

THE EPOCH TIMES LIFE & TRADITION

Many people ask:
Are you using
technology, or is
technology using
you? But not
Andreen. She looks
for solutions.

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Keeping Finances in Check During the Holidays

A conversation with financial expert Rachel Cruze

BARBARA DANZA

The expectations are high. The Christmas carols are everywhere. The marketing messages are relentless. It takes a strong will and a solid frame of mind to navigate the holiday season with your financial integrity intact.

I asked Rachel Cruze for her advice on keeping finances in check during the holidays. She is a best-selling author and the host of The Rachel Cruze Show and The Rachel Cruze Show podcast. Here's what she said.

THE EPOCH TIMES: Why do you think staying on solid financial footing is especially difficult during the holidays?

RACHEL CRUZE: It's the happiest time of the year, which means we're seeing everyone "living their best life" on social media. It's easy to fall into the comparison trap. Trust me, we all struggle with it!

But comparison will steal your joy and your paycheck. If we're not careful with social media, we can wind up chasing someone else's values instead of our own, and it always dead-ends in debt. If social media is tempting you to spend more money than you have, set some boundaries.

Set a time limit for the amount of time you can spend on the apps. Or maybe commit to taking a break from social media altogether and focus on making memories with the people right in front of you. The most important thing to remember is that you're comparing someone else's highlight reel to your real life.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What are the most common money mistakes you see people making this time of year?

MS. CRUZE: One of the most common money mistakes I see around the holidays is not making a budget. Without a budget, it's easy to spend a little money here and a little there. Before you know it, you've spent hundreds of dollars and haven't even bought a present for your husband yet!

Don't do that to yourself. You know Christmas is coming. Make a list of everyone you need to buy for and add a line item to your budget. Assign a dol-

lar amount to each person and stick to it.

Another mistake I see people making is shopping for themselves. As tempting as it is to buy a little something for yourself in the middle of all this Christmas shopping, remember that the holiday season is about giving. It's not about you! If you really want it, add it to your Christmas wish list and share it with a loved one who might want to buy it for you.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What are the key strategies you recommend to ensure good financial health in the new year?

MS. CRUZE: I said it once, but I'll say it again. The first, most important step to financial health is a budget. If you don't tell your money where to go, you'll wonder where it went. Your income is your biggest wealth-building tool, and a budget is what will set you up to win with your money. It might not sound like much fun, but doesn't a vacation with your friends and coming home without debt sound fun?

I recommend creating a monthly, zero-based budget. This is where your income minus your expenses equal zero. I want you to spend every dollar on paper, on purpose, before the month begins. So every dollar has a name. I use the free budgeting app EveryDollar because it helps me to stay on track!

The other key to taking control of your money is getting out of debt. Aren't you sick and tired of your paycheck already being accounted for before it comes in? If you want to win with your money, you have to make the decision to kick debt to the curb!

If you have debt, start by building a \$1,000 starter emergency fund. Once you have that, list your debts smallest to largest, regardless of interest rate, and attack the smallest debt. Throw everything you can at that debt. Then, when you've paid off that debt, roll that money over to the next largest debt. This is called the debt snowball, and we've seen people pay off debt in an average of 18–24 months using this method. Trust me, it works, and you'll ex-

perience so much freedom when you're no longer shackled by debt!



STEPHEN CHERNIN/GETTY IMAGES

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THE EPOCH TIMES: What are some of your favorite ways to save money during the holidays?

MS. CRUZE: One simple way to save money during the holidays is to learn how to say no. There are so many parties and festive activities this time of year. And a lot of them cost money!

Don't feel pressured to say yes to attending a party or taking your kids to the most expensive Christmas show. Choose to attend the things that you can actually afford so that you're not paying for Christmas in January. The great news is that there are also a ton of free activities this time of year to enjoy, too!

Another way to save money is to be careful with sales. Just because something is on sale, doesn't mean you have to buy it. Should you look for deals? Absolutely. But you shouldn't stretch your budget or spend money you don't have just because

something is "on sale." Use sales to your advantage, but don't let Christmas sales turn into an excuse to use credit cards.

THE EPOCH TIMES: How would you encourage someone working to get out of debt, but wishing for a "magical" holiday season?

MS. CRUZE: Getting out of debt is hard work. The reality is that there may be things you have to say no to right now. You're making short-term sacrifices that are setting you up for long-term financial freedom!

But being on a budget doesn't mean you can't have any fun. Find ways to get creative this holiday season so that you still feel like you have a life. There are so many free or low-budget holiday activities that you can enjoy. You can watch Christmas movies at home, drive around a festive neighborhood and look at Christmas lights, or even serve as a family. Remember what the holidays are all about. What matters most is spending time and making memories with the people you love. You can't put a price on that!



COURTESY OF RACHEL CRUZE

A Christmas Stocking a Day for Cats

ANDREW THOMAS

Ever since she was a young girl, Martina Ruhl has always loved knitting. The Dublin-based woman, who is originally from Germany, has been knitting one Christmas stocking a day to support local animal rescues and a sanctuary for cats.

"I must have been in kindergarten. Learning to knit is one of my earliest memories. I admired my grandmother's skills, the click-clack of the knitting needles," Ruhl told The Epoch Times in an email.

"Knitting can be just mindlessly relaxing, when you have parts of plain stitches that you don't have to think about what you're doing, and your thoughts can drift," Ruhl said.

Knitting for Cats

In 2016, a feral cat she had been feeding came around one day with kittens. She

contacted the Cat and Dog Protection Association of Ireland, which sent a woman to help trap and rescue the cat and her kittens.

Ruhl adopted the cat, Fluffy, and her two kittens, Bella and Tina. She also took in two more cats, named Georgy Clooney and Ricky Martin.

Ruhl is passionate about supporting local animal rescues in her community, and she embarked on a project to knit one Christmas stocking a day for an entire year for a total of 365 stockings to benefit them.

A benefactor can donate to a fundraiser for the Fairyglen Animal Sanctuary in Ireland or to other local rescues, and in exchange, receives one of her handmade pieces. The sanctuary was home to approximately 80 cats when Ruhl visited this past spring.

Ruhl makes several different sizes of Christmas stockings, including tiny, small,

medium, large, and huge. The pieces she knits are made with acrylic yarn or pure wool, and it takes her about four hours to finish a small stocking.

Staying the Course

In 2018, she tried to knit one Christmas stocking a day. She kept a diary, and recorded the size of the stocking, the pattern, color, and type of wool for each.

She started keeping the diary and photographing the pieces, which she posts on Instagram. She fell just short of her goal, completing 354 pieces.

This year, she started anew on Jan. 1. As of mid-December, Ruhl had knitted 339 stockings. So far, she is on track to complete her goal and she is confident she'll make it to 365 by year's end.

"It's a win-win situation: I get to knit, someone gets a Christmas stocking, and the cat rescue gets money," Ruhl said.



COURTESY OF MARTINA RUHL

One of Ruhl's cats with a Christmas stocking she knitted.

Marines Taking Care of Their Own

Ed Boran on helping the families of fallen Marines

CATHERINE YANG

Ed Boran was in high school during the Vietnam War, and he wanted to become a Marine. His sophomore year in college, he told his mother, and she cried. Boran didn't have to go to war—he had an exemption because his father had passed away. His brother, who had served in the Army, had also passed away. But a few months later, she came back with a Catholic medal with an enameled red, white, and blue border that bore the words "Sea, Air, Land" and said he could join.

"I haven't taken it off since," Boran said.

Boran was in combat for 13 months, and the Marines lived up to every expectation of character he had for them.

"What stood out to me was the loyalty and the professionalism of the military at the time. It validated my rationale for becoming a Marine. It was everything I had thought about and hoped for, and it came to fruition. I have no problem dying for a good Marine," he said. "It makes you a brotherhood. That's what I found to be enlightening and fulfilling and the reason why I'm still connected with the Marine Corps."

This is something that never leaves you, which is why Boran now volunteers most of his time with the Marine Corps-Law Enforcement Foundation (MC-LEF), which serves families of fallen Marines. Boran has worked with the foundation for the past eight years, and in 2014 took over as co-president along with John Conner.

Since its inception in 1995, the organization has given \$78 million in scholarships to more than 4,100 children of Marines and other humanitarian assistance to families, such as covering an officer's medical debts.

"I am a former Marine, and Marines look after Marines—that's part of it. The bigger part is, I was in combat for 13 months and I have little residue from that experience. This helps me out an awful lot," Boran said. "It makes me feel fulfilled, grateful that I'm there to help out other Marines. This is therapy as far as I'm concerned."

Unbreakable Bonds

The bonds Boran forged in Vietnam has stuck with him to this day.

When Boran got to Vietnam, he met 19-year-old corporal Willis Turner, who just had a way with people.

"I thought the world of him right off the bat," Boran said. He made Turner a sergeant within a month and platoon sergeant within two.

"It was the best decision I ever made as a platoon commander in Vietnam because he was so spectacular. He was so good with the troops."

"I found out years later, he never said a word to me, that he was the recipient of the Silver Star for saving six Marines during a firefight which ensued about two or three months before I got there," Boran said. One of those Marines was the lieutenant who was Boran's predecessor.

"Corporal Turner left his secure position, went over a hill to where all these wounded Marines were, and he would grab one—bullets were flying all around—and drag him back to safety. And he did that six times," he said.

The two of them lost touch after returning from the war, and Boran had tried unsuccessfully to track him down for several years. But just two months ago, they finally reconnected, at an MC-LEF

fundraising dinner event in Dallas.

"He lives in Dallas and after 51 years of trying to find him, I just got a hold of him," Boran said. "He showed up at the airport to pick me up and I have a picture on my cellphone of us just crying and embracing and embracing and crying at the airport."

"He was a true hero and great soldier and a great example to the platoon. When he was with me he probably saved several lives because he was on top of these guys," Boran said. "I just think the world of this fellow and I'm so glad we reconnected after 51 years."

“It makes me feel fulfilled, grateful that I’m there to help out other Marines. This is therapy as far as I’m concerned.”

Ed Boran

Helping Families

There's an iconic photo of a young boy choking back tears at his father's funeral, as a Marine hands him a U.S. flag. After the death of Marine Staff Sgt. Marcus Golczynski in Iraq in 2007, MC-LEF created a scholarship bond for his son.

"The son just graduated college. The son graduated college and calls the office and says he graduated college, 'I want to thank you all for helping me out, get me through college,'" Boran said. "That just happened in the last month, that's why it's fresh in my mind."

"As of January 1 of this year, we upped the amount of the scholarship grants each child from \$30,000 to \$35,000," he said.

When a Marine, Navy Corpsman, or FBI agent dies in service, the MC-LEF then deposits \$35,000 into an account in each of their children's names and hands the account over to their parent or guardian to hold onto until the child is 18 and can access the funds plus interest.

"Our dream would be that they go to college," Boran said. Some don't and invest the money in other ways, and it's theirs to do so, but the majority of the children do put the money toward college. "It's great to hear their success stories, what they've gone on to do. And some of them actually end up donating money on a yearly basis to the foundation as a thank you to us."

Respect for Veterans

There has been a sea change in the attitude toward veterans during Boran's life. Today, Americans are appreciative, and Boran often hears "Thank you for your service." This respect has grown over the years, as has support for the foundation.

Boran remembers when his plane landed in California after a 15-hour flight back from the war; the first thing they were told was, "Don't leave the plane."

He was stunned: they'd just spent half a day sitting in an airplane to come home and were now told to stay put.

"They said, 'You can't leave the plane because there are demonstrators there,'" Boran said. The plane dropped off those going home on the West Coast, and then headed for New York, where Boran heard another announcement.

"They said: When you get home, you take your uniform off and you're not

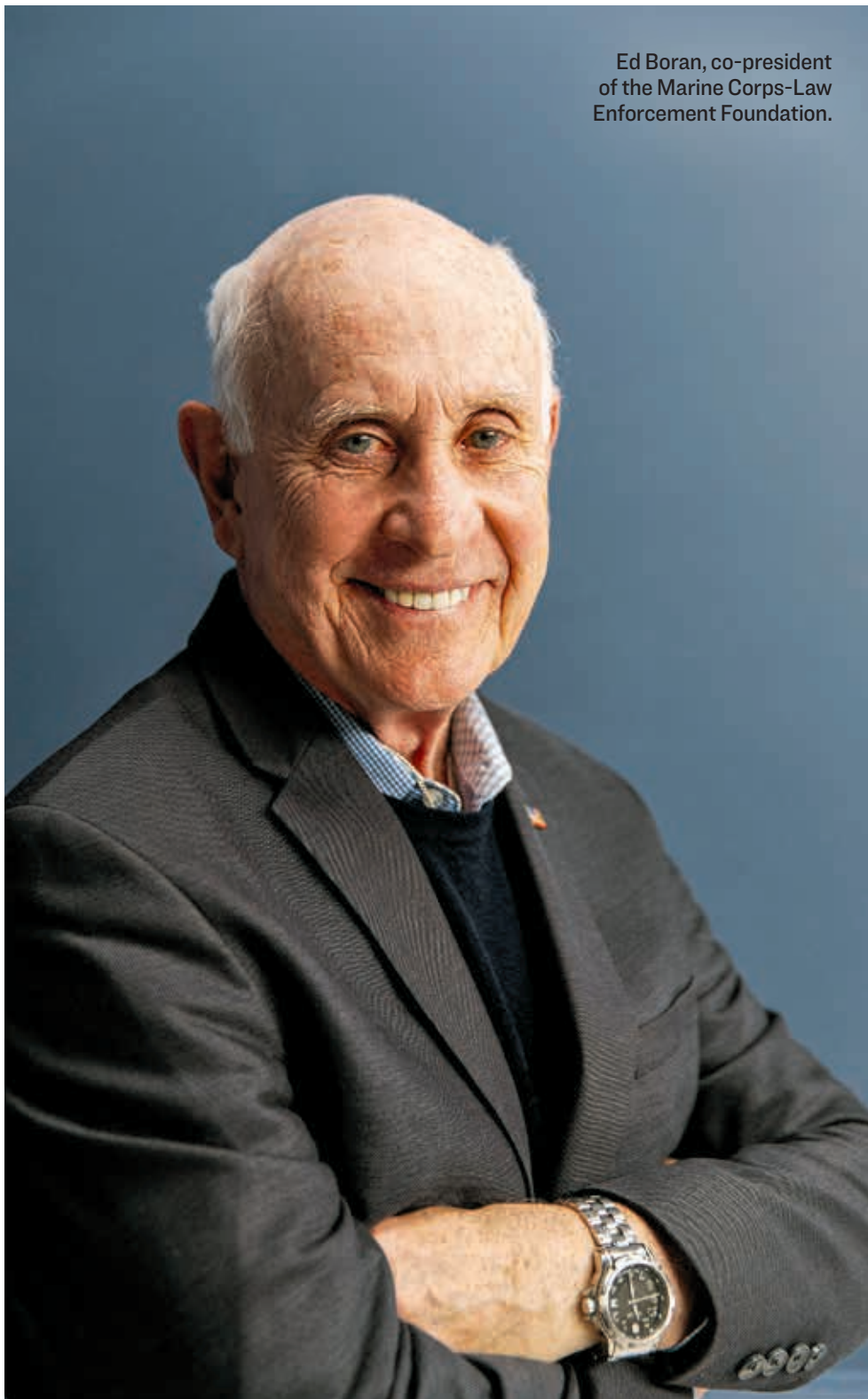


COURTESY OF ED BORAN

Ed Boran and Willis Turner meet in Dallas, 51 years after serving together in Vietnam.



COURTESY OF ED BORAN



Ed Boran, co-president of the Marine Corps-Law Enforcement Foundation.

THE EPOCH TIMES

put it back until you report back 30 days later to whatever base you're going to," Boran said. He wasn't sure what he was hearing. Then he got home, and saw the total apathy toward those who'd served in the war.

"Nobody cared. 'Where have you been?' 'I was in Vietnam for 13 months.' 'Why? Why'd you do that?' It was total apathy. It was just no sympathy whatsoever, no appreciation. It was a dark cloud over veterans coming back from overseas and that existed for many years later," Boran said.

He recounted: "In May 7, 1985, the Vietnam Veterans of America wanted to have a ticker tape parade in New York City, finally, 10 years later, after the war was over, to welcome home the Vietnam veterans." The city said the organization would have to come up with enough money to cover the costs of security, cleanup, and so on.

"They came down to the last day, they were a million dollars short," Boran said. "And a guy named Donald Trump stepped forward."

Without fanfare or publicity, he handed the organization a check for a million dollars.

"He says, 'You'll have your parade,'" Boran said. Trump is also a regular donor to MC-LEF.

"After 1985, I think it's slowly, very slowly turned around, and now everybody loves a veteran," Boran said. "Thank you for your service—that's what everybody says, but nobody said that before. It's a 180-degree turn."

An Uplifting Role

Boran has a nearly full-time position doing everything from taking out the garbage to handwriting thank you letters and ordering golf balls for their events. The nationwide organization puts on 16 or 17 events a year, and he and the co-president travel to attend almost all of them.

Out of the entire organization of more than 100 people, they work with only one part-time employee, and thus are able to give almost every dollar donated to the organization to the families who need it.

"Going back eight years, my biggest challenge was to get the word out because nobody really, even in the Marine Corps, even heard of the MC-LEF," Boran said. "So my biggest challenge was to get the word out there as much as possible."

Boran encouraged people to hold more

golf tournaments around the country, and they added events in Las Vegas and Scottsdale, in California, along with five or six more each year on the East Coast.

"Once we got the word out, people appreciated what we do," Boran said.

He really feels MC-LEF is making an impact, not just for the families of Marines and federal law enforcement, but for regular Americans who appreciate the mission.

"Donors across the country see something that they appreciate, and the outpouring from Americans across the country is just amazing," Boran said. "The fact that we have expended over \$78 million and monies keep pouring in because people believe in our cause and they want to help these families out."

"They're there to support their fellow Americans. It's uplifting, it's terrific," Boran said.

Luckiest Guy in the World

When Boran isn't traveling across the country for events and raising awareness for MC-LEF, he spends as much time as he can with his family.

His three children are all married and he now has nine grandchildren, and the whole family gets together every year for major holidays.

"I get to see them as much as I possibly can," he said. "They're wonderful, everyone is just absolutely precious, out of this world. I'm the luckiest guy in the world."

The foundation does keep him busy.

"Since January 1, we've expended just over \$2.5 million, affecting the lives of 121 children and families," he said. "Just the fact that you're helping all these people out, these children out, who under ordinary circumstances will not receive anything like that. It's just rewarding."

Many of the MC-LEF chapters and annual events across the country were started by someone who was a Marine or had a family member who was a Marine, but the majority of the people who volunteer for MC-LEF aren't.

"You know what's funny, probably more than 50 percent of the people, of the over a hundred people that volunteer, they were never in the Marine Corps, they were never in the service. That struck me. It's probably more like 60 percent that were never in the military, but they, for some reason, appreciate what we do," Boran said.

"I'm the luckiest guy in the world to be in a position that I am. I get more back than I give."

SYDA PRODUCTIONS/SHUTTERSTOCK



If you are dreading upcoming holiday occasions because certain people or situations make you feel uncomfortable, there are ways to set boundaries.

RELATIONSHIPS

It’s OK to Say ‘No, Thank You’

Don’t let difficult people put a damper on your holiday joy

MICHAEL COURTER

Seeing family is one of the great joys of the holiday season, but for many of us, it can mean having to face certain people or situations that make us uncomfortable. Maybe we anticipate and imagine facing these people or situations and experience discomfort before they even appear. This can detract from the joy of family get-togethers or even cause us to miss out on these occasions because we dread the discomfort so much. The mature way to handle these situations is to communicate our boundaries or limits to the people who are causing our discomfort. In my experience, when people are willing to be honest, clear, and kind, they will normally receive positive responses from other people and feel more free and empowered to be themselves.

Why It’s Hard to Set Boundaries Many of us have a hard time saying no or telling other people when their behavior makes us uncomfortable. Often, this is due to our fear of confrontation or because we are worried the other person will feel uncomfortable or be disappointed in us. However, not saying anything is failing to be fully honest with ourselves and the other person. They will sense the discomfort or disconnect, but they won’t have a chance to correct their behavior because they won’t know what’s wrong.

Another reason for failing to communicate our discomfort to other people is that we tell ourselves that we are being too selfish. Shouldn’t we be able to sacrifice and be tolerant of others even if it makes us uncomfortable? Sacrifice can indeed be a virtue, but it is helpful to consider why you aren’t being forthright with the person. Is the person’s behavior inappropriate, but they keep doing it because no one will tell them or sanction them for it? Is it only you who are made uncomfortable, or might this person’s behavior be alienating other people in their lives? In this case, you may be helping the other person to correct themselves if you tell them about it. You also need to ask yourself: Are you afraid that the person who is making you uncomfortable will be angry or reject you, or are you worried about feeling embarrassed? Are you saying negative things to other people about this person but not to them? These fears may be showing up in multiple relationships in your life, and you might want to focus on being more open, direct, and honest with people.

Communicating So how do you communicate boundaries, set limits, and say no to people when you don’t feel comfortable? First, you need a clear description of what exactly the person does or says that makes you uncomfortable.

Even when a particular person seems to do a lot of things to irritate you, you can usually break it down into a few categories. It helps to talk it over with someone you trust, to have them help you define exactly what the source of your discomfort is. One key thing to keep in mind is to tell the other person how you feel or what your reaction is to their behavior, rather than telling them that they are wrong for the way the act. The latter will bring up defensiveness and entrenchment while the former is more likely to result in sympathy and understanding. Work on this until you can describe it in one or two sentences. Figure out how to say it clearly and compassionately.

If the Behavior Continues Next, you need to figure out what you will do if the person decides to continue their behavior. Sometimes a person will stop a behavior that bothers you when you point it out, but often they won’t if you don’t show them that you are serious. Find something that you can and definitely will follow through on if you need to. Be creative and don’t back yourself into a corner. Instead of saying, “I will never come to your house if you do X.” Say, “I’ll never be able to feel comfortable in your home if you do X.” This tells the other person that you are serious while leaving your options open about exactly what you will do about it.

Many of us have a hard time saying no or telling other people when their behavior makes us uncomfortable.

How to Manage Your Child’s Holiday Gift Expectations

VINAY SARANGA

Children are an absolute gift! As parents, we want the best for our children in all aspects of their lives. After all, their happiness means the world. However, this is the time of year when parents begin to hear more and more about the things their children want as the holiday lists roll in. It seems like they’re adding something new every day, or changing their minds at the last minute, which is no surprise in this overstimulated world. For parents, it’s important to manage expectations, especially during this time of year. Luckily, there are strategic ways to manage your children’s holiday gift expectations, and it doesn’t have to end in disappointment. **Explain How to Prioritize and Deal With Disappointment**

This is where you have the opportunity to address your children’s “gimme” mentality. When kids make their long list of gifts, they certainly aren’t considering whether or not you can afford everything they want. Of course, children don’t really even understand the value of money, so that’s a lost point. A better approach is to teach them about prioritizing their list. It’s a great lesson to learn early on that we can’t always have everything we want in life. Work with them to identify the one or two items that mean the most to them on the list (and fit within your gift budget). Sit down with them to discuss every item on the list, and find out their motivation for selecting the items they did. Also, let them know why you can’t get the rest of the items on the list. This will teach them not to feel sad or disappointed whenever you say no, because they’ll know there’s a logical reason behind your decision and that you’re not just trying to deprive them. This strategy can help develop critical thinking habits in your children that will be beneficial to them for the rest of their lives. **Teach the Importance of Generosity and Empathy** It’s the time of year to remind children that gifts are

It’s the perfect time to talk about the benefits of helping others.

Challenge yourself to get into the holiday spirit in unique ways that won’t break the bank. Bake some cookies, make a gingerbread house, or volunteer your time together as a family.

FAMVELO/SHUTTERSTOCK



meant to be given as well as received. It’s the perfect time to talk about the benefits of helping others. This also helps shift the focus of your child from getting what they want to giving in ways that can’t be monetized. There are a lot of different ways you can help your kids attain an age-appropriate level of self-sacrifice. Try taking them shopping to choose gifts for friends, family, or a charity. Better yet, encourage them to give away their toys from the previous year to a kid-focused charity or toy drive. You can also take them along to buy food and personal care items for people in homeless shelters as a way to demonstrate wants versus needs. **Focus on the Magic of the Season (the Big Picture)** No matter what you’re celebrating this holiday season, your kids will undoubtedly be very happy when they see their gifts. But those gifts are soon quickly forgotten, sometimes even before the next holiday. The truth is that gifts are wonderful, but there’s more joy

to be gained when you look at the bigger picture. Remember, memories last longer than gifts. Try to be creative and give experiences instead of toys. Challenge yourself to get into the holiday spirit in unique ways that won’t break the bank. Bake some cookies, make a gingerbread house, or volunteer your time together as a family. There are no limits to what you can add to your family’s holiday tradition. Start conversations now before the holidays are in full swing so you can manage expectations and teach a few valuable lessons along the way. Remember to be patient, especially if your children are used to getting what they want. Generosity, gratitude, and prioritizing are all complex concepts for children. Keep exposing them to situations where they can do good for others even if it means not getting everything they want. *Vinay Saranga M.D. is a child and adolescent psychiatrist and founder of Saranga Comprehensive Psychiatry.*

Getting Organized for the HOLIDAYS

BARBARA DANZA

The holidays are a joyous time to gather with family and friends and reconnect to the most important aspects of life. It’s festive. It’s fun. It can even be magical. These festivities don’t just plan themselves, however. It takes organization to get through all of this fun and fancy without stress and anxiety. I asked online organizing coach and television personality Alejandra Costello for her advice about staying organized through the holidays. Here’s what she said.

THE EPOCH TIMES: While the holidays are a joyous, family-oriented time, they can also be stressful—with lots of to-do’s and at least one deadline that’s non-negotiable. What are some organizational strategies you recommend to curb the stress and make space for the joys of the season? **ALEJANDRA COSTELLO:** Since the holidays can be so hectic, it’s important to make lists and prioritize. This helps you quickly gain clarity and figure out what’s most important. Make separate lists of meals to prepare, cookies to bake, groceries to buy, gifts and stocking stuffers to shop for, holiday cards to send, thank you cards for after the holidays, things to do around the house before guests arrive. Add due dates to each list (or each task on each list) so you can prioritize and focus your energy on the timely tasks for each day. If you begin to feel stressed by the volume of tasks on your to-do list, stop and ask yourself, “Does this really matter?” and “How can I make the task easier?” (If not, skip it or ask for help.) Maybe it’s buying the pie instead of baking it from scratch. Or maybe it’s handwriting your address labels on your holiday cards instead of typing up and printing fancy time-consuming labels. Or maybe it’s skipping hanging the lights on the house and simply lighting one tree outside. Whatever tasks are on your to-do

list, getting into the habit of asking yourself these two questions can reduce stress levels so you can enjoy the holidays.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What are some common organizational mistakes people tend to make this time of year? **MS. COSTELLO:** Lack of planning is a top mistake people make this time of year. If you’re participating in the holidays, planning is crucial, whether you’re the host or a guest. And doing so well in advance can ease the stress and eliminate overwhelm and confusion. This includes planning and prepping meals, planning the order in which things will be cooked or baked, buying gifts and sending cards, cleaning and organizing the house, etc.

However, be mindful of over-planning (planning things down to the minute, being unrealistic), which can lead to high expectations and eventually disappointment. When we over-plan things, we leave little space for the joy of spontaneity. Do enough planning so you don’t feel frantic and instead can relax and enjoy. However, don’t be so rigid that if something doesn’t go as planned, you feel disappointed. Remembering what the holiday season means for you can bring things back into perspective.

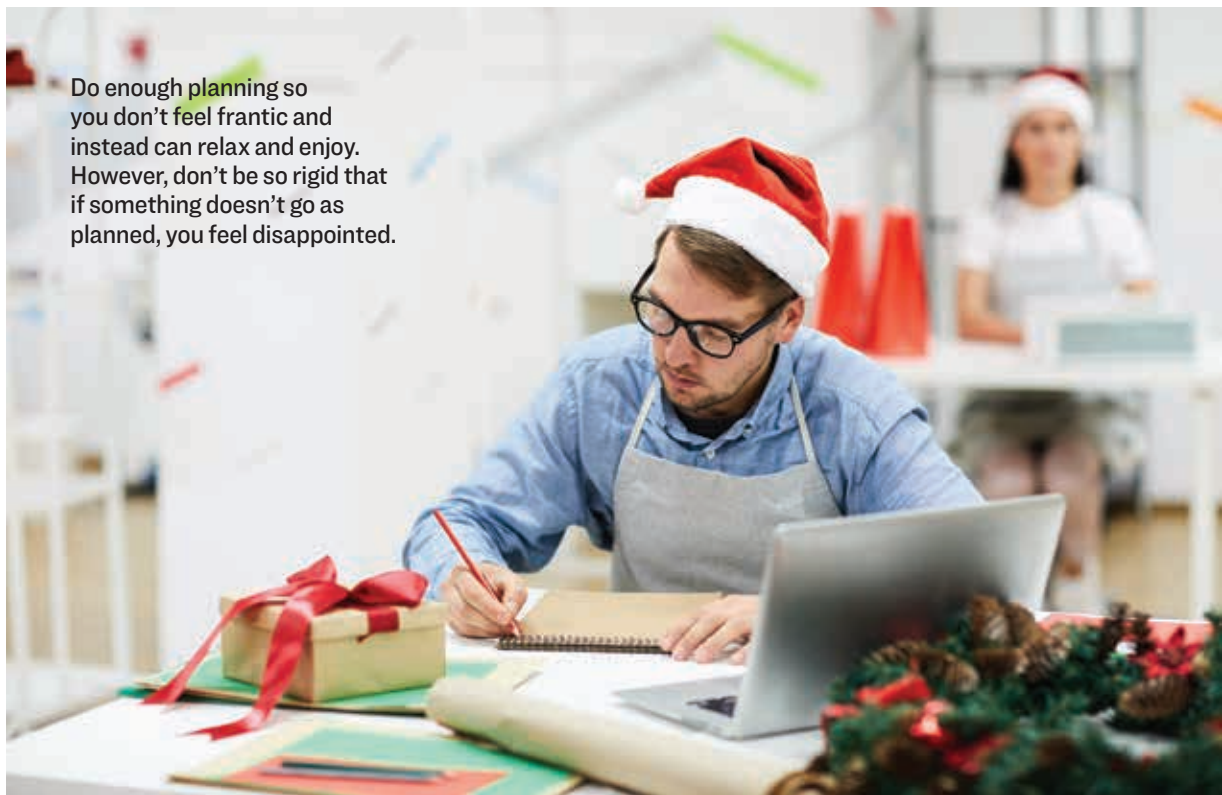
THE EPOCH TIMES: Shopping for gifts takes time and energy. How can shoppers simplify their gift-giving and get it done without much stress? **MS. COSTELLO:** Shopping online can save the time and energy of driving and shopping around town. However, the novelty of physical gifts fades over time. Instead, consider planning stress-free holiday experiences with loved ones, which gives both of you the anticipation of the event, the actual fun of participating in the event, and the lasting memory of the event to reminisce and share with others. Ideas include holiday concerts and performances, volunteering to sort and wrap toys for a charitable organization, meeting for hot



COURTESY OF ALEJANDRA COSTELLO

“If you begin to feel stressed by the volume of tasks on your to-do list, stop and ask yourself, ‘Does this really matter?’ and ‘How can I make the task easier?’”

Alejandra Costello



Do enough planning so you don’t feel frantic and instead can relax and enjoy. However, don’t be so rigid that if something doesn’t go as planned, you feel disappointed.

What to Do When the Kids Want a Dog for Christmas

SHARON ELBER

Now that the holiday season is in full swing, many parents are gathering lists to send to Santa, only to find out that top of the list for their children is a dog. If you’re riding the fence on whether or not it’s the right time to add a canine companion to your family, here are some tips to guide you through the decision-making process. **Is Your Family Ready for a Dog?** Bringing a dog home from the shelter is a very exciting experience for everyone. However, finding out that it isn’t going to work out, and having to return a pet is a potentially traumatic experience, particularly for children. To make sure you are making the right call rather than an impulsive decision, think through these three main areas: space, time, and budget. **Space** Dogs need exercise to stay healthy and mentally balanced. For the vast majority of dogs (with the possible exception of senior canines) walks alone will not meet their exercise needs. Off-leash running and playing in a secure area is more or less a daily requirement. Toy and small breed dogs may have their exercise needs met with games such as fetch and tug played indoors. However, medium

to large dog breeds benefit greatly when they have access to a secure fenced yard for daily play.

Time Does your family have time to provide for the attention and training that a new dog will require? If the adults are working all day while the children are away at school, your new dog will be spending a great deal of time alone. While some breeds will tolerate being alone during the day (as long as they are getting plenty of training, exercise, and attention when people are at home), many will not.

Budget Make sure you have some money set aside for the costs of owning a dog. These will usually spike in the beginning as you pay for an initial vet visit, buy the first round of preventative medicine (heartworm and flea and tick preventative), as well as getting geared up with a leash, harness, crate, bedding, toys, etc.

If the budget is already stretched due to gift-buying and travel over the holidays, it might not make sense to add a dog to the mix. **What Type of Dog Would Be a Good Fit for Your Family’s Lifestyle?** Take some time to sit down with



For the vast majority of dogs (with the possible exception of senior canines) walks alone will not meet their exercise needs.

JAMIE STREET/UNSPLASH

spends a great deal of time outdoors and you are looking for a friendly and trainable adventurer, then a dog from the herding or sporting groups may be a better choice. While we are on the subject of fit, consider carefully before adopting a puppy. While they are as cute as can be, puppies require much more time and energy due to the fact that they need to learn everything, including house training. Although they’re adorable, they’re labor-intensive and require some basic training knowledge in order to become the well-adjusted dog you’re hoping for.

Are the Holidays the Best Time to Be Adding a Dog to the Family? Although the standard advice is that the holidays are a terrible time to add a new furry friend to the family, this isn’t always the case. For example, if you are not planning to travel or host large groups of people, the holidays may be an ideal time. If the kids are home from school, then this is a great time to establish some routines, get the kids involved with care and training, and make sure your new dog gets plenty of attention in their first days in their new home. On the other hand, if your holiday schedule is jam-packed with

activities, travel, or guests, then it can create a lot of extra stress on the dog. Waiting until after the hustle bustle is over may be a better option. **What Are the Adoption Options in Your Area?** Before buying a puppy from a breeder, make sure to exhaust the options for adopting a dog in your area. In addition to your local animal shelters, search for animal rescue volunteer groups in your locale as well. These organizations offer you the advantage of having knowledge about how your canine candidate behaves in a home with other animals and children. In addition, foster parents can tell you about any known behavioral issues or concerns. It’s one way to take the guesswork out of bringing a new rescue dog home. Web search tools such as AdoptAPet are great tools for finding adoptable dogs in time for Christmas through vetted rescue groups. Using these types of tools helps you avoid accidentally supporting puppy mill breeders and puppy adoption scams, which are especially common around the holiday season. *Sharon Elber is a writer and received her master’s in science and technology studies from Virginia Tech and has worked as a professional dog trainer for over 10 years.*

Scilla Andreen

on Making Films That Start Conversations and Empower People

CATHERINE YANG

When Scilla Andreen set out to make a movie about the effects of social media usage, people imagined an exposé on the evils of these big platforms or governments.

In her research, Andreen did look into how developers are designing apps without regard for human health, and the role that government might play and the First Amendment rights it might curtail. But she decided not to focus on any of that.

Are you using technology, or is technology using you? That's a question people are asking as the negative effects of social media are revealed. However, rather than trying to determine who to blame, Andreen is looking for solutions.

"I've gone into it all, I looked at it and I just thought, well, here's the power, the hope—that when we realize that as individual human beings, regardless of color or education or socioeconomic background, we have power," she said.

At the end of the day, you get to decide how to use your phone. "I want to empower people to make decisions," she said.

"The reason there's quinoa and kale on regular grocery store shelves is because people said, 'We want healthy food on every grocery store shelf.' Not just a co-op or something far away. So, we as people have a lot of power. And if we use that power, with our voice, with our actions, and with our wallets, I think we can affect change way more quickly than with government and through corporations.

"We need context, we need information and we need an action item. We need a path forward, that is free that we can do for ourselves to model to help ourselves and then we can go and help others."

Andreen, the CEO of IndieFlix, directed "Like," which came out earlier this year. In it, she interviews children as young as 8 (when they get their first smartphone), older teens from all over the world, and experts in neuroscience, psychology, technology, market research, mental health, and other areas.

"It's funny, I went into it thinking that I'm going to interview all these kids and they're going to tell us all these wonderful stories and going to get such insight into what's going on with this generation," she said. "What I quickly learned was that was actually quite boring.

"All the kids said the exact same thing: 'It's a chore, it's a job, but if I don't do it, I'm out of touch, I will lose connection with my friends.' It's their water cooler." Andreen, a mother of six, is frequently on her phone herself.

Instead, the process of making the film revealed adults' own phone addictions. While the youngest generation might be so dependent on their phones they don't know where to look in face-to-face conversations, their parents modeled that unending screen time themselves.

“All the kids said the exact same thing: ‘It’s a chore, it’s a job, but if I don’t do it, I’m out of touch, I will lose connection with my friends. It’s their water cooler.’”

Scilla Andreen



A poster of Andreen's "Like."

(Below) The documentary "Like" is meant to inspire people of all ages, asking the questions, "Are we addicted? How do we stop? Where do we start? What do we need to know?"

(Bottom) Dimitri Christakis, featured in "Like," is the director of the Center for Child Health, Behavior and Development at Seattle Children's Research Institute. He is the author of "The Elephant in the Living Room: Make Television Work for Your Kids."



Filmmaker Scilla Andreen.

©Coco Knudson/IndieFlix/SVFF2019

The film is currently screening around the world, often hosted in schools, in settings where people can have a conversation about "Like" afterward.

"It's at almost 900 screenings now in 11 countries, and it's just growing," Andreen said.

People like that Andreen's film isn't saying to take away anyone's smartphone, and it's not slamming social media. Instead, it draws attention to our own behaviors and what can be done to regain the autonomy we might have given away inadvertently to technology.

"People need to use these tools to enhance the human condition to help each other to be kind," she said.

Delving Into Mental Health

The idea of "Like" came naturally to Andreen in the process of working on her previous film, "Angst," which is about anxiety and mental health.

"A woman who worked with me and knew that I made movies and took them out into the community—we literally go out into thousands of schools and communities and corporations in 75 countries—said, 'You need to make a movie about mental health,'" she said.

Andreen wasn't sure; her movies are for ages 10 and up, and are screened at many schools; mental health seemed such a heavy topic. Plus, she didn't know anything about it, since her niche was in lighter and empowering topics.

"She kept asking me for a year, and I would see her every week. And then I learned on New Year's Day, she died by suicide. She was a mom with two kids," she said.

Andreen has always felt she was able to put herself in people's shoes, but she had no clue what was going on with her colleague—or what to make of all those stories of kids who had just gotten magnificent scholarships or won some award who are committing suicide. She needed to understand.

"And I just thought: I'm going to make a movie about mental health, I have no idea what that looks like, but it's going to be filled with hope, and going to help us have a better understanding of what's going on," she said.

"Why is it that an eighth-grader is dying by suicide? What's happening?" she asked. She didn't care if the movie was heavy and no one would watch it. "I really had no choice, it was the only way to channel my grief and I was also really curious—I had to know what was going on."

She interviewed parents, children, educators, doctors, and brain scientists, and realized she could make this topic one that wasn't scary for people. And it's hard to talk about, because "the stigma, the shame, the fear—there's so much fear around it because it's life and death."

She also realized that she is herself a textbook case of social anxiety. She had grown up inventing games to play with herself to hack her brain and turn something that

might have crippled her into a superpower.

"When you start to understand and hear about the brain science, it's fascinating and there's so much hope there," she said. "That hope gave me a ton of energy, focus, and direction—getting information out there for people to know that there are wonderful tools that are free.

"You know, anxiety is 100 percent treatable, not 100 percent curable, but it is 100 percent treatable to the extent that it can become your superpower. You can turn it into something really great for you."

It was hard to screen the film at first. The schools Andreen had worked with were interested but worried they didn't have the resources to have the conversations the film would generate. After a few months, it caught on.

"We've had over 4,000 community screenings in 69 countries. It's subtitled into seven languages and dubbed in Spanish," she said. It's also going to be used as part of the curriculum for training teachers and mental health professionals in various communities.

"It has become an incredible tool to comfortably open up a conversation in a community on a mass scale. It's almost like community therapy."

Andreen says it's been like holding up a big mirror to look into, and realize that it is normal to have anxiety. Life has never not been stressful, and we should learn ways to cope with that, she says.

She's also written a book called "The Creative Coping Toolkit" that includes many of the little hacks she's used herself (rhythmic snapping, reciting the months backward, holding her trusty smooth skipping stone in hand) to help families have these conversations, without even making it about "mental health," because it's really about creating connections.

Something that comes up frequently is whether anxiety is really on the rise, or if we've just gotten better at identifying it. Andreen, who thinks it's a bit of both, says much of the rise has a lot to do with our screens.

"It came up so much, literally in every interview, that people felt like the reason there was a spike in anxiety because of social media was because there was so much meanness and cyberbullying taking place on social media," she said.

"Angst" led directly to "Like," and Andreen's trilogy of succinct and impactful hour-long films will be completed in early 2020 with "The Upstanders," a film about resilience and bullying.

All of these issues are connected.

Why Are We Mean Online?

It began with wanting to answer the very question of why are people being mean online?

"Everyone goes, 'Well, because there's anonymity,' but I don't believe that people are inherently so mean," Andreen said.



"Something else is at play here."

She knew first-hand that social media could be a power for good. When her daughter was diagnosed with cervical cancer and she and her husband couldn't afford a clinical trial, they turned to crowdfunding and received an outpouring of love and support at a very difficult time.

So, she went back to all the experts, parents and kids, and asked, "Why would you participate in something so cruel and mean to another person?"

"Some of them are just, 'I'm afraid to stand up, because then I'm afraid I might become bullied,' or 'I don't know why I did it. I just did it. I wasn't thinking,'" she said. "Then there's, 'I did it because I see my parents doing it,' 'I see people being online being so mean and cruel to each other. It's all over the news.' And then you start to realize when you break it down, that it's really about resilience.

"It's about connection, about belonging. It's about, do you matter? Are you heard?"

"If a kid is going to go and shoot up their peers, do they feel like they belong? Do they feel like they matter? Do they feel like anyone cares? Or do they feel invisible? Are they so disconnected? Are they probably sleep-deprived? Are they unloved? Do they have no connection with self?"

While she was putting together the film, a study came out identifying the youngest generation as the loneliest people on the planet—even more than seniors.

"Then, you realize, OK, let's look at the effects on the brain from all of this. The fact that they're lonely puts them in a state of fight or flight, they're not getting sleep, they're not getting nutrition, they're not going outside and getting sunshine on their face, or just breathing fresh air," Andreen said.

These are things that feed our brains and boost our immune systems and give us a sense of well-being. That deficit, plus the 24-hour cycle of breaking news, pseudo-urgent notifications, and LEDs makes for a poor state of being, she said.

"We have to get back home; we have to nurture our basic physiological needs. And then we need touch, we need connection. We need human beings around us who look at us," she said. "We need actual, real human contact again. And it's fascinating to me, we can actually get there really fast. But it's going to take some effort of getting time with each other, which is for younger people, really uncomfortable."

Andreen has talked to many kids, and

Max Stossel, the narrator of "Like," is the head of education for the Center for Humane Technology.

“We need actual, real human contact again ... But it’s going to take some effort of getting time with each other, which is for younger people, really uncomfortable.”

Scilla Andreen

Andreen has talked to many kids who are interested in having face to face conversations but don't know where to start.



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF INDIEFLIX

(Far L) Cora Breuner, a professor of pediatrics, specializes in the treatment of eating disorders and obesity, and sports- and trauma-related injuries in children and adolescents.

(Left) Claire looking at her phone in "Like" (2019), a documentary about social media.

she's asked if they would like if school had a class on how to have a real conversation without devices?

"They were like, 'Oh, that would be really great.'" Then she asked what needs to be taught. They told her: "Well, where do we look? What do we do with our hands? Where does the phone have to go?"

She said: "It's like, really? These are ninth- and 10th-graders, and fifth-graders. Their biggest thing is where to look."

Andreen's hope with her films is that we won't just value but will seek out and build human connections.

"My hope is that people will want to self-regulate because they're inspired to do so—because they see the benefits of it. And that we actually start connecting with each other in real-time, like physically real face time," she said. "The chemical release on the brain when you actually look into someone else's—a human being's—eyes, it creates a feeling of wellness, it boosts your immune system. You don't get that from looking at your phone.

"I feel like if people started to connect more in real life—just a few hours more a day—I feel like the world will change.

"Let's have a conversation about all this stuff. Because when we talk about it, we can find ways to create balance in our lives."

Action Items

As most of us know, and as "Like" explains, the developers of most apps and social media platforms are trying to increase the time you spend on their platforms. It doesn't matter to them how old you are or if you're sleeping or eating or moving around; they are trying to increase their numbers.

Knowing that isn't enough, Andreen says. Some action items are needed to create balance.

For instance, looking at your colorful phone makes your brain light up—because it's designed to—in some cases, it's the same parts of your brain that light up when you see someone you love. But if your phone is in grayscale, remarkably, the brain doesn't light up.

"Honestly, when my phone's on grayscale, I can't stand it. I don't even want to look at my phone," Andreen said. She says it's to the point that if she wants to use it, she has to turn off the grayscale.

"I think every Q&A I've ever gone to, I ask people, 'Raise your hand if you use your cellphone as an alarm clock.' I would say 95 percent of the audience raises their hand, and that is kids to grownups.

"And so when you realize that when you first wake up in the morning and your cellphone goes off and you look at it to turn off your alarm, that beautiful color on your phone immediately stimulates your brain, and chemicals start releasing in the brain that tells the brain this thing that's in your hand, that you're looking at to turn off the alarm, is way more interesting than anything in your room.

"More interesting than the person next to you, or what's outside the window and the weather, or the art on the walls, or how about just your feelings. The things you're ruminating on thinking and feeling about what happened yesterday or the day."

But if your phone is in grayscale, it doesn't have the same effect. Better yet, Andreen says, get an analog alarm clock.

"[That is] hugely powerful and impactful to change the start of your day, which is sometimes the only time we get a few minutes with ourselves, to connect with ourselves, so we can effectively connect with others and navigate our day," she said.

Another action item is to turn off all notifications that come from anything but another human being, such as sales or dating apps or social media telling you to check, check, check.

"You can check those when you feel like checking, not because it's telling you," she said. "Those minor adjustments have a huge impact. It's like taking a rock out of your shoe."

Creating Community

Andreen originally went to school for political science.

"And I fell in love with a director and dropped out," she said.

She started working in commercials and then, in television in costume design. Later, she started producing and directing short films, and, eventually, feature films. Once on the film festival circuit, she realized there were thousands of great films that no one would ever see, because only a tiny slice of what's produced each year gets distribution from Hollywood.

"So I thought, 'OK, I'm going to start the company that will be a home for all the filmmakers that I'm meeting and all their stories that Hollywood isn't picking up,'" she said.

She and her best friend started IndieFlix, as a DVD on-demand company in 2005, and within a few months, she was thrown headfirst into learning how to build and run a business. It grew to a full-fledged business, with more than 12,000 titles with global streaming rights.

Eventually, the time came when Andreen realized she didn't want to watch any of the movies on her own platform; while she had worked very hard, the business was a far cry from the creative filmmaking roots that inspired it.

"And a little film called 'Finding Kind' crossed my desk," she said.

Andreen had been badly bullied as a young girl and had vowed that if she ever had the chance to help prevent someone else from being bullied, she would go to great lengths to do so. She had a very personal interest in helping get the film funded and distributed—but not on her streaming platform. She wanted to bring it directly into schools.

"I think it should be screened in schools, where kids can witness each other watching the film and have a conversation," she said. "So, we took it to my daughter's school and showed it to the sixth and seventh graders, and it has had an incredibly powerful impact on that community—word spread, all on its own. That film is still offline. It's going on 10 years and has screened in 50 different countries."

It showed Andreen a new way that film could affect the world, which she had set out to do with IndieFlix in the beginning. She decided to stick with the offline-only method of distribution, at a time when streaming was quickly gaining ground.

Now, a decade later, that approach has proven to be the right one.

"Sometimes, we have 60 people, sometimes, we have 800 people in an auditorium. It is palatable—the energy in the room is so powerful, it's nothing like you'd feel except in rare instances in a typical movie theater," she said. "The conversations, the emotion, the connection, the solidarity—it's an energy that's hard to explain and hard for people to imagine unless they've experienced it.

"We've reached millions of people and they're all conversations that are had offline." And the beautiful thing is that these conversations start at the screenings, but they snowball into our daily lives, at the line at the grocery store or in the carpool lane or soccer practice, she says.

"We're building community with these films. And mostly I've just followed my heart and what felt right. Because, for me, when I follow my heart and do what I'm naturally passionate about, even if it doesn't make sense to others, I seem to have boundless energy to do it. And an absolute clarity."

REACHING WITHIN: WHAT TRADITIONAL ART OFFERS THE HEART



of the composition. The horse's groom at the back right of the painting is the least important element, receiving the least amount of light. In comparison, the horse receives more light, has higher contrast, and appears closer to us. Paul receives the most light at the foreground of the picture plane.

The groom leads the horse by its bit to the right of the picture plane. The groom also points to the ground. Paul is on the ground with his arms outstretched and eyes closed as he experiences visions of the Messiah. His arms are outstretched as if he wants to hold on to the divine vision and never let go.

Both the horse and groom, however, seem unmoved by Paul's fall. They seem to go about business as usual. The horse even seems to step over Paul as the groom leads it. Paul is having the experience of his lifetime, and no one or no thing in the painting seems to care much.

Why does Caravaggio depict the horse and groom as unmoved as Paul has his vision? Is it to suggest that Paul's vision is a personalized and solitary vision? As Jesus's "chosen instrument," is Paul no longer a part of his former world?

The horse and groom may pass by Paul during his fall, but it's difficult for us to pass him by. The composition is framed so tightly that the three figures fill up the picture plane to its limit. Caravaggio foreshortened Paul's body and forced it to nearly share our space.

Art historians Steven Zucker and Beth Harris suggest that this degree of foreshortening and tenebristic realism was Caravaggio's attempt to bring the divine into the world:

"[T]here's so much foreshortening here, not only is the body of Saul foreshortened, his sword is foreshortened, the horse is foreshortened. And, so, everything is so close to us. In the Renaissance, we often saw a distance between the world of human beings and realm of the divine. But, here Saul is present in our world."

Caravaggio uses foreshortening to accomplish a trompe l'oeil effect that makes Paul appear as if he is sharing our space. Trompe l'oeil is a French art phrase meaning "deceive the eye." It was often incorporated in still-life paintings to make objects appear so real that they seemed to actually exist.

Did Caravaggio want us to feel closer to the divine by making the image appear so real? Why did he use tenebrism and foreshortening to create a trompe l'oeil effect that would make the divine appear as if it shared our space?

The Divine Here and Now
Not everyone today is religious, but it doesn't mean that religious teachings don't provide moral lessons from which we can all learn. Caravaggio's presentation of Paul's conversion has a lot to offer us in terms of improving our characters.

Caravaggio's painting reminds me that we all live our lives doing things that we aren't proud of. We may find ourselves intentionally and unintentionally hurting people. At first, we may find reasons to rationalize and justify our actions. But hopefully, we eventually recognize the pain we cause before we hurt someone or something in a way we deeply regret.

It took divine intervention to prevent Paul from causing any more suffering. The divine intervention, however, began with Jesus asking the question "Why do you persecute me?" That is, he asked: Why?

Starting with a "why" and questioning our own behavior may be enough to shock us into seeing how our actions may negatively affect others: "Why am I acting like this?" Maybe this shock has the potential of making us fall away from bad habits that cause harm. Though the world may go on as usual, we each have the potential to separate ourselves from thoughts and actions that hurt others.

Seeing how our actions may negatively affect others can cause us to reflect on our own behavior. Then, hopefully, we can make the necessary changes to allow the divine to share our space.

Art has an incredible ability to point to what can't be seen so that we may ask "What does this mean for me and for everyone who sees it?" "How has it influenced the past and how might it influence the future?" "What does it suggest about the human experience?" These are some of the questions I explore in my series Reaching Within: What Traditional Art Offers the Heart.

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

PAVING THE WAY TO HEAVEN: Asking Yourself Why

ERIC BESS

In 1600, Caravaggio, an Italian Baroque painter of biblical scenes, was commissioned by Tiberio Cerasi to paint a scene of Paul's conversion on the way to Damascus.

Saul's Conversion
Saul of Tarsus, who would later be called Paul upon his conversion to Christianity, was a Jew from Asia Minor and a member of a religious sect called the Pharisees. As a Pharisee, Saul believed in life after death and in the significance of Jewish traditions, and he carefully studied the Hebrew Bible.

For the first half of his life, Saul persecuted adherents of the then-new religious movement Christianity. Scholars say there's no evidence that his attempt to persecute Christians stemmed from being a Pharisee, but Saul may have believed that converts to Christianity were not respectful of Jewish traditions and mingled too freely with the non-Jewish.

Saul's persecution of Christians consisted in arrests, humiliation, and ostracization. He would travel to synagogues to punish Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah. Saul even witnessed a mob stone a man named Stephen who was one of seven Christian deacons in charge of helping other persecuted Christians. Saul approved of the mob's actions.

On his way to Damascus to continue persecuting Christians, Saul had a vision in which he saw Jesus. "The New International Version" (NIV) of the Bible tells the story from Acts 9:1-5 as follows:

The composition is framed so tightly that the three figures fill up the picture plane to its limit. Caravaggio foreshortened Paul's body and forced it to nearly share our space.

"Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' 'Who are you, Lord?' Saul asked. 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ...'"

Those gathered near him could not see who Saul was talking to. After the vision, Saul went blind and did not eat or drink for three days. Jesus appeared to a man named Ananias and told him to meet with Saul, who was now Jesus's "chosen instrument." Ananias met with Saul, and Saul's blindness was cured when Ananias touched him. Saul was baptized, converted to Christianity, and changed his name to Paul.

Caravaggio's Painting
Caravaggio depicted the moment at which Paul falls from his horse and receives the divine vision. The artist used tenebrism to organize the effects of light in the composition. Tenebrism is the use of extreme, gloomy darks and extreme lights to convey drama and emotion in art.

The three figures in the composition appear to be illuminated by a spotlight in an environment of darkness. The light helps organize the hierarchical elements

▲ "Conversion on the Way to Damascus," 1601, by Caravaggio. Oil on canvas. Saint Mary of the People, Rome.



What Does Ballet Have to Do With Classical Chinese Dance and Shen Yun?

CATHERINE YANG

Classical Chinese dancer Gu Yun began training professionally as a dancer at age 14. Over the course of his career, he has witnessed a growing interest in classical Chinese dance around the world. But he says not all Chinese dance is truly authentic.

Gu attended Beijing Dance Academy at age 20 to specialize in classical Chinese dance and was part of an intensive program that condensed a six-year curriculum into four years. He went on to earn a number of prestigious awards, including the 2003 First Prize for trio dance at China's most renowned competition, the Peach & Plum Cup Dance Competition, the Teacher's Award, first prize at the Beijing Dance Competition, and the Shandong Province Dance competition, among others.

His illustrious career was seemingly cut short when Gu sustained an injury in his torso. To his dismay, he realized he would have to retire from the stage.

Nonetheless, he wanted to continue working with classical Chinese dance, so Gu took a teaching position in Los Angeles.

How Shen Yun Is Different
In the United States, he was intrigued to discover that New York-based Shen Yun Performing Arts was sparking widespread interest in classical Chinese dance all across the country. He finally saw a performance of Shen Yun for himself and was so inspired artistically that he sought to join the company.

At Shen Yun, Gu quickly discerned many differences from the training he was used to, not the least of which was the fact that ballet was nowhere to be found, not even in teaching dance fundamentals.

"I am, you could say, a product of Beijing Dance Academy and trained in this particular hybrid Chinese-ballet style, so I know exactly which aspects are ballet and which are Chinese dance," Gu said.

For many years, Gu explained, Beijing Dance Academy taught this hybrid style, which originated decades ago, when dance teachers from the Soviet Union were invited to the academy. The school wanted to create a formal training system that could effectively teach large numbers of students in Chinese dance, a form that had been previously passed on only in an apprenticeship-like manner.

So the teachers drew upon what they knew, which was Russian classical ballet, to give more structure to the teaching of the myriad Chinese dance techniques and movements. This, as a side effect, introduced ballet movements into Chinese dance.

One can clearly see this mixed style in dances in which the upper body follows Chinese dance movements but the footwork is almost all ballet, Gu said. Those more familiar with dance might also be able to detect that the Beijing Dance Academy style of dance uses the aesthetic of ballet, that

its sense of beauty actually comes from the language and culture of ballet.

What was done at the academy was replicated in schools elsewhere, and what Beijing did set the tone for what was taught across the nation.

But now, things are changing. "This Chinese-ballet hybrid became the basis of what was dubbed 'classical Chinese dance' by the Beijing school, but in the last decade, Beijing Dance Academy has also been removing the ballet parts and is trying to rediscover real Chinese dance," Gu said. "But Shen Yun, from the beginning, has done without ballet."

"Shen Yun has its own way of teaching [classical Chinese dance], ... Shen Yun's training from the ground up has been Chinese dance, whether it be in the pedagogy or the choreography or other aspects. They've never incorporated ballet."

Perhaps most fascinating for Gu was that the beauty this dance style achieved was entirely its own, something drawn purely from traditional Chinese culture.

"Take the ways of movement, for example. These are really natural ways of movement," Gu said, explaining how the limbs and body parts work together when one takes a step to walk, or turn, or bend. It's a language of movement you can see in things like tai chi, bagua, and Chinese martial arts. Gu has done some research himself, finding historical drawings and images of some movements in ancient Chinese culture.

"[Different styles of dance] all have their own body language to express their views of human nature and have their own inherent characteristics," Gu said. Even between different styles of Chinese dance, he says one can notice a big difference. Many dancers in China have foundational training in Chinese dance. But if you use those movements together with the language of contemporary dance to tell a story, the effect is quite different from using the body language of traditional Chinese culture to tell the same story.



“[Different styles of dance] all have their own body language to express their views of human nature and have their own inherent characteristics.”

Gu Yun

performed in palaces for sacred rites and rituals, or for entertaining emperors and foreign dignitaries. When China's last dynasty ended and the country became a republic, some of these elegant court dances continued to be passed down in Chinese opera houses, where they developed and absorbed theatrical and regional influences.

The result was an exceptionally rich and varied art form that Shen Yun is now working to revive and reinvigorate.

Today, Shen Yun is not the only company interested in classical Chinese dance, but it is safe to say that it is the most authentic in its approach.

POPCORN & INSPIRATION

Love Can Teach Right From Wrong

Film review: 'Remember the Night'

TIFFANY BRANNAN

Even after watching them every year, there is something undeniably heartwarming about the classic holiday films you have loved since childhood. However, there are many classic Christmas movies that you may never have seen. Although less popular than "It's a Wonderful Life" (1946) and "White Christmas" (1954), these movies are just as merry, entertaining, and uplifting.

One of my favorite Christmas classics is "Remember the Night" (1940), starring Barbara Stanwyck and Fred MacMurray. Beginning on Christmas Eve and lasting through New Year's, it depicts the most charming old-fashioned country Christmas one could hope to see. However, it is more than just a festive movie about stringing popcorn and singing carols; this film is inspiring.

"Remember the Night" shows the difference that love and kindness can make in someone's life. Barbara Stanwyck's character, Lee Leander, is a thief because, when she was young, her mother belittled and shamed her. In contrast, Fred MacMurray's character, Jack Sargent, grew up to be an honest man because his mother lovingly taught him the difference between right and wrong.

Sargent, a New York district attorney, prosecutes Leander, a beautiful young woman who stole a bracelet. Suspecting that she will be acquitted for Christmas, he gets the case postponed until January. However, he feels bad about her spending Christmas in jail and asks "Fat" Mike (Tom Kennedy) the bondsman to get her out. Jack is shocked when Mike brings Lee to Jack's apartment; Mike has misunderstood Jack's intentions. The young attorney must drive home to Indiana for the holidays, but he decides to take Lee to dinner first.

When Jack discovers that they are both Hoosiers (that is, from Indiana), he offers to take Lee to her mother's home for Christmas. Lee hasn't seen her mother since she ran away years ago. When they arrive, the cold woman (Georgia Caine) welcomes her daughter by reminding her how she always knew that she was no good. Jack saves Lee from this wretched situation by bringing her to his family's home. There, she meets his loving mother (Beulah Bondi), sweet spinster Aunt Emma (Elizabeth Patterson), and their lovably lazy serving boy, Willie (Sterling Holloway).

During the holidays, the Sargent family makes Lee feel special and loved for the first time in her life. Jack tells his mother about Lee's crime so she won't misunderstand their relationship. However, the wise Mrs. Sargent senses that there is more than just compassion between Jack and Lee. What future awaits the district attorney and female criminal in New York?

Love Makes the Difference

Why did this couple end up on opposite sides of the law? Although Jack and Lee both built their lives in New York, their Indiana childhoods made them who they are. When we first meet Lee, she seems like a hardened woman who has found an easy but dishonest way to make a living. She tells Jack that her mind just works differently, claiming that people have different "rights" and "wrongs." We don't realize why Lee turned to crime until we meet her mother.

Lee's mother is one of cinema's cruelest parents. Without even a hello, she summons her daughter into the dark house and immediately suspects her motives for visiting. Although Lee's mother knows nothing about her daughter's recent crimes, she ruthlessly says that she always knew her daughter would steal and recounts how Lee once stole her mission money. Lee tear-



Fred MacMurray and Barbara Stanwyck in a promotional photo for their film "Remember the Night."

fully insists that she only borrowed it but couldn't pay it back since no one would hire her after her mother called her a crook in front of the whole town. Thus, Lee ran away and became exactly what her mother always said she was.

When Jack tells his own mother about Lee's criminal record, Mrs. Sargent immediately discerns that Lee lacked childhood love. She then recalls the time young Jack took her egg money without permission. She remembers how hard he worked to pay her back once he understood what he had done. "You made me understand," Jack says. "No, dear. It was love that made you understand," his mother responds. Without such love in her childhood, Lee never understood the importance of honesty.

Paying for Your Actions

Love may teach children right from wrong, but romantic love can confuse your ideals. When Jack falls in love with Lee, he can't imagine prosecuting her and trying to send her to jail. His affection for her is so great that he forgets her past wrongs and believes that his love can change her life.

In contrast, Lee has lived selfishly since she ran away. Since no one cared about her, she didn't care whom her stealing, lying, and deceiving hurt. However, the love that the Sargents show her makes her want to reform. Mrs. Sargent's unselfish concern for Jack's well-being makes Lee understand the importance of thinking of others. Lee finally realizes that, no matter what your experiences have been, you must pay for what you've done, "Otherwise, you never learn."

This movie is a beautiful story of love's transformative power. It doesn't preach, nor is it pretentiously cheery. It doesn't sugarcoat the truth about life in middle-century America, but neither is its realism depressing. Without any objectionable content, this film manages to be entertaining, inspiring, and rejuvenating almost 80 years later. Through witty dialogue, beautiful black-and-white cinematography, and excellent storytelling, it tells of a holiday season that changes a woman's life forever. As the old year dies, Lee must put her former self to rest. Is Christmas not a time for new beginnings?

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.

'Remember the Night'

Director Mitchell Leisen	Sterling Holloway
Starring Barbara Stanwyck, Fred MacMurray, Beulah Bondi, Elizabeth Patterson,	Running Time 1 hour, 34 minutes
	Not Rated
	Release Date Jan. 19, 1940 (USA)

★★★★★

The Little Black Dress Gets a Makeover for the Holidays

MANY NGOM

Women have two pieces of clothing that we cherish in our wardrobe. Jeans are convenient, durable, and honestly go with everything. And then there's the little black dress we bought years ago, the one that always comes in handy for unexpected occasions. Easy to wear and oh-so-comfortable (and usually crease-resistant too), it makes us feel taller, slimmer and chic. For the holidays, I picked four black dresses fresh from the runways and offer some tips so you can get creative with them. With the kind of shining confidence you'll exude, you might be asked for tips of your own as well!

The Coat Dress

Make a statement with this luxurious dress. From its body structure to its fabric, it will take you to almost any party during the holidays with elegance and style. The brocade fabric adds richness, and it's festive. And you don't have to worry about the parts of your body you are not comfortable with—it's thickness hides everything, and the double-breasted style slims your waist and holds your tummy tight. The A-line imparts an elegant and timeless silhouette that fits almost every body shape. The tulle trim adds lightness to the coat.

For accessories, you can go with minimal jewelry and a classic black pair of pumps, or you can show off your stylist skills by carefully picking unique accessories for this unique black dress.



Lurex Jacquard Cocktail Dress With Tulle Underskirt by Pamela Roland, price upon request.
Pointed Toe Pumps by Schutz, \$123.
Eagle Embellished Envelope Clutch by Kurt Geiger London, \$155.
Maryn Satin Headband by Eugenia Kim, \$145.
Garance 24K Gold Vermeil and Crystal Earrings by Mallarino, \$340.

Embroidered Crepe Midi Dress by Prabal Gurung, \$1,195.

Odalis Embellished Ankle Strap Sandal by Badgley Mischka, \$245.

Crystal Handel Clutch by NORDSTROM, \$100.

Simulated Pearl & Cubic Zirconia Ring by MAJORICA, \$150.

Liv Leaf Ear Climbers by NADRI, \$50.



The Updated Sheath Dress

If you have a lot of work to get through in the run-up to the holidays, no worries. There's just one rule: keep it simple.

This classic dress is ideal for office parties, with a black and white palette that is sharp and timeless. It's also versatile, and is designed to take you from day to night with ease. During the day at the office, pair it with a black blazer, and, for the evening, you'll be party-ready—the only thing you'll need to do is refresh your makeup. As for the accessories, use the same color palette or be bold with bright colors like multicolor stone jewelry.

Barocco Rodeo Print Accent Asymmetrical Dress by Versace, \$1,675.

Shearling Coat by Stand Studio, \$348.

High Heel Boots by P.A.R.O.S.H., \$305

Janyce Twisted Bow Clutch by TED BAKER LONDON, \$109.

Cascade Torsade Hoop Earrings by Gas Bijoux, \$215.



The Scarf Dress

This season, the silk scarf is now part of the dress, rather than an accessory. If you are the type who always forgets her scarf at parties (like me), this dress is for you—seriously. The shape of the dress is most basic so that the multicolored side panel can complete the look. The dress is perfect for the woman who is ready to update her little black dress, surely and slowly. The silk side panel gently sways and flows with your dance moves. For the younger woman who likes colors, the royal blue accent color will enhance the simplicity and the beauty of the dress.



Ruffled Asymmetric Silk Midi Dress by Rasario, \$2,005.
Caterina Pumps by Gianvito Rossi, \$875.

Antonia Faux Pearl Headband by Shrimps, \$240.

Flower Candies Malachite Earrings by Sylvia Toledano, \$200.

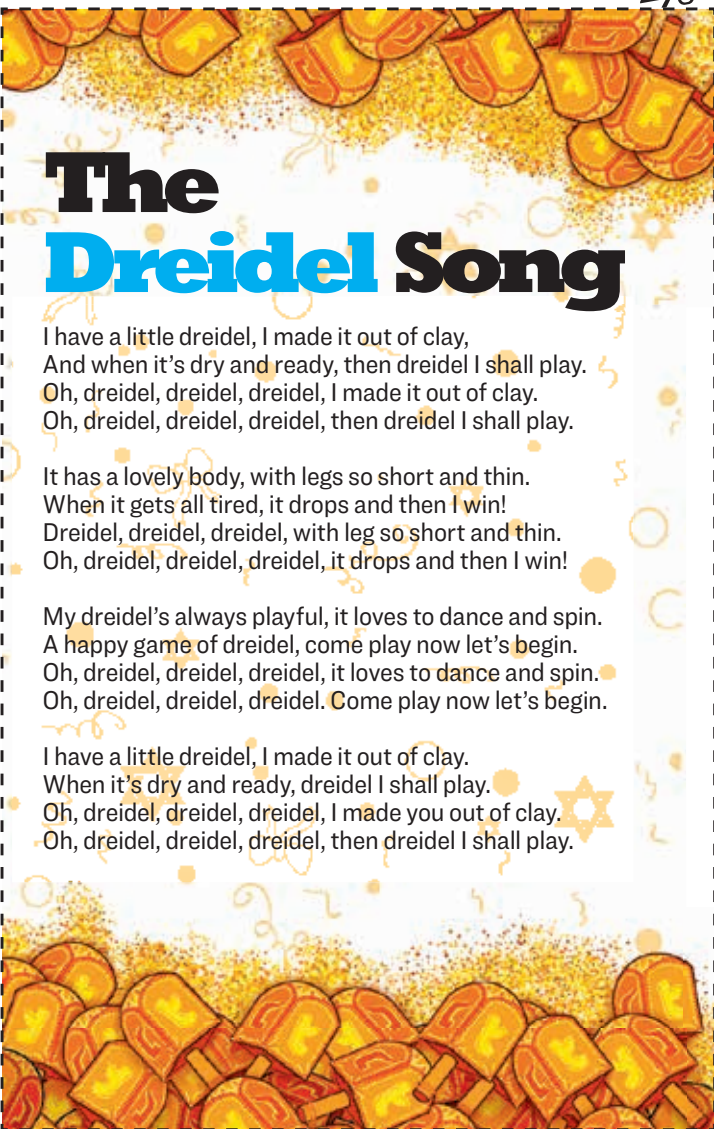
Mother of Pearl Clutch by Sadra Squishee, \$475.



WEEK 52, 2019

FOR KIDS ONLY

THE EPOCH TIMES



I have a little dreidel, I made it out of clay,
And when it's dry and ready, then dreidel I shall play.
Oh, dreidel, dreidel, dreidel, I made it out of clay.
Oh, dreidel, dreidel, dreidel, then dreidel I shall play.

It has a lovely body, with legs so short and thin.
When it gets all tired, it drops and then I win!
Dreidel, dreidel, dreidel, with leg so short and thin.
Oh, dreidel, dreidel, dreidel, it drops and then I win!

My dreidel's always playful, it loves to dance and spin.
A happy game of dreidel, come play now let's begin.
Oh, dreidel, dreidel, dreidel, it loves to dance and spin.
Oh, dreidel, dreidel, dreidel. Come play now let's begin.

I have a little dreidel, I made it out of clay.
When it's dry and ready, dreidel I shall play.
Oh, dreidel, dreidel, dreidel, I made you out of clay.
Oh, dreidel, dreidel, dreidel, then dreidel I shall play.



WHY COULDN'T THE
CANDLE
GET ANY
SLEEP?

BECAUSE THERE'S
NO REST FOR THE
WICKED.



“
A little bit of
light pushes
away a lot of
darkness.”

JEWISH PROVERB



'A CHRISTMAS CAROL' IS PUBLISHED



On Dec. 19, 1843, Charles Dickens published the beloved Christmas classic tale of Ebenezer Scrooge. Originally titled “A Christmas Carol. In Prose. Being a Ghost Story of Christmas,” it chronicled the story of Scrooge’s sense of “humbug” and

his great change after being visited by the spirits of Christmas past, present, and yet to come. “A Christmas Carol” is still enjoyed around the world today. It has never been out of print and has been adapted many times for stage, film, and other media.

By Aidan Danza, age 13

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: ANCIENT BIRDS

When I think of “prehistoric animals,” I think of the giant dinosaur **Tyrannosaurus**.

However, the dinosaur was not the only prehistoric animal that existed: There were animals before and after it, as well.

After the mass extinction at the end of the Cretaceous period, other animals took the place of Tyrannosaurus, Triceratops, and Velociraptor in the food chain; and at about this time, many new species of birds emerged.

TERROR BIRDS

Terror birds were a group of large, carnivorous birds. Their size ranged from the size of a modern heron to about the size of the modern ostrich.

They were flightless, had short tails, and had massive bills and feet. In the case of some, the bill was almost the size of the rest of its head!

They lived in South America, and it is speculated that they ate prehistoric mammals. Scientists also believe they did not thrash their prey side to side, as mammalian predators do, but jabbed and stabbed at their prey. They also may have kicked them, like modern-day secretary birds do with snakes.

Terror birds included such animals as Titanis, Gastornis, Lallawavis, and Brontornis.

MOAS

Moas were some of the largest birds that ever lived. Adults, from the ground to the top of the head, were almost 12 feet tall.

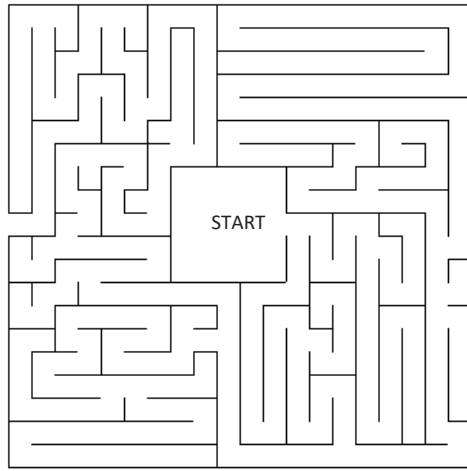
They lived in and around New Zealand. Most of the moas were hunted to extinction by the 1440s. Their primary predators were the giant Haast's Eagle and the Maori natives that lived in New Zealand.

GIANT TERATORN

Argentavis has the distinction of being the largest flying bird that has ever existed. It weighed more than 150 pounds and had a 23-foot wingspan.

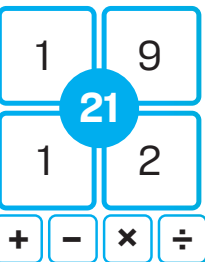
How did it fly? Scientists say that Argentavis had to get a running start on a downhill slope to generate enough lift to get airborne. Once it did, it would not use flapping like small birds do today, but instead would glide like modern birds of prey. It would use air currents rising up the sides of the Andean cliffs where it lived to generate more lift while on the wing.

AMAZING ESCAPES!



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

Easy puzzle 1



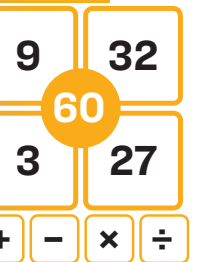
Solution For Easy 1
1 + 2 = (1 + 6)

Medium puzzle 1

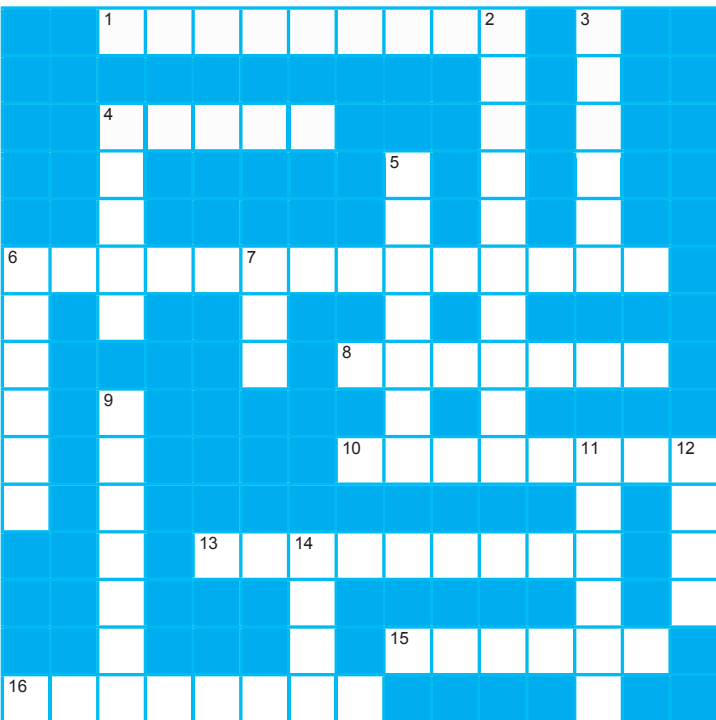


Solution for Medium 1
21 + 02 = 2 + 1
2 - 2 = (21 - 02)

Hard puzzle 1



Solution for Hard 1
(23 - 25) = (6 + 6)
6 - 23 = 2 x 22



Down

- Inscription in a book (10)
- Jewish church (6)
- Israel's 20th Chief of General Staff (5)
- Hanukkah item (7)
- “Amen” preceeder (6)
- It burned for 8 days (3)
- “Impossible” happening. (7)
- Hanukkah starts in this month (6)
- “Half” on a dreidel (4)
- Moolah (4)

Across

- Hanukkah Latkes or livivot (Hebrew), e.g. (9)
- Dreidel letter (5)
- Latkes (14)
- Chanukah toy (7)

- Another spelling of a holy season (8)
- Duration of Hanukkah (9)
- Applesauce-topped noshes (6)
- Bestows (8)

Ancient Inspiration for Today

A SHOW THAT CANNOT BE SEEN IN CHINA





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—IN New York Magazine

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CURATOR’S NOTES

Charles Dickens and Christmas Today

LORRAINE FERRIER

Charles Dickens is largely responsible for our idea of Christmas today, more than 170 years after he published his Christmas books. He could be called the father of Christmas itself, or rather, of the business of Christmas. Of course, it’s not all down to Dickens. Many changes were afoot in Britain in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The recently opened exhibition “Beautiful Books: Dickens and the Business of Christmas” explores the blossoming industry of Victorian publishing and Dickens’s Christmas books, alongside other artifacts that illustrate how Christmas publishing developed the modern idea of Christmas.

Where better to see this exhibition than the Charles Dickens Museum at 48–49 Doughty St., London. Number 48 was the Dickens family home from 1837 to 1839, where Dickens wrote “Oliver Twist” and “Nicholas Nickleby,” and where he completed “The Pickwick Papers.”

The exhibition is curated by guest curator Simon Eliot, Professor Emeritus in the History of the Book at the University of London. Eliot gives us an overview of the exhibition in a recent phone interview.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What was British book publishing like in the 19th century?

MR. SIMON ELIOT: Book production was increasing, partly because it had been industrialized. From 1805 on, you could actually produce paper through a steam-driven machine. By the 1820s, it was possible to print books by steam-driven machines. Therefore, you’ve got a higher throughput, and with this you’ve got cheap paper; that alone means a huge increase in output.

And you’ve got to link this to the growth of the middle classes. This is the beginning of industrialization, from the late 18th century onward, so there are many more middle-class people. And the middle classes have a disposable income.

If you as a manufacturer or as a salesperson are interested in selling more, Christmas becomes an obvious and almost inevitable way of marketing your product. So that’s happening in the early 19th century.

Another really important feature of Christmas in the 19th century was this growing concentration on children. Children became a focus. Therefore, the number of toys and games and books for children increased at an astonishing speed.

A lot of the developments in the 19th century have their origins in the 18th century. The idea of the nuclear family, for instance, comes from the Enlightenment view that your marriage ought to be a companionship marriage, a marriage, if not of equals, at least of people who complement each other—the ideal of romantic love. The nuclear family, the loving husband and wife bringing up loved children, is something the 18th century develops quite strongly.

There’s a very strong Puritan tradition dating right back to the 16th century, and indeed before, which views children as little sinful adults, so they had to be punished and forced into virtue. But by the end of the 18th century and the Romantic period, there’s the idea of children as separate and different and, to use Wordsworth’s phrase, that they bring “trailing clouds of glory” with them when they arrive.

That’s a remarkable change. It certainly develops through the 19th century and, of course, Dickens was critically important in this. Lots of his characters are children or behave like children. And he’s very conscious of the way that children are misused, or abused, or callously treated.

The growing importance of children, the distinctiveness of children, their innocence—that’s exaggerated, in the sense that they’re not guilty, they’re not stained with sin, and that they should be educated and encouraged—that’s something very characteristic of the late 18th century. Then that really explodes in the 19th century. So then Christmas becomes the time for children and children’s books, annuals, and pantomimes. And Christmas as a celebration of children becomes progressively more important.

In one sense, Dickens in the 1840s just brings all these new developments together and focuses them and articulates them. But they were there before Dickens started writing about Christmas. In a sense, Dickens was the first one who put all of them together and presented an idea of Christmas to this new consuming class. And that, of course, has had an astonishing impact on our view of Christmas ever since.

THE EPOCH TIMES: Do you think that the publishing of “A Christmas Carol” was a catalyst for a Christmas publishing phenomena?

MR. ELIOT: I don’t think it was a catalyst. Or rather, one could say it was



CHARLES DICKENS MUSEUM

“What Dickens did was find a sort of Christmas myth that everyone could understand, appreciate, and celebrate.”

Simon Eliot, Professor Emeritus in the History of the Book at the University of London

“Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim,” from “A Christmas Carol,” circa 1920, illustrated by Harold Copping.

Continued on Page 16



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CURATOR'S NOTES

How a Christmas Tradition Came to Be in Victorian England

LORRAINE FERRIER

Tim Travis, curator of prints at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, shares in an email about how Henry Cole, a civil servant and the Victoria and Albert Museum's founding director, commissioned the first Christmas card. And about how the English custom of sending Christmas cards came to be.

The 19th century was a period of growing social and geographic mobility in the UK. For the first time, with industrialization and urbanization, people lived and worked farther away from the places where they were born and formed larger but looser social networks. These changes were mediated by adopting new traditions and shared customs, like the exchange of Christmas cards.

This idealized scene would have had a sentimental appeal not easily appreciated today.

The first commercially available type of printed greeting card was the valentine, introduced at the beginning of the 19th century. Although the custom of giving Valentine's Day gifts, such as gloves to be worn to church on Sunday, or hand-drawn or -written verses or riddles already existed from at least the 15th century.

The exchange of valentine greetings and gifts wasn't only a romantic custom; it could also be a sentimental and social one. Large households would draw lots to see who would be whose valentine that year (a bit like "Secret Santa" in workplaces today). The diarist Samuel Pepys recorded on Valentine's Day in 1666 or 1667 that the little boy of one of the servants drew Mrs. Pepys as his valentine: "This morning, come up to my wife's bedside, I being up dressing myself, little Will Mercer to be her Valentine; and brought her name writ upon blue paper in gold letters, done by himself, very pretty; and we were both well pleased with it."

The First Christmas Card

In the mid-19th century, the custom was to make Christmas visits to all of one's friends and acquaintances, leaving a visiting card—often decorated with Christmas motifs—either ready-printed or hand-decorated with printed scraps, or to write Christmas letters to everybody on writing paper likewise decorated.

The purpose of Henry Cole's Christmas card was to replace those activities with a mass-produced illustrated card with just enough space for a short greeting, which could be sent by the penny post to all the many people he knew. The penny post, which Cole helped instigate, meant that a card could be sent anywhere in Britain for only a penny.

The design was reproduced lithographically in an edition of 1,000 which were then hand-colored by William Mason, a professional "colorer." Any cards left over were then sold by Cole's business partner Joseph Cundall at their emporium, Summery's Home Treasury, at 12 Old Bond Street, for one shilling each.

The first Christmas card was very expensive. To put it into context, one shilling was about the daily wage of a working man or the price of a good meal at The Reform Club, London, the exclusive club that Henry Cole frequented.

There are several interesting differences between the design of the card and what we would expect today: Scenes of festive eating and drinking are less common now that cheap and plentiful food and drink are taken for granted in the

West. On the card, the central scene of plenty is offset by the side panels showing the hungry being fed and the naked clothed.

The trellis framework with trailing vines, a symbol of abundance with religious overtones, demarcates the separate scenes while connecting them within the same overall design, reinforcing the moral message that material comfort imposes a social obligation to aid those less fortunate, which is personal and communal and not simply the prerogative of the state.

The central scene shows at least three different generations of a (presumably extended) family gathered together. In the 1840s, the average life expectancy was low, between 40 and 45 years (about half as long as today), and infant and child mortality rates were high with about 15 percent of babies dying before their first birthday. Varying, of course, with relative wealth or poverty and social class, living long enough to enjoy grandchildren or great-grandchildren was not taken for granted, and so this idealized scene would have had a sentimental appeal not easily appreciated today.

One of the later criticisms of the card concerned the illustration of a little child being given a glass of wine. Today in the West, we take the availability of clean, safe drinking water for granted, but in 19th-century cities, cholera and typhoid outbreaks were common, and wine or beer were often consumed instead.

How the Christmas Card Became a Custom

A variety of factors came together to create the Christmas card industry, in what the late historian of Christmas cards, George Buday, called "the fullness of time." One factor was improvements in postal services (the Uniform Penny Post went nationwide in Britain in 1840 and the halfpenny post for single-sheet postcards in 1870), making postage more accessible.

In addition, new technologies allowed cheaper methods of mass-producing printed goods (especially in color) such as books, games, and stationery—including cards.

Another development was the establishment of trades and retail outlets to supply relatively nonessential novelties and luxuries to a growing middle class with disposable income and leisure time. Christmas cards began to be sold not only by stationers and bookshops but also by tobacconists, drapers, and toyshops.



Christmas card, 1860s, by anonymous. Bequeathed by George Buday.

The Creation of Christmas Motifs

Many of the early Christmas cards featured flowers, or springtime or summer scenes rather than winter ones. There were two reasons for this: Firstly, many early Christmas card manufacturers had previously made valentines. There was no guarantee that Christmas cards would ever be as popular as valentines. At first, the phenomenon was widely



(Above) The Henry Cole Christmas card, 1843, by John Callcott Horsley.

(Left) Christmas card, 1860s, by anonymous. Bequeathed by Guy Tristram Little.

(Right) Christmas card, 1860s, by anonymous. Bequeathed by George Buday.



thought to be a passing fad. So instead of commissioning new illustrations and creating new printing plates, they adapted existing Valentine's Day ones and simply added a Christmas greeting. Also, sunny, flowery scenes cheered

people up during the long, dark, cold winter months before the invention of electric lighting and central heating.

The seasonal Christmas themes familiar to us today spread from other formats to cards a little later—influenced by popular literature: Charles Dickens's "A Christmas Carol" (1843); "Christmas with the Poets" by Henry Vizetelly, illustrated by Myles Birket Foster (published 1852); and the 1876 edition of "Old Christmas: From the Sketch Book

of Washington Irving" by Washington Irving. These books were extremely popular, widely read, reviewed, and frequently reissued.

The second half of the 19th century was the period when today's familiar Christmas iconography of robins, holly and mistletoe, snow scenes, and Father Christmas developed. These motifs developed alongside themes that have since fallen out of fashion: pictures of money, food and drink, good

and naughty children, hunting scenes, and figures in military uniform. Religious subjects were relatively rare, as the sending of Christmas cards was seen as an extension of secular social customs like Christmas visits and letters rather than religious observances.

Increasingly, many cards (especially at the cheap and cheerful end of the market) were imported from Germany, which in the 19th century led the field in color printing, especially chromolithography (prints made by lithography whereby a stone or plate is made for each color) on a mass-produced scale. Novelty, fancy-shaped, and humorous cards were especially popular.

The Legacy of Christmas Cards

The perennial Christmas themes that crystallized in the late 19th century have lasted well over a hundred years, being expressed in different styles over the decades, or in a self-consciously nostalgic Victorian idiom, but not differing much in content. Today, the greeting card market in the UK is worth over a billion pounds per year (around \$1.3 billion), and the British buy more cards per person than any other country in the world, including America.

Most art forms and the social conditions that generate them have a beginning and an end. George Buday spoke of "the fullness of time," the coming together of technological, historical, social, and economic factors giving rise to the Christmas card industry. I am going to go out on a limb and predict that a perfect storm of factors may herald its demise or at least its decline.

The creative energy may be draining away from traditional-format Christmas cards as a mass medium of exchange and communication, and their days as an aesthetically designed product expressing an individual's (or a corporation's) taste, values, and self-image may be numbered.

Whatever new forms are adopted by people to greet each other at different holidays and seasons in the future, I hope that the ethos of the Henry Cole first Christmas card—gratitude for well-being, love of family and friends, and concern for the less fortunate—will not be forgotten.

This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.

What Our Readers Say:

It's the only sane newspaper amidst all this insanity.

STAN K., PASTOR

It's bringing morality back to newspapers.

LISSA T., BUSINESS OWNER

It's the only paper that I know of right now that actually gives you the honest, old fashioned journalism.

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You're presenting the facts and letting the reader decide.

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Some of the beautiful book covers of Dickens's novels from the Charles Dickens Museum collection.



Charles Dickens's rushlight holder, circa 1830. He kept the light on his writing desk throughout his life.

ALL PHOTOS BY CHARLES DICKENS MUSEUM UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE



The woodblock for "Fezziwig's Ball," 1852, by Hablot Knight Browne, commonly known by his pen name, Phiz. The woodblock was made for a compilation of all five of Dickens's Christmas books called "Christmas Books," cheap edition, 1852.



A rare trial edition of "A Christmas Carol," 1843.



Charles Dickens's dining room is decorated for Christmas at the Charles Dickens Museum, London.

Children were the growing focus of Christmas celebrations. Here, *The Publishers' Circular* in 1881 shows a couple of children's annuals.

CURATOR'S NOTES

Charles Dickens and Christmas Today

Continued from Page 13

one of the catalyzers. The desire to sell books, for instance gift books, very expensive, beautifully produced books, in the 1810s and 1820s—that was there already.

The gift books were mostly a sort of literary compilation of poetry, of short stories, and of specially commissioned illustrations, usually steel engravings. Frequently, these books were edited by members of the aristocracy, particularly female members of the aristocracy, so they were a highly respectable, upmarket sort of product.

Most of the poetry was uplifting, the sort that would do you good. The book was shouting with respectability, improvement, wealth. Actually, most of the literature contained in those books wasn't very good. But it was almost more important that you were seen to be giving and receiving this.

What Dickens did was find a sort of Christmas myth that everyone could understand, appreciate, and celebrate. So these things were there; he articulated them. And of course in articulating them, yes, he accelerated them.

To some extent, at least in the first pro-

“**Dickens mentioned almost being haunted by the need to write a Christmas story. Almost like Scrooge, he began to be haunted by the very thing he created.**

Simon Eliot, Professor Emeritus in the History of the Book at the University of London

duction of "A Christmas Carol," Dickens follows the concept of the gift book. For the first time, Dickens was interested in every aspect of the book's production—not just the printing, not just the illustrations, but also the binding.

The coloring of the illustrations was done by hand, and they were very expensive. Although the 6,000 first edition copies sold out within a few days of "A Christmas Carol" being published on Dec. 19, 1843, Dickens made hardly anything out of it because the cost of production was so high. That continued to be the case for the next few editions. Gradually, of course, the cost dropped and his profits increased. But it wasn't initially a commercial success—certainly not that first issue.

And of course, it wasn't just "A Christmas Carol" that Dickens wrote for Christmas. There were four other Christmas books that followed in the 1840s. Then, there was a Christmas story every year in his magazines until his last, "No Thoroughfare" in his periodical *All the Year Round*, in 1867. So Dickens not only articulated it, he provided a whole host of books and stories that elaborated on the new idea of Christmas.

THE EPOCH TIMES: In 1868, Dickens wrote that he was sick of Christmas.

MR. ELIOT: Yes, he was. He just generally felt he had done all that he could. He felt that there was a lot of trash being written to imitate him as well. Dickens mentioned almost being haunted by the need to write a Christmas story. Almost like Scrooge, he began to be haunted by the very thing he created. And certainly, two of his later novels do deal with Christmas very extensively, which are "Great Expectations" in 1861 and "The Mystery of Edwin Drood," which he didn't complete, of course; he died halfway through in 1870. He had visions of Christmas in both, but they're very somber. They're very dark. They're nothing to do with sparkly snow and good cheer.

Even if some of his novels are more somber about Christmas, his readings that he went on to give and partake in until 1870 still revive the old books. The very last reading he gave, on March 15, 1870, certainly included a reading from "A Christmas Carol" and "The Pickwick Papers," so he went right back to his early works. He could always return to performing the sort of cheerier early writings.

THE EPOCH TIMES: Please highlight a few of the exhibits for us.

MR. ELIOT: I'd like to highlight two exhibits in the exhibition that tell us a lot about the social, economic, and material circumstances of the world in which Dickens published his Christmas stories.

One exhibit is an illustration of a colored engraving called "Approach to Christmas" that was produced by James Pollard between 1830 and 1837. At that time, Dickens was beginning to write about Christmas in "The Pickwick Papers." The illustration features a horse-drawn mail coach driving toward London. The coach is laden with Christmas food, Christmas goodies, and right on the top is a Christmas tree. The coach is driving toward London in a snowstorm. That's important because it's a common image we have, certainly in the UK, that Christmas and snow are associated. But actually, if you think about the last hundred years, there have been very few white Christmases in the UK. But while Dickens was growing up between sort of 1812 and 1840, it was the last bit of what's been called the Little Ice Age, which was from the 16th to 19th century, when average temperatures were as much as 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit lower than they are today.

It meant that Christmas was commonly a white one, and that's associated with the height of the mail coach era between 1800 and 1840, after which the railways took over. Our Christmas cards of snowy scenes and mail coaches are fixed very firmly in the first 40 years of the 19th century, and that's the sort of image Dickens lived and grew up with. That was appropriate then but not really appropriate now, yet we carry it on, almost like a living fossil.

We also have Dickens's rushlight holder on display. A rushlight is a primitive form of artificial light where the dried pith of the rush plant is soaked in melted animal fat called tallow, and that sits almost horizontally in a pair of pincers. You light one end of the rush and it slowly burns back along its length. The light is not great; it's about the equivalent of a modern match. But that was certainly the cheapest way of getting artificial light.

And it's quite clear that Dickens had this rushlight holder on his desk throughout his writing life. Now, he could only have used it when he was at his poorest, probably as a child. But obviously, he wanted to be reminded of this, so there it is.

For most people, certainly the poorest people, there really wasn't adequate

“**It wasn't just 'A Christmas Carol' that Dickens wrote for Christmas. There were four other Christmas books.**

Simon Eliot, Professor Emeritus in the History of the Book at the University of London

lighting. Gas lighting was for the middle class and only came into domestic homes in the 1850s. There were candles, but they were appallingly smelly because most of them were made of animal fat and their wicks didn't burn away, so you had to trim the wick every 10 minutes or the candle would lose a lot of its light. So reading was tricky and expensive. If you could only afford one candle at a time, you had a race, as it were, to the length of the candle as to the amount you could read. For the very poor, who could afford a fire but not a candle, they would actually have to be almost on top of the hearth to get sufficient light to read by firelight. So that's one thing, which just reminds us not just of Dickens, but how people would've read over the Christmas period.

To find out more about "Beautiful Books: Dickens and the Business of Christmas," visit DickensMuseum.com. The exhibition, running until April 19, 2020, is a collaboration between the Charles Dickens Museum and the antiquarian booksellers Maggs Bros. Ltd.

This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.



A photographic portrait of Rudyard Kipling as a postcard, by Bourne & Shepherd. Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University.

LITERATURE

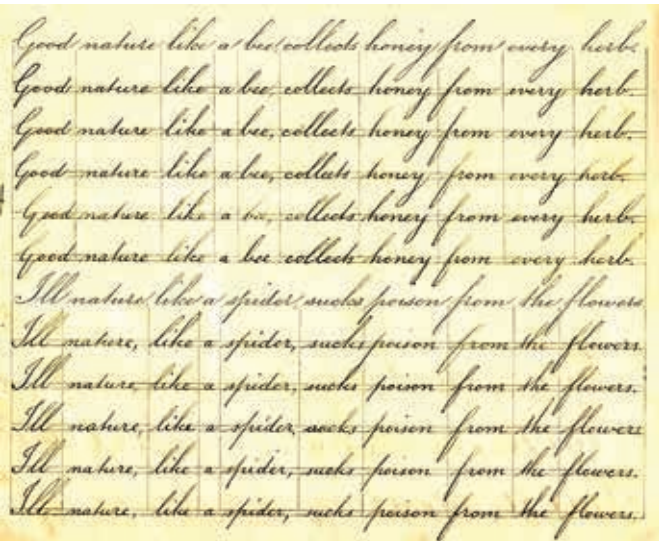
The Gods of the Copybook Headings: Revisiting Rudyard Kipling

JEFF MINICK

Sitting on my desk is a 776-page volume of poetry that will in 2021 become a hoary centenary. Embossed in gold on the cover is a swastika, a Hindu symbol of the sun, prosperity, and good luck, once a popular icon even in the West until it was stolen and corrupted by the Nazis.

In 1907, the man who composed these verses won the Noble Prize for Literature at the remarkably young age of 41. He also wrote hundreds of short stories and several novels. Many of these were made into films in the 20th century, among which were “The Jungle Book,” “Kim,” “Gunga Din,” “Wee Willie Winkie,” “Captains Courageous,” “Soldiers Three,” and “The Man Who Would Be King.” (Reader, if you haven’t seen this last film, starring Sean Connery, Michael Caine, and Christopher Plummer, treat yourself to a great movie this winter.)

Meanwhile, this same man has all but disappeared from some textbooks and classrooms. Turn to the index of the sixth edition of “Literature” by X.J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia, and in these 1,859 pages you’ll find no mention of this English writer. Examine the teacher’s text for “Prentice Hall Literature: The English Tradition” (second



(Left) A page from a 19th-century copybook, in which the printed headings have been copied. The homily is paraphrased from a 17th-century sermon of Isaac Barrow, “Against Detraction.”

(Below) Rudyard Kipling attended Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee festivities and then wrote a poem about them. “Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee Service, 22 June 1897” by Andrew Carrick Gow. Guildhall Art Gallery.



edition) with its 1,461 pages of poems, plays, and stories from England, and you’ll find just one of his poems.

Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) fails to meet our standards of political correctness.

Orwell and Kipling

Critics long ago attacked Kipling for his belief in the British Empire, his jingoism, and some of his works like the poem “The White Man’s Burden.” In a review of Kipling’s poetry, George Orwell says of Kipling: “During five literary generations every enlightened person has despised him” and “Kipling is imperialist, he is morally insensitive and aesthetically disgusting.”

In this same essay, and unlike many who condemned Kipling then and continue to do so now, Orwell conducts a long investigation into why Kipling’s poetry was so popular. Unlike those who sneered at Kipling, Orwell writes a passage about him that deserves quoting at length:

He does possess one thing which ‘enlightened’ people seldom or never possess, and that is a sense of responsibility. The middle-class Left hate him for this quite as much as for his cruelty and vulgarity. All left-wing parties in the highly industrialized countries are at bottom a sham, because they make it their business to fight against something which they do not really wish to destroy. They have internationalist aims, and at the same time they struggle to keep up a standard of life with which those aims are incompatible. We all live by robbing Asiatic coolies, and those of us who are ‘enlightened’ all maintain that those coolies ought to be set free; but our standard of living, and hence our ‘enlightenment,’ demands that the robbery shall continue. A humanitarian is always a hypocrite, and Kipling’s understanding of this is perhaps the central secret of his power to create telling phrases. It would be difficult to hit off the one-eyed pacifism of the English in fewer words than in the phrase, ‘making mock of uniforms that guard you while you sleep.’

Storm Warnings

If we approach Kipling in this same nuanced manner, we too may discover lessons worth learning from him.

His story “The Man Who Would Be King,” in which two ex-soldiers try to found a kingdom in Kafiristan, today a province in Afghanistan, leaves one of the “kings” dead and the other blind and broken in health. Here is a warning we might heed regarding intervention: It’s dangerous to meddle in cultures and lands unfamiliar to us.

Kipling repeats this admonition in other poems and stories. In “The Naulahka,” for instance, he writes of India:

Now it is not good for the Christian’s health to hustle the Aryan brown,

For the Christian riles, and the Aryan smiles and he weareth the Christian down; And the end of the fight is a tombstone white with the name of the late deceased, And the epitaph drear: “A Fool lies here who tried to hustle the East.”

Holding Up a Mirror to Us

Despite his patriotism, Kipling was quick to criticize the English for what he deemed their faults and failures. In 1897, for Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee, Kipling observed the celebrations and parades, and then wrote “Recessional” as an afterword and a warning. Here, the accused imperialist warns against boasting and jingoism, reminding his audience that misplaced faith in might and power will bring ruin:

For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube and iron shard,
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
And guarding calls not Thee to guard,
For frantic boast and foolish word—
Thy Mercy on thy People, Lord.

Just as pertinent to our own time is “The Gods of the Copybook Headings.” Copybook headings were maxims at the top of a page, which schoolchildren then copied out below to practice their handwriting.

Here, Kipling contrasts the Gods of the Copybook Headings with the Gods of the Market Place. The former represent wisdom and ancient truths, and the latter are “smooth-tongued wizards” who promise such things as “abundance for all” and “perpetual peace.” Here are the last two stanzas:

As it will be in the future, it was at the birth of Man
There are only four things certain since Social Progress began.
That the Dog returns to his Vomit and the Sow returns to her Mire,
And the burnt Fool’s bandaged finger goes wabbling back to the Fire;

And that after this is accomplished, and the brave new world begins
When all men are paid for existing and no man must pay for his sins,
As surely as Water will wet us, as surely as Fire will burn,
The Gods of the Copybook Headings with terror and slaughter return!

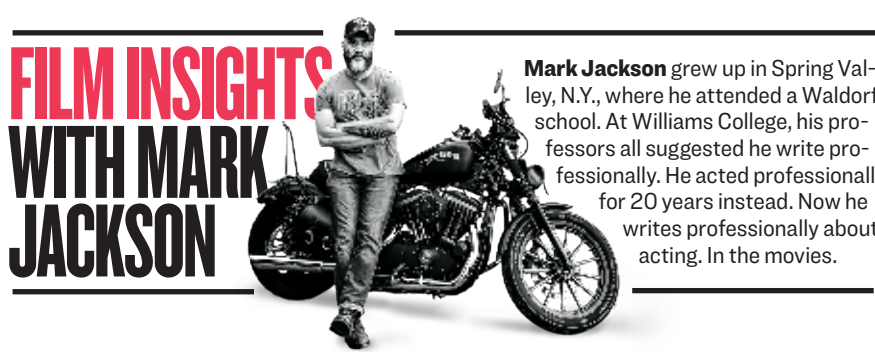
Things as They Are

There are other reasons to explore Rudyard Kipling’s work: his rollicking verse, creativity in language, and brilliantly drawn characters. As James Mustich says in “1,000 Books to Read Before You Die,” “It is impossible to read a page of Kipling without being startled by a phrase or sentence that is animated with the spring of speech rhythms but starched with a unique confidence and poetic poise.”

At the end of his poem “When Earth’s Last Picture Is Painted,” Kipling writes that after death, each of us “Shall draw the Thing as he sees It for the God of Things as They are.”

We live in an age in which all too many of us worship the Gods of the Market Place and The God of Things as We Wish Them to Be. Rudyard Kipling reminds us that there are antidotes to these poisons.

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



Innocent Hero’s Life Savaged by Corrupt FBI and Lying Media

MARK JACKSON

Clint Eastwood has been exploring American heroism for a while now. From “American Sniper” to “Sully” and now “Richard Jewell,” he’s having a look at (mostly) true stories about what constitutes a hero.

They may be true, but there’s some artistic license. For example, I still don’t understand why Eastwood left out of “American Sniper” the little-known fact that Chris Kyle, America’s most-decorated war hero ever, fresh home from Iraq, bought a new truck, got held up at gunpoint at a gas station, and—battle-hardened Navy SEAL that he was—killed both would-be thieves dead with his .44 magnum. Which is, ironically, a “Dirty Harry” gun. And Clint Eastwood is Dirty Harry.

But never mind all that. Eastwood is, generally speaking, a master storyteller, and “Richard Jewell” is a wonderful chapter in the Clint-as-director canon. And here’s where the film’s excellence mostly comes from: the fabulous casting of Paul Walter Hauser as lead character Richard Jewell. Hauser looks like Nick Offerman’s (who played Ron Swanson in “Parks and Recreation”) overweight, younger brother Matt, and is just as talented as Nick.

1996 Olympics Bombing

Richard Jewell was the nondescript security guard who did an ostensibly heroic deed by calling in a pipe bomb he spotted in a backpack under a bench at Centennial Olympic Park in Atlanta, which was hosting the 1996 Summer Olympics. He then helped evacuate venue personnel and the crowd, thereby being directly responsible for greatly reducing potential casualties.

This immediately placed him at the center of a media maelstrom.

Then, the whole situation drastically backfired, and he became the prime suspect, fingered by the FBI as the would-be bomber.

Snickers

We’re introduced to Jewell approximately 10 years prior to the main plot; it’s his first

‘Richard Jewell’

Director
Clint Eastwood

Starring
Paul Walter Hauser, Sam Rockwell, Kathy Bates, Jon Hamm, Olivia Wilde, Nina Arianda

Rated
R

Running Time
2 hours, 11 minutes

Release Date
Dec. 13

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

‘Richard Jewell’ demonstrates the power that the media wields, using unproven allegations, to wreak havoc with people’s lives.



Richard Jewell (Paul Walter Hauser, C) finds himself in a media storm after he discovers a bomb at the Atlanta Olympics.

day on the job as a gofer for a small business. His boss, Watson Bryant (Sam Rockwell), is a firecracker of a lawyer who nicknames Jewell “Radar” (after the famously supernaturally precognitive “M.A.S.H.” character), because Jewell notices Bryant likes Snickers bars and henceforth keeps Bryant’s desk drawer well-stocked with Snickers.

Jewell is, plain and simple, a good man. He’s unfailingly polite, dispenses many acts of kindness, works hard, and always thinks of others first, putting their needs before his own. He’s a momma’s boy—but what a momma’s boy; every mother would want such a son. He takes impeccable care of her and expresses an abiding, deep love, gratitude, and respect.

He’s got some annoying tendencies, though. Lately in the news, there’s been a lot of talk about “stolen valor,” which refers to a particular kind of guy who simply can’t resist the temptation to call himself a former Navy SEAL, Green Beret, or Delta Force operative. This is a thing; there are groups hunting down cases of stolen valor now, and there are serious penalties for this.

This is all to say, Richard Jewell would appear to be a hair’s breadth away from a stolen valor type of guy. He keeps saying to cops, “Yeah, I’m law enforcement, too.” The thing of it is—he was a cop. And a very talented one to boot; one who read law enforcement manuals before bedtime. But he doesn’t look like a cop. Or act like a cop. Or walk like a cop. What do we say about that sort of thing? We say he’s not a cop. But ... he was.

And so Eastwood, in excellent, sneaky storytelling fashion, gets us to start judging Jewell the way the FBI does, and the story-rabid press starts spinning Jewell as a cop-wannabe fatso, a rent-a-cop has-been—a Paul Blart-ian, obese, Guns N’ Ammo- and Soldier of Fortune-reading momma’s boy. There he is, getting investigated as a possible terrorist, and he’s trying to chat up the Atlanta PD and the FBI like he’s the fellow law enforcement bro. Talk about snickers. In America, our knee-jerk reaction to this

sort of thing is an immediate, vociferous howling of “looserrrrr!!!”

However, Richard Jewell is simply genuine and sweet. Eastwood shows us how good this man is and how easily both his weaknesses (lack of an aggressive cop personality) and strengths (reverence for the rule of law, honesty, fairness) are taken advantage of.

The Vultures

Jon Hamm plays devious FBI Agent Tom Shaw, dead-set on taking Jewell down by using any unethical means necessary. Atlanta Journal-Constitution reporter Kathy Scruggs (Olivia Wilde) unscrupulously uses sex (and agent Shaw) to obtain FBI insider info (more dramatic license, which, by the way, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution has threatened to sue Warner Bros. for). Together they create a living hell for both Jewell and his mother (a never better, heart-rending Kathy Bates).

Like the best dramas, there’s much humor to be found, especially during the scene in which Bryant discovers Jewell’s gun collection (that Jewell failed to tell him about) which is, shall we say, extensive. This leaves Bryant the monumental task of proving his client’s innocence while curtailing Jewell from haplessly fitting the perfect profile of a lone bomber and happily handing law enforcement personnel enough rope to hang him with.

Jewell was never formally charged; he was simply bullied by law enforcement and the media, relentlessly. Movies like “The Report” and “Spotlight” have shown the importance of truthful investigative journalism in unearthing foul play by corrupt organizations.

Conversely, “Richard Jewell” demonstrates the power that the media wields, using unproven allegations, to wreak havoc with people’s lives, such as the recent NBC hit piece on The Epoch Times. Richard Jewell wasn’t able to defend himself. The Epoch Times, however, can.

FILM REVIEW

Another Adventure Through the Virtual Lands of Jumanji

IAN KANE



The four avatars: “Mouse” Finbar (Kevin Hart), Smolder Bravestone (Dwayne Johnson), Ruby Roundhouse (Karen Gillan), and Professor Shelly Oberon (Jack Black), in “Jumanji: The Next Level.”

‘Jumanji: The Next Level’

Director
Jake Kasdan

Starring
Dwayne Johnson, Jack Black, Kevin Hart

Rated
PG-13

Running Time
2 hours, 3 minutes

Release Date
Dec. 13

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

gone their separate ways, too, although they’ve kept in touch. Spencer’s life seems the most ill-adjusted of the foursome. His romantic relationship with Martha has cooled off, and when he returns home on a college break, he learns that his cranky grandfather, Eddie (Danny DeVito), has moved in because of a recent surgery.

Since life doesn’t seem so hot for poor Spencer, and thinking he’ll be much happier in a virtual reality, he manages to fix up the broken Jumanji video game enough so that he can transport himself back into it. Spencer’s friends eventually learn of his digital flight and follow him into the game.

But this time, they accidentally pull Eddie along with them, as well as Eddie’s old pal Milo (Danny Glover).

The Fun

A big part of the fun in “Welcome to the Jungle” was watching how the different youths inhabited their avatars and how those actors played against type (such as the geeky Spencer inhabiting the burly body of Dwayne Johnson’s Dr. Bravestone). That’s on display again in this newer film, but this time the filmmakers have added an additional layer of complexity because each of the characters gets to inhabit different avatars than in the 2017 film. The reason for this switch

is explained as caused by a technical glitch in the video game. As a result, we get to see how the different teens fare as Dr. Smolder Bravestone (Dwayne Johnson), Professor Shelly Oberon (Jack Black), “Mouse” Finbar (Kevin Hart), and last but not least, Ruby Roundhouse (Karen Gillan). These changes allow the avatars’ actors even more opportunities for hilarious shenanigans.

But, let’s also say that if you haven’t seen the previous film, things can be a little confusing, although the film does make a decent attempt to bring franchise neophytes up to speed.

The Jumanji game itself has changed somewhat. The avatars move from the jungle environs of the previous film into mountainous and desert biomes. They also become tasked with a new mission: to save the land from a vicious warlord named Jurgen the Brutal (Rory McCann), who just so happens to have recently offed Bravestone’s parents.

As is common with many adventure games, there is also a powerful relic that the avatars must find called the Falcon’s Heart. If they

can retrieve this item from Jurgen, they have a chance at restoring Jumanji’s lands to their former beauty and thereby win this iteration of the video game.

The path to Jurgen’s headquarters is fraught with all kinds of dangers, including a large flock of stompy ostriches as well as a gaggle of cantankerous baboons. To the film’s credit, most of the action scenes are pretty engaging, although others (such as a big fight scene involving Dwayne Johnson’s character) feel tacked on.

The comedic parts are much evenly played, however, and there are also some good philosophical lessons in “Jumanji: The Next Level” that elevate it from being an average film to being a pretty darn good one, at least for certain ages. Parents should know that there is a considerable amount of foul language that might be inappropriate for younger kids.

Ian Kane is a filmmaker and author based out of Los Angeles. To see more, visit [DreamFlight-Ent.com](#) or contact him at [Twitter.com/ImIanKane](#)

THEATER REVIEW

Familial Ties That Bind

JUDD HOLLANDER

NEW YORK—The old saying that blood is thicker than water is a point made quite clear in Joshua Ravetch’s “One November Yankee.” This two-person play, starring Harry Hamlin and Stefanie Powers as three separate pairs of siblings, is being presented by the Delaware Theatre Company at 59E59 Theaters.

As the show begins, visual artist Ralph (Hamlin) is preparing for the opening of his latest installation, titled “Crumpled Plane,” at New York City’s Museum of Modern Art. Nervously watching Ralph put the finishing touches on the exhibition is his sister Maggie (Powers), a MOMA staff member.

Maggie is the frequent object of media mention, thanks in no small part to her ever-changing marital status. She’s commissioned her brother’s latest work for the museum, but now fears the piece will be an abject failure—something that would cost her not only her job but also her position in New York society. Maggie is quite protective of her carefully cultivated public image.

Ralph’s work is meant to show the collapse of civilization. The idea for the title and the specific image he’s using in the exhibition come from the disappearance of a light plane in the mountains of New Hampshire five years earlier.

The story then shifts to the immediate aftermath of said crash.

Pilot Margo (Powers) and her brother, the sole passenger, Harry (Hamlin), attempt to assess their situation while also determining exactly why they crashed and just whose fault it may have been. The pair wonders if they will still be able to make it to their father’s wedding in time. This is where they were heading when the plane went down.

These interlocking stories make clear that each person in their respective pair is emotionally damaged in some way.

The final brother and sister pair are Ronnie (Hamlin) and Mia (Powers), who stumble across the wreckage of Margo’s plane while hiking in the area several years after the crash. The sight of the wrecked hulk triggers memories of a family tragedy in Ronnie and Mia’s past, an event neither has fully come to terms with.

Damaged Siblings
These interlocking stories make clear that each person in their respective pair is emotionally damaged in some way. They each depend on the support of their sibling to help them deal with the turmoil in their own life, and



Harry Hamlin and Stephanie Powers in “One November Yankee.”

thus hopefully be able to move forward.

Yet for all the bickering that occurs in each story, the underlying respect the siblings have for one another is also evident.

Despite the serious undertones, each scene is punctuated with enough humor to make the characters recognizable and relatable.

Hamlin and Powers play off each other best as their Maggie and Ralph characters. Each uses their position to mask their own inner insecurities—a trait present in all three stories—while making clear how just much each has riding on the success of Ralph’s installation.

Powers cuts a particularly caustic figure as Maggie. She uses puns to make biting comments. Yet she struggles to understand the installations Ralph and his competitors have created over the years. For example, while Ralph may see an exhibit con-

sisting of thousands of ping-pong balls with only one colored differently than the rest as a statement of the individual against society, Maggie just sees a large collection of small spheres.

In the episode of the plane crash, Hamlin does a very nice job channeling Woody Allen for the character of Harry, a nebbish Jewish writer.

Ravetch, who also expertly handles the directing chores, works closely with Hamlin and Powers to nicely balance the scenes. The action stays focused on the relationships and on the larger issues of life, death, and success. He also imbues the proceedings with mystery as the audience members wait to see exactly what will happen next.

The set by Dana Moran Williams is especially striking. The wrecked plane is an impressive sight greeting the audience. The costumes by Kate Bergh are quite

good, especially the outfits Powers wears as Maggie and Margo.

An intriguing piece, “One November Yankee” (the title taken from the registration numbers on the side of the crumpled plane) examines family connections, especially how members depend on each other when things look darkest, whether they realize it or not.

Judd Hollander is a reviewer for Stagebuzz.com and a member of the Drama Desk and the Outer Critics Circle.

‘One November Yankee’

59E59 Theaters
59 E. 59th St.
New York

Tickets
646-892-7999 or 59E59.org

Running Time
1 hour, 40 minutes (no intermission)

Closes
Dec. 29

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