

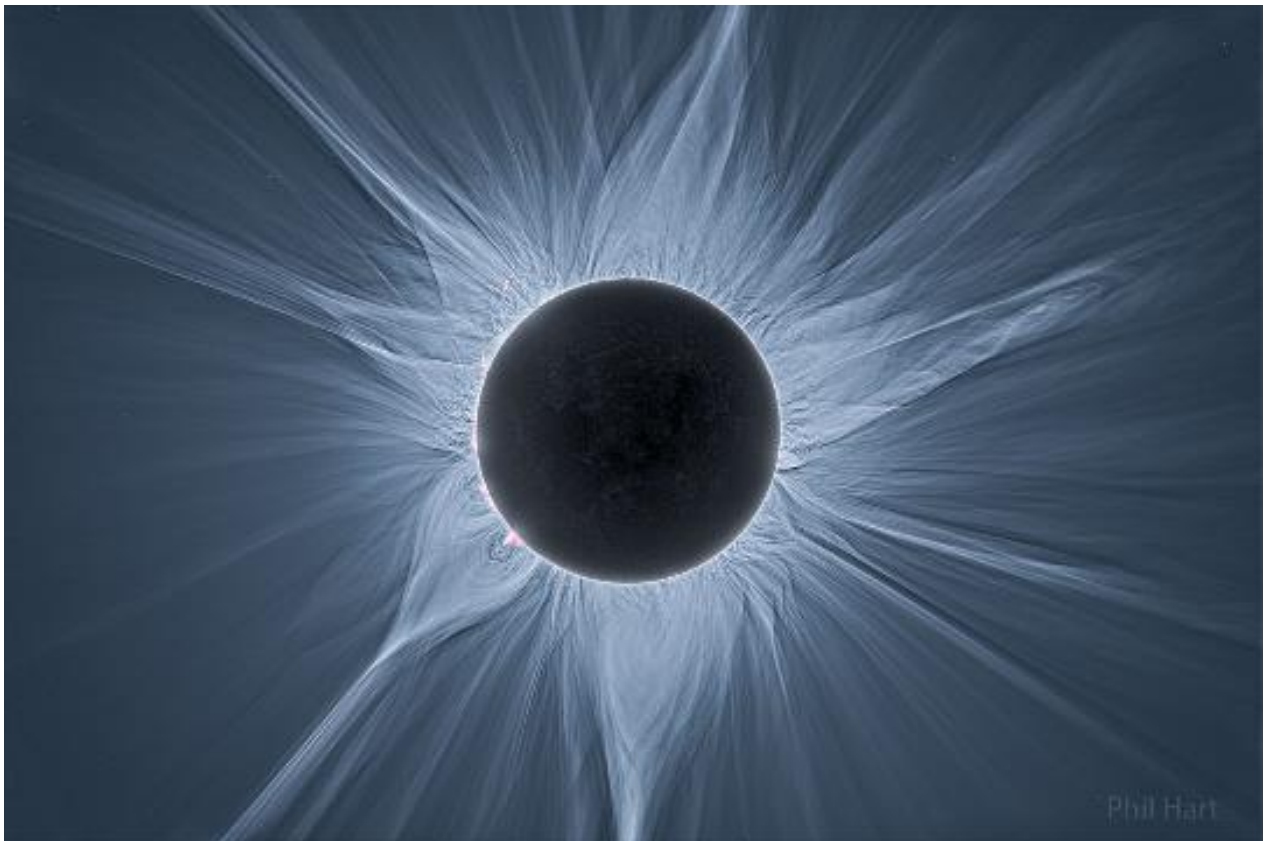
## Ode to E Pluribus Unum for Sunday April 7 2024

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## Detailed View of a Solar Eclipse Corona



*Image Credit & Copyright: Phil Hart*

Only in the fleeting darkness of a total solar eclipse is the light of the solar corona easily visible.

Normally overwhelmed by the bright solar disk, the expansive corona, the sun's outer atmosphere, is an alluring sight. But the subtle details and extreme ranges in the corona's brightness, although discernible to the eye, are notoriously difficult to photograph.

Pictured here, however, using multiple images and digital processing, is a detailed image of the Sun's corona taken during the April 20, 2023 total solar eclipse from Exmouth, Australia.

Clearly visible are intricate layers and glowing caustics of an ever changing mixture of hot gas and magnetic fields. Bright looping prominences appear pink just around the Sun's limb.

A similar solar corona might be visible through clear skies in a narrow swath across the North America during the total solar eclipse that occurs next Monday.

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## Spaghetti-Harvest in Ticino



*allthatsinteresting.com*

The spaghetti-tree hoax was a three-minute hoax report broadcast on April Fools' Day 1957 by the BBC current-affairs program Panorama, purportedly showing a family in southern Switzerland harvesting spaghetti from the family "spaghetti tree".

[https://youtu.be/tVo\\_wkxH9dU](https://youtu.be/tVo_wkxH9dU)

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## Collateral Impacts of Organic Farming

Clustering organic cropland can reduce pesticide use on nearby conventional farms

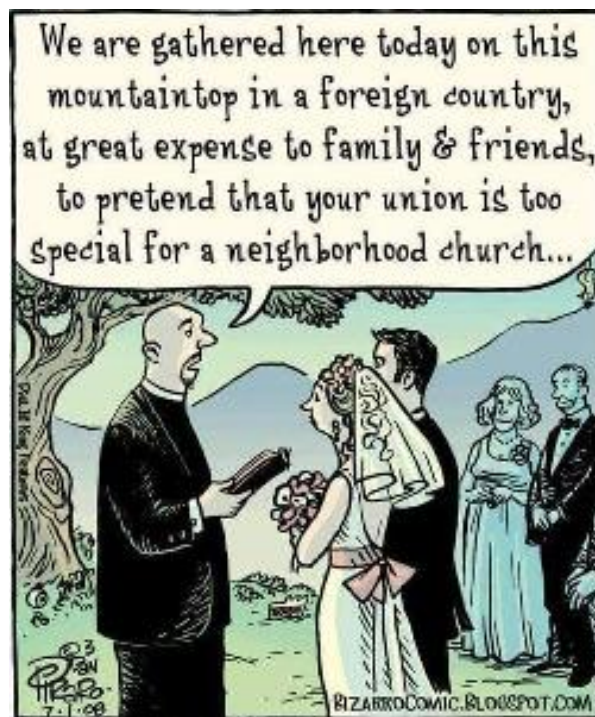


*bren.ucsb.edu*

Organic and conventional farms are frequently located close to one another because of suitable climate and soil conditions, proximity to marketing channels, ownership, and other local factors. Yet proximity does not necessarily make for compatibility. Drift from pesticide sprays or pollen from genetically modified crops can threaten organic certification status. Conversely, insects, fungal spores, and weed seeds from flower strips maintained for natural pesticide control in organic fields can be sources of pest infestation in conventional fields, as can mobile insect pests that are inadequately controlled in organic fields.

<https://bit.ly/3vvIzBe>

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## Traditional Paris Cafe Waiters' Race Resumes After 13-Year Gap



*messynessychic.com*

The Course des Cafés returned to Paris on Sunday for the first time in 13 years, challenging French waiters to race 2 kilometers (roughly 1.2 miles) while carrying a tray with a cup of coffee, a glass of water, and a croissant. The 110-year-old tradition was revived in honor of the upcoming Paris Olympics

<https://youtu.be/rhMq4bLMFnY>

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## Are Phones to Blame for the Mental Health Epidemic?



*Francis Scialabba*

A social psychologist known for bashing trigger warnings and safe spaces is back with another controversial take on what's ailing today's youth that's got everyone talking about whether phones need to be kept on a shelf too high for kids to reach.

In his new book, *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*, NYU business school professor Jonathan Haidt argues that the replacement of "play-based childhood" with "phone-based childhood" is the major cause of rising rates of adolescent mental illness around the world.

There's no doubt that the world is in the midst of a youth mental health crisis, but the book has sparked a debate over something you may remember from Intro to Psychology: correlation vs. causation.

Haidt says...people born around the turn of this century (aka Gen Z) are the first humans to have grown up with smartphones, which caused this generation to develop depression and anxiety disorders in way higher numbers than older generations. He says his book cites several [experimental studies](#) that allow researchers "to infer causality" and 64 studies that show "significant correlations" between phone usage and poor mental health.

But his critics say that inference might be too big a leap.

- There's evidence showing correlation between rising rates of smartphone usage and youth mental illness, but nothing to prove that one causes the other, psychologist Candice L. Odgers wrote in her review of the book for *Nature*. (You can read Haidt's response [here](#).)
- Judith Warner's review for the *Washington Post* argues that Haidt "minimizes" the psychological impact of growing up in the fallout of 9/11, economic turmoil, school shootings, the climate crisis, and a far-too-long list of other stressors.

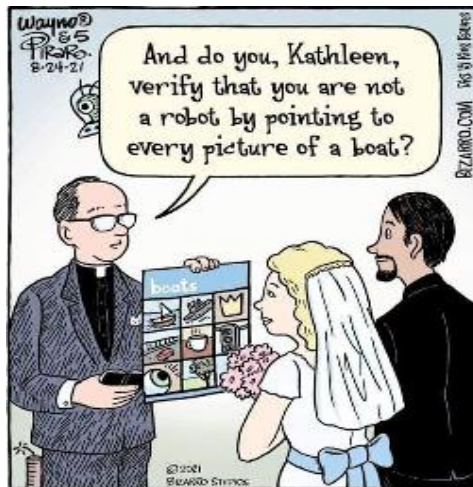
- Openness to mental health counseling has also increased as reported rates of anxiety have increased, Yale finance professor Paul Goldsmith-Pinkham pointed out on X.

Big picture: Everybody pretty much agrees that cutting down screen time and subbing in more exercise, socializing, and sunshine are good ideas.—ML

*Morning Brew, April 2, 2024.*

*Yeah, pretty simplistic, yet...*

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## IMAX Documentary 'The Blue Angels' Gets Release Date



*avgeekery.com*

The Blue Angels—an IMAX documentary from Amazon studios focused on the Navy's premiere aeronautical demonstration team—has a set release date for May 17.

A [new trailer](#) that debuted on YouTube Wednesday gave viewers a glimpse into the film, which offers an immersive experience providing firsthand cockpit views of the Blue Angel's precision flying and aerial maneuvers. The documentary will focus on what it

takes to become a Blue Angel—from the team’s selection process and training regime through the demanding eight-month show season.

“The film will also be a tribute to the extraordinary teamwork, passion and pride of the hundreds of outstanding men and women of the Navy and Marine Corps,” according to a press release. The film’s release coincides with the 78th anniversary of the Blue Angels’ mission, which includes 138 active-duty sailors and Marines.

Produced by Glen Powell, star of “Top Gun: Maverick,” and filmmaker J.J. Abrams, the documentary will be in IMAX theaters for one week before globally streaming on Prime Video starting May 23rd.

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## History of Flight in Dinosaurs



*Image credit: National Geographic Society/James L. Amos.*

Jingmai O’Connor and Yosef Kiat share insights gleaned from modern birds’ feathers that help understand the evolutionary history of flight in dinosaurs.

Dinosaurs are evolutionary links to modern birds, although the history of flight in dinosaurs is murky. In a recent PNAS study, Yosef Kiat and Jingmai O’Connor of the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago sought to clarify the history of flight. Kiat is an ornithologist and O’Connor is a paleontologist, so they looked at the feathers of both modern birds and fossilized dinosaurs for clues as to whether a species likely could or could not fly. They describe how the number and shape of primary feathers provide important information about a species’ abilities and history.

<https://bit.ly/3TXxCRx>

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## Jester's Cap



### Thoughts on last week's Ode

Phobos...didn't know about Phobos being doomed. Will it eventually de-orbit and land on Mars? Also, you indicated that a Martian has to watch Phobos rise in the west. Not sure what that means in context. Do we, as convention, call the direction of planetary rotation, west to east? Does watching it rise in the west mean it moves in the same direction as Mars rotates (while lapping it) or that it orbits in the opposite direction? How long is it predicted that Phobos will remain in orbit? And what's the predicted impact of the impact?

*I imagine that its orbit is close enough in that it's shorter than that of Mars. As for the impact of its impact, with so little atmosphere only our seismometers will care...unless, of course it manages to smack down on some unlucky alien.*

\*\*\*

Down syndrome...I don't recall whether I've recommended Ferroll Sams' books to you, but this is a good time to do it. Sams was a GP in Fayetteville, Georgia. He did flight physicals on Delta pilots, saw other patients, and wrote. I never met him, but from what I've heard about him, and what I've read by him, I missed a serious opportunity. Start with his trilogy, Run With The Horsemen, Whisper Of The River, and When All The



World Was Young. In that order. Then read Down Town, which isn't a sequel, but somehow fits in with the trilogy. When I read them, my cheeks were sore from smiling.

\*\*\*

Reading...I hated reading until I loved reading. Phonics is fine for translating a written word into one you know, but it doesn't have anything to do with acquiring new vocabulary. Neither, especially, does the Easter egg hunt for words that was the penultimate sword in the heart of my reading experience in high school. Miss Curry put a word list on top of reading all of David Copperfield in the 9th grade. That's all it took for to know that literature was definitely nothing I wanted any part of.

The final nail in that coffin came when I was a junior in high school. Our English teacher, Miss Vial [pron: vee' all] insisted that 1) all literature was symbolic and 2) her analyses were the only correct ones. It was for us to try to figure out what she was thinking. To say I was terrible at that would be like saying that dwarves aren't quite as tall NBA players. She was easily the worst teacher in the school. Which, at the time, was saying something. Anyway, it took me a number of years to shake off her dogma about symbolism and just start reading books for themselves.

So, about vocabulary...when my son was around 10 or so years old, he fell deeply in love with tropical fish. One day he's bubbling over about a new fish he just learned about, the Geophagus and..."it eats dirt?" "How did you know that?" "Geo- is a combining form meaning earth, as in geology, geography, etc. and -phagos similarly means eat or consume." "Yeah--it picks up dirt and gravel in its mouth and spits out what isn't a nutrient." He told me a little more about Geophagus and then told me about...

"Steatocranus...." "Has a fat head?" "How did you know that?" "Steatos = fat and cranos is head, like cranium."

He couldn't get into a Latin class fast enough. Totally hooked on language.

Point is that words don't just fall out of the sky as individual morsels of language.

*(Neither do recipes. The mom of one of my Italian friends from HS days was a good cook in her own right. But she could also have something at a restaurant and figure out how to bootleg it. It had never occurred to me to try that. But I did. It's like playing music by ear. Turns out not to be very hard to do. You just have to have a large enough and varied enough palette, aka pantry, to be able to get asymptotically close to the target flavor and texture.)*

Words evolve from other words and word roots. Getting a sense of how it works is like deriving equations rather than just being shown. The former is far and away the most common way math and sciences are taught, and it gives you exactly zero flexibility

when you run into a situation in which you don't know which one to use. Way we learned it was to get our arms around where it all comes from. What got derived or proven in class was never what was on the homework or the tests. Those were just proto-tools. The real game was using those tools. Open-book and open-notes exams were brain-twistingly tough.

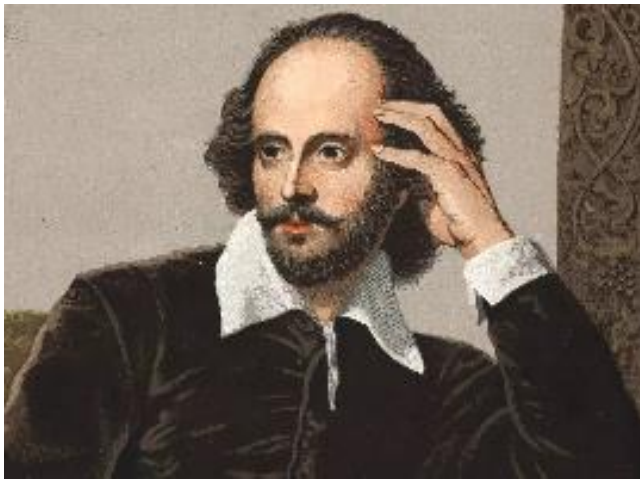
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Kipling... <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46783/gunga-din>

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## Poetry Corner

### William Shakespeare (1564–1616)



*Leemage / Getty Images*

Though more is known about Shakespeare's life than those of most other Elizabethan and Jacobean writers, few personal biographical facts survive, which is unsurprising in the light of his social status as a commoner, the low esteem in which his profession was held, and the general lack of interest of the time in the personal lives of writers.

Nevertheless, hundreds of biographies have been written and more continue to be, most of which rely on inferences and the historical context of the 70 or so hard facts recorded about Shakespeare the man, a technique that sometimes leads to embellishment or unwarranted interpretation of the documented record.

Here are three of his Sonnets that say more of the man than all the biographies can do.

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#### Sonnet 40

Take all my loves, my love, yea, take them all:

What hast thou then more than thou hadst before?  
No love, my love, that thou mayst true love call—  
All mine was thine before thou hadst this more.  
Then if for my love thou my love receivest,  
I cannot blame thee for my love thou usest;  
But yet be blamed if thou this self deceivest  
By wilful taste of what thyself refusest.  
I do forgive thy robb'ry, gentle thief,  
Although thou steal thee all my poverty;  
And yet love knows it is a greater grief  
To bear love's wrong than hate's known injury.  
    Lascivious grace, in whom all ill well shows,  
    Kill me with spies, yet we must not be foes.

\*\*\*

### **Sonnet 73**

That time of year thou may'st in me behold  
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang  
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,  
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.

In me thou see'st the twilight of such day,  
As after sunset fadeth in the west,  
Which by-and-by black night doth take away,  
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.

In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire  
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,  
As the death-bed whereon it must expire  
Consum'd with that which it was nourish'd by.

    This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more strong,  
    To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

\*\*\*

### **Sonnet 147**

My love is as a fever, longing still  
For that which longer nurseth the disease,

Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,  
Th' uncertain sickly appetite to please.

My reason, the physician to my love,  
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,

Hath left me, and I desperate now approve  
Desire is death, which physic did except.  
Past cure I am, now reason is past care,  
And frantic-mad with evermore unrest;  
My thoughts and my discourse as madmen's are,  
At random from the truth vainly expressed:  
For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright,  
Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.

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## Chords & Riffs

### Ludwig Von Beethoven; Sonata #30 in E major, Op. 109



*Andras Schiff*  
*nyphil*

Sir András Schiff is world-renowned as a pianist, conductor, pedagogue and lecturer. Called "one of the most penetratingly serious masters of the keyboard before the public today" (Boston Globe), Sir András continues to awe audiences and critics alike. Born in Budapest, Hungary, in 1953, Sir András studied piano at the Liszt Ferenc Academy with Pal Kadosa, György Kurtág, and Ferenc Rados; and in London with George Malcom.

His many honors include the International Mozarteum Foundation's Golden Medal (2012), Germany's Great Cross of Merit with Star (2012), the Royal Philharmonic Society's Gold Medal (2013), a Knighthood for Services to Music (2014) and a Doctorate from the Royal College of Music (2018). He was awarded the Jean Gimbel Lane Prize in Piano Performance in 2021 from The Henry and Leigh Bienen School of Music at Northwestern University.

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Beethoven's 30th sonata, Op. 109, was written in 1820 and dedicated to Maximiliane Bentranò. After the Hammerklavier, Beethoven returns to a smaller scale and a more intimate character. Musically, the work is characterised by a free and original approach to the traditional sonata form. Its focus is the third movement, a set of variations that interpret its theme in a wide variety of individual ways. The first pianists to undertake to



bring Beethoven's last sonatas, including Op. 109, to public attention were Franz Liszt, who regularly included them in his programs between 1830 and 1840, and Hans von Bülow, who even included several of the late sonatas in one evening.

Andras Schiff <https://youtu.be/15EFrXnj49Q?t=1>

\*\*\*

Gould's monologue on Sonata 30 is worth your notice for explaining the inner workings of the piece.

Glenn Gould [https://youtu.be/tuNkBd\\_LL1s?t=3](https://youtu.be/tuNkBd_LL1s?t=3)



## How Does an Owl Fly So Silently?



*Audubon.org*

Using sensitive sound equipment the team try to find out how an owl can fly so silently compared to other birds.

Owl-feathers are much, much less stiff. They're quite a bit softer. This not only makes the owls' flight quieter, but it also makes it difficult for owls to go very fast. This isn't much of a hinderance, because a falcon or a hawk is using speed and power to get prey, whereas an owl is using stealth.

### **Wind turbine performance**

Wind turbines are noisy, so [Biome Renewables](#) is using the feathery fringe on the back edge of owl wings as a model to make them quieter. The fringe dampens the flapping sounds of owls and breaks up the wind, as shown in this video.

[https://youtu.be/d\\_FEaFgJyfA](https://youtu.be/d_FEaFgJyfA)

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### **Mappa Mundi: The Greatest Medieval Map in the World**



*Calmax/Alamy*

Almost twice as large as the famous English [Hereford Mappa Mundi](#) (ca 1300), this exquisitely decorated planisphere showcasing Europe, Africa and Asia was the masterpiece of Fra Mauro, a monk of the Camaldolese order who lived on the small Venetian island of San Michele.

<https://bit.ly/49yjwea>

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### **Dictionary.com Adds More Than 300 New Entries for Winter 2024**



TarikVision/ iStock

Dictionary.com just got a winter refresh. The popular online lexicon recently added 327 new entries, 173 new definitions, and 1,228 revised definitions.

“It’s 2024, and the pace of language change is as rapid as it has ever been,” wrote Senior Editor Nick Norlen and Director of Lexicography Grant Barrett. “Our lexicographers are updating the dictionary more frequently than ever, doing the human-scale work of documenting words across the vast spectrum of the always-evolving English language. And wow, the variety is real.”

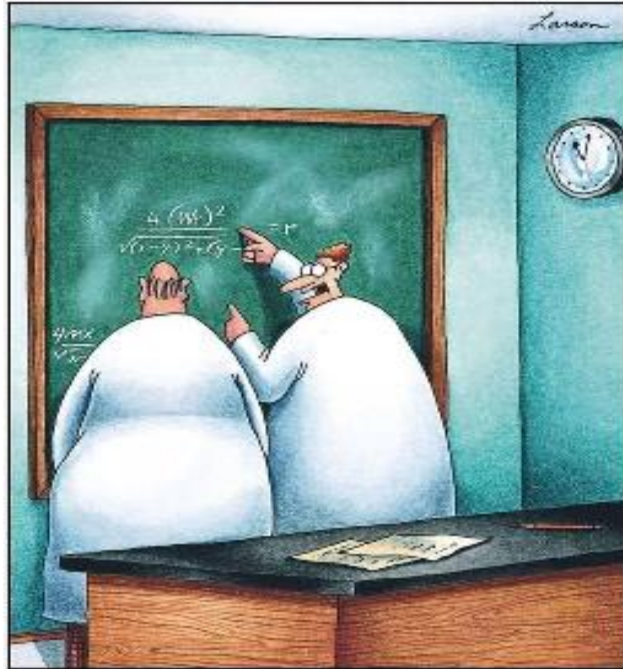
The entries run the gamut of categories, from youthful slang to science terms and new wellness fads. They include the TikTok trend “girl dinner,” defined as “an often attractively presented collection of snacks that involve little preparation, such as small quantities of cold cuts, cheese, fruit, cherry tomatoes, etc., deemed sufficient to constitute a meal for one.”

There’s also “stellar nursery,” an astronomy phrase that entered the mainstream thanks to discoveries from the James Webb Space Telescope; “shacket,” a combination of shirt and jacket; and so much more.

[Read the Entries](#)

*Bed-rotting, bussin'? How did we get by without these?*

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"Yes, yes, I know that, Sidney—everybody knows *that!* ... But look: Four wrongs *squared*, minus two wrongs to the fourth power, divided by this formula, *do* make a right."

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## A Small Step for Your Salad, a Giant Leap for Farming in Space



*The Hustle*

When we dreamed of becoming astronauts one day, that the fantasy probably didn't include eating our veggies.

But growing greens in space is actually a top priority for scientists, with ambitious missions planned for as early as the 2030s, like NASA's Mars exploration.

Since that little jaunt would take three years round-trip, astronauts will need more robust options than freeze-dried pouches to stay healthy, per The Guardian.



Now, the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence in Plants for Space (yes, that's the name) is taking \$35m in funding over seven years to grow a new solution.

At the University of Melbourne, researchers are experimenting with:

- Farmbots — robotic farming machines — that can plant and irrigate seeds, harvest crops, spray pesticides, and monitor plant growth and temperature with soil sensors.
- Organic materials that can be used to 3D-print food, and microencapsulation techniques to incrementally release flavors to control the taste and smell of food.

And it doesn't stop at leafy greens — astronauts deserve a little fun, too, so scientists are even looking into brewing beer.

### **Taste test**

Though NASA has already managed to grow flowers and greens on the space station with its Vegetable Production System (AKA Veggie), all this tech faces a host of challenges — the obvious one being the whole no gravity thing.

But there are other obstacles for scientists trying to solve the food problem, like spacecraft weight limits which give each astronaut ~1.87k pounds, including all gear and food.

Not to mention the most important part of eating: enjoying it. That's why the university's team is employing AI and facial analysis to measure blood pressure, heart rate, and facial expressions via a biosensor app.

That data can then be fed to algorithms to better predict how astronauts might react to food in space.

Ultimately, though, we're not sure what all the fuss is about. Why would you need anything else when we already have [Dippin' Dots](#)?

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## F4U Corsair: The Epitome of the 'Art on the Hoof' Era



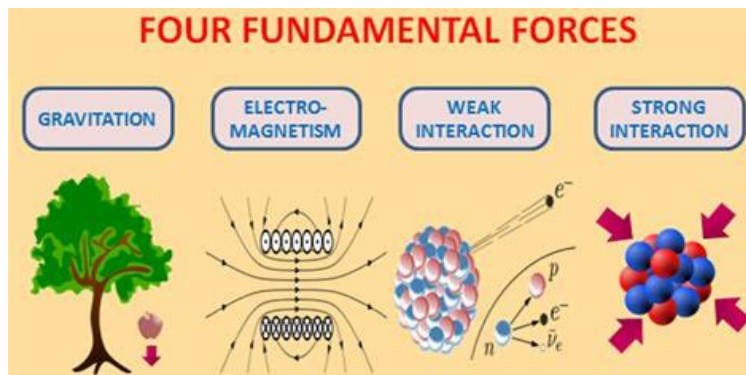
*aircraftsandplanes*

[https://youtu.be/6Rw\\_eQ4S\\_OM](https://youtu.be/6Rw_eQ4S_OM)

*My buddy Pat Healy sent this. What a machine.*

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## The Unpredictable Strong Force Continues to Surprise Physicists



*socratic.org*

After more than a century of slamming particles together, physicists have a pretty good idea of what goes on in the heart of the atom. Electrons buzz in probabilistic clouds around a nucleus of protons and neutrons, each of which contains a trio of bizarre particles known as quarks. The force that holds all the quarks together to make the nucleus is the aptly named strong force. It is the strong force that must be overcome to split the atom. And it is the strong force that binds quarks together so tightly that no quark has ever been spotted solo.

Just last summer, the LHCb collaboration at the Large Hadron Collider in Europe spotted signs of two hitherto unseen varieties of quark foursomes known as [tetraquarks](#) briefly zipping through the collider's underground tunnels. Cataloging the diversity of quark

behaviors helps physicists refine their models for simplifying the complexities of the strong force by providing new examples of phenomena the theory must account for.

<https://www.livescience.com/48575-strong-force.html>

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## Preserving the Ogallala's 'Fossil' Water Reserves



*Water levels for Ogallala Aquifer decline considerably*  
*newschannel10.com*

The Ogallala Aquifer in the U.S. Great Plains region provides water to some 2.3 million people and nourishes nearly a quarter of all irrigated agricultural land in the country. And it's slowly but surely going dry—in some spots more rapidly than others.

The Ogallala formed during the Miocene and Pliocene eras and during the last ice age; replenishing it once again would take 6000 years of rainfall. "On a human timeline, it is a nonrenewable resource," emphasized agroecologist Meagan Schipanski of Colorado State University.

She and colleagues speaking at the AAAS annual meeting described various approaches they've been exploring to work with local growers, policymakers and community members to slow the drain on the Ogallala. "I've come to see this much more as a human problem than a hydrological one," Schipanski said. She believes strategies that target individual operators aren't an effective use of resources. Kansas State's Matthew Sanderson, who looks at agriculture through a sociological lens, noted that top-down directives tend to be rejected or rebuffed by farmers and policymakers. Instead, both researchers argued that the most effective strategies for heading off depletion start with bottom-up approaches that begin with tweaks to local policies.

Steven Evett, a water management researcher at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, added that shifting the region's agriculture doesn't have to harm local economies. In fact, some strategies may result in higher profits. For example, in areas at high risk for groundwater depletion, switching out water-hungry corn for more certain varieties of cotton could bring in 30% more revenue and reduce water use by 26%.

*Those of us who worked on the USAF's MX Basing Mode EIS will recall the concern and discussions on possible remediation efforts as part of the analysis. I seem to remember that the water level in some areas near the Texas/New Mexico boundary was forcing the return from irrigated farmland to economically chancy dry practices.*

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## **Wanted, dead and alive: Schrödinger's cat.**

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### **Inside the World's Oldest Hotel, Established in A.D. 705**



*Nishiyama Onsen Keiunkan/ Expedia*

Nestled in the misty woodlands at the foot of Japan's Akaishi Mountains, the Nishiyama Onsen Keiunkan has welcomed guests for over 1,300 years, making it the oldest continuously running hotel in recorded history, according to Guinness World Records.

<https://bit.ly/3VsddVB>

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### **Stunning Minerals and Gems Photographs**





*László Kupa*

Photographer László Kupa gives us an amazing look at rare and unique minerals and crystals, from fluorite to malachite and back again. The minerals in question are sometimes as small as a few centimeters in size, but their detail and dramatic color and form look exquisite in these close-ups.

<https://mossandfog.com/stunning-minerals-and-gems-photographed-by-laszlo-kupa/>

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## **AI Washing, Explained**



*AI right here in River City*  
*themoviedb.org*

Sometimes AI seems pretty impressive — at least in its ability to whip up several images of a cat playing a banjo in a matter of seconds.

But is it always? SEC Chair Gary Gensler recently brought up the concept of “AI washing” in a pop culture-laden speech, comparing it to *The Music Man*, a musical about a big-talking con man.

AI washing is when companies create false buzz and manipulate investors by:

- Being misleading about the capabilities, limitations, or risks of their AI products.
- Lying about how and when they’re using AI.

### **Why is this happening?**

Everyone wants to be part of the hot new thing. Goldman Sachs found that a record 36% of S&P 500 companies talked about AI in their Q4 earnings reports, per *Business Insider*.

But many companies are nebulous at best about what AI can do and how it will integrate into existing operations, while others are hyping a future that may never occur.

Example: I received a press release about an AI girlfriend who doesn’t nag you to do the dishes. She also doesn’t really exist, and unless she’s a WiFi-enabled dishwasher, you’ll eventually still have to do your own dishes.

### **Does AI washing have consequences?**

Yes. Hype too hard, and the SEC will come for you. It charged two companies earlier this month.

- Toronto-based investment adviser Delphia claimed it used AI to predict upcoming companies and trends when it didn’t have those capabilities. It agreed to pay a \$225k fine.
- Bay Area-based Global Predictions falsely claimed it was the “first regulated AI financial advisor” and that it offered “AI-driven forecasts.” It agreed to pay a \$175k fine.

While AI does have great potential, companies should also be realistic about what it can do.

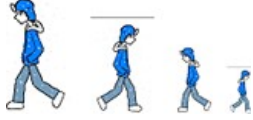
One company found its customer support agents were 14% more productive when integrating AI, though its higher-skilled agents saw little benefit.

And companies that have attempted to use AI to fully create articles, art, or other creative work have had mixed results. May we never forget that Glasgow Wonka experience.

*From The Hustle, March 28, 2024*

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## My Walking Thoughts



For Sunday April 7 2024

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### First Solo Flights

This is from [Fred Wudl](#), Ph.D. Professor Emeritus in the Department of Materials Engineering at the University of California, Santa Barbara.



*wikipedia*

### **"Don't Panic" \***

In 1972 in Transit, a region between Buffalo, and Lockport NY, there was a private landing strip belonging to a native American that owned a few single engine trainers, among them there was a Cessna 150 and a Piper Tri pacer. The former was for the newbies and the latter for the more advanced. The owner of the strip was also the instructor, an affable, portly man of average height whose name I can't remember, so let's call him Joe. After a few lessons we came in for a landing and just as we reached the end of the landing strip, Joe jumped out of the Cessna saying, "just do a touch-and-go and roll back to the shed". So, I gunned it and took off nicely, got into the familiar pattern that required coming in over the "screen" of a drive-in theater. As soon as I turned for my final, I realized the plane was not descending at its usual rate, in fact, I "ran out" of runway, had to shove the throttle to the hilt and get up in the air pronto. As I started my new pattern I realized what may be happening, so in my final I started much lower and made it to terra firme where Joe was waiting for me and as soon as I deplaned, smiling, Joe said "well you figured it out". Yes, after my aborted attempt I realized that the plane was missing about 200 pounds of Joe...

After a couple of weeks of doing straight and level and touch-and go exercises, it was time to prepare for a real solo. By this time it was already winter and there was a nice blanket of snow everywhere. Before I started on the solo stage of the training, Joe mentioned that if I ever got into trouble, I should just point due West and soon I'll see the Niagara Falls airport with one of the longest runways in the US with a much less busy airport than the Buffalo International.

It was a cold gray, typical Buffalo winter day. Joe's instructions were to go a few miles from the airport and practice level 360s and by the way, his radio was out, so, not to wonder too far. So, I took off smoothly, flew a couple of miles to the East and started practicing my 360s concentrating on not losing altitude. When I came out of what I assumed was a 360-degree turn, I could recognize *nothing*, not the drive-in theater nor any of the known water towers. I looked at the gyro, it was pointing north and the compass was pointing south! Panic. I flew straight and level until the two instruments caught up with each other and I was flying south. At that point was able to relax and managed to see one of my landmark water towers. After a few more flights in full circles I headed to home base without incident.

*\*The reassuring phrase from "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" by Douglas Adams.*

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