ANDREW THOMAS** 

Danny Combs is a Grammy Award-winning guitarist, and played professionally for a decade. Despite his successful career, his role as a father trumped music once he noticed his son was displaying signs of

When Combs's son was 2 years old, he started to show emotional expressions, language development, and social development consistent with autism. The family was living in Nashville, Tennessee, at the time and took their son to Vanderbilt University where he underwent a variety of tests.

Combs was understandably concerned about his son's future.

"With Dylan, it just became apparent that he was just this super bright, talented kid that had so much to offer and he just wasn't really getting the chance to express it," Combs told The Epoch Times.

#### **Working With Hands**

Combs was constantly told about what Dylan couldn't do as opposed to what he could do. However, Combs discovered that Dylan was really good at making things with his hands. For instance, he could make three-dimensional superhero costumes out of cardboard.

Combs grew up with family members and friends who worked in manufacturing and contracting, and recognized the value of working with one's hands.

Combs had the opportunity to meet Dr. Temple Grandin, a prominent advocate in the autism community, at one of her speeches. Combs told her he had an idea for a program to help teach those on the autism spectrum a skilled trade. She immediately encouraged him to go for it.

"I needed that push," Combs said. The autism community has the highest rate of unemployment, estimated at 90 percent. Combs was determined to change that, not just for his son, but for others as

#### **Skilled Trades**

well.

Combs started a GoFundMe campaign for his organization Teaching the Autism Community Trades (TACT), and thought about what trades would be a good fit for those on the autism spectrum. He also looked at the trades where employees were aging out, and found there was a demand for carpen-

ters, mechanics, plumbers, and welders. Combs drove a 1958 Chevrolet panel truck loaded with tools to different churches, recreation centers, and homes to meet with families to get the idea started.

They would set up imprompt u workshops and teach autistic children how to build 3-D printers and instruments.

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Combs grew up with family members and friends who worked in manufacturing and contracting, and recognized the value of working with one's hands.

Within a few months, Combs had raised enough money to get a permanent space in their current hometown of Denver, and a warehouse.

A Father Leaves His Career to Help

the Autistic Enter Workforce

TACT features a variety of different programs including science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), instrument building, welding, carpentry, auto mechanics, woodworking, graphic design, and photography. TACT also transitions its students into jobs.

#### Therapeutic Work

Learning these trades is also therapeutic for children and young adults on the autism spectrum. Even though they may not know it, they're receiving frustration tolerance fine motor, and gross motor skills.

Furthermore, these trades often don't require a lot of social interaction. For instance, someone on the autism spectrum can be a skilled mechanic without having to interact with strangers too much.

TACT currently works with 507 students and has an 86 percent job-placement rate, Combs said. Some of the organization's stu-

dents have gone on to work for Audi and Danny other large companies. A company called Combs CTI, which manufacturers credit cards, with two hired one of TACT's students, and came of his chilback to the organization asking for 30 more. dren.

"It's really neat the way that kids with autism gravitate toward this, and just have the skills to do it. Their mindset is so problemsolving based. They're good at it. It's pretty amazing," Combs said.



**Dylan Combs** was diagautism as a young child. He's now 10 year old.

### Of all the things you are worried about, there may be some you have no control over. **RELATIONSHIPS** If so, try not to worry about them anymore. Your Anxiety Is Trying to Tell You Something

#### **MICHAEL COURTER**

Anxiety acts as a warning bell from our subconscious mind that something is wrong.

Anxiety may be trying to warn of us of a problem or threat developing in the future that needs to be dealt with. Or it may be an uncomfortable feeling that develops when we aren't living by our values and making progress toward important life

When we ignore the warnings, the alarm will only get louder.

**Procrastination** is not the only reason for anxiety but it is very common, and they often go hand in hand.

People usually feel that anxiety is very uncomfortable. It can cause mental and physical discomfort, including headaches, stomachaches, and chest and back pain. It can make it hard to concentrate, cause your mind to go blank, or give rise to uncontrollable worries.

Anxiety is meant to be uncomfortable because its aim is to motivate us to do something or fix whatever

**How People Respond to Anxiety** Some people develop a pattern of

trying to escape the discomfort by avoiding the things that cause the anxiety in the first place. A lot of bad habits and behaviors are simply an attempt to avoid feeling anxious or distractions from thinking about or doing things that make us anxious. This leads to procrastination, and procrastination leads to ... you guessed it-more anxiety!

Here is an example from my client Marci. She complained to me of difficulty sleeping and waking up having more difficulty sleeping and frequently with feelings of panic, as worse anxiety afterward. Procrastiwell as chronic shortness of breath nation isn't the only reason for anxi-

and chest tightness.

A lot of people told Marci that getting more exercise would reduce her anxiety, so she got a gym membership and committed to going four times per week. However, going to the gym became an additional pressure that increased her anxiety whenever she thought about it. She noticed herself binge-watching more of her favorite episodes on Netflix instead of going to the gym, and ety but it's very common, and they often go hand in hand.

Some people respond to increased anxiety by trying to get as many things done as quickly as possible. They jump from task to task, but rushing through things doesn't usually produce good results. Other people respond with perfectionism, trying to get every detail just right, but losing the forest for the trees. They often use time and effort inef-

A large portion of anxiety often

and your mind is always trying to make sense of it in the background. Or, you have things that you are trying to remember or to do, but you don't have them written down or prioritized, so your mind is occupied by trying to remember the details.

what is causing it. It remains vague,

#### Make a Plan

You have to defeat the monster by making a careful plan. Here is a the tasks and projects with a priority process that works well for my clients who complain of feeling overwhelmed and anxious and who resort to distraction, procrastination, rushing, or perfectionism. The process takes some time but it often brings relief.

1. Start by writing down the things you are worried about. Divide them into things you can do something about and things you have no con-

2. Looking at the ones you have no control over, cross off those that are very unlikely to happen. You don't need to worry about them anymore. Have faith that you will be able to endure if anything on this list occurs. Tell yourself that you have no choice but to accept what you can't

3. Take the list of things you can do something about and prioritize each one by giving each one a score between one and 10, with 10 being the highest priority. Next, label each one as a project or a task by putting a P or a T next to it. Tasks can be done comes from not having a clear idea of in one step, usually in five minutes

to a few hours. Projects need to be lowing your dreams. His website broken down into multiple tasks. Making an appointment to get your taxes done is a task. Cleaning and organizing the garage is a project. Speaking of appointments, make

record appointments or tasks that need to be done on a certain date. 4. On a separate piece of paper, in two separate columns, write down of at least 8. The tasks with a priority of 8 to 10 are your to-do list.

sure you have a calendar ready to

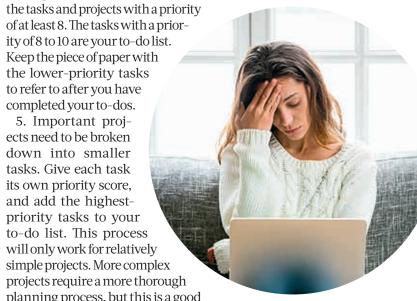
the lower-priority tasks to refer to after you have completed your to-dos. 5. Important projects need to be broken down into smaller

tasks. Give each task its own priority score, and add the highestpriority tasks to your to-do list. This process will only work for relatively simple projects. More complex projects require a more thorough planning process, but this is a good way to get started on some more involved things that you keep put-

6. Stop procrastinating and start doing your tasks from the highest

Michael Courter is a therapist and counselor who believes in the power of personal growth, repairing relationships, and folis CourterCounsel.com.

Do you have questions about relationships or personal growth that you would like Michael to address? Send them to mc@CourterCounsel.com.



A large portion of anxiety often comes from not having a clear idea of what is

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causing it.

Start by writing down the things you are worried about. Divide them into things you can do something about and things you have no control over.

Standing up for teachers and exposing the unions that are hurting schools and children

#### **CATHERINE YANG**

Rebecca Friedrichs has a strong sense of justice. It's what led her to decide to want to be a teacher at the age of 12. It's also what informed her philosophy as a teacher for nearly three decades, and it's why she made the difficult decision to stop teaching in order to rescue teachers across the nation from the culture of fear and isolation instituted by teachers unions.

"Teachers have been deceived. They've been told that the union is not the problem, the union is their savior, that the administrators and legislators and the school board are the problem, and the parents are the problem. And the union is going to save them," Friedrichs said.

"What they don't realize is that their union is the one who put into office the problem legislators, the problem school boards, and those school boards control the problem administrators."

Teachers, already under tremendous pressure and stress, don't exactly have the time to do the detective work to discover who is at the bottom of the discipline problems at the school or the problematic curriculum they're now forced to use. But Friedrichs has connected the dots, and now she wants to get the word out.

Friedrichs is the founder of For Kids and Country, and author of "Standing Up to Goliath," which recounts her journey of speaking out against state and national teachers unions-political lobbying groups that masquerade as teachers and unions in order to raise money and influence.

Friedrichs said she wrote the book for

"That's the whole reason I wrote the book and wrote it from the angle of testimony. Because they didn't need to hear my opinion, they needed to see the truth, they needed to see pictures of what's really going on and where, and hear testimony from multiple sources," she said.

It took a year of sustained focus, of sitting at the kitchen table with 200 note cards, going to bed when her husband was getting up in the morning, interviewing teachers and parents with these long, unjust, harrowing stories to write her book.

"It was a rewarding experience, though, because I came to the point and realized that the only way to help teachers to see the truth was the power of testimony. So that motivated me," she said.

#### Finding the Big Picture

Friedrichs first witnessed the power of unions early on, even before she was a fullfledged teacher.

As a student teacher, she had a wonderful mentor. But right next door there was a teacher she thought of as "The Witch," because she would yell and handle the small children in her classroom in a way that was downright abusive. When Friedrichs inquired about filing some sort of complaint, she soon learned that unions had secured that teacher's tenure, and she could not be fired.

Friedrichs would later learn from another teacher who had been on campus at the same time that this was not an isolated event. That person, too, worked near an abusive teacher who could not be fired.

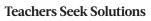
The book demystifies, chapter by chapter, the stunning myriad of ways that state and national teachers unions can affect schools on the ground level, and many of those ways can come as a surprise. The lack of qualified STEM teachers, the rise of in-school bullying, the radicalization of children, and mass political protests that have nothing to do with education have odd and disturbing ties to

For instance, the new sex-education curriculum plans that teach how-to's to 11-yearolds, and have horrified parents who belatedly discovered the content because of the way the material was secretly introduced, was pushed for by these unions. The curriculum contains content so explicit that it can't be repeated here, but it's in the book. Friedrichs herself said that as she was writing the chapter, she had to get up and pace the house because the level of abuse on our chil-



**Unions are** using teacher faces, the teacher profession, teacher money and gaining unfettered access to America's kids through teachers.

Rebecca Friedrichs



Friedrichs notes many cases of teachers finding on-the-grounds solutions to the everyday problems they face–but the stories have similar chilling endings. Despite the progress, at some point the unions come in

lose gracefully."

One day, an angry child punched Benner and refused to calm down. Benner took him to the principal's office, but discovered the student would not be punished. Even the other students thought something wasn't right.

He found it full of misleading information, for race, rather than behavior. There were a small pay cut for the year in order to help lower suspension rates for students of color. Racial equity, rather than implementing discipline strategies that work, means often not

Many teachers have seen that this strategy leads to lawlessness and chaos on campuses, as students realize they won't be punished no matter how they act out. The teachers there to teach and students there to learn end up suffering under a fearful and disruptive environment where learning cannot happen.

#### Unions

As Benner dug deeper, he discovered the racial equity strategy was bargained for by the teachers union—without many teachers in his district even being aware of this. The union had then hired a consultancy to train every employee in the school district to check

to the union for representation. The union have very effectively taken parents out of the

know it's happening. "They're changing our history, they've un-

dren was so disturbing, but people needed to

dermined our science, they've undermined discipline. In most states, parents don't have the right to see the child's medical records after age 14-all kinds of stuff unions have pushed off the backs of teachers," she said.

Science, for example, has literally been redefined to be about "consensus" that includes, rather than is based on, empiri-

Unions are also the ones funding protests and legislation against school choice, despite so many parents and teachers having seen how it benefits children. Unions have supported baffling legislation that would seem to run counter to education or safety, and pushed back against a federal bill that would prohibit sex offenders from working in schools. They demoted a principal who reported an unfit teacher, and they awarded another for enabling a sex offender. There is a heartbreaking story of an inner-city single mother who tried to get her two girls out of a dangerous school and into a different one. Not only was she jailed and fined, but her elderly father was dragged off to jail where he then passed away.

But it turns out, teachers tend to be fantastic problem solvers.

and shut it down.

One such teacher was Aaron Benner, a beloved teacher who taught at a predominantly black public school campus with severe discipline problems. He started a football program during his lunch break, where students

Ten years ago, she served as a local teachers learned to live by the motto "Win gracefully,

Benner later found out that their state had paid millions to a consulting firm to come up with a racial equity strategy in schools. suggesting teachers were punishing students directives from the Obama administration to punishing students who are disruptive.

#### But what did this have to do with unions?

their "systemic racism."

He saw wonderful female teachers quit because they faced such physical threat, and if they were white, they would always be accused of being racist. He said a teacher nearly got killed in the district, and instead of marching against violence or having policies that would have protected him, the unions used him as a bargaining chip to bring in more money. He was personally reprimanded for informing a mother when he saw her fourth-grade daughter get punched in the face and knocked out by a boy.

Benner was outspoken, and as a result, he was hit with a series of investigations, including a false claim of harassment. He had paid his union dues, so he did what every teacher would in the situation and turned

told him to plead guilty to the faulty claim. He wouldn't. When Benner later got fed up and said he was going to the press, a representative said not to, because it would make them "look bad."

As a result, the school lost a great teacher. Benner resigned and later accepted a position as a dean in a private school.

Friedrichs herself has tried to come up with win-win solutions many times in her career. union leader herself in order to try to bring about change from the inside. At the time, there was a downturn in the

economy, and they were told there were budget cuts. The district would have to lay off teachers, meaning the newest teachers, because that's what the union rules are.

Three of these teachers were ones Friedrichs had mentored herself; they were team players who'd helped improve the district's writing scores significantly.

Friedrichs did an informal poll of teachers to see if they would be open to taking these new teachers keep their jobs. Many were supportive of the idea, so Friedrichs brought it up at the next union meeting. She was immediately shut down. She persisted for months, but the union refused to even survey the option. Eventually, union leadership got so annoyed with her, they flat out told her not to worry, because they would make sure these unemployed teachers could take a seminar on how to get unemployment

She was shocked—they were going to represent these teachers right out of a job.

#### Masquerading

Friedrichs has discovered that unions use four manipulation tactics to keep teachers in line: fear, intimidation, isolation, and ignorance.

"The unions are not only using billions annually provided by teachers tax-free, but they're also bullying teachers to be boots on the ground for their agenda, including these Red for Ed teacher strikes. Just completely bullying the entire country. Bullying every legislator, bullying every school board, bullying every parent, through teachers," she said. There are stories of union leadership screaming at teachers for voicing their opinion or even asking an innocent question about whether this policy will benefit everyone, and the result, time and again, is that teachers learn to be silent. Friedrichs recalled one such instance at a California Teachers Association conference, where ironically there was also a "Bullying 101" workshop available meant to help teachers address campus bullying.

They also now control the parent-teacher associations (PTA), which are now not allowed to be anything but "neutral" on policy, and equation-a move good teachers do not support. Unions are so effective at fearmongering and rallying outrage that one parent trying to improve things through her school board opened her front door one day to find that her front lawn had been stuck with forks, tongsup, and covered in toilet paper. Her young children could have been seriously injured had they stepped out onto the lawn.

"The hardest part—the word union is a positive word," she said. "There's a double whammy because they're standing behind the profession of teacher, which is highly respected, and standing behind the label of union, which is highly respected. But they're neither one," she said. "They're really political action committees for a radical socialist agenda."

The book includes statistics spanning several decades, and shows that though the majority of teachers have conservative-leaning views, union spending, which is in the millions, is 100 percent toward liberal causes. And it turns

out the state union conferences do teach bullying, in workshops that teach you "how to deal with" conservatives. Friedrichs found out that the

change in teachers unions came in the 1960s. Prior to that, the National Education Association (NEA) had a mission to inspire beauty and wisdom and to pass on a heritage of purpose. It was a call to service, and it promoted the golden rule.

She quotes speeches from NEA leaders who came in during the '60s and turned it into a political powerhouse-completely fund-

ed by public school teachers' paychecks. They proudly declared that the NEA had been so effective not because it put children or education first, but because they did what unions did best: collective bargaining That Friedrichs's salary was being used

to fund political causes she was personally disgusted with seemed to be a constitutional violation. "Unions are using teacher faces, the teacher

profession, teacher money, and gaining unfettered access to America's kids through teachers. That is crooked and corrupt," she said. "They're making billions and billions of dollars off people who never needed them in the first place." The divide in politics became the focus of

Friedrichs's 2016 lawsuit.

#### Her 2 Cents

Friedrichs had wanted to be a teacher ever since she was about 12 years old.

She remembered that as a student, teachers would often give information, but not the big picture. Things were taught in isolation, or information would be skipped, and she'd

After about three years of serving on her local union, Friedrichs had woken up

realization

there was

no changing

unions from

the inside.

People against the

in Washington on

MARK WILSON/GETTY IMAGES

Jan. 11, 2016.

California Teachers Union

rally in front of the U.S.

Supreme Court building

Which way are

we going to go?

Are we going

to keep being

politically

correct and

too afraid to

Rebecca Friedrichs

speak out?

feel lost even though she was a top student. "I just wanted to help children to understand better. I love that process," Friedrichs said. "Making something that could seem difficult seem easy. And I just loved it, absolutely loved it. People would ask me, 'Oh, how can you stand being with little kids all day?' It was the best job in the whole wide world. I absolutely loved it."

Friedrichs would get students reading five Friedrichs wants everyone to know they years below grade level, students labeled "defi- now have a part to play: Everyone knows cit" or "disorder" as her father had been, but at least one teacher, and if you can "adopt a she would see that with good education they teacher" and pass on the message, things will learned to love reading and love learning.

For Friedrichs, being a teacher meant you were called to service, to be a servant leader. It meant high integrity, honesty, and working very hard to present the truth, and inspire in children lifelong learning, as well as to give them the tools to do so.

Aside from the unions, Friedrichs loved every part of teaching.

> After about three years of serving on her local union, Friedrichs had woken up to the stark realization there was no changing unions from the inside. She-like so many of her fellow teachers-was utterly demoralized. Then she turned on the TV, and saw a norrific scene on the news.

People were protesting Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker's proposals to rein in pension debt, and teachers were not only faking sick to protest, they closed down schools,

attacked students who didn't agree, defaced buildings, and urinated on the walls inside the capitol building. Damages racked up to \$2 million, a bill taxpayers had

This was the impression America now had

of teachers. Friedrichs was deeply embarrassed; she recognized there were union activists among teachers, but she also knew too many good teachers who cared about their students to believe what she saw was the true picture. She knew she had to find an audience and

tell them the truth.

Friedrichs felt God in her heart, and knew she had to start writing about the injustices instigated by the unions. She had deep reservations, however, and thought she would never get published.

Then the story of the widow's mite came to mind. She'd known it since childhood.

A poor widow had placed two mites, basically two pennies, into an offering jar, and Jesus pointed it out to the disciples, saying she had given more than all the wealthy because she'd given all she had.

God was telling Friedrichs to give what she

had-He would do the rest.

MARK WILSON/GETTY IMAGES

So she did. The first editorial she wrote seemed to go nowhere, but then two days later, California state Sen. Gloria Romero wrote a piece about just that topic. Romero had heard from so many teachers about the abuse they faced from their unions, but they were so afraid, none of them would reveal their identities.

Friedrichs wasn't afraid to forego anonymity. She got in touch with Romero, who put her in touch with Larry Sand of the California Teachers Empowerment Network. She kept writing editorials, and then gave interviews, and soon Friedrichs's testimony was heard everywhere.

In 2013, the idea of a lawsuit came up between several teacher support groups. With her family's support, Friedrichs joined, and ended up as lead plaintiff.

For Christmas, Friedrichs's sister gave her a necklace. Inside the glass pendant was a unique item, and Friedrichs asked if it was an antique. Her sister told her, "It's a widow's mite."

Friedrichs wore that necklace throughout the lawsuit.

The case was about contesting the forced fees-even if you were not a union member, you were still required to pay fees, which were then used to fund political campaigns the teachers didn't have a say in.

It looked like it was going to win 5-4, but then with the death of Justice Antonin Scalia, they lost, 4–4. A year later, Mark Janus won his labor case, Janus v. AFSCME, meaning all unionized government employees have the right to opt out of their unions and pay nothing.

There are tremendous implications for teachers, parents, students, and everyone with an interest in the future of the nation.

#### Adopt a Teacher

Throughout Friedrichs's activism, she was still teaching. But while she wrote editorials at home and gave interviews to the press, she shut up about it at school.

"I never talked about it at work. At work, I was a teacher, I was there for the kids, I supported my colleagues, and this didn't come up," she said.

But the teachers who knew what she was doing would reach out to her secretly. They'd send private emails at home, or have clandestine meetings at the coffee shop because they

were so terrified they might be seen with her. "Teachers are terrified. They're so bullied. You don't dare speak against the union. If you say something against the union, it will ruin you," she said.

"The most common question people ask me is if I'm afraid for my life, so that tells you something about how fearful people are," Friedrichs said.

quickly change.

She's created a brochure that outlines six steps: embrace, educate, enlighten, empathize, encourage, and empower. Teachers won't exactly take to the truth easily; they'll likely be on the defensive—what about their pay, their pension, their liability insurance? She hopes her book will address each of their issues, and that they'll receive empathy and support, having been alone in this fight for

"People have to get involved," she said. "The only way to they're going to break free is per-

"People go, 'Oh I'm not going to talk to a teacher, they might get mad at me.' You know what? Take a risk. Let them get mad at you at first. Do you love them? Do you love your kids? Do you love this republic?" Friedrichs said.

The teachers who have read her book tend to leave their unions—their state and national unions-because they can stay with just their local unions, which very often are teacherrun associations that work for teachers.

Today, Friedrichs travels and speaks on the topic constantly. She's stepped away from teaching after 28 years with a heavy heart because what she now has to do is more important than her wish to be in her classroom with her students. Someone recently told her that she was still teaching—she was teaching all of America. That cheered her up.

Having seen what she's seen, she feels we're at a fork in the road.

"I have hope when good, honest, moral people stand up and fight. But too few are doing that," she said.

"If good, honest, moral people start to fight, then, yes, I'm very hopeful we could turn things around. We could strengthen and keep our republic quickly and turn things around quickly. But if they don't, we could lose it quickly.

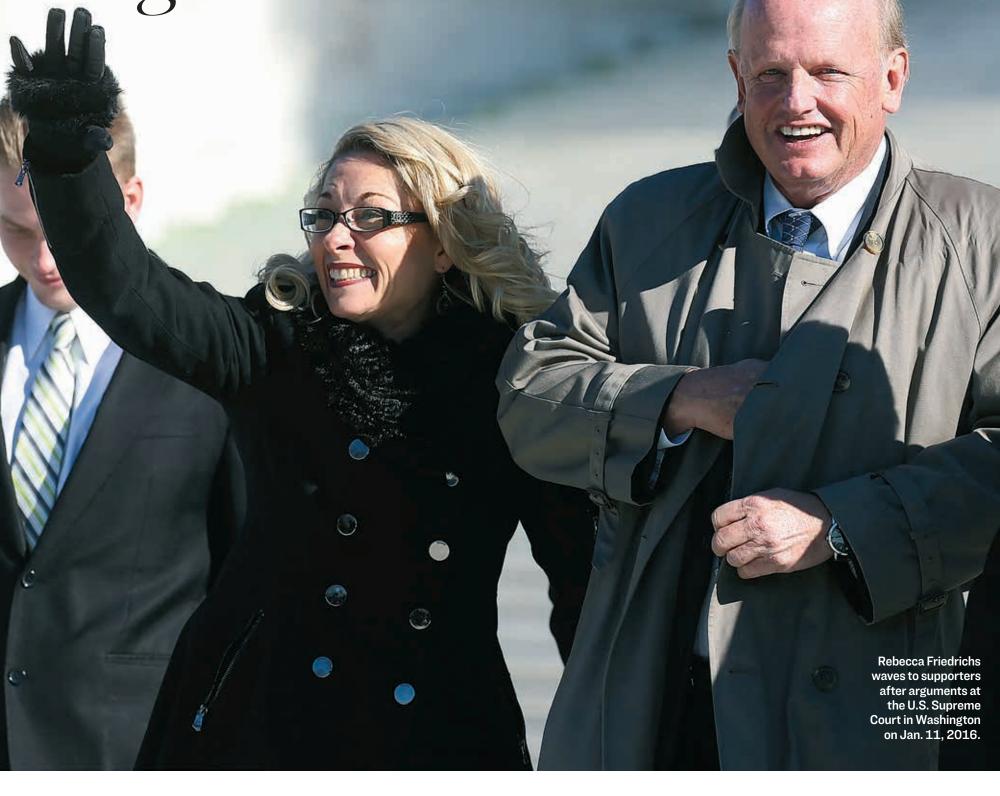
"Which way are we going to go? Are we going to keep being politically correct and too afraid to speak out?

"If Americans remain cowards, I'm worried. If they'll stand up and speak out, the good moral people, there's nothing stopping us.

"Goodness always wins in the end-if it



Friedrichs is the author of "Standing Up to Goliath: Battling State and National Teachers' Unions for the Heart and Soul of Our Kids and Country."



## A Childish Descent: 'The Fall of Phaeton'

#### **ERIC BESS**

In my social media feeds, I often see Picasso's famous quotes: "Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up," or "It took me four years to paint like Raphael but a lifetime to paint like a child." Is Picasso right? Is art that tries to embody a child's mindset good for our culture?

Mythological tales have historically been intertwined with cultural teachings. Sharing myths was a way of continuing and strengthening the spiritual and moral aspects of a culture. In my pursuit to see if there were any images of myths that suggest the effect of a child's perspective on culture, I came across this image by Flemish artist Peter Paul Rubens titled "The Fall of Phaeton."

The story of Phaeton is as follows: A water nymph, Clymene, and the sun god, Helios, have a child named Phaeton. When Phaeton was a young boy, he was teased and his legitimacy was challenged by his playmates. Clymene told Phaeton to ask his father for guidance, and the boy asked his father to help prove his legitimacy. Helios agreed to give Phaeton anything to help.

Unfortunately, Phaeton requested to drive the sun chariot for a day. Helios tried to convince Phaeton that this was a terrible idea and that even Zeus himself was not properly equipped to drive the sun chariot. Phaeton insisted, however, and Helios kept his promise.

Phaeton stepped into the chariot and prepared to drive. The horses, however, were not used to his weight and thought the chariot was empty. The team became confused, reared, and Phaeton lost control.

The artist captures the moment just after Zeus has intervened.

Of course, the horses went wild and went off course. The earth froze when the horses carried the sun chariot too far from the earth, and it burned when they carried it too low. To prevent any more destruction, Zeus threw a thunderbolt at the chariot and Phaeton fell to his death.

#### **Drama Through Composition**

Rubens skillfully depicted the drama of Phaeton's fall. The artist captures the moment just after Zeus has intervened. Zeus is not present and neither is his thunderbolt, but Phaeton, along with the chariot and other figures, is seen falling to earth.

Rubens used compositional elements to heighten the drama of Phaeton's fall. The figures are so arranged that they form a strong diagonal line from top right to bottom left, and the rays of light from the top right reinforce this movement.

The drama is also increased through Rubens's use of light. The light at the top right of the painting illuminates the forms of the figures, horses, and carriage out of the surrounding darker environment, and this sharp contrast aids in depicting drama.

Rubens's understanding of composition, lighting, and narrative helped him to successfully communicate a complex design. The maturity of his complexity in no way resembles the work of childlike simplicity. I would argue that it makes him a master

#### **Avoiding a Childish Descent**

of expression rather than a novice.

Rubens's painting warns us that a child can also turn a circumstance of average hardship into an overly dramatic expression of

unrestrained emotion, and impulsive emotion can often have a negative effect on individuals and their environments.

Phaeton's fall occurs because of the drama that ensues when his feelings are hurt by his playmates, who are also children. It is likely that the boy wanted to show off for his playmates after they had humiliated him.

Of course, children can possess innocence, which may be what Picasso intended. But children also lack the wisdom of their parents and grandparents and can act impul-

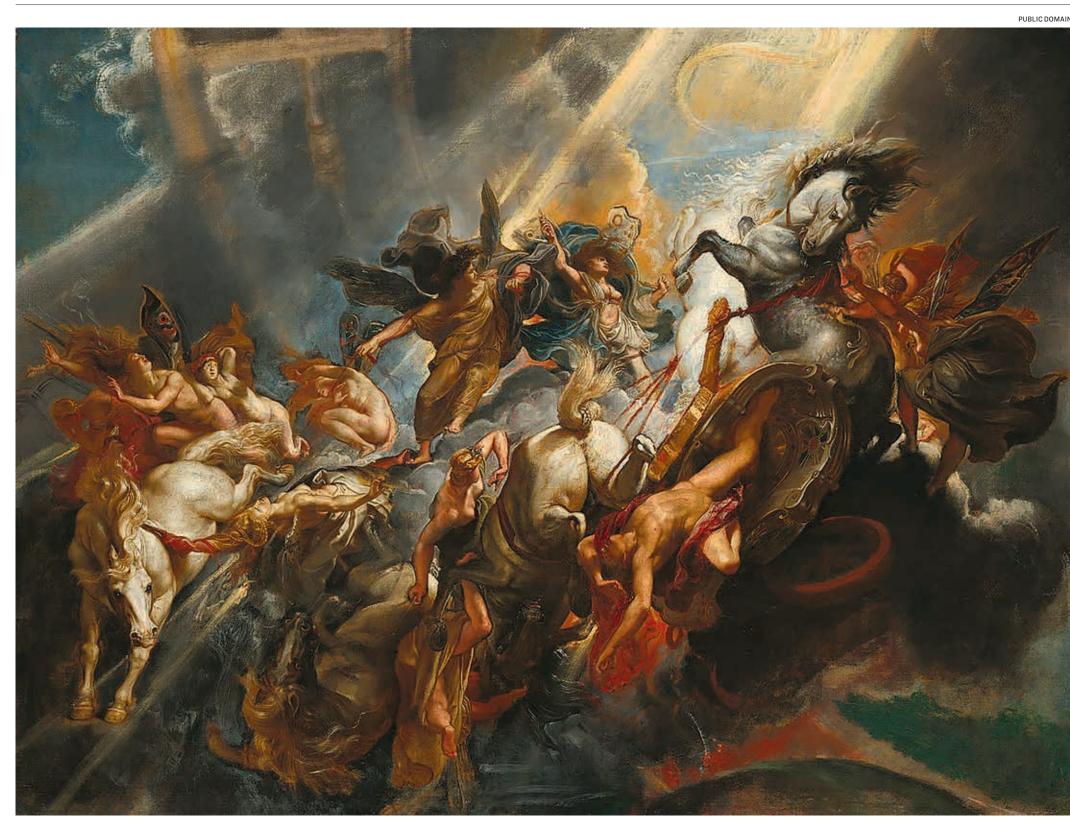
Taking this analogy to art, do we want an art based on naive impulses?

Traditional methods of art, just like mythological tales, help transfer practices that communicate spiritual and moral wisdom to future generations. So a culture built on traditional methods of creating art can positively impact that culture.

Despite Picasso's claim otherwise, the practice of traditional methods of art requires and teaches patience, and patience can counteract-can tame-childish emotions. Rubens, for instance, had to practice considerable patience to create his masterpiece of compositional elements, the content of the story, and the accurate depiction of objects in order to create a coherent scene

Effective communication, a foundation upon which all visual art and culture is built, is anything but childlike and is certainly not childish.

artist. He is currently a doctoral student at the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts (IDSVA).



"The Fall of Phaeton," circa 1604/1605, by Sir Peter Paul Rubens, probably reworked circa 1606/1608. Oil on Canvas, 38.75 inches by 51.63 inches. National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

# 'Joker': No Laughing Matter

It isn't the first film to raise concerns by highlighting murder

In September, Robbie Collin of the Telegraph asked Joaquin Phoenix a pointed question about his starring role in the then-upcoming film "Joker": "Aren't you worried that this film might perversely end up inspiring exactly the kind of people it's about, with potentially tragic results?" In response, the actor muttered, "Why? Why would you ...? No ... no," and then he stood up and walked out the door. After an hour-long conference with a PR agent, Phoenix returned to the interview and explained that he had "panicked ... because the question genuinely hadn't crossed his mind before." However, the question had crossed thousands of minds leading up to the DC Films release.

On Oct. 4, Warner Bros. released its latest Batman-themed film, "Joker," about the franchise's villain, the "Clown Prince of Crime." In it, Arthur Fleck (Joaquin Phoenix) is an unsuccessful comedian with a mental illness that makes him laugh uncontrollably. Eventually, Gotham City's cruelty makes him go insane and become the murderous Joker.

This standalone film contains new concepts, as a IGN.com article suggests. The Joker's facial coloring, for example, comes from makeup and dye, not from acid discoloration. His permanent smile is painted, not frozen by insanity or knife wounds. Although he commits a murder in a clown costume, and when pushed too far becomes the evil Joker, he is just an ordinary man.

If he is just an ordinary man, mightn't a wider audience identify with him? That is, is "Joker" dangerous for society, or were the concerns around the movie unfounded?

#### A Dangerous Joke

On July 20, 2012, James Holmes, 24, entered the midnight premiere of "The Dark Knight Rises" at Century Aurora 16 Multiplex Theater in Colorado, wearing black protective gear, a gas mask, and bright orange hair. He opened fire, killing 12 people and injuring 70 others. Police apprehended him at his car, where, although some dispute this, he reportedly said that he was "The Joker."

"Joker" has revived frightening memories. Sandy Phillips, whose daughter died in the Aurora shooting, told The Hollywood Re-



Joaquin Phoenix in "Joker."

While the story was meant to raise awareness about mental illness, it implies that anybody could be only one bad day away from becoming a homicidal maniac.

"supposed to think" is "kind of great." In recent years, inceldom has gone from

an advice forum to a violent misogynist group. Since the online subculture breeds and praises killers, people have feared, as Vox states, that glorified incel Arthur Fleck could inspire real-life violence.

This isn't the first Warner film to raise concerns by highlighting murder. In the early 1930s, people feared that gangster films would corrupt children. No crimes were directly linked to these violent films, yet criticism persisted.

#### **School for Crime**

In the early 1930s, gangster films seemed like a school for crime. From 1930 to 1933, America's unemployment rate soared from 8.7 percent to 24.9 percent. Meanwhile, outlaws Bonnie and Clyde and John Dillinger became folk heroes for robbing banks. It wasn't a wise time to glorify men whose reward for stealing, bootlegging, and killing was riches, power, and women, according to the book "The Dame in the Kimono."

However, the films of the times did just

that. Gangsters played by actors James Cagney, Edward G. Robinson, and Paul Muni made crime look so glamorous that it was worth early death. Mark Vieira, in his book "Sin in Soft Focus," cites censor James Wingate as saying, "Children applaud the gang leader as a hero," adding that they "see a gangster riding around in a Rolls-Royce and living in luxury, and even though some other gangster gets him in the end, the child unconsciously

Knight Rises."

think people can handle that message." Despite denials that Fleck is a role model, many feared he could be perceived as a tragic hero. The greatest concern was that Fleck's transformation to the Joker would inspire an incel mass shooting. "Incel" stands for "involuntary celibate," an unattractive, romantically unsuccessful man. After the Venice Film Festival, Time Magazine called Phoenix's Joker "the patron saint of incels" and said the film "lionizes and glamorizes"

porter, "My worry is that one person who

may be out there—and who knows if it is just

one–who is on the edge, who is wanting to

be a mass shooter, may be encouraged by

this movie." She added, "I don't need to see a

picture of Holmes; I just need to see a 'Joker'

Because of these concerns, five relatives

promo and I see a picture of the killer."

of Aurora shooting victims

penned a letter to Warner Bros

on Sept. 24, asking the com-

pany to advocate gun control.

Warner Bros. responded: "Nei-

ther the fictional character Jok-

er, nor the film, is an endorse-

ment of real-world violence of

any kind. It is not the intention

of the film, the filmmakers or

the studio to hold this char-

acter up as a hero." Director

Todd Phillips said that "Joker"

"makes statements about a lack

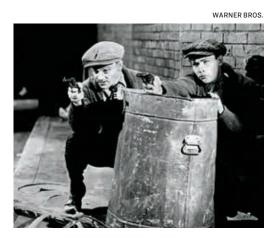
of love, childhood trauma, lack

of compassion in the world. I

A poster for "The Dark

forms the idea that he will be smarter and get away with it." Hollywood insisted the evil just provided contrast to decency, but crime seemed to overshadow Anti-heroes date to Hollywood's begin-

nings. From Western outlaws to the "Phantom of the Opera," early films frequently sympathized with villains by showing their pathetic backgrounds. The Phantom, like earlier Joker incarnations, was a criminal because of his appearance. While we can



James Cagney (L) and Edward Woods in 1931's "The Public Enemy."

pity phantoms, we can't imitate them, since incidents of unusual misfortunes had corrupted them.

However, "Joker" turned this phantom into a gangster. While previous acid-induced disfigurements were unrelatable hardships, anyone could experience the unkindness and bullying that drives Arthur Fleck insane. While the story was meant to raise awareness about mental illness, it implies that anybody could be only one bad day away from becoming a homicidal maniac.

#### **More Than Entertainment**

When no tragedy haunted the opening of "Joker," earlier concerns were ridiculed. Twitter users who saw the film joked about not being shot. Memes depicted the media desperate for a tragedy to validate their predictions. And "Joker" was deemed a poignant, successful film.

Is this evaluation true? Since a crazed incel hasn't shot up a screening, is "Joker" harmless? As radicalization expert Robert Evans explains, predictions of violence increased this movie's security. A potential gunman would have to be completely insane, which most incels aren't, to strike in such guarded

This movie has subtler dangers. Jokes about shootings show how macabre and twisted our society has become. This insensitivity is not formed just from "Joker," but from the thousands of similar films. Certainly, movies like this make you wonder: Would society improve if Hollywood ensured that right and wrong were always clear? When the lines blur, our youth get caught in the crosshairs.

Tiffany Brannan is an 18-year-old opera singer, Hollywood historian, travel writer, film blogger, vintage fashion expert, and ballet writer. In 2016, she and her sister founded the Pure Entertainment Preservation Society, an organization dedicated to reforming the arts by reinstating the Motion Picture Production Code.



Paul Muni in "Scarface."

Gangsters played by actors James Cagney, Edward G. Robinson, and Paul Muni made crime look so glamorous that it was worth early death.

Let's tell our young people the words they need to hear about truth, honor. courage, and virtue



We should encourage young people to strive, starting at this very moment, for what the ancient Greeks called arête—excellence and moral virtue.

#### **JEFF MINICK**

Recently, I was visiting my daughter and her family in Elmhurst Township, Pennsylvania. They live in a rambling old house on the grounds of Saint Gregory the Great Academy, a Catholic boarding school, where my son-in-law teaches geometry and carpentry, and oversees the care of the buildings and grounds.

The 60 young men enrolled in this school follow a rigorous schedule: academics, chapel, prayers, sports, and what the academy calls guilds, extracurricular activities where the students receive training in everything from wilderness survival to animal husbandry, from cooking classes to juggling. Singing is also taught and encouraged.

One evening, we watched a soccer game between St. Greg's and a local high school, during which the Saint Gregory boys not on the soccer field stood together in the bleachers and sang Latin hymns, Gaelic songs, and chants throughout the entire game. It was an impressive feat.

Having taught various seminars to homeschooling students for 25 years, I remain an old warhorse of a teacher and am always looking for the opportunity to encourage our young people, so I asked my son-inlaw if I might speak for 10 minutes to his class. He was kind enough to humor me. Below are the five main points I delivered to the class:

1. 'You've Already Won the Lottery'

Recently, a friend, Franklin, and I were discussing money when, he said, "Yeah, people are always telling me, 'Franklin, you need to play the lottery.' I tell them, 'I already won the lottery. I was born in the middle of the 20th century in the United States of America."

I had for years explained to my students that they are living in a veritable paradise, compared to many other places on earth. Instead of sitting in a heated classroom, they could be standing up to their knees in a rice paddy or walking five miles to some school in Africa just to obtain a rudimentarv education. I told them they have advantages others only dream of-clean drinking water, a variety of foods, clothes and shoes, hot showers, computers, and books-and that it was up to them to take advantage of their advantages and someday to pass on in some manner the gifts they were given. The lesson here is gratitude.

#### 2. You Cannot Win If You Do Not Play

That line came to me long ago from songwriter and musician Steve Forbert, and is another piece of advice I have frequently imparted to my students. For the Saint Gregory boys, I referenced the previous night's soccer game, pointing out that all of them, both those playing on the field and those singing in the stands, had participated in the game and that this same passion for engagement will carry them far in life.

To live fully, I told them, to take part in the grand adventure of life, means stepping onto the playing field, taking the hits, and assuming responsibility for your actions. Here I brought up the film "Rocky Balboa," which some of the boys had seen, and who when asked by a mother what in a antiques like excellence, gratitude, truth, Rocky's speech to his son: "It ain't about word he was preparing the Eton boys for, honor, courage, and virtue. ow hard you hit. It's about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward, how much you can take and keep moving forward. That's how winning is done!"

Accept responsibility for your actions, I told them. Take the hits and keep moving

#### 3. Strive for Excellence

His comment about the lottery was new to Despite an injunction by a Master Teacher me-Franklin and I only recently met-but to "Be ye perfect even as I am perfect," most

of us will fall far short of perfection. But we can push ourselves, I told the boys, and seek to be and do our best in whatever we undertake. The ancient Greeks called it arête, meaning both excellence—to fulfill one's potential-and moral virtue.

Here I emphasized immediacy. Start now, I told them. Start today. All of us, I said, and especially young people, often regard the present as a mere stepping stone to the future: Saint Gregory's is but a prelude to college, and college an overture to law or medicine or some other pursuit. "There at last," some of us think, "I will find happiness and fulfillment." Wrong, I said. Your destiny and your happiness lie in this day, this very hour. Here I followed up with another movie line, this one from "Gladiator:" "What we do in life echoes in eternity."

Start now to strive for excellence, I told those boys. Start now.

#### 4. Memento Mori

Remember, I told the boys, someday you are going to die–a cold, hard fact that should inspire us to live life to the hilt. I mentioned some of the pictures of saints with which the boys were familiar, paintings in which a skull sits on a shelf or desk, an object kept by those venerable men and women to remind themselves that life is short. I then told them a story of an Eton headmaster, replied, "In a word, madam. Death." By that remark, I explained, he meant they were preparing young men to live as fully as possible, that we die well when we have

lived well. I then asked the average age of the young men and found it was 15 to 16. After pointing out that most of them would probably live another 70 years, I then pointed to myself and said that with any luck, I would live another 15 years. For me, time has become a precious commodity. Look at every day, even the most difficult

5. Keep Alive a Sense of Wonder

We concluded my 10 minutes with an exercise I have employed in other moments of teaching. "Look at your classmates," I said. They did so. "Now," I said, "look out the windows behind you." They turned in their desks and looked through the windows at a beautiful October morning: blue skies, red, yellow, and brown leaves, a touch of frost on green grass.

"You're looking at a wonderful mystery," I said. "Your classmates, this dayand you're a part of that mystery, swirling through space on a tiny planet, breathing air, dreaming dreams. So often we forget we're living in this mystery, this miracle, but if we just stop every once in a while to take it in, we can keep our sense of wonder alive and well."

I then thanked them for listening and left

A final note to my readers: Some of you may find what I had to say to the boys that morning hackneved, cheap, old hat, and

I would disagree.

Our young people need to hear the old words, those dusty, all-too-often neglected

They need those words. Desperately And it's up to the rest of us to see that

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.

#### Habits and routines bring peace and sanity.

## Why Habits Matter

#### Reclaim steady routines for peace and mental clarity

#### **VERONICA BAUGH**

The first three weeks of my college experience felt like roughly 3 bil lion years.

It wasn't that my classes weren't interesting-they were! I loved my friends and my needs were being met just fine. That was the confusing part: My life was nearly perfect, yet I was miserable.

It didn't add up. What was going

Then one day, while listening to Jordan Peterson's podcast, it hit me: I had no routine. From the moment I set foot on campus, everything I encountered and attempted to do was uncharted territory, meaning that I had no standard procedure with which to approach even the most fundamental tasks. No wonder I was miserable. I needed a routine, and I needed one soon.

In his "12 Rules for Life" book tour, Peterson frequently spoke of the importance of routine and habit in combating chronic anxiety. Waking up at the same time every morning, eating adequately, exercising, and following the same micro-routines every morning are just a few of the Peterson-approved

**Mostly what** you want is to have a routine that's disciplined, that's predictable, and ... stick to it. You will be way healthier and happier and saner if you do that.

Jordan Peterson

habits to help regulate anxiety and depression.

"Mostly what you want is to have a routine that's disciplined, that's predictable, and ... stick to it. You will be way healthier and happier and saner if you do that," Peterson said in one of his lectures.

My only problem was that I couldn't develop a daily routine until at least a few weeks had passed at college. Habits only come with time (or so I thought). So, my anxiety fermented through three long weeks of ill-defined schedules and crucial homework assignments. My mental stress was at a constant breaking point, and there were many times I just wanted to go home.

Eventually, my schedule began to regulate itself. Visualizing the course of my day when I woke up helped me to face it, especially when I could differentiate between essential and optional tasks. I was able to foresee free time, giving me the fortitude to work harder when it was time to study.

I had learned the hard way something I should have remembered: Habits and routines bring peace and

It doesn't matter how "new" your situation is. New baby, new job, new spouse, new home-you still need a lifeline of routine to grasp while your lifestyle shifts. This lifeline, I learned, cannot be a variable like sleep cycles, diets, or favorite peo-

ple. Sleeping food options, and even friends are all subject to change along with your lifestyle.

Your "lifeline of habit" needs to begin and end with you alone. For me, this titanium lifeline became my spiritual habits.

The real improvement in my overall mental health only came when I started prioritizing my daily prayer. No matter how big my homework avalanche, how much sleep I'd gotten, or how many parties were starting, carving out small amounts of time in the morning and the evening to pray cleared my head. That's all it took.

I'd practiced this routine while living at home, but at college these 20-odd minutes of prayer each day became much more meaningful. They gave me time away from the hectic demands of life, a few guiltfree minutes of time to reflect and take a deep breath.

If you're going through a turbulent

period in your life, I encourage you to practice a similar daily habit. It doesn't have to be prayer-it could be a daily run, morning reflection, or 10 minutes of journaling, drawing, or some other quiet task that you enjoy. My roommate even keeps her cool by playing basketball for just half

TEECHAI/SHUTTERSTOCK

Steady daily routines come over time, but you'll go a long way to restoring mental clarity and peace if you make a disciplined effort to reclaim helpful routines and habits.

an hour a day.

Veronica Baugh writes from the South Side of Chicago. This article was originally published on Intel-



The Wisest

**Poem Ever** 

Courtesy of The Society of Classical Poets

by J.J. Bitters

The wisest poem ever

To be much of a scholar

Was written by my daughter, Although I've never known her

She's only five years old now,

But wise beyond her years. My daughter wrote a poem

That moved me into tears.

A napkin was her scroll; A purple crayon her feather Transcribing all her soul. I've read a bunch of sonnets

And other poems too.

But not a single poem

Has ever moved me more

Cross-legged on the floor.

She handed me the napkin,

Looked up at me and said,

Then watched me as I read.

"I wrote a little poem!"

Although it is a short one,

I hope you will agree ...

The wisest poem ever:

Hove me

I love you.

I love we.

And Maya Angelou

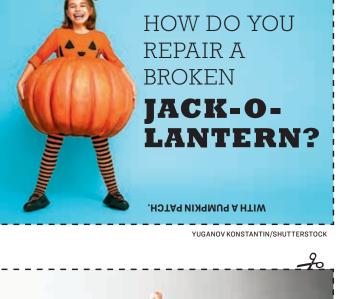
She scribbled down her feelings;

By Whitman, Frost, and Shakespear

Than words my daughter scribbled









This Week in History



n Oct. 31, 1541, Pope Paul III unveiled one of Renaissance artist Michelangelo's most famous paintings, "The Last Judgment." The painting is a mural

located on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel in Vatican City. It took

Michelangelo nine years to paint.

It depicts the biblical scene of the return of Jesus Christ and the day on which souls are judged and given their eternal fates. It is an immense work

with many details and covers the entire wall.

By Aidan Danza, age 13

play.

### LOOKING AT THE SUN

supports all life on Earth, and all life in the solar system (if there is any).

It gives us heat and light and energy. Without the sun, life would not be possible: Earth wouldn't even exist. But all things, even the things that give so much life and live for so long, were nonexistent at one point.



Scientists think that waves of energy in space formed a system of gas and dust that is called a nebula. It was made up mainly of hydrogen and helium. The nebula eventually got too big to support itself, and its gravity made it wheel. This spin caused the nebula to flatten into a disk. In the center of this huge disk was material that clumped together to form a tiny protostar Over many millions of years,

this protostar got bigger and hotter, and more pressure built up inside the sun. This caused the current process of hydrogen fusion that fuels the sun's heat, light, and energy. Fusion is when two atoms join together to make one entity, and it creates a very powerful

Deep inside the sun, the fusion that keeps it (and us) alive happens in the hottest part of the sun: the core. The core is the deepest part of the sun. It is extremely hot (almost 27 million degrees Fahrenheit) and is under enormous pressure and very dense The nuclear fusion inside the

sun's core produces photons that take an extremely long time to radiate out through the rest of the lavers in the sun. The photons go the sun starts to get less dense, and then to the photosphere, which is the sun's "surface," that you see. This is where sunspots form, and this is also where the light that reaches our Earth comes from.

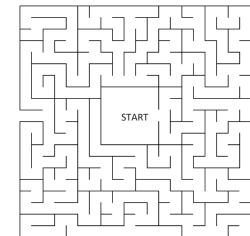


Fusion releases tremendous amounts of energy, but only if the resulting nuclei are light.

chromosphere is suspected to help

the sun conduct heat The final layer is called the corona. If you have ever seen a total solar eclipse, this is the part that

(Don't look at it directly!) This is a cooler part of the sun compared to you can see. The corona is actually the core (about 10, 000 degrees hotter than the photosphere, ever Fahrenheit) but it's still hot enough though it's farther away-the to melt and boil diamonds. The reason is still uncertain.

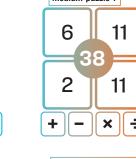


USE THE FOUR NUMBERS IN THE CORNERS, AND THE OPERANDS (+, - AND X) to build an equation to get the solution in the middle. There may be more than one "unique" solution but, there may also be "equivalent" solutions. For example: 6 + (7 X 3) +1 = 28 and 1+ (7 X 3) + 6 = 28



Solution For Easy 1

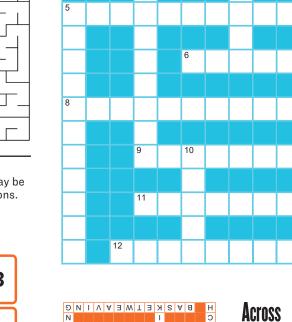
2×7×(E-8)



Solution for Medium 1 (11+11) × 2 - 6



53 + 53 + 6 - 2



1 Story making (7)

2 Stringing jewellery (7) 3 Art coated in varnish (9)

4 Art for candle-making,

pottery or metalworking (7) 5 Sampler technique (5-6)

7 Making a sweater, perhaps (8)

10 A dyeing art? (5)

Y A B T T O G E W B B O I D E B A

You just need a pencil and paper (7)

5 You use a hook for this (not fishing!) (10)

> Art you can walk on (3-6) Combines photos, art, and

9 Doily-making skill (10) 11 Activity involving firing

memorabilia (12)

and glazing (7)

**12** Certain wicker craft (13)



# THE EPOCH TIMES

TRUTH AND TRADITION =



It's not only about singing. It's about personally holding themselves to the highest standards.

St. Thomas Choir School boys continue the tradition that aims for the highest standards for music at St. Thomas

# Noble Singing

at Saint Thomas Choir School, 100 Years On

North America's only choral boarding school

#### **LORRAINE FERRIER**

ne block south of New York's Central tion is thriving at Saint Thomas Choir School. The chorister boarding school is one of only three such schools worldwide, which include Westminster Abbey Choir School in London and Escolania de Montserrat near Barcelona, Spain.

order to create the best musical standards for Saint Thomas Episcopal Church on Fifth Avenue, in New York City.

In 1913, Noble was the organist cathedral in England when the rector and vestry of St. Thomas invited him to become the organist and choirmaster at St. Thomas. York Minster had a choir school, and Noble made it a condition of his appointment at St. Thomas that a choir school must be established.

In St. Thomas Choir School's inaugural year, 21 boys enrolled. Noble taught at the school until 1943.

the choir's 100-year celebrations, Englishman Thomas Tertius it will hold a concert, "Saint Noble (1867–1953) founded Saint Thomas Choir School at 100," Thomas Choir School in 1919 in with the Orchestra of St. Luke's.

their school days in the 2015 documentary "T. Tertius Noble & the Saint Thomas Choir School: The First Century." Tom Carroll, and choirmaster of York Minster a chorister in the class of 1945, remembers Noble as "the most soft-spoken, loving director" and a "surrogate father to his

Choir alumni reminisce about

some beautiful compositions."

whole choir." "We learned a lot from him; it was extraordinary," "He was impeccable in his playing, in his compositions, and his

directing of the choir," said John Papps, a member of the class of This year, on Nov. 7, as part of

1944. Papps believed that if Noble had stayed in England, he could have been in the "pantheon of Romantic Victorian composers. ... They were all in the same category of great composers of Anglican Church music–and they did

Excerpts of Noble's cantata "Gloria Domini" will be performed at the Nov. 7 concert to commemorate this rare choral tradition that remains in the heart of Manhattan.

#### What It Takes to Be

a St. Thomas Chorister Today, 29 boys live and study at the school. To be a student at St.Thomas Choir School requires a certain kind of "sparkiness," said Victoria Vanasco, director of admissions, in an email. Boys enroll at the school from the third to fifth grades, and besides their having the obvious "interest and aptitude for music," Vanasco said that prospective students need to be energetic, with a natural curiosity to try new things and to challenge themselves. That's the spark she's looking for.

Not all applicants need to have learned an instrument or been in a church choir, although that obviously helps. "We tend to emphasize musical potential rather than polish," she said.

"For a third grader, we look for a good ear, an interest in music, a trainable voice, and that spark," Vanasco said. The higher the grade, the higher the entry standards, due to the limited amount of time for training the older boys before their voices change, she explains. When a boy's voice breaks and he is no longer able to sing as a treble, he becomes an acolyte who assists in the church service. Acolytes continue with all aspects of choir school and sing in the chamber ensemble.

Continued on **Page 16** 

These are the sort of poems our not-so-distant ancestors. men, women, and young people once read aloud in the evenings in the family parlor.

EVGENY ATAMANENKO/SHU





# Literary My Literary

An exploration of 'The Best Loved Poems of the American People'

#### **JEFF MINICK**

The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there. --L.P. Hartley, "The Go-Between"

here it sat on my sister's bookshelves, a duplicate of the book I'd thumbed through frequently in my teenage years, "The Best-Loved Poems of the American People." I pulled the anthology from the shelf, noted the yellowing of the top edge, opened it, and read the inscription: "Merry Christmas, Penny. 1970. Mom and Dad."

Skimming the Table of Contents, I found many poets and poems I recognized: John Keats's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," Christina Rossetti's "Up-Hill," Edgar Allen Poe's "Annabel Lee," Joyce Kilmer's "Trees," Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "Sonnet From the Portuguese," and other familiar names. Even Rudyard Kipling, now banned by the politically correct, appeared at least twice among these makers of verse.

The majority of these poets, however, were strangers to me, long gone to the grass of graveyards. Who was this John Bennett, author of the lovely "In a Rose Garden"? Who was Alice Carey, who wrote so tenderly of her little brother's death in "Among the Beautiful Pictures"? Why were we unfamiliar with Louisa Fletcher's "The Land of Beginning Again," whose words might yet assuage sadness and regret?

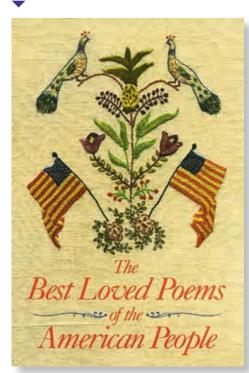
As I held that book with its golden cover adorned by peacocks and American flags, an idea came to me. I would treat "The Best Loved Poems of the American People"-referred to below as "Best Loved Poems"-as if I were an archaeologist on a dig who, having just discovered a buried palace, sets out to learn its past and unlock its meaning. My tools would be the anthology I held in my hand and the internet. Here are some of my findings.

#### The Book Itself

In 1936, Doubleday editor Hazel Felleman and writer Edward Frank Allen published "Best Loved Poems." Publication constituted an act of enormous hope and optimism, for the audience at which they aimed this hefty volume of 575 poems and 670 pages was suffering through the Great Depression, with an unemployment rate that year of 16.9 percent. There is something touching and noble in Doubleday's risky venture, something ineffably American to bring out such a book when so many

were struggling to put food on the table. In his Introduction, Edward Allen writes "In a sense, this book has been edited by the American people who love poetry." Those same people demonstrated that love of poetry by buying the book–not just then, but up to our own time. "Best Loved Poems" remains in print after 83 years and has sold more than 1,500,000 copies.

Peacocks and flags adorn the cover of a book of American poetry.





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The collection contains works by wellknown poets, such as John Keats.

It has 182 customer ratings on Amazon, with the great majority of them positive. (The negative ones criticize the damaged condition of the book received.) Here is part of one of those reviews:

"When the courtship started with my wife her attitude was 'flowers are nice, but if you're really interested in me then read poetry with me.' So was set in motion a precedent throughout our marriage that she would recite poetry to me from this book. Thus, it was in her final months of brain cancer, when she could not speak or feed herself, that myself and my mother would sit at her bedside and read to her from this book (that has her inscription, in her own writing, in it from 1974). If you're in love with someone, buy this book."

#### Virtue, Form, Tradition

I next mulled over the organization of "Best Loved Poems," which the editors had grouped by topics, and realized that some of the titles of these sections suggested radically different values from our own. "Faith and Reverence," "Home and Mother," and "Patriotism and War" come from a time when faith, home, motherhood, and patriotism were not topics for debate or institutions in decline, but instead bespoke traditional American virtues with no need for further justification.

The poems themselves wear this face of confident tradition. In this collection, we find no modernists like T.S. Eliot or Ezra Pound, no free verse, no experiments with form and language. No-the writers featured in "Best Loved Poems" work within the framework of verse, using as their templates meter, rhyme, and rhythm. And unlike so many of our moderns, these poets aim to stir our hearts, not to make us fret and puzzle over the meaning of a line or verse. Here, for instance, is the last stanza of John Bennett's "In a Rose Garden":

A hundred years from now, dear heart, We'll neither know nor care What came of all life's bitterness, Or followed love's despair. Then fill the glasses up again, And kiss me through the rose-leaf rain; We'll build one castle more in Spain, And dream one more dream there.

Here are the opening lines of Louisa Fletcher's "The Land of Beginning Again":

I wish that there were some wonderful place Called the Land of Beginning Again Where all our mistakes and all our

heartaches And all of our selfish grief Could be dropped like a shabby old coat by the door And never put on again

#### **Our Common Humanity**

My archaeological adventures also uncovered a quality running through "Best Loved Poems" that beggars any one-word



description. Whatever the topic-romance, death, love of country, motherhood–these poems, even the ones some might deride as overly sentimental, have the power to rouse emotions and thoughts common to all. These are the sort of poems that our not-so-distant ancestors, men, women, and young people once read aloud in the evenings in the family parlor, both for the pleasure of the rhyme and beat of the verse, and because the poems go to the roots of who and what we are. Which of us, for example, has not experienced the regrets expressed by Mary

If I had known the trouble you were

What griefs were in the silence of your face;

Carolyn Davies in "If I Had Known"?

I would have been more gentle and more caring; And tried to give you space. I would have brought more warmth

to the place,

If I had known.

If I had known what thoughts despairing drew you; (Why do we never try to understand?)

I would have lent a little friendship

And slipped my hand within your And made your stay more pleasant in

If I had known.

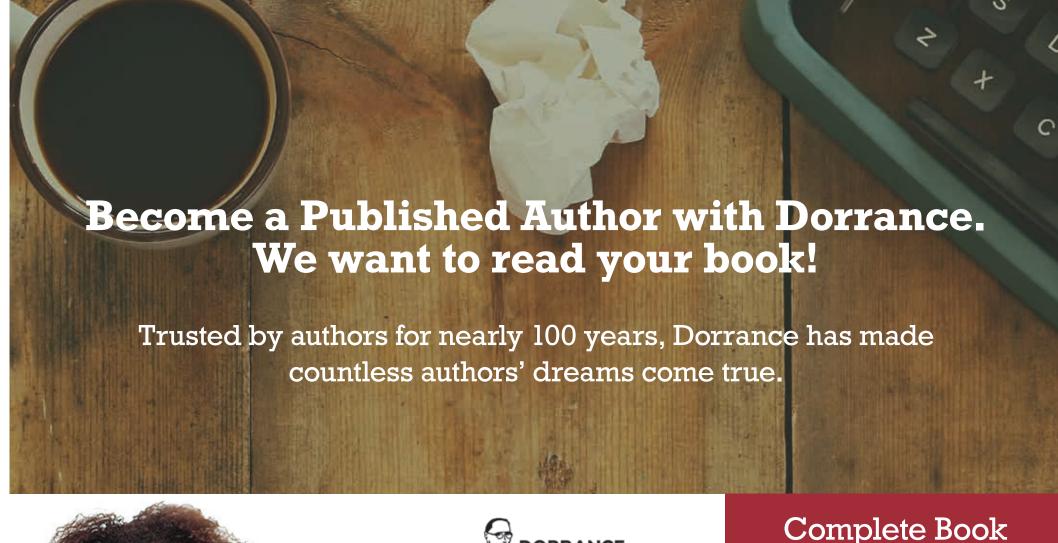
Finally, through the wonders of our elec-

tronic world, I discovered that most of these

A portrait of Christina Rossetti, September 1866, by her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti. forgotten artists and many of their other poems could be found on the internet. These poets may have faded from living memory, but devotees of their work have kept them alive online, where they patiently await our coming and our homage.

The Amazon reviewer mentioned above wrote, "If you're in love with someone, buy this book." I would add: If you're a lover of words and verse, of tradition, and of America, buy "The Best Loved Poems of the American People."

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.







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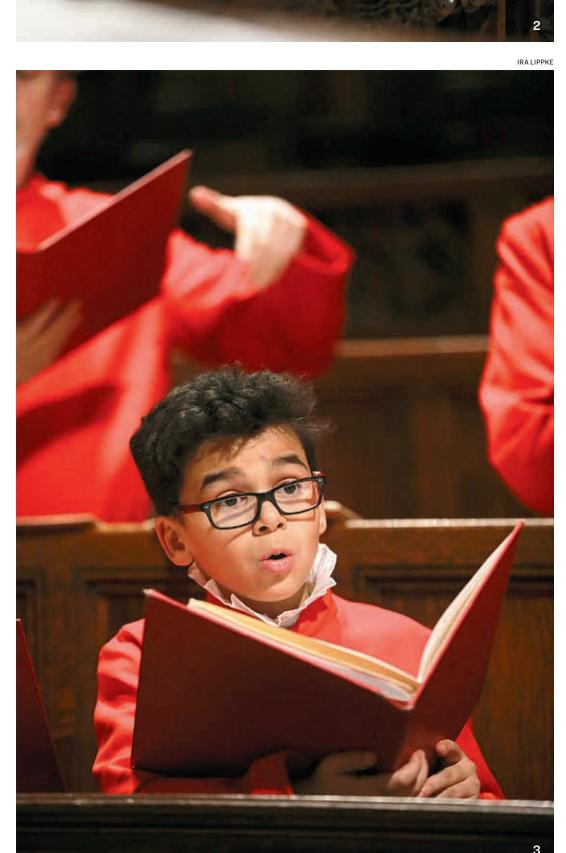
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Jonathan Bolena



The students affectionately call themselves 'The

room, to Christmas Eve dinner, to the annual pilgrimage to camp for parent's day," she said. Current students hail from eight states, yet she says the families all feel like

one extended family. Vanasco should know, as she has the benefit of being both a parent and a staff member at St. Thomas Choir School. Her son Quinn started in fifth grade, and when he was in seventh grade, she began working at the school.

"I see him becoming this remarkably capable person ... who now knows on a very real level what it takes to become worldclass at something, how to be resilient. He will carry that with him wherever he goes from here," Vanasco said.

#### A Sacred Responsibility: **Preparing for Evensong**

Five times a week, the boys put their musical training into practice when they sing Evensong at St. Thomas. The boys continue the tradition that Noble set back in 1919 when he founded the school, aiming for the highest musical standards for their sacred music.

For the choristers, it's not only about singing. It's about personally holding themselves to the highest standards, having that reverence and professionalism. Jonathan believes it's important to "set an example, whether kneeling or sitting, not talking, showing respect for whoever is [there], and showing that you really care about what you do and how you do it."

"While not everyone considers this possibility, we not only lead the choir in the music but also mentally and spiritually," Jonathan said. "One of the many ways to calm people into a spiritual state of mind is through our music. It is the most powerful gift we have," he said.

"The music we sing really conveys the message that the priests and church are trying to give to people," Quinn said. We understand that message through practicing and rehearsing the piece of music, he explained. "We try to convey the meaning by feeling the emotions ourselves and hopefully the congregation feels it too."

Before Jonathan sings, he imagines himself sitting in the congregation and asks himself how he would like to feel having those "beautiful melodies float right past" him. Now, as an acolyte, he loves watching the congregation. "When they listen to the music, you know their mood has changed. You know that it has brought them into a worshipful state," he said.

To find out more about the "Saint Thomas Choir School at 100" concert on Nov. 7, visit SaintThomasChurch.org

The stu– dents prepare over 450 music pieces a year and spend over 20 hours a week in rehearsals, services, and performances. (bottom L) puts himself in the shoes of the congregation before he sings. He asks himself, "How would I like to feel being led to wor-

2. Chorister Quinn Vanasco (2nd L) sings. It's at rehearsals that the boys learn how the music relates to a religious text so that when they sing they can truly convey its meaning.

3. The St. Thomas Choir School of 2019, 100 years after the school's founding.

4. Saint Thomas Episcopal Church on Fifth Avenue, New

5. The founder of St. Thomas Choir School, a mustachioed Dr. T. Tertius Noble (back C) stands with his choristers in a photo taken in the late 1930s.

6. The boys of St. **Thomas Choir School** live and learn in the heart of New York

Week 45, 2019 THE EPOCH TIMES

# Noble Singing at Saint Thomas Choir School, 100 Years On

Continued from Page 13

Some, if selected, join the gentle men's choir and sing as altos, tenors, and basses.

Musically, the boys are being shaped as professionals from an early age: The students prepare over 450 music pieces a year and spend over 20 hours a week in rehearsals, services, and performances. The boys also have scheduled, individual voice and instrument lessons and practice.

"It has made me into a better musician, both in vocal and instrumental capacities," said 13-year-old Jonathan Bolena, an acolyte, from Staunton, Virginia, as he and a current chorister, Quinn Vanasco, responded by email.

**Excerpts of** 

will be per-

formed at the

Nov. 7 concert

orate this rare

that remains

Manhattan.

in the heart of

choral tradition

to commem-

choir-founder

**Thomas Tertius** 

Noble's cantata

'Gloria Domini'

The school encourages the boys to "try your best and do your best," said 11-year-old Quinn, from Buffalo, New York. "It makes me less afraid to be up front [and] to be willing to do things I may never have imagined doing," he said. Resilience, no doubt, is a key

quality for a St. Thomas Choir School student, because not only is there that solid foundation in sacred music, but the school also has rigorous academic and sports programs. Then, of course, the boys board at the school, living away from home at an early age.

#### Family and 'The Band of Brothers'

Except for the third graders, all the boys at St. Thomas Choir School board full-time at the school, along with the core teaching staff.

Of course, the boys are homesick; they are young, after all. Tom Carroll said that boarding wasn't easy in the beginning, "but you come through it a bigger and better person than you were before."

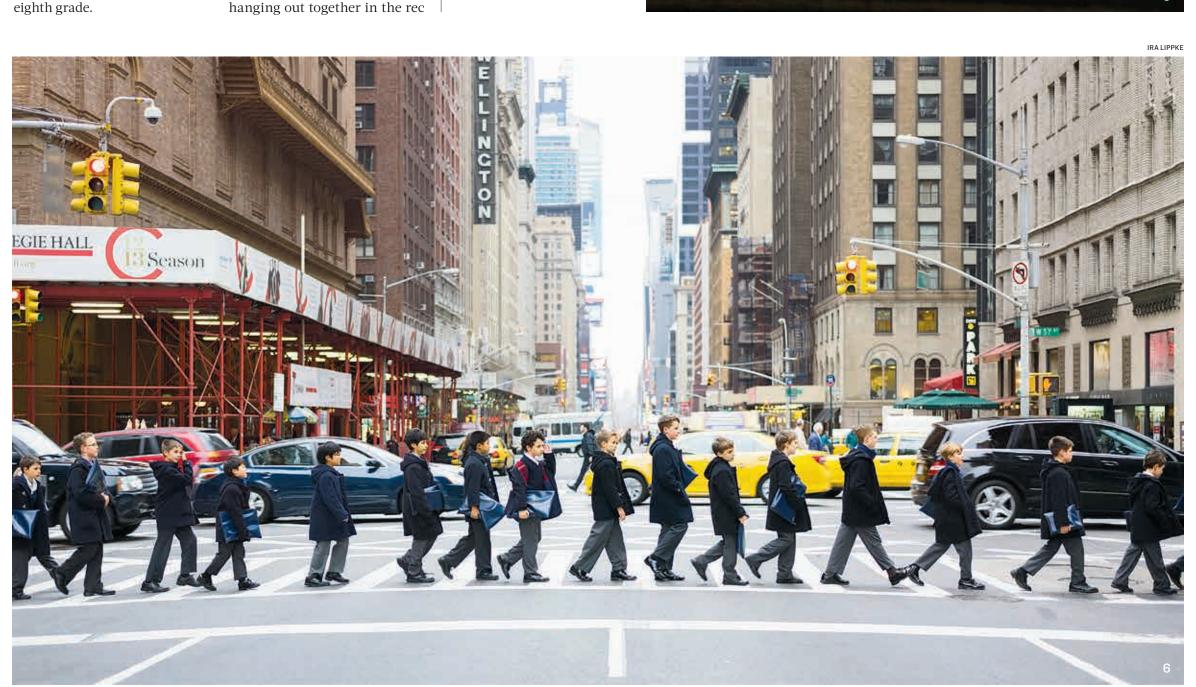
All students, past and present, seem to speak of the boarding experience as one that strengthens and develops their character as young men.

better prepared for life after St. Thomas Choir School, when they go off to high school and college.

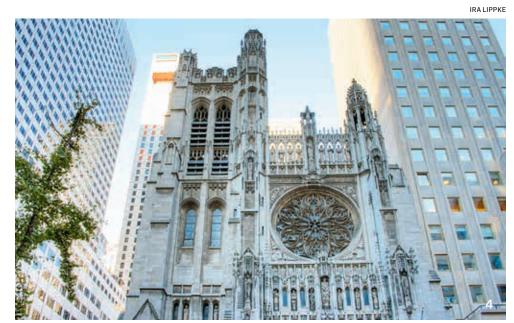
"It has changed my perception of different cultures and made me more accepting of the people around me," said Jonathan, who enrolled when he was in fourth family: "everything from coming grade and is now an acolyte in to the weekly Sunday lunch and eighth grade.

The students affectionately call "The school has made me adept themselves "The Band of Broth- at solving my own problems and ers." Quinn and Jonathan both made me a more socially active say that boarding has made them person since I am around my friends and faculty so much," said Quinn, now in seventh grade.

Victoria Vanasco stresses to parents that boarding school is not about dropping your child off in September and not seeing him until June. There's time for











THEATER REVIEW

# A Heartbreaking Tale of Hope and Regret

(Left) (L-R) Paul O'Brien, Pamela Sabaugh, and Tommy Schrider tell their stories in Brian Friel's "Molly Sweeney." (Right) Molly Sweeney (Pamela Sabaugh) has had a rich life, even though she's been blind since infancy.

Week 45, 2019 THE EPOCH TIMES

#### **JUDD HOLLANDER**

EW YORK–Just because something can be done, doesn't mean it should **\** be. Playwright Brian Friel makes clear this point in his bittersweet 1994 play "Molly Sweeney," currently being revived by the Keen Company at Theatre Row.

Molly Sweeney (Pamela Sabaugh) is 41 years of age and lives in Ballybeg, Ireland. She works as a massage therapist in a health club, has many friends, and has been married to her husband, Frank (Tommy Schrider), for a little over two years. She is also unable to see, having lost her sight when she was 10 months old. Though still able to detect the difference between light and shadow, she is, for all practical purposes, blind

Molly is content with her life. She of-circumstances, as she has to learn ten feels she understands and experi- "how to see." She is so used to functhan sighted people.

However, her condition doesn't sit well with Frank. Currently unemployed, he spent his youth traveling abroad, getting involved in various projects and get-rich schemes. He is what can be described as a restless soul and has an innate desire to fix things. He wants to find a way to restore Molly's sight, which he is sure is the right

thing to do. Though, he never seems to ask Molly what she thinks about this.

Frank's quest leads him to Mr. Rice (Paul O'Brien). Once an ophthalmologist with a bright future, Rice suffered an immense personal upheaval after his wife left him. Since then, he has learned to depend too much on alcohol, thus derailing his career. This is the reason he ended up working in a regional hospital in Ireland.

In Molly, Rice sees a chance at professional redemption and earning the respect he craves from his colleaguesif the operation on Molly's eyes proves successful. Though, success is a relative term. Rice warns Molly that the best they can hope for is a partial restoration of her sight

After the operation, Molly finds herself facing an entirely new set of introduction of the fifth, no matter how impaired it may be, fundamentally changes the way she perceives the world. It becomes a world that she increasingly no longer feels a part of, and one in which no one is able to

With "Molly Sweeney," Friel offers the warning to be careful what you wish for, as what may start out with the

With 'Molly Sweeney, playwright Friel offers the warning Be careful what

you wish for.

Sweeney' **Keen Company** at Theatre Row 410 W. 42nd St.

New York **Running Time** 2 hours, 30 minutes (including intermission)

Nov. 16

212-239-6200 Telecharge.com

RUSS ROWLAN

best intentions by some, can turn ultimately tragic when applied to others. The play also makes perfectly clear how there are times when is it important to say "no" to what others want you to do, and instead put your own

The work is told as a series of monologues, with each of the characters relating events as they remember them. The different viewpoints eventually come together to offer a complete picture of what has transpired. What's striking is the layer of details Friel has included for his characters, such as the relationship between Molly's parents and why she was never sent to a school for the blind.

Also compelling is the fact that neither Frank nor Rice are merely selfserving. Though they each want Molly to be able to see for their own reasons, they are both-like Molly-fully formed individuals whose stories we want to no action per se, just people talking.

Sabaugh is excellent as Molly. She shows the changes she feels after the operation not so much as turmoil, but rather as an ever-growing incompleteness. She used to be able to identify flowers, as her father spent hours with her in the family garden when she was a child, teaching her to identify different specifics by touch and smell. But Molly is unable to call upon these

senses when she tries to see the flowers with her eyes.

ing Frank as a caring individual, yet never completely happy unless he has a cause to champion. Highly intelligent, the character explains such concepts as engrams and the internal clocks of Iranian goats. Schrider's final speech shows both how much and how little has changed for his character.

O'Brien works well as Rice, the most tormented character of the three and the one who learns the most in the play. He comes to like Molly very quickly and truly tries to help her, though he eventually realizes the accolades he eventually receives are not the ones he wants

Jonathan Silverstein's strong direction helps keep the narrative both focused and involving. These are especially important because there's Zhang's sound design play key roles in helping involve the audience in the tale.

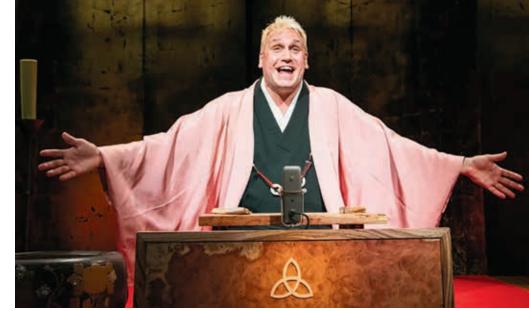
Wonderful in its execution, "Molly Sweeney" offers a heartbreaking tale of hope, regret, and ultimately mov-

Desk and the Outer Critics Circle.

Schrider does a good job in show-

Judd Hollander is a reviewer for Stagebuzz.com and a member of the Drama

Katsura Sunshine performing in "Katsura Sunshine's Rakugo."



THEATER REVIEW

## A Soupçon of Japan

**DIANA BARTH** 

EW YORK–Some years ago I had the pleasure and privilege of appearing in the classic Kabuki play "Kanjincho" at New York's Institute for Advanced Studies in the Theatre Arts. It was directed by Kubuki legends Matsumoto Koshiro VIII and Nakamura Matagoro II. We performed off-Broadway and at the Library of Congress

biased in favor of Japanese culture.

Rakugo is a centuries-old Japanese form of storytelling. It's now being brought to New York's New World Stages by the Canadian-born performer-director of Slovenian descent, Katsura Sunshine, whose given name is Gregory Robic. But don't be fooled by Robic's, that is, Mr. Sunshine's seemingly

inappropriate background. Robic went to visit Japan supposedly for a in Washington, D.C. Thus, I admit to being brief stay, but he ended up living there for

The content of Sunshine's stories is generally humble and down-to-earth.

'Katsura Sunshine's

**New World Stages** 

**Running Time** 1 hour, 15 minutes

Jan. 4, 2020

212-239-6200 or Rakugo.lol

Rakugo'

340 W. 50th St. New York

Closes

**Tickets** 

20 years, during which time he became a student of rakugo master Katsura Bunshi VI, with whom he served a three-year apprenticeship. This made Sunshine only the second Westerner in Japan's history to achieve rakugo master status.

Wearing the traditional kimono and holding a fan, Sunshine kneels on a small platform and tells his stories, mixing humorous events with a cultural education. For example, there are numerous ways to say "thank you" in Japanese, depending on the situation and the status of the person thanked. It's of-

ten a bit of a struggle to find the right version. The content of Sunshine's stories is generally humble and down-to-earth. His delivery is brisk and rapid, sometimes too much so, demonstrating a ready wit and sharp mind.

Overall, the performance is very enjoyable. The set is simple, with only red and white lanterns overhead. The audience, which may have been puzzled at the beginning of the presentation, appears to eat it up enthusiastically.

The show would also be a good bet for kids; there's enough naiveté to grab the interest of the younger set. And new stories will be introduced each month during the planned run through early January, so a revisit might be a good option, especially during the upcoming holidays.

An evening spent in the company of "Katsura Sunshine's Rakugo" would, in my opinion, be quite pleasurable.

Diana Barth writes for several theater publications, including "New Millennium." *She may be contacted at diabarth99@* gmail.com



# The Original Cast Can't Re-ignite the Franchise

#### **MARK JACKSON**

he original "Terminator" was an nstant classic. You know this already. It was thrilling and terrifying, it was original, it had James Cameron as a young, hungry, slightly genius filmmaker, and it had Arnold Schwarzenegger at the height of his movie and muscle prowess. It slammed the Austrian-accented phrase "I'll be baaaack" into the public consciousness, and 35 years later, it's still in there. It spawned the term "Governator."

Well, Arnold's no longer the governator, but he's baaaack again as the terminator, along with Cameron, and even Linda Hamilton. But even all three of them can't make this one interesting.

Why? Because we already know all this stuff. Like, for 30 years now. Ever since Robert Patrick's T-1000 terminator model, the liquid metal one, where you shoot holes in it and they

So what's the point? Where's the suspense? Where's the unknown? Where's the mystery? Where's the nail-biting fear? Nowhere, is where. This is the fundamental problem with Hollywood's playing it safey-safe and wringing every last



and Natalia Reyes.

'Terminator: Dark Fate'

Arnold Schwarzenegger,

Linda Hamilton, Mackenzie

Davis, Gabriel Luna, Natalia

Director

**Starring** 

**Running Time** 

2 hours, 8 minutes

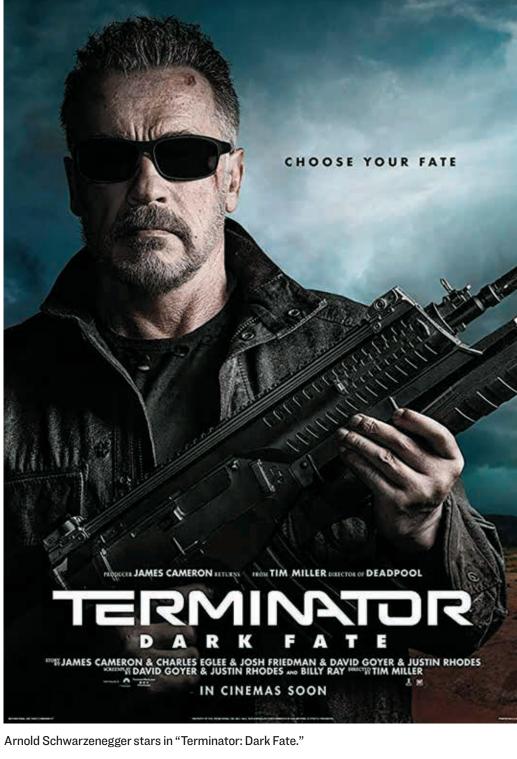
Tim Miller

(L) and Natalia Reves star in "Terminator: Dark Fate." (Bottom) Gabriel Luna stars as a lethal machine.





Well, 28 years after "Terminator: Judgment



drop of money out of tried-and-true, market-research-driven, known fare. The elements of surprise and originality are long

Granted, every once in a while, the franchise will come up with a new terminator-thingy that's got some scariness. Remember the motorcycle terminators? Those were menacing and original. And you could send them somersaulting spectacularly into the roadside bushes with a well-placed tripwire.

But this latest gooey terminator that can be machine-gunned into a few different puddles of bubbling black goo, which can (Below) Mackenzie Davis | then promptly locate the other puddles of black goo and then morph back into a carbonite skeleton? Exactly like Scarlett Johansson in "Lucy," and Tom Hardy in

#### So What Happens?

Day," we find ourselves down around the U.S.-Mexican border. Which is all very current events-y, of course. Dani (Natalia Reyes), a young Mexican woman, is being nunted by a "Rev-9" terminator (Gabriel Luna–see above about the new black-goo

Dani must be somebody special who has the ability to change the outcome of the future. That's why the dastardly Skynet keeps sending terminators Back to the Future to terminate these hero types in the first place. Probably if you sit there and guess really hard who Dani might be, you'll go, "Oh, duh!" Hmm. Is that a spoiler? Nah,

Luckily for Dani, there's a female version of Michael Biehn's character from the

original movie, a cyborgian supersoldier named Grace (Mackenzie Davis). She's got Biehn's same, burning, megawatt eyes. This role should catapult Davis to A-list leadinglady status. Anyway, her futuristic cyborg warrior has been sent to protect Dani, in the same way Biehn's character protected Sarah Connor.

Speaking of whom, Sarah (Linda Hamilton) is baaack, too.

#### Well, Arnold's no longer the governator, but he's baaaack again as the terminator.

Linda Hamilton was awesome in a few of these terminator stories. The first one, of course, but also the 1991 one that she got ridiculously physically jacked for. (As a personal trainer, I appreciated the massive deltoids.) However, here, it doesn't look like she's been plying her acting trade in a while; the rust is thick. She looks like she's standing around, trying to feel stuff. This is a big acting no-no.

#### It's a Chase Movie

Terminators will always chase you around. Because you don't want to die. So you run away. And they chase you. You burn off all their fake skin, and the shiny skeletons with the red demon eyes, firing machine guns, clunk after you. You smash off a metal femur, and they crawl after you. They turn into motorcycles and burn rubber after you. Chase-chase-chase.

It's always been a story about protecting someone who has the ability to save the future. The most fun thing about "Terminator: Dark Fate" is Arnold Schwarzenegger's T-800, jalopy-terminator model. He's been studying human behavior and has tried to fit into human life, going by the name of Carl. Carl the terminator.

He actually has a wife and kid. When asked by Sarah Connor-who will loathe him 'til all eternity for killing her kid-why his wife puts up with him, he cites a list. On reason is, "I am extremely funny." Only Arnold can say a line like that. If "Dark Fate" was as good as the original, that's the line we'd be saying for the next 35 years. Ultimately, the most important thing from the movie is its poster:

Just like the currently playing "Zombieland 2: Double Tap," what these movies about undead creatures that are coming to eat/terminate you are good for is to remind you that now is a very good time to choose your fate. What that means, on a superficial level, is that you should choose wisely whether you spend \$18.50 on a movie theater ticket or \$1.91 to get the DVD from a ocal neighborhood Red Box.

#### **FILM REVIEW**

## Naomie Harris Shines as Ethical Rookie Cop

#### **MARK JACKSON**

ritish actress Naomie Harris stars in "Black and Blue," a powerful addition to the gritty, hightension, dimly lit, dirtycop thriller genre, which includes Kurt Russell in "Dark Blue," Denzel Washington in "Training Day," and Richard Gere in "Internal Affairs."

Alicia West (Harris) is a New Orleans rookie cop. She's Black. She's a cop-and that's your movie title right there. Why's that interesting? In America, being "biracial" in this particular sense will put you in a world of hurt when you have to police the neighborhoods you grew up in, being perceived as a traitor.

Young Alicia, at age 17, broke out of the New Orleans ghetto by signing up with Uncle Sam's Army. Two tours in Afghanistan, she's already a battle-hardened vet when she returns to join her hometown law enforcement team. Which means she can be bullied by veteran cops as a rookie only so far. She might not know the ropes just yet, but do not tread on her.

#### **Narcs and Drug Dealers**

Alicia hits two birds with one stone: working out by jogging to her recently deceased mom's grave and leaving fresh flowers. On the way home, in a well-to-do neighborhood, two white police officers roll up on her, slam her against an iron fence, and pat her down with undue hostility.

When they realize she's blue too, they lamely explain the racial profiling and unnecessary force: She fit the description. A highly unapologetic apology is reluctantly offered.

She's soon pulling a double shift with highly intimidating vet officer Deacon Brown (James Moses Black) as her shift squad-car partner. Brown spells out the racial rules

of black and blue: You think you black? You think those your people? Well, they not. ... You blue now."

They cruise around a little bit, and then Brown pulls up a"t an abandoned factory. He tells her to stay put. You can see her wondering how it is that he gets to talk to her the way he does.

However, there's an irresistible copper-colored Chevelle with white racing stripes sitting in front of the squad car, and when a random street guy starts trying to break into it in broad daylight, right in front of a squad car, no less, she's bound and determined to do some police work. She runs the would-be perp off, but immediately hears gunfire coming from the factory.

Upon investigation, she witnesses a narcotics team, headed up by Terry Malone (Frank Grillo), owner of the Chevelle, blow away a black drug dealer. Her body-cam witnesses it too, recording everything, along with her getting fired upon herself by the narc boys, because they notice the body-cam.

#### Running From the Blue and the Black

Alicia is suddenly and desperately on the lam, but as bad as it gets, she deeply knows right from wrong and virtue from vice, and that body-cam-by golly-is going to get delivered to her police precinct, on her watch, or she's going to die trying. It's a fine display of courage and righteousness.

Alicia's shot up; she needs to apply some Afghanistan-learned, improvised field dressing. In need of shelter and assistance, she hunts down an old acquaintance, Milo "Mouse" Jackson (Tyrese Gibson). He's in I-don't-want-any-trouble mode, but she eventually wins him over with her combination of vulnerability, truthfulness, and wanting to do the right thing.



Naomi Harris as a cop with high morals in "Black and Blue."

The dirty narc boys want her six feet under as soon as possible. And when the local gang shotcaller Darius (Mike Colter) pulls up in a black suburban, wafting prodigious shaved-head menace, and finds out his nephew just got executed (and, as the narcs pin it on Alicia), he immediately wants her tremendously dead-yesterday. So now, she's on the run from the blue cops and the black neighborhood.

#### **Performances**

Frank Grillo ("Warrior") plays excellent, fabulous-head-of-hair, mean-as-a-snake bad guys. Reid Scott plays Alicia's well-meaning but weak partner. Unfortunately, his character arc is slightly too predictable.

Tyrese Gibson of "Fast & Furious" fame is normally an action guy, but

here he puts on some weight as Milo and does a solid dramatic turn.

Oscar-nominated former Bond girl Naomie Harris nails her first leading role here, and herewith joins the rarefied crew (which includes Eamonn Walker and Idris Elba) of feted British black actors who can come over here and get so seamlessly African-American in accent and body language that it's uncanny. Idris Elba likes to relate stories of men on the street in Baltimore coming up to him, wanting to congratulate him on his role in "The Wire," and freaking out when he'd reply in his native British accent. Harris is likewise gifted.

This is a rip-roaring, fast-paced thriller, with much action and no gratuitous violence. It may be shot in muted blues, browns, and grays, but throughout, Alicia's noholds-barred attempt to uphold the law shines a light in the dark. The racial overtones might be a bit heavy-handed, but it never hurts to have America have another look at race issues.

#### 'Black and Blue'

**Director** 

Deon Taylor

Naomie Harris, Tyrese Gibson, Frank Grillo, Mike Colter, Reid Scott, Nafessa Williams, James Moses Black

**Running Time** 1 hour, 48 minutes

Rated

**Release Date** 



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