

THE EPOCH TIMES

LIFE &

TRADITION

SAMIRA BOUAOU/THE EPOCH TIMES



Bob Woodson is the president and founder of The Woodson Center. Founded in 1981, the center helps neighborhood leaders and community-based organizations address problems through innovative solutions.

Bob Woodson: A Legacy of Neighborhood Empowerment

Over his long years working with committed grassroots leaders, Woodson has learned the principles that uplift people and communities

CATHERINE YANG

Bob Woodson was a young social worker in Pasadena, California, in the 1960s when he witnessed something no one had told him was possible.

A young ex-gang member had completely changed his ways, and he told Woodson that though he changed his character, he still had the experience of a gangster and looked the part, too, and this was what allowed him to have an advantage on the streets. He and several other ex-gang

“

I've seen how people who are spiritually rich can prosper under the worst of circumstances.

Bob Woodson

members did youth outreach, and they commanded the respect they needed to have an influence, but a positive one.

“I saw how these young gang members were still able to entice their peers who were in that troubled life to pursue peace,” Woodson said. “I worked closely with them for 10 weeks ... and I marveled at how effective they were.

“That was my first revelation—as a young social worker, what I saw on the streets was nothing like what I learned in the university. I had a sharp contrast between what I learned in the university about human

change and growth and development, and actually being in a laboratory where people that others had given up on then were dramatically transformed and redeemed.

“I said, there's something going on here that I didn't learn in class.”

He found himself on the lookout for other stories and remedies that brought transformation and redemption, and he saw similar principles. “Then the rest of my career I spent validating and re-validating that approach.”

Continued on Page 4

A Raised Glass: Here's to Some Admirable Young Women

▶ Maddie Spear said, “One constant prayer that I pray daily is the following—‘Lord, I am available. Do big things with this life you have given me.’”

JEFF MINICK

In late September, I received an email from a 19-year-old Epoch Times reader living in Missoula, Montana. Maddie asked whether she might write me with some ideas about life and her future plans, and I agreed to read whatever she sent.

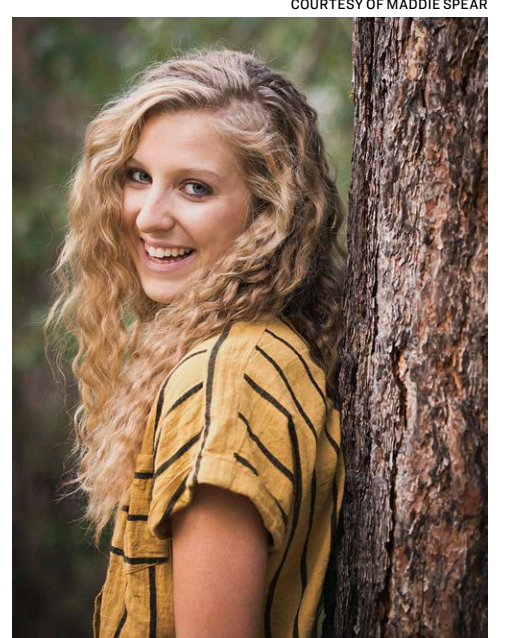
A day or two later, up popped a 2,300-word email chock full of Maddie's thoughts about male-female relationships, family, faith, technology, and half-a-dozen other topics. A list of 10 questions followed her missive, each of which deserved a lengthy answer. After suggesting a phone call rather than a written reply, which would have taken me hours, I found myself speaking to this delightful young woman. We covered a broad range

of topics, and during that conversation, the idea for this article was born.

Many people today, fearful of being shunned or even losing their jobs, are reluctant to share their views with others on such matters as religious faith, political convictions, and hot-topic issues such as abortion, gender, or even the nuclear family. Most of us have heard of the “shy voter” phenomenon of President Donald Trump supporters, people who conceal their politics from strangers but speak loudly in the voting booth. We hear less about the silencing of young conservative women attending college or working a job, who feel constantly pressured to keep their opinions to themselves.

Continued on Page 2

COURTESY OF MADDIE SPEAR



A Raised Glass: Here's to Some Admirable Young Women

Continued from Page 1

Questions

Wishing to give a voice to such women, I interviewed four young women, including Maddie, to discover what they were thinking. There was Maddie, of course, with whom I spoke in a second phone call; Jessica, 22, who lives here in Front Royal and works as a dental assistant; her sister Rebecca, 29, mother of two young daughters and coach of the local college's cross-country team; and my own daughter Katharine, 37, a homeschooling mother of seven who now lives in Pennsylvania.

What, I wondered, were the priorities of these four women? What were their thoughts, as Maddie asked me, on the role of the female in society? What values did they share in common? What approach did they take to a culture that frequently denigrates stay-at-home moms, large families, and in some cases, the family itself?

Here are some of their observations.

Faith and Family

When asked what they valued most in life, all four women put their religious faith at the top of the list. That faith not only helps carry them through the daily skirmishes of life, but also guides them in larger ways. After interviewing Rebecca in November, for example, we talked briefly of the election mess, a conversation she ended with a reminder that "we just have to remember God is in charge." In her email, Maddie wrote: "One constant prayer that I pray daily is the following—'Lord, I am available. Do big things with this life you have given me.'"

Second on their list of values was the family. All four women grew up in intact families with a mother, father, and siblings. Jessica and Rebecca have four other brothers and sisters, Katharine has three brothers, and Maddie has an older sister and two younger sisters whom her parents adopted from China.

In her email, Maddie wrote at length about the importance of the family, not just to the individual, but also to the culture. Eventually, she hopes either to found an organization or work for one that promotes strong families. Here are just a few of her words on the matter:

"My passion for family grows stronger every day. I would love to be a part of something that takes action on this issue. Right now, I have obligations at home. I own a business, tutor kids, and will not be totally untied until the summer of 2021. However, I want to GO next year. I want to either join in on something, or start something of my own. Now, as a precursor, my thoughts are in complete disarray. However, as I said, thoughts and dreams are a start. The adventure that I would like to embark on, or be a part of, would promote first and foremost, the values of family and define the roles of a male and female. If I was to start something completely new, the name would be 'All Great Change,' derived from the great Ronald Reagan who once said, 'All great change in America begins at the dinner table.'"

Feminism and Motherhood

Both Maddie and Jessica addressed feminism and what it means to them. "A lot of girls my age, at least in college, struggle with what feminism really means," Jessica said. "A lot of them think you have to be like a man to be equal."

Maddie wrote: "We are strong, capable, and needed. However, we are not to trample over the passions and strengths of a man. We are to complement them. Many women today are not asking for equality, they are asking for dominance."

Katharine and Rebecca are stay-at-home moms who spend most of their time with their children. Katharine homeschools six of her seven children—the oldest goes to a private academy a two-minute walk from their house—and tries to instill in them the values of faith, discipline, and hard work. Rebecca tells me that when she's out in public with her two little girls, someone may say, "Wow, you've got your hands full." Her usual response "I'm really, really happy" sometimes brings a look of envy from women her age.

Education and Passions

Katharine and Rebecca are graduates of Christendom College here in Front Roy-



Many young women may feel the pull of marriage and motherhood as well as the societal pressure of having a career.

al, and Jessica graduated this spring from Thomas Aquinas College in California. Maddie has earned an associate's degree in general studies from her local community college and is now taking a gap year to mull over her future. Meanwhile, she is teaching middle school students various subjects, using the basement of her parents' home as a classroom.

All four women believe strongly in the value of a good education untarnished by leftist propaganda.

As for their other interests, Rebecca enjoys running, holistic health, and cooking. Like her sister, Jessica is a runner and also a reader of historical novels and survival stories. Katharine also follows the holistic health path, frequently takes her children to daily Mass, and raises her flock of chickens. The last four years have roused in her a passionate interest in politics.

Maddie lives on a six-acre "mini-farm" with her parents and siblings, which her family tongue in cheek calls "The Spear Ranch." She has hunted with her father since she was 9, mostly going after elk and deer, and loves hiking as well. When we spoke, she was about to depart for a week-long hunting trip with her dad.

Inspirational Advice

When asked what advice she might give to female contemporaries such as herself, Maddie said: "Be confident in your convictions and principles and morals. When they signed the Declaration of Independence, our Founding Fathers were signing a death warrant. They

What approach did they take to a culture that frequently denigrates stay-at-home moms, large families, and in some cases, the family itself?

believed in their convictions. Stand strong, and present your convictions in a loving way."

Jessica said, "A woman should look at her feminine virtues rather than trying to be like a man."

"Be courageous in your vocation," Rebecca told me, "even though it can be looked down on by society, like motherhood. A lot of young women feel that call and that pull to marriage and motherhood, and it appeals to them, but because of social pressure they feel they have to get a job. In my life, the most alive I've ever felt is to be a mom."

"Women, embrace your femininity," Katharine advised. "Men, embrace your masculinity. We should let men be men and women be women. If we did that, we'd see some enormous changes in our society."

My Takeaway

Interviewing these four women was a delight less for what they shared with me than for the enthusiasm, joy, and strength I found in their voices. They know we're in tough times, but they don't allow these challenges to diminish them or lead them to despair. Here are women passionately in love with their families and with the world, who can still take pleasure in the laughter of a child, a hike in the mountains, a glass of wine, and a well-prepared meal.

Although this mess we call an election had darkened my thoughts, these shining lights—Maddie, Jessica, Rebecca, and Katharine—chased away that darkness, at least for the time being. Their example brought me to my feet and walking on the path again. These women inspired me, and I hope by sharing their stories and thoughts you will also find that same inspiration.

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

For some mothers, homeschooling may be part of the daily routine.



YUDANOV KONSTANTIN/SHUTTERSTOCK

A Foster Family's Journey

Parents of 6 who fostered over 30 kids adopt 2 boys with cerebral palsy

LOUISE BEVAN

After five of their six children left high school and moved out of the family home, an Alabama couple made a huge decision—they decided to become licensed therapeutic foster parents.

Willie and Teresa Smith's fostering journey began in 2003, and hit an emotional peak on July 22, when the couple adopted two special boys: Kristopher and Lucas.

In a stroke of serendipity, their adoption date was also Teresa's birthday, and the boys happened to be their "awesome gift" that made their family complete, reported AL.com.

Teresa and Willie, the founder and pastor of New Covenant Church, have fostered more than 30 children through Alabama MENTOR, a home and community-based services provider specialized in therapeutic foster care.

The Gadsden-based couple discovered they had an aptitude for taking care of children with profound special needs after fostering a boy post-kidney transplant.

Kristopher was 6 years old when he first arrived at the Smiths' home in 2015. He has cerebral palsy, is quadriplegic, blind, and uses a G-tube to take his food. He also had hydrocephaly and a seizure disorder and needed round-the-clock care, the Alabama-based news outlet reported.

The Smiths were overwhelmed, but it took mere hours for the couple to fall in love with Kristopher.

Two years later, Lucas arrived. Then 14, Lucas also had cerebral palsy and persistent muscle spasms.

"They wanted us to keep him for a week-end," Teresa told the AL.com. "We picked him up Friday, and by Monday I was begging to keep him."

Both boys underwent an extraordinary transformation under the Smiths' roof.

Lucas weighed just 38 pounds when he arrived. Over the course of three months, he almost doubled his body weight. At 17,



COURTESY OF TERESA SMITH

the gregarious teen was crowned "prom prince" by his peers at Gadsden High School. Kristopher, now 12, is loving and affectionate and no longer has seizures. He has also developed a particularly close relationship with his adoptive father.

"Their bond is incredible," Teresa said. "Taking care of Kristopher and Lucas is no easy task, but the Smiths hail routine and teamwork as the magic formula. They rise at 5:30 a.m., deliver thrice-daily medication, four feedings for Kristopher and six for Lucas, plus baths and regular diaper changes."

"I asked my husband one day, 'What did we do before the boys?'" Teresa said. "They are a joy, a blessing to our family."

The Smiths moved into a bigger home in spring 2019 to accommodate Kristopher and Lucas's needs, the AL report said. Their extended family, including 22 grandchildren, fully supported Willie and Teresa's decision to adopt.

Teresa said that the boys' adoptive siblings "absolutely love their little brothers." One of the couple's daughters is a nurse

Both boys underwent an extraordinary transformation under the Smiths' roof.

at Kristopher's school; one of their sons is a coach at Lucas's. While occasional stares or cruel comments from strangers still occur, the Smiths rally around their boys to ensure they feel loved and protected at all times.

"We love these boys," Teresa said. "When people see us, they say, 'They have to be your kids.' They literally look like they belong to us."

Alabama MENTOR State Director DeAnna Hand praised the Smiths for being "an exceptional family."

"Their dedication and committed care is inspiring to many," Hand said in a statement. "I've witnessed the boys light up with smiles and coos as Teresa talks with them. It warms your heart immediately!"

Willie and Teresa have had such a rewarding experience as foster parents that Teresa now co-leads training classes for the Alabama MENTOR program, inspiring others to follow in their footsteps.

Teresa told AL.com that Kristopher and Lucas have enriched their lives. "They're helping us realize how blessed and fortunate we are," she said.

FROM A READER

Mary's Christmas

It was December in southeast Kansas and a thin layer of snow was on the ground. My stepmother was busy making cookies and sprinkling Christmas colored sprinkles on top of them when my 7-year-old sister, Sylvia, and I came bounding through the front door. And as usual, we were hungry. There's something about being in school all day that works up a good appetite.

All that evening I was bothered by thoughts of that little red-headed girl who 'wasn't having Christmas.'

Mom handed us a couple of cookies and poured a glass of milk for each of us. Our preschool sister and kindergarten brother joined us for a snack. As we sat around the table, Sylvia eyed one of her Christmas cookies, examining each side of it, and then said matter-of-factly, "Mary isn't having Christmas."

"What? Who is Mary?" I asked. "You know," said Sylvia. "She rides our school bus and sits by me sometimes. I asked her what she wanted for Christmas, she said she wasn't having any." No one knew what to say at the moment, and so Sylvia continued. "Mary has

pretty red hair, but I think she forgets to brush it, and her teeth, and the other kids don't sit by her. I think it's because she's ... kinda different."

Our mom questioned us about Mary and her family, and where she lived, but we didn't know very much. We only knew there were other children in the family and that they got off the bus along the road where there wasn't a house.

All that evening I was bothered by thoughts of that little red-headed girl who "wasn't having Christmas," as Sylvia had said.

The next morning when we left for school, Mary was still on my mind. We had only moved to Wichita from the farm and lived in the area for a short time. However, I knew that our principal knew everyone in the community, so I made it a point to talk to him during lunch.

As the principal walked by me at the lunch table, I asked him, "Do you know of a little red-headed girl named Mary who rides our bus?"

"Yes," he responded. "She's one of the Pearson kids who live off the road a little ways. Why? Is there a problem?"

I explained to him what Sylvia had said and asked him if he thought they might be a family that needed some help at Christmas. The principal told me the Pearson family probably did need assistance and seemed glad that someone had thought of them. I then told him that our family would do something and that I would give their name to the Christian Dorcas Society in town, because they always helped others at Christmas time.

That day I found a big box at the grocery store a few blocks from our house. Later that night we all discussed what should go into the box for the Pearson family. It was just a few days until

Christmas and we began working to wrap gifts and fill the box. Our sister, Rose Marie, chose some toys and games that were age-appropriate, along with a cuddly stuffed teddy bear for one of the younger children. Even Larry, who was just a toddler at the time, watched what was going on and ran to his own little box of toys and began throwing some of them into the box.

We all chipped in and began cooking and baking things to go in a box of food items that would make up their Christmas dinner. Mom asked Sylvia if she would like to add something special to the box that would be for Mary.

"We could get her a pretty hat with gloves to match," suggested Mom.

"We could get her green, like her eyes!" remarked Sylvia. "Green it is!" announced Mom. That weekend we made a few purchases with money we had saved in our piggy banks. I bought a children's Bible and marked the story about the birth of Jesus with a bookmark.

The next day was Christmas Eve, and after work, we and our parents loaded the boxes into our car. We had received directions on how to get to the Pearson house from the principal, and we were putting our coats on to leave when Sylvia said, "Mom, I don't want to go."

"Why not?" I asked. "Don't you want to help take the gifts to Mary?"

"Maybe Mary will hide her face," Sylvia said with a worried look.

Mom seemed to understand what Sylvia was feeling, and asked, "Are you worried that Mary might somehow be shy or uncomfortable knowing that you told about there not being

a Christmas for her family?"

Although our parents didn't think there would be a problem, they told Sylvia she didn't have to go along.

We drove up the old dirt road and found a little house in a clearing in the woods. Our dad got out and went to the door while we stayed in the car. A very old, friendly dog met him as he got out of the car, and a man opened

the front door as dad walked toward the house. As Mr. Pearson stood at the open door a small child peeked around the doorjamb and waved at us. Dad talked a moment and then handed him the packages. When dad turned to leave, Mr. Pearson said something else,

causing dad to turn around and shake his head.

We all enjoyed Christmas a little more than usual that year and learned that it is definitely "more blessed to give than to receive."

When school started again after Christmas break, and the bus made its stop to pick up the Pearson kids, Mary was wearing the green hat and gloves. When she got on the bus she sat down next to Sylvia, hugged her, and gave me a big smile, saying, "We did have Christmas!"

That was all she needed to say. Her smile said the rest. And we did learn later that the Dorcas Society took the Pearson family a gift box of food and a toy for each of the children.

Is there any way you can help put a smile on someone's face this Christmas? Think about some way you might give the gift of love that was given to us so many years ago that first Christmas. After all, whose birthday is it?

—Allen Stark



An unexpected Christmas gift. ANA BITTER/SHUTTERSTOCK

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF ELIZABETH CHAN



Growing Family Inspires Singer's Christmas Album

Singer-songwriter Elizabeth Chan, who writes exclusively Christmas music, releases her 9th album

ANDREW THOMAS

NEW YORK—"Tis the season, and many Americans are trying their best to look forward to Christmas. It's been a tumultuous year, and some festive cheer certainly is in order. Singer-songwriter Elizabeth Chan's latest Christmas album "Celebrate Me Home" is her



(Top) Elizabeth Chan has been producing Christmas music for the past decade. (Bottom) Elizabeth Chan's latest album "Celebrate Me Home."

Ever since Chan was 7 years old, she has been obsessed with Christmas music.

ninth record, and will hopefully lift spirits this holiday season.

Ever since Chan was 7 years old, she has been obsessed with Christmas music. She vividly remembers listening to Christmas tunes in the backseat of her father's car or at home, and she told her parents that she wanted to write Christmas music when she grew up. They weren't terribly enthused and urged her to become a lawyer or doctor instead.

"I just knew from a very young age that I loved Christmas music, and that it was something that just brought me so much joy," Chan said.

Chan is the daughter of Filipino and Chinese immigrants, and it was her Filipino mother's side that celebrated Christmas. The holiday has never been about gifts for her; her favorite memories are from being with her extended family laughing and enjoying each other's company.

"That was the magic of Christmas. Just being together, and the closeness and the love and the family," Chan said.

Career and Family

Chan's childhood Christmas memories have heavily influenced her songwriting. Artists often produce Christmas albums, but she makes Christmas music exclusively. Her love for her family, home, and the spirit of the holidays are her muses. Her 5-year-old daughter has gotten involved in music, too, and wrote her own Christmas song, which is on this latest album.

Chan has been writing and producing Christmas music for nearly a decade, and her perspective on the holidays has evolved over time. When she first started, she had just gotten married. Now, she's a mother who just welcomed her second daughter into the world this fall.

"I think as I've grown my family, I've also grown as a composer and someone who writes about Christmas music because my family, my home, and my family life are really the inspiration," Chan said.

Early Beginnings

Early on, Chan had followed her parents' wishes, attending a competitive university and pursuing a traditional career. She worked diligently, but she reached a point in her career when she realized how unhappy she really was. She had a great office, received excellent compensation and benefits, but struggled to accept that this would be the rest of her life.

"I had zero passion for what I was doing, and I really had this kind of existential crisis," Chan said.

Chan wondered if the paycheck was worth her unhappiness. She thought about what made her happy, and Christmas music came to mind. She wanted to pursue writing and producing Christmas music, but she was unsure of how to embark on this new career.

"I had to give myself the opportunity to be the person I wanted to be, and figure it out," Chan said.

Christmas Year-Round

Chan took her career one day at a time, and nearly a decade later she's produced nine

Christmas albums. She's found her calling and her passion, but not every day is easy. She's not only had to develop her musical talent but also learn how to be an entrepreneur in the entertainment business.

Writing during the pandemic has heavily influenced her latest album "Celebrate Me Home." March normally would have been the time to develop plans for recording and producing her next record, but the pandemic led to closed-down recording studios and prevented her from working closely with other musicians. In the middle of all of this, she also discovered that she was pregnant.

"I started to doubt whether I would be able to come up with a Christmas record this year, and that made me really sad," Chan said.

Tragically, some of Chan's relatives succumbed to the pandemic. She struggled to think about how she would write Christmas music while she was experiencing so much hopelessness in the world. Moreover, she had her pregnancy to think about. She had been accustomed to feeling joyful and writing music, but watching her family members fall ill presented a creative block.

"I just knew from a very young age that I loved Christmas music, and that it was something that just brought me so much joy."

Elizabeth Chan

Chan came to change her perspective through her song "Celebrate Me Home," a reinterpretation of the Kenny Loggins classic. She had never produced and wrote in such a remote fashion, but was nevertheless determined.

"I just so wanted to get the song out in the way that I felt it, in the emotion that I felt it, that that's how I ended up cobbling together my album," Chan explained.

Chan looked at her pregnancy and unborn daughter as inspiration. She focused on her, and the fact her family was about to get bigger. Her family has always inspired her, but she didn't expect them to be so uplifting this year. The music video for the song, which captures some of the quarantined times at home, also features her pregnancy and her newborn daughter coming home.

Chan feels that a lot of Christmas music this year doesn't acknowledge the struggles we've all been through this year, and she wants her album to convey a sense of hope. She knows it's a lot to ask for people to be happy and forget that we're living in a time of pandemic, but she hopes that people are kind to themselves.

"Instead of Christmas being the things that we wish we had, how about we turn Christmas and the holiday season into being thankful for the things we've got, and that's love, and family, and home," Chan said.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF BLENHEIM PALACE



(Above) An aerial view of Blenheim Palace at Woodstock, in Oxfordshire, England. (Below) The painted ceiling of Blenheim Palace's Great Hall by English painter James Thornhill depicts the Duke of Marlborough presenting the plan for the Battle of Blenheim to Britannia, the personification of Britain.

LARGER THAN LIFE: ART THAT INSPIRES US THROUGH THE AGES

Blenheim Palace: Prim on the Outside, Lavish on the Inside

England's national treasure Blenheim Palace, in Woodstock, Oxfordshire—the birthplace and ancestral home of Sir Winston Churchill—is a fine example of the short-lived English Baroque style of architecture.

English Baroque wasn't as outwardly flamboyant as European Baroque. The exteriors of English buildings were made of limestone and slate; they were decorated

conservatively and adorned with classical figures, column shells, and pilasters. But inside, the highly ornate and decorative interiors are similar to those seen in French palaces.

Despite its magnificent appearance and its being called a "palace," Blenheim Palace has never been home to royalty and is the only English country house to be called a palace.



In 1704, the nation of England honored John Churchill, the Duke of Marlborough, with a gift of land for his military triumphs over the French and Bavarian troops in the War of the Spanish Succession.

Dramatist and self-taught architect John Vanbrugh (with the assistance of notable architect Nicholas Hawksmoor) designed the country house. The building of Blenheim Palace, named after the Battle of Blenheim in Bavaria, began in 1705 and was completed in 1722.

In 1761, renowned English landscape designer Lancelot "Capability" Brown, known as "England's Greatest Gardener," modified and redesigned Blenheim Palace's park, which is enclosed by the palace walls. Brown's park is considered "a naturalistic Versailles."

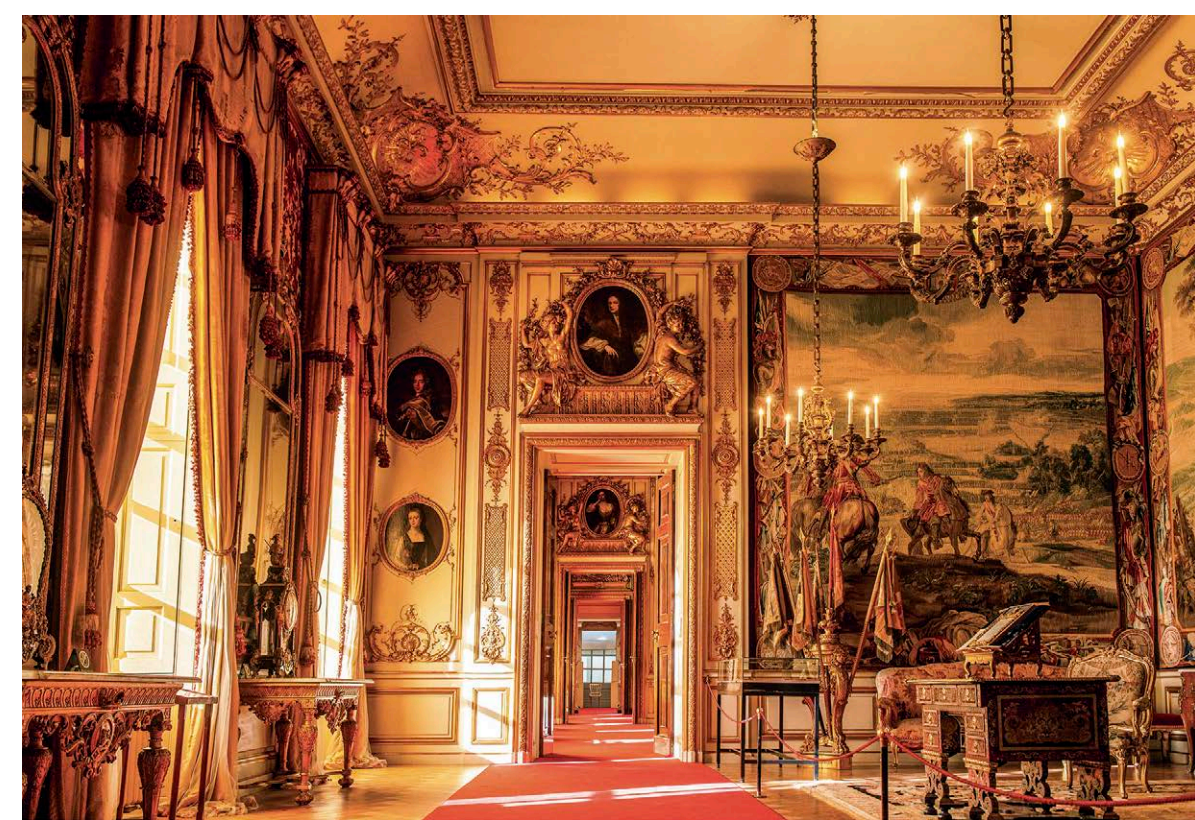
Blenheim Palace and Park greatly influenced the English Romantic movement "characterized by the eclecticism of its inspiration, its return to natural sources, and its love of nature," according to the World Heritage website.



(Left) The north gate of Blenheim Palace.



(Left below) The Temple of Diana at Blenheim Palace, where Sir Winston Churchill famously proposed to his future wife, Clementine Hozier.



(Right) The second State Room.

DEAR NEXT GENERATION:

'Learn a trade in a field you enjoy'

→ Advice from our readers to our young people

I come from hardy stock. Strong work ethic rooted in a strong love for God and selflessness toward others.

Both my grandmothers were single mothers in the 1940s. My maternal grandmother took over her husband's sales route with a tobacco company, and by the 1970s, she owned a tobacco wholesale business that serviced several counties. Her philanthropic heart was just as large. She decorated eggs, and every Palm Sunday, she opened her home and invited her community to see her eggs and donate to the first unwed mothers' home in her town.

I used to joke with my friends that our family spelled F-U-N with four letters: W-O-R-K.

My paternal grandmother was a Rosie the Riveter for a shipyard during World War II. She was known in my hometown as Big Mama. Though her frame was small, her heart was big. Well into her 80s, she still

walked to and from the grocery store while taking her famous fried pies to neighbors and nearby businesses.

And both these women were prayer warriors. Praying for just about anything and everyone to the God they loved. They prayed for me as they taught me about hard work. I used to joke with my friends that our family spelled F-U-N with four letters—W-O-R-K.

Like I said, I come from hardy stock. My parents didn't fall far from the oak trees under which they were raised. Though they were high on education, they also thought it was important to never shy away from manual labor.

It was 1976 and the summer before my high school senior year. My father sat his youngest child down for a father-daughter chat. He gave me the college talk. About money that wasn't much there. Leaving home. Choosing a career. And to my surprise, that career didn't necessarily mean a college degree.

He offered this advice, "I know you like doing hair—for yourself and your friends. My aunt and uncle owned a beauty shop, and I worked there when I was a little boy. How about you learn a trade during your senior year?" I liked the idea.

From an early age, my father had taught all of his children how to barter, so he encouraged me to go to the beauty salon



Julia Flanagan with her parents.

where my mother got her hair done and ask if I could work for them for free. Yes, he said FREE. I was a little shell-shocked, but I kept my composure and listened. "In exchange," he said, "ask them if they will teach you how to cut, perm, color, and style hair."

Long story short: I did whatever the ladies told me to do—sweep the floor, answer the phone, clean the bathroom, etc. And in exchange, they kept their end of the bargain. At the end of nine months, I had a trade! And not a dime had changed hands. I gained skills that not only helped me get through college (yes, I earned a degree, and not just one but three), but also have saved me thousands of dollars on hair care, have allowed me to improve people's self-esteem at homeless shelters, and have allowed me to make a side income when times were tough and I needed a second

job to make ends meet.

Over the years, I have appreciated my sturdy stock gene pool and sage advice offered by my elders. And today, I am a psychotherapist and career coach. I often give young people the same advice my father gave me. No matter how much book learning you get, you will always find work to do with your hands in helping others. So, open a book. And learn. And ask to learn a trade in a field you enjoy in exchange for your labor. You'll be amazed at how far you can go!

—Julia Flanagan

What advice would you like to give to the younger generations?

We call on all of our readers to share the timeless values that define right and wrong, and pass the torch, if you will, through your wisdom and hard-earned experience. We feel that the passing down of this wisdom has diminished over time, and that only with a strong moral foundation can future generations thrive.

Send your advice, along with your full name, state, and contact information to NextGeneration@epochtimes.com or mail it to:

Next Generation, The Epoch Times, 229 W. 28th St., Floor 7, New York, NY 10001



(Left) Blenheim Palace's magical Christmas lights. (Right) Christmas decorations add even more opulence to the murals that French decorative painter Louis Laguerre painted in Blenheim Palace's Saloon.



Homeschooling More Than Doubles During the Pandemic

State-level data show just how dramatic the surge in homeschooling has been

KERRY MCDONALD

Many families took one look at their school district's remote or hybrid learning offerings this fall and said, "No, thank you." That's the message gleaned from national and state-specific data on the surging number of homeschooled students this academic year.

Prior to the pandemic and related school closures last spring, there were just under 2 million homeschoolers in the United States, representing about 3.4 percent of the total K-12 school-age population. According to recent polling by Education Week, that percentage has more than doubled to 9 percent this fall, or nearly 5 million homeschoolers. This estimate mirrors related polling from Gallup in August suggesting that 10 percent of U.S. students would be homeschooled this year.

State-level data show just how dramatic the surge in homeschooling has been, particularly in areas where many district schools continue to be closed for full-time, in-person learning. In Massachusetts, for example, the Boston Globe reported last month that 7,188 students statewide transferred from public schools into homeschooling this year, compared to only 802 homeschooling transfers in 2019.

In North Carolina, homeschooling filings nearly tripled, with more than 10,000 parent forms submitted over the summer, compared to about 3,500 in 2019. In fact, so many parents in North Carolina completed their online intent to homeschool forms during the first week of July (when the system began accepting filings for this year), that it crashed the state's nonpublic education website.

In New York City, homeschooling increased by nearly one-third this fall. More than 10,000 students withdrew from the city's public schools this year for homeschooling, compared to about 2,500 student withdrawals in 2019. In Vermont, homeschooling applications were up 75 percent compared to 2019, with similar patterns seen in neighboring New Hampshire. In Wisconsin, homeschooling filings more than doubled this year, and in Connecticut, more than six times as many students have left the public schools for homeschooling compared to 2019.

According to the Education Week survey, it's lower-income families who are more likely to choose homeschooling during the pandemic. This challenges the continued criticism that "pandemic pods" and other family-centered learning models are only options for more privileged families. Indeed, as The New York Times pointed out in July in response to these criticisms, "the population of home-schoolers—before the pandemic—was less affluent than average."

Public School Enrollment Plummeted
Driven in large part by new homeschoolers, public schools across the country are

experiencing plummeting enrollment. For instance, in Arizona, public school enrollment is down 5 percent compared to 2019, and in Massachusetts, it's down 4 percent.

In addition to the homeschooling surge, some families have opted out of their district school for private and parochial schools that have been better able to meet parent demand for in-person learning during the pandemic. A new analysis of private school enrollment finds that 70 percent of private schools surveyed experienced either increased or constant enrollment compared to 2019. Of those indicating that their enrollment remained the same, it was due to already being at capacity.

Declining enrollment in public schools has some people worried. State funding of public schools is often directly related to the number of students enrolled in these schools. With the recent public school exodus, states such as Texas and California have decided to freeze enrollment at pre-pandemic levels to maintain school funding rates. But many parents and taxpayers may be getting frustrated that public schools continue to receive full funding while, in many cases, not offering their full education services for students. This could partly explain why parent support for school choice has soared during the pandemic.

According to a recent RealClear Opinion Research poll, support for school choice policies that encourage funding to follow students instead of schools has jumped 10 percent since April to 77 percent.

Sustained Surge in Homeschooling

With a COVID-19 vaccine on the horizon, hopes of returning to normal life are higher than they were at the start of this academic year. Many of the families who recently withdrew their children from a district school in favor of homeschooling or private schooling will likely return to their district when the pandemic ends and standard schooling resumes. But some families may find that they prefer their new learning options.

Some of the now nearly 5 million homeschoolers and their parents may discover that they weren't so fond of standard schooling after all and appreciate the freedom, creativity, and flexibility that homeschooling offers.

Parents I have interviewed told me they had considered homeschooling for a long time but had lacked the catalyst to give it a try until now. Seeing their children flourish outside of a conventional classroom could lead many of these parents to continue homeschooling post-pandemic. As an article in The Atlantic stated: "COVID-19 is a catalyst for families who were already skeptical of the traditional school system—and are now thinking about leaving it for good."

Once life returns to normal, new homeschoolers may also discover that real homeschooling is much better than the



PAVELL PHOTO AND VIDEO/SHUTTERSTOCK

According to the Education Week survey, it's lower-income families who are more likely to be choosing homeschooling during the pandemic.

pandemic version they have experienced. Local homeschooling groups will regain their full vitality and sociability. Museums, libraries, and local businesses and organizations will return to offering their suite of homeschooling classes. Daily activities will take place more often outside one's home than inside it, and homeschoolers will once again be deeply connected to the people, places, and things of their communities.

This fall, millions of new homeschooling parents have realized that their children can learn without school. When the world reopens to them, they will find that homeschooling is even better than they imagined.

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

Parents who had been considering homeschooling lacked the catalyst to give it a try—until now.

Reflecting on Homeschool

6 questions for a fresh start in the new year

BARBARA DANZA

The end of the calendar year beckons us to reflect on all that has passed and the new year to come. For homeschoolers, this occasion to contemplate and review comes at an apropos time.

At this juncture, most homeschooling parents find themselves just catching their breath and taking a well-deserved break; perhaps many are catching some extra breaths during this last month of the year.

As you pause to think about how it's gone and look toward the new year and a fresh start, here are some helpful questions to guide your reflection.

Why Homeschool?

Start with the most fundamental question. Why are you homeschooling in the first place? Why have you chosen this significant responsibility to take on?

As you answer, you may find that your resolve is stronger than ever or that your answer has evolved over time. Get clear on your reasons and ensure that what you envision for the future aligns with it.

To What End?

What are your goals for the coming year? Perhaps you're hoping to have your child reading independently by summertime. Or you want to increase the number of nature walks you take each week. Perhaps you hope to help your child memorize multiplication facts. Perhaps you want to spend more time exploring subjects your kiddos are excited about and less time checking boxes. Perhaps you're putting together a college resume or portfolio with a specific course of study in mind.

Whatever your unique homeschool goals are, write them down and make sure your actions in the new year support them.

What's Working?

Even if you're ending the year particularly discouraged, be sure not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Identify the pieces of your homeschool—even the very smallest ones—that are working.

Think about things such as your morning routine, your daily habits, your weekly rhythm, the curriculum you're using,

how much time you're spending in the great outdoors, what extracurricular activities your children are participating in, etc. Consider the subjects that make up your homeschool and evaluate each one. Consider each individual child and his or her specific skills, talents, and strengths—and how you're encouraging him or her.

Think of all that is right with your homeschool and continue to enhance those aspects in the new year.

What's Not Working?

The next obvious question is to identify what's not working in your homeschool. Perhaps you've chosen a curriculum that has everyone frustrated or bored. Perhaps your child is struggling in one particular subject and it needs to be approached from a different angle. Perhaps you're over-scheduled. Perhaps you need more structure, or maybe less. Perhaps your family isn't getting enough exercise.

Think carefully about what's not working and aim to get to the root cause of the problem. If you can identify that, you can

come up with a solid remedy.

What Would This Look Like If It Were Easy?

I wrote about this question recently, and it's one I often pose to myself. It's helpful to remember that learning comes naturally to humans, that children yearn to learn, and that you need not overcomplicate this homeschooling endeavor.

What would it look like if it were easy? What are you doing to make this more difficult than it needs to be? How can you turn that around? Remove the strain, the frustration, and the notion that it's only good enough if it's hard.

What Would This Look Like If It Were Fun?

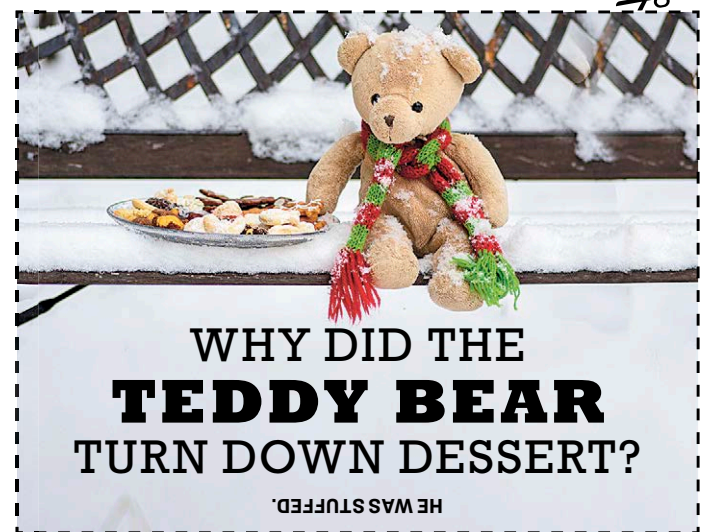
Not only can this be easy, but it can be fun! I'd wager that you've made some effort into making homeschool fun for your kids, but what about you? Are you having fun? What would this look like if it were fun for you? What would your children's experience be like if you were having fun, too? Perhaps this coming year is the year you find out.



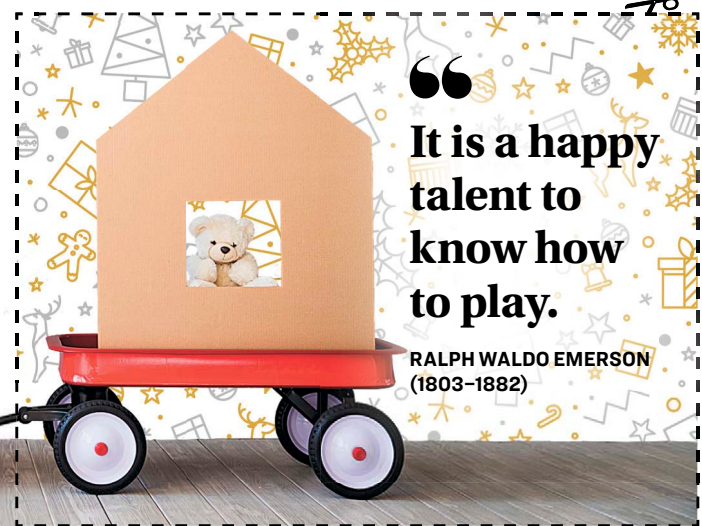
Christmas Gifts

by Carolyn Wells

Ten Christmas presents standing in a line; Robert took the bicycle, then there were nine. Nine Christmas presents ranged in order straight; Bob took the steam engine, then there were eight. Eight Christmas presents—and one came from Devon; Robbie took the jackknife, then there were seven. Seven Christmas presents direct from St. Nick's; Bobby took the candy box, then there were six. Six Christmas presents, one of them alive; Rob took the puppy dog, then there were five. Five Christmas presents yet on the floor; Bobbin took the soldier cap, then there were four. Four Christmas presents underneath the tree; Bobbet took the writing desk, then there were three. Three Christmas presents still in full view; Robin took the checker board, then there were two. Two Christmas presents, promising fun, Bobbles took the picture book, then there was one. One Christmas present—and now the list is done; Bobbinet took the sled, and then there were none. And the same happy child received every toy, So many nicknames had one little boy.



IVA VAGNEROVA/SHUTTERSTOCK

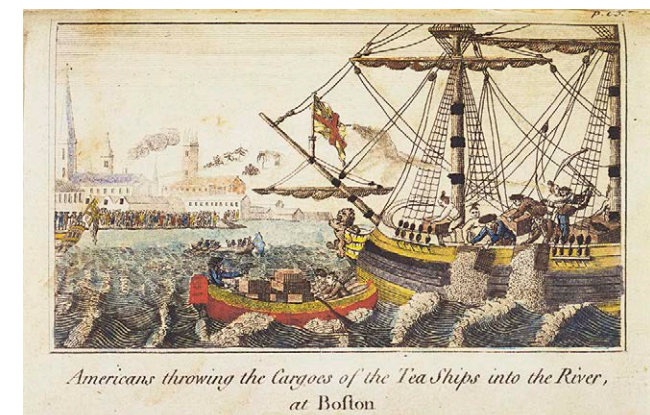


ALL IMAGES BY SHUTTERSTOCK

ALL IMAGES BY SHUTTERSTOCK



A PARTY IN BOSTON



NETPHOTOS/SHUTTERSTOCK

A 1789 illustration of the Boston Tea Party event by the British engraver W.D. Cooper.

On Dec. 16, 1773, American patriots disguised themselves as Indians and boarded ships carrying tea along the Boston Harbor. They protested the heavy taxes, such as the Tea Act, being imposed upon them by England without allowing for any government representation. The rebels threw 342 chests of tea into the harbor.

This act of defiance became known as the Boston Tea Party and was one of the key events that led to the American Revolution and America's eventual independence.

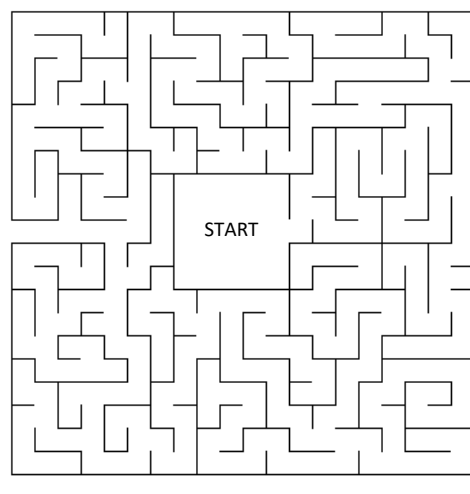
By Aidan Danza, age 14

ALL ABOUT DIRT: TYPES OF SOIL

- GELISOLS**: These soils occur mostly in the Arctic and Antarctic. They are permanently frozen, restricting plant growth.
- ANDISOLS**: These soils are generated by their volcanic ash. Surprisingly, they have a capacity to hold organic material and water, making them very fertile.
- ARIDISOLS**: These soils occur in dry areas, including deserts and the like, as well as Antarctica's valleys.
- ULTISOLS**: These soils are very old, weathered soils that formed in humid areas. Their subsoil layer (layer of soil beneath the top layer, called topsoil) contains a lot of clay. Ultisols can also be quite acidic.
- ENTISOLS**: These soils also exhibit almost no layers, other than a topsoil layer. They usually occur in areas where sediment has been recently deposited. Entisols are a catch-all group; whatever doesn't fit into any of the other categories is an entisol.
- ALFISOLS**: Alfisols are very similar to ultisols, but are less acidic, less weathered, and more fertile. They usually occur on forest floors.
- HISTOSOLS**: Histosols are dark, wet soils that occur in swamps and the like. They are made up of decaying organic matter. Because of this, they are often very fertile farmland when drained. These soils are also very mucky.
- OXISOLS**: These soils inhabit tropical and subtropical regions. They contain iron oxides, quartz, and clay minerals, and are very old and weathered.
- VERTISOLS**: Vertisols are very rich in expansive clay, which expands when wet and shrinks when dry. Thus, they pose a problem to foundations and roadways, which can crack when the soil dries.
- SPODOSOLS**: Spodosols are generated by the decay of conifer needles. They are usually very acidic, so are not tolerated by most plants.

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

AMAZING ESCAPES!



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

Easy puzzle 1

7	9		
5	9		
+	-	x	÷

Solution For Easy 1
5 + 6 = (9 - 6)

Medium puzzle 1

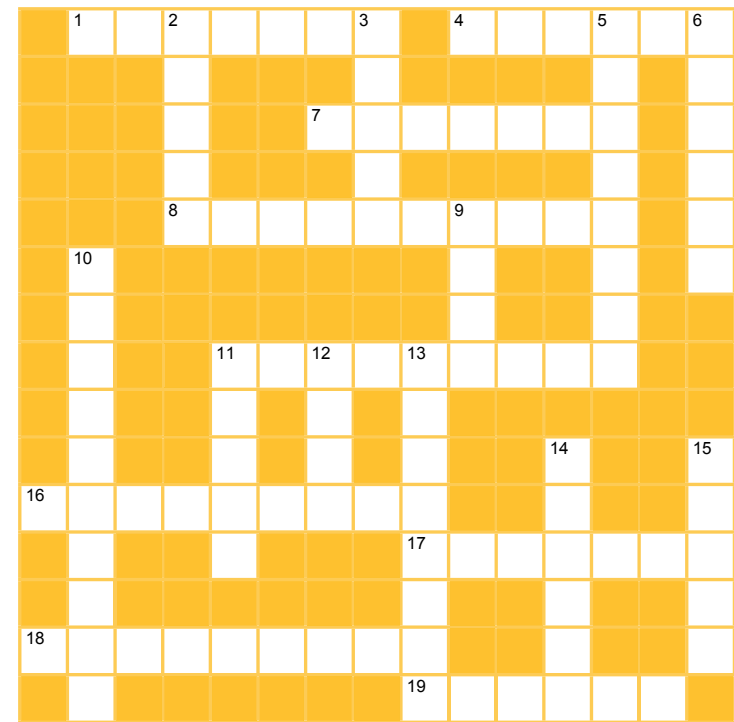
8	12		
8	11		
+	-	x	÷

Solution For Medium 1
11 - 21 = 8 x 8

Hard puzzle 1

18	33		
5	28		
+	-	x	÷

Solution For Hard 1
81 - 5 + 82 = 82



Across

- 1 ____ with steeles and aggies (7)
- 4 Ancient calculator (6)
- 7 Two-wheeler (7)
- 8 Bath time companion (6,4)
- 11 5-iron and others (4,5)

Down

- 2 Driverless racer, casually (2,3)
- 3 It comes with a ladder (5)
- 5 Game where players say "King me!" (8)
- 6 Rollerblades, maybe (6)
- 9 Barbie or GI Joe (4)
- 10 "Hit! You sank my ____!" (10)
- 11 A model of the earth (5)
- 12 Big name in bricks (4)
- 13 It has four knights and a couple queens (5,3)
- 14 They may be wooden, with letters painted on them (6)
- 15 You need them to play "Crazy 8" or "Go Fish" (5)

Across

- 16 Like giant Legos (9)
- 17 Motor bike (7)
- 18 Make pictures with light! (9)
- 19 A proper one includes a creamer (3,3)



The Joy of Gifting

(From readers who gave the gift of The Epoch Times)

“**Real news for those seeking the truth.**”

“I gave a gift subscription of the Epoch Times to a friend who I thought would appreciate the honest reporting that I have found this newspaper to have. Personally, I really enjoy the paper!”

LINDA NOCIS

“As young adults, my children need to be informed with independent, unbiased news, and most of all, content for a traditional growing family.”

JOSEPHINE STEINDL

“It is so refreshing to get unbiased news—and actually get to form my own opinions.”

ERIN E DOTSETH

“Good reporting. The recipient is someone intelligent who appreciates all the work you do.”

CAROL ROGALA

“It seemed perfect for my husband’s birthday.”

JENISE STEINMAN

“I [...] and thought it would be great for both of my sons who are always looking for truthful news.”

RICK ONOFER

“My brother enjoyed reading Epoch but couldn’t afford it, so I helped.”

ALICE CARR

“My friend is very politically engaged, but I could tell she wasn’t getting enough information from the WSJ and Fox News. ET has the very best coverage on the legal and Constitutional election challenges. My husband and I so appreciate the careful research and detail that go into the newspaper and daily emails. FINALLY... some Journalism again!”

BRUCE WALKER

“We love that we get unbiased, truthful information that we cannot get anywhere else. I also love the different sections of paper, particularly the opinion section and articles about eastern medicine, homeschooling, family and health.”

MICHAEL DILORENZO

“I find the articles very informative. My husband does not spend as much time online as I do, and I thought this would be a good way to share the content of The Epoch Times with him.”

CONNIE BREDEMEIER

“Real news for those seeking the truth.”

BRUCE WALKER

“Provides independent and fair news to my family.”

BILLY BELCHER

“It gives more than news, which takes us away from politics and gives us a variety of useful information—both for young and old.”

SAL BERMUDEZ

“Honest, objective, balanced, intelligent, thought-provoking news—just like the old days.”

THOMAS ANDERSON

“Knew my daughter and family would enjoy the unbiased news.”

SHIRLEY FARRIS



Give the gift of Truth & Tradition at

ReadEpoch.com/Gift

Give the Gift of Truth and Tradition

THE EPOCH TIMES

You know that the truth doesn’t just make you more informed—it can also bring you a sense of revitalized hope. **But what about your friends and family who are still missing out?**

This holiday season, our Epoch Times gift subscription can help you share this hope with your loved ones. Thousands of our most loyal subscribers—and counting—have already done so.

Through our journalism, you can prove to them that our nation’s values remain strong. You can show them that there is a growing community that’s willing to fight for these values. What else can bring more hope nowadays?



“I have decided to give subscriptions to The Epoch Times as Christmas gifts to all adults on my list—the gift of information, the gift of knowledge, the gift of truth, [and] the gift of trust.”

PAULA LABROT, CA

Yes, I'd like to give the gift of Truth and Tradition with a subscription to The Epoch Times

- \$139 12 months (Save 31%)*
- \$159 12 months PREMIUM (Save 38%)*
- \$39 3 months
- \$59 3 months PREMIUM

PREMIUM Premium gift packages come with a book set** and infographic poster (valued at \$56)

THE RECIPIENT WILL RECEIVE:

- WEEKLY PRINT NEWSPAPER ***
- UNLIMITED DIGITAL ACCESS ★

ONLINE ReadEpoch.com/gift

BY PHONE (917) 905-2080

BY MAIL **The Epoch Times**
229 W. 28th St., Fl. 7
New York, NY 10001

PLEASE PRINT THE RECIPIENT’S INFORMATION LEGIBLY AND INCLUDE APT, STE, OR UNIT #

FIRST NAME _____ LAST NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____ UNIT # _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

EMAIL★ _____

PAY BY CHECK (PAYABLE TO THE EPOCH TIMES) USE MY CREDIT CARD

CARD#★★ _____

EXPIRATION _____ CVV _____ ZIP _____

NAME ON CARD _____ SIGNATURE _____

BY SIGNING THIS SUBSCRIPTION FORM, I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE READ, UNDERSTOOD AND AGREED TO THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS AT ReadEpoch.com/Terms I ALSO AFFIRM ALL INFO ABOVE IS COMPLETE AND ACCURATE.

*Based on the regular monthly price of \$16.90.

**A book set “How the Specter of Communism is Ruling Our World.”

***The print edition is mailed out every Wednesday. Their first issue should arrive within 16 days of us receiving this form.

★ We strongly suggest that you provide the recipient’s email so they can access our self-service customer portal, our digital content, as well as our apps on iPhone and Android.

★★ We use your credit card solely, and securely, for your gift subscription. We do not share it with any third parties.

To ensure your gift order is processed in time for Christmas, please use the online order form. Orders received by mail will be processed upon receipt.

