

Pink Things

Imagine a soft, fluffy cotton candy cloud, wispy and light, swirling in shades of blush and bubblegum pink. It hangs delicately in the sky at sunset, reflecting the warm hues of the fading day. Below, a patch of blooming peonies stretches their petals wide, the rich pink blooms vibrant against the lush green foliage, exuding a sweet, heady fragrance that dances on the breeze. Each flower unfurls like a silky ribbon, inviting you to linger and admire their intricate layers. The gentle pink of a nearby child's cheek, flushed with laughter, encapsulates innocence and joy, while a scattering of rose petals blankets a garden path, each petal's tiny heart whispering tales of love and beauty. In this world of pink, everything feels soft, tender, and full of life.

Barefoot Pink Moscato. Produced in California. Deliciously sweet.

The pink-bellied toad (*Brachycephalus ephippium*) is a small amphibian native to the tropical rainforests of Central America, regions such as Costa Rica and Panama. Recognized by its striking pink belly, this toad uses its bright coloration as a warning to predators about its toxicity. It primarily feeds on small insects and invertebrates, capturing prey with its sticky tongue.

There are lots of pink things in my college apartment. My couch is a bright fuchsia, stacked with cherry blossom and blush pillows, sprouting daisies, littered with meticulously stitched rose gold sequins (heart-shaped, of course). There's a salmon dresser, strangely ornate with its intricate fanned carvings and antique brass hardware, painted by my frugal father following his legal corporate thievery. Across the room, a repurposed metal utility cart, brightly coral, holds red solo cups and a couple cheap bottles of Barefoot Fruitscato. The wine itself is hued with deep rubies and red purples. A huge champagne carpet with artistically white flowers haunts the space underneath my bed, and two panels of pastel curtain line the windows that look out into more windows. Cerise collapsible storage cubes populate white organizers, orchid silk pillowcases head the bed frame, and a flamingo Keurig elbows room between a toaster and a Ninja blender.

(Thump-thump) Can you hear it in the silence?
(Thump-thump) A rhythm pulsing, deep inside us.
Every moment, every breath we take,
(Thump-thump) Life's melody, no mistake.

Floating like a dream plucked from the softest corners of your childhood, its ethereal wisps swirl in pastel hues of pink and blue, a painter's brush sweeping across a dusk canvas. Each delicate strand unfurls like cirrus clouds, capturing light and refracting it as a kaleidoscope of delight. Melting on the tongue, it releases a burst of sweetness that dances in the air, conjuring memories of sun-drenched Carowinds afternoons and the carefree laughter of children chasing after pink balloons. The sugary aroma lingers, a gentle whisper of nostalgia, while the fluffy weave cradles the babe, an essence of innocence, transformative and whimsical. A fleeting moment of joy that invites us to savor the sweetness of life, if only for a heartbeat.

Psychology Today's Arial bold headline from 2018: "What Does the Color Pink Do to You?" Beneath, "Research reveals the weakening effects of Baker-Miller Pink." Written by Diane E Dreher, PhD. (A picture of a beaming woman, white sun hat, navy turtleneck, blonde bob.).

Inside the human body lies an intricate world, where many systems work in direct harmony to sustain life. The heart, a tireless pump, rhythmically circulates blood, delivering oxygen and essential nutrients to every cell whilst removing waste. The lungs expand and contract repetitively, exchanging carbon dioxide for oxygen, while the digestive system transforms food into energy, breaking it down through a labyrinth of vital organs that absorb nutrients. The nervous system, a vast network of signal transmission, communicates through sensations and commands, coordinating action and reaction. Each organ, from the most delicate of the liver to the most resilient of the bones, plays a crucial role in this symphony of life.

The pink ribbon is a global symbol of breast cancer awareness. It represents continued support for research, education, and those affected by the disease. October is celebrated as Breast Cancer Awareness Month, marked by various pink-themed events

ChatGPT on "Pink Things:" Peonies, sunset, flamingos, tulips, geraniums, lilies, cherry blossoms, roses, rhododendrons, candles, piñatas, champagne flutes, gift wrap, ribbons, yoga mats, workout gear, gardening tools, artwork, stationary, umbrellas, backpacks, calendars.

The pink-bellied toad exhibits direct development, meaning that its eggs are laid in a moist leaf litter, and the young emerge as miniature toads without a free-swimming tadpole stage.

The Earth rotates on its axis, causing an inferior movement of the sun. When the sun dips, its light passes through more of the Earth's atmosphere, scattering shorter wavelengths of light, (blue and violet). This scattering leaves longer wavelengths (reds, oranges, and pinks) to dominate the sky, creating the vibrant colors associated with sunsets. Atmospheric conditions, such as dust, pollution, and humidity, can enhance these colors—resulting in stunning displays.

I lean closer to the rose, its petals unfolding in layers. The scent wraps around me, a blend of sweetness and earth. I trace the edges with my fingers, feeling the smooth surface, observing the way the light reflects off of them. The thorns bite my fingers with speculative vengeance.

Barefoot Pink Moscato is a juicy and refreshing wine with ripe nectarine aromas and flavors. Layers of raspberry and pomegranate complement the lingering, sweet citrus finish.

A medical student dissects a cadaver for their myofibril research. Using a sharp-bladed autopsy knife, they slice through the soft, peachy layers of integument, revealing the subcutaneous organs, muscles, and bones. A micro-scalpel makes small waves in the epimysium, coaxing the smooth fibers out from the fascicle. The cartilage cracks. They paw past the stone-shocked myocardium, still stuck to the pulmonary artery, still straddled by the aorta. They brush by serratus anterior, pectoralis major, and external intercostal muscles, sticky ligaments strapping beef to bone. They break the marrow-heavy rib cage, dismembering each from the sternum like

a child pulling flower petals. They tear muscle from bone and snap the jaw into large, jagged pieces and rip the spinal cord out like a zip tie. As the lifeless corpse white eyes into nothing, the medical student prays. *Please*, they ask, *let there be no consequence for the living*.

(Thump-thump) Can you hear the cries inside?
(Thump-thump) In this rhythm, pain can't hide.
Every heartbeat, a heavy weight,
(Thump-thump) Marking moments that seal our fate.

A sinister presence lurks beneath the surface. The petals of roses lie scattered on the ground, remnants of affection turned to betrayal. Cotton candy spins on abandoned stands. Flamingos stand in still waters. The sky fades into a muted hue where shadows creep. Dresses hang lifeless in forgotten closets. In this realm, we take off our masks.

The pink-bellied toad rests on a leaf, its body still against the backdrop of brown Lake Norman. I watch as it moves, small limbs grittily pushing against the ground with each hop. Its glistening skin reveals the patterns of its surroundings, shifting to camouflage from nearby stalking prey. I notice its wide eyes. *I'll call you Curiosity*, I think. As I approach, it pauses abruptly, sensing my presence. I reach down to grab it. It easily avoids my anxious grasp and hops away.

ChatGPT on "Pink Things:" Strawberry shortcake, lemonade, raspberry sorbet, cotton candy, frosting, watermelon, cherries, home fragrances, bicycles, luggage, vitamins, medical scrubs.

The Japanese cherry blossom is well-known for its radiant, delicate, and transient beauty. Cherry blossoms, or "sakura," are the flowers of these trees, primarily of the species *Prunus cerasus*. These airy blooms cluster in bunches along the waxy branches, spreading their pink petals across the length and breadth of the canopy, suffocating any other naturally-occurring greenery. The cherry blossom holds deep cultural significance in Japan's history, culture, and identity. Originally used to "divine" the annual harvest, sakura embody wabi-sabi philosophy and shinto ideals of impermanence, hope, and renewal. The trees bloom in spring, typically from late March to early May, attracting thousands of visitors to hanami (flower-viewing) festivals.

The pink-bellied toad faces significant threats from habitat loss due to deforestation and climate change, raising concerns about the overall health of its rainforest ecosystem.

The human heart symbolizes love, emotion, and connection, representing both the vulnerability and strength of human relationships. Often depicted in art and literature, it serves as a universal emblem of affection, passion, and the essence of our shared experiences. Beyond its physical function, the heart is seen as the "seat of the soul," an embodiment of the complexities of our feelings and the depth of our connections with others.

Pink eye (conjunctivitis), roseola, erysipelas, rheumatic fever, scarlet fever, pityriasis rosea, psoriasis, eczema (atopic dermatitis), contact dermatitis, hives (urticaria), celiac disease, lupus erythematosus, kawasaki disease, fibromatosis (desmoid tumors), granuloma annulare,

meningococemia, impetigo, rosacea, skin tags, toxic shock syndrome, acne vulgaris, seborrheic dermatitis, dermatomyositis, tinea corporis, viral exanthems (measles, rubella), erythema multiforme, mastocytosis, non-hodgkin lymphoma, polymyositis, acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). *These conditions vary in cause and symptoms but are all associated with some type of inflammation, rash, or other pink skin change.*

In the delicate embrace of spring, cherry blossoms unfurl like whispered secrets, painting the landscape in soft hues of pink and white. Each petal, a fleeting promise, dances gently on the breeze, creating a fragrant tapestry that shimmers under the warm sun. As they cascade to the ground, they scatter memories of warmth and renewal, carpeting the earth in a pastel dream. Underneath the boughs, laughter mingles with the rustle of petals, as time seems to pause in this ephemeral bloom—a reminder that beauty is a testament to the cycle of life.

My Business Psychology professor happily informed us that pink should never be worn to executive meetings. In their words, “It has a sort of excessive softness that can evoke feelings of naivety or immaturity, which makes it less suitable for serious or sophisticated settings.”

Some species of pink-bellied toads are endangered or under threat due to habitat loss, pollution, and climate change. Some species of pink-bellied toads don’t exist anymore.

(Thump-thump) Can you feel the fear arise?
(Thump-thump) In the chaos, truth here lies.
Every heartbeat feels the strain,
(Thump-thump) In this disaster, loss and pain.

A peer of mine wrote a paper on the use of the color pink in design and branding, stating that “An overreliance on pink can feel clichéd, lacking originality and depth.”

ChatGPT on “Pink Things:” Cushions, rugs, curtains, wall art, beddings, vases, lamps, tableware, picture frames, throws, bracelets, fitness trackers, heart health items, water bottles.

The human heart is a remarkable muscular organ, roughly the size of a fist, located slightly left of center in the chest. Its primary function is to pump blood throughout the body, delivering oxygen and nutrients to tissues while removing carbon dioxide and waste. The heart operates through a sophisticated system of chambers—two atria and two ventricles—along with a network of valves that ensure unidirectional blood flow. This relentless, rhythmic contraction allows it to beat about 100,000 times a day, sustaining the invaluable functions of life.

Barefoot's Pink Moscato blends have won the 2016 Ultimate Wine Challenge.

“The cherry trees may not cause harm to the park ecosystem, but people can cause harm to the trees. Large crowds of visitors come to the Mall every year when the cherry blossoms are at peak bloom. Park staff encourage visitors to be Cherry Blossom Protectors and help us take care of these special trees” (National Park Service).

(Thump-thump) Can you feel the healing start?
(Thump-thump) In this rhythm, we'll mend the heart.
Every heartbeat whispers grace,
(Thump-thump) In forgiveness, we find our place.

The coloration present on the pink-bellied toad serves as a warning to potential predators about the toxins the toads produce, a defense mechanism known as *aposematism*.

Afterthought

Writing *Pink Things* was a very enriching experience, expanding my knowledge on a variety of topics (pink-bellied toads, rosacea, and the process of spinning cotton candy, to name a few). As an exploration of femininity as a harsher reality than initially assumed, I drew on my own experiences as a woman to “round out” this narrative. I’m a big fan of the fragment essay and its “choppy” style of understanding or analysis, so I dove into that style and focused on a key topic: Pink! I began with a couple paragraphs on the human body and the heart, and then dispersed other segments (a song, a couple lists, some prose) throughout as I wrote them. In the end, I ended up scrambling everything into different places. I believe that I successfully created a commentary on the association of the color “pink” with femininity and womanhood, or at least gave a reader something to think about. Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed the rewarding research and imagination, creation, and execution of this piece, from draft to final copy. I hope a reader walks away with some intrapersonal conflict as to what the color “pink” *really* symbolizes.