

"No entertainment is so cheap as reading, nor any pleasure so lasting" Mary Wortley Montagu

Poem of the Week

The power of music

For a lot of people in lockdown music has become a lifeline. Elizabeth Bishop's poem explores this.

Sonnet

*I am in need of music that would flow
Over my fretful, feeling fingertips,
Over my bitter-tainted, trembling lips,
With melody, deep, clear, and liquid-slow.
Oh, for the healing swaying, old and low,
Of some song sung to rest the tired dead,
A song to fall like water on my head
And over quivering limbs, dream flushed to glow.*

*There is a magic made by melody:
A spell of rest, and quiet breath, and cool
Heart, that sinks through fading colours deep
To the subaqueous stillness of the sea,
And floats forever in a moon-green pool,
Held in the arms of rhythm and of sleep.*

A moral dilemma: what should we be able to own?

You are a sculptor. You buy a block of marble and you carve a statue that is worth a great deal because of your talent and labour. You are free to keep it or sell it to the highest bidder.

You are a biochemist. You own various cell materials and chemicals. You use these to create a vaccine against coronavirus. Should you be able to keep it or sell it to the highest bidder?

If your answer is no, who should own the vaccine?

What about the solar-powered laptop that would transform educational possibilities for millions of children in developing countries?

Dracula Day

Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* was first published on May 26, 1897. To celebrate, test your vampire knowledge with some fiendish quiz questions.

1. In what modern European country is Transylvania?
2. In what English county is Whitby where Dracula first lands?
3. The following all auditioned for the lead role in Francis Ford Coppola's 1992 film. Who got the part? Gabriel Byrne, Gary Oldman, Hugh Grant, Alan Rickman, Sting, Christian Slater
4. The following are all inventions of the 1870s and 1880s. Which one plays an important role in Stoker's novel: bicycle, cash register, typewriter, ballpoint pen, Coca Cola, barbed wire



5. The image above is a still from which of the following Dracula films: Nosferatu (1922), Dracula's Daughter (1931), Love at First Bite (1979), Nosferatu the Vampyre (1979), Dracula: Dead and Loving It (1995)
6. TV vampires: who was 'the vampire slayer'; which series included the song 'Bad Things' in the brilliant opening credits?

Barbering advice

From Father Antun Marun, a French priest in Damietta, Egypt, 1813

...When plague grew severe in the town, so much so that it was in the house of this barber and his daughter died of it, I'd be shaved by him in the following manner. I'd heat a copper of water, and when he came to my house I'd make him climb onto the roof of al-Barija [the church next door]. I'd order him to take off all his clothes and stand naked with his head uncovered. I'd tell [my servant] Panagioti to pour hot water over him so he could have a really hot wash, [washing] his head and the rest of his body, right down to his feet. Then I'd give him an old jubba [robe] of mine to wear, a fibre rope as a belt, and a piece of white calico to wrap around his head, all in my presence; and I'd wash his hands in vinegar in the way described above. He'd shave my head and wash it without me touching him or him touching me – except his hands, nothing else.

When he was finished, he'd go up to the roof of al-Barija, take off the jubba and the head-wrap which were mine, and hang them on a fibre rope tied to the roof for this purpose. Then he'd put his clothes on and leave in peace. This was what I did until the end of the plague, and I paid the barber half a piastre each time.

Translated and posted by Peter Hill on <https://theplaguebarber.wordpress.com/>

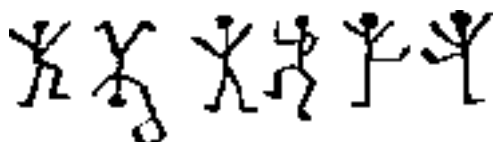
What do you reckon the barber thought?

Sherlock Holmes Day

May 22 has been declared Sherlock Holmes Day in honour of his creator, Arthur Conan Doyle. How much do you know about the great detective?



1. Who is Holmes' arch-enemy?
2. What is Holmes' drug of choice?
3. What is Watson's profession?
4. In which story do these figures appear?



5. What is the speckled band?
6. What investigative instrument did *A Study in Scarlet* introduce?

ANSWERS

Dracula

1. Romania
2. North Yorkshire
3. Gary Oldman
4. typewriter
5. Nosferatu (1922) dir FW Murnau
6. Buffy; True Blood

Sherlock Holmes

1. Professor Moriarty
2. cocaine
3. Medical doctor
4. The Dancing Men
5. A snake
6. A magnifying glass