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Fuel for Imagination

INSPIRE KIDS TO FALL IN LOVE WITH READING

Books have always been a very important part of our family life. My mother was a librarian, and I loved nonfiction as a kid. I remember reading every single biography on the nonfiction shelf at the library. There must have been dozens of them.

My wife and I have tried to instill that same love of reading in our three kids. In recognition of Young Readers' Week this month, it's worth reflecting on how kids can develop a love of reading in an age of screens.

Our home "library" consists of bookshelves and piles of books spread all over our house, including 2 very large IKEA bookshelves in the basement. At ages 14, 12, and 9, my kids have learned that I will normally say no to whatever new toy or iPad they want, but I normally won't say no to a book. To me, that book will probably be a more worthwhile investment in their future.

We don't guide their reading choices too much other than urging them to avoid comic books in favor of novels. When my 12-year-old son wanted to watch "The Mandalorian," the TV show from the "Star Wars" franchise, we made a deal. If he first read the novelization of the story, he could watch it on TV. The same thing happened for Season 2: He read the novelization and then watched the show. The most interesting aspect for me was watching my son

watch the TV version of the story for the first time. He had already read the book and created images of the characters in his own imagination. Watching the show, he realized that somebody else had *their own vision* of what the characters looked like, so we talked about those different viewpoints.

It can be hard to consistently enforce the "read the book first" rule with three kids. My daughter has already read all the "Harry Potter" books and the challenge we faced is that the younger two kids have already watched the movies with her. By the time they get old enough to read the books, they will have seen the movies, which will shape the characters they picture in their minds.

With "The Lord of the Rings," I'm looking forward to having them read the books first, then watch the movie versions. They can have their own mental picture of what they think the characters look like, then they can reflect on the movie artists' depiction on the screen.

And, of course, we read to each of our kids at bedtime when they were small. They had a bookcase full of books, and they got to pick out whatever they wanted us to read. My youngest got into Mo Willems, so we had an entire bookshelf of the Mo Willems' Pigeon and Elephant and Piggie series. He is 9 now, and he has immersed himself in a couple of different fantasy series, including "Wings of Fire," about a war raging between the dragon tribes of Pyrrhia.

Even now that they are older, we still set a nightly routine at home that makes it more likely our children will turn to books at bedtime. Screens have to be turned off one hour before bed, and my kids all pick up a book for at least a half-hour of reading. My wife and I follow the same rule, based on the science that says curtailing devices' blue light and turning to a book cues your brain that your day is winding down toward sleep. Sometimes, my kids do reading they've been assigned for school, and sometimes they read for pleasure. Either way, they are getting a clear message that books are an important part of our family life — one I hope will become a lifelong love.

- Andrew M. Ayers



THE \$93,750 SPUD

Uncover Fabergé's Unexpected Masterpiece

When you think of the name Fabergé, you probably imagine opulent, jewel-encrusted eggs that epitomize luxury and elegance. But did you know the famous Russian jeweler Peter Carl Fabergé, the mastermind behind the glittering eggs, also created a humble potato? And not just any potato, but one that fetched an astounding \$93,750 at a Christie's auction in 2016.

Fabergé's Glorious Spud

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Peter Carl Fabergé was the go-to jeweler for Russian royalty. His intricate and lavish creations, particularly the famous Fabergé eggs, were commissioned by Tsars Alexander III and Nicholas II as Easter gifts for their wives and mothers. Each egg was a masterpiece, often containing hidden surprises like miniature portraits, mechanical wonders, expensive jewels, or even tiny replicas of royal palaces.

But amidst these exquisite creations, Fabergé had a sense of humor and a knack for the unexpected. Enter the Fabergé potato — a far cry from the shimmering eggs but equally fascinating in its own right. This potato, crafted from pink agate, was a whimsical departure from his usual opulent fare.

The Humble Potato's Journey

Fast-forward to 2016, and this extraordinary potato was again in the spotlight. When Christie's auction house announced the

sale of a Fabergé potato, the world did a collective double-take. After all, who would have thought a potato — albeit one crafted by a master jeweler — would garner such attention and a hefty price tag to match?

The bidding war was intense, with collectors and Fabergé enthusiasts eager to own this unique piece of history. When the gavel finally came down, the potato had sold for a staggering \$93,750. Not bad for a root vegetable!

Why a Potato?

You might wonder why Fabergé, a jeweler known for his elaborate and luxurious designs, chose to make a potato. Perhaps it was his way of showing artistry could be found in the simplest of things. Or maybe it was a playful nod to the significance of potatoes in Russian culture — a staple food that sustained many through tough times. Whatever the reason, Fabergé's potato reminds us that even the most mundane objects can be transformed into something extraordinary with a bit of creativity and a touch of humor.



ROMAN RULES

PECULIAR LAWS OF THE ANCIENT EMPIRE

While ancient Rome may be known for gladiators, grand conquests, and fashionable togas, a surprisingly intricate legal system kept their civilization in line. They had many laws — some familiar, others bizarre — that dictated the everyday lives of millions of Roman citizens, enslaved people, and soldiers across a vast empire. Here are three of the most outrageous and interesting laws Romans enacted as a republic and an empire.



Dress Codes and Party Fouls

Beginning in around 215 BC, the Roman Republic began instituting what was known as sumptuary laws, which restricted the clothes people could wear, foods they could eat, and the maximum number of attendees at parties. They created these, in part, to reduce the costs of banquets, festivals, and other Roman ragers. Some examples were enacted in 213 BC when it became illegal for women to wear colorful dresses — unless they were celebrating a ritual sacrifice — to wear more than a half ounce of gold or even to ride around in carriages. However, they soon repealed these laws because they considered them *antiquated*.

Shocking Statute

Tough luck for those who like hanging out on tall metal poles — if a lightning strike killed someone in Rome, the law forbade families from burying them! This is because Romans believed lightning strikes were

divine retribution from the king of the Roman pantheon, Jupiter.

See Ya Later, Gladiator!

Romans “borrowed” the idea of gladiatorial games from their (conquered) neighbors, wherein people would fight — sometimes to the death — for the public's amusement and began holding them back in 264 BC. However, because only 3 of every 5 people made it to their 20s at the time, only about 10% of those bouts involved actual fatalities. Many slaves, prisoners of war, and Christian martyrs fought as gladiators in the arena, but if they were already sentenced to execution, they had no hope of survival. One peculiar law involving gladiators was that they would fight until an injured combatant put down his shield and lifted his index finger to ask for mercy. At that point, it would come to an abrupt halt — though the emperor, if in attendance, would make the final decision.

TAKE A ***BREAK***



HELPING KIDS WITH ADHD THRIVE

STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORT AND EMPOWERMENT

It's common for parents of children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) to sometimes feel frustrated and overwhelmed — and more than a little guilty for having these emotions. First and foremost, it's perfectly understandable for any parent to experience hurdles as they work to help their child live a happy, healthy life. Although there are unique challenges to raising a youngster with ADHD, every day is an opportunity to take positive steps to help your child learn and grow. Here are four quick tips to help make the rough times a little smoother.

Build a balanced routine.

Helping your child stay on task with daily routines is critical to managing their ADHD journey. Are they hydrating regularly? Do they follow consistent meal and sleep schedules? Sometimes, staying consistent with the smallest things makes the biggest impact on your child's well-being.

Plan a digital detox.

With everything so tech-based these days, there's a good chance your child spends a lot of time in front of a screen. Set aside time throughout the week to interact with them in a digital-free environment — even if it's just to chat about their day. This time is meant to help you build a stronger relationship with your child, so try to avoid discussing anything that may cause conflict or a distraction.

Find a community of support.

Participating in a support group is a fantastic way to connect with other parents, share concerns, and learn new ways to encourage your child's growth and success. As a bonus, connecting with parents whose experiences are similar to yours could lead to their children interacting with yours — which may go a long way in helping your child relate to other people and develop their social skills.

Tailor your tools.

Every child with ADHD is a unique individual with specific needs. A specialized mental health professional can help you craft a solid framework to address obstacles as they arise. Whether you need guidance on stress management or tips on sharpening your communication skills, utilizing the services of an empathetic therapist could provide you with the fresh perspective and game plan you need to help your young one thrive.



GREEK CHICKEN AND RICE

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 lbs boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cubed
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 1 (14-oz) can diced tomatoes
- 1 cup uncooked long-grain white rice
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1/2 cup feta cheese
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Directions

1. In a large skillet over medium heat, add olive oil and sauté onion and garlic until softened.
2. Add chicken, oregano, and thyme and cook until the chicken is no longer pink, about 3–4 minutes.
3. Pour in chicken broth, diced tomatoes, and rice. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low and cover. Simmer for 15 minutes or until the rice is cooked through.
4. Stir in the lemon juice and feta cheese, then season with salt and pepper.



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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

1

Spark a Reading Habit in Your Kids

2

Discover Fabergé's Playful Potato Masterpiece

Ridiculous Rules From Ancient Rome

3

Greek Chicken and Rice

Tailoring Your Child's ADHD Journey

4

Hollywood Ending in the 'Rust' Trial

HOLLYWOOD ENDING

Alec Baldwin Walks Free After Case Dismissed

About three years ago, on Oct. 21, 2021, cinematographer Halyna Hutchins was shot and killed by a live round fired by actor Alec Baldwin on the set of the movie "Rust." You might believe this would be an open-and-shut manslaughter case. However, just like the scenes Hutchins brilliantly captured on film, this scene was more complex and layered than you may expect. Baldwin's trial was dismissed just three days after it began, on July 13, 2024. Ironically, but perhaps fittingly, Baldwin's criminal case came to a dramatic, Hollywood-esque conclusion.

Is the armorer to blame?

Previously, in May, Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, the armorer for the film, was found guilty of involuntary manslaughter for her role in the fatal shooting of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins. The jury deliberated for just three hours before passing judgment; evidence revealing Gutierrez-Reed loaded the gun that killed Hutchins likely

contributed to the swift decision. She was sentenced to 18 months in prison but has appealed, and what happened in July in Alec Baldwin's trial may affect the outcome of that appeal.

Hollywood Ending

When the third day of Alec Baldwin's involuntary manslaughter trial in New Mexico began, it became apparent that something was amiss. The defense attorneys had something important to bring to the court's attention. Assistant District Attorney Erlinda Johnson was absent. As it turned out, she had resigned from the case after allegations that Santa Fe police, in conjunction with Special Prosecutor Kari Morrisey, had conspired to hide evidence from the defense. The evidence in question was a case of ammunition matching those retrieved from the set of "Rust." The ammunition was given to Santa Fe police before the trial, but it was filed under a separate case number — even though



Photo:
Abhi Suryawanshi

the witness who handed in the evidence claimed it was relevant to the "Rust" trial. In light of these revelations, Santa Fe County District Court Judge Mary Marlowe Sommer dismissed the case with prejudice.

Throughout the day, as the camera centered on Hollywood star-turned-defendant Alec Baldwin, viewers were treated to his wide range of emotions: first, annoyance, then sadness, and, finally, tearful exultation. This was his Hollywood ending.