



Reading Group Round-Up

Promoting reading and reading groups in prisons

Fairness and Equality: what do they mean?

John and Margaret went shopping to buy Christmas presents for their three sons: Matthew 14, Mark 12 and Luke 10. The loving parents always tried to treat their children equally. This year they had budgeted to spend £100 on each of them.

For once it looked as if their shopping would be trouble-free, for they soon found what they were looking for: handheld PlayBoy games consoles at £100 each. Just as they were about to take three to the checkout, John noticed a special offer. If you bought two of the new, top of the range PlayBoyPlusMax consuls at £150 each, you would get an original PlayBoy free. They could spend the same amount of money and get superior goods.

'We can't do that,' said Margaret. 'That would be unfair, since one of the boys would be getting less than the others.' 'But Margaret,' said John, excited at the thought of borrowing his sons' new toys, 'How can it be unfair? This way, none of them gets a worse gift than he would have done, and two of them do better. But if we don't take the offer, then two of the kids are worse off than they would otherwise be.'

'I want them all to be equal,' replied Margaret. 'Even if it means making them worse off?' (Source, Julian Baggini, *The Pig that Wants to be Eaten and 99 Other Thought Experiments*)

Teasers

- Is something boring because of it or because of you?
- If all religions were banned, would there be more or less war in the world?
- Can dogs have a sense of humour?
- If scientists could create a new species of animal purely for testing medicines on, should they do it?
- IS MARMITE NICE - YES OR NO?

Three love poems written at very different times but all with something powerful to say

Westron wynde, when wilt thou blow,
The small raine downe can raine?
Christ if my love were in my armes,
And I in my bedde againe.
Anonymous, early 1500s

A Red Red Rose

O my Luve is like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June;
O my Luve is like the melody
That's sweetly played in tune.

So fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in luve am I;
And I will luve thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun;
I will love thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only luve!
And fare thee weel awhile!
And I will come again, my luve,

Though it were ten thousand mile.
Robert Burns (1759 - 1796)

Giving Up Smoking

There's not a Shakespeare sonnet
Or a Beethoven quartet
That's easier to like than you
Or harder to forget.

You think that sounds extravagant?
I haven't finished yet —
I like you more than I would like
To have a cigarette.
Wendy Cope (b. 1945)

Travelling alone

Maybe it's different when you grow up around lightning. Say if you're from Kansas where all it is, is normal. Normal and dangerous, and you know exactly what it's like to catch the whipcrack end of the stuff with your roof or barn or the only tree around for miles. But that's not me. To me it's incredible. I mean, I look forward to it when it smells like lightning's coming. When it slashes and streaks and you can hear it sizzling apart the night. I totally love that. So guess what: I was on a plane one time - this was about three years ago - a little puddle jumper out of Dallas down to Lake Charles - so we must have been over East Texas or Shreveport - it could have been Arkansas - wherever - the point is, out the window was this giant cloud that looked like a lightning factory. You know, I mean, you should have seen it. It wasn't shooting out lightning bolts. They were all happening inside the cloud, so these areas would suddenly flash in the middle ... then somewhere else ... then pmm pmm pmm pmm pmm all in a row ... like if you were standing outside a welding shop in the dark, in the snow, and seeing all these blue-white flashes through windows covered in dust. Sort of like that. And it just went on and on and on not stopping. And I mean, it really did look like a factory. You know, like this was where and how lightning was made, then shipped around the world to thunderstorms. Like down there in the middle, gods were working with hammers and anvils and bellows and wearing those helmets with a little strip of glass to look out of. Like a cloudy furnace. Like the birthplace of light. Like maybe that's the way the universe looked in the womb. God, I wished someone would've been there with me. It was the kind of thing that's twice as good to share.

Rob Carney

Prison Reading Groups (PRG) funds and supports informal and voluntary reading groups - no tests, no certificates, no right or wrong answers, just a chance to get together and talk about a book. Members choose the books and they get new copies to keep or pass on to others. Since lockdown the groups haven't been able to meet face to face but some are still reading and sharing views in writing. If you'd be interested, get your librarian to check out our website for ways to get started www.prisonreadinggroups.org.uk

PRG is part of Give a Book www.giveabook.org.uk



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We Care

National Prison Radio

National Prison Radio is marking Care Leavers Week by launching a brand new series of programmes for people who have spent time in local authority care.

People who have been in care have particular rights. Under new legislation, some people who have spent time in care are entitled to additional support up until the age of 25. This includes help with things like accommodation and training.

In We Care, we'll be talking to organisations about what services are available if you've spent time in care. We'll also

hear from care leavers - people who have lived experience of being in care.

Sam, from the Care Leavers Association, spent time in the care system and in prison. He's now a support worker and he spoke exclusively to National Prison Radio. He went into care at the age of 20 months, and as a young teenager ended up getting involved in crime. This escalated when his mother died and he ended up in prison.

While he was under probation, Sam was linked up with the Care Leavers Association. Along with the birth of his son, that experience helped him turn his life around. They got him involved in music

projects and mentored him, and then they trained him up to help others in his situation. He's visited prisons to talk to other care leavers about the help that might be available to them, and to hear their stories.

Since the pandemic, Sam hasn't been able to do this work, but thanks to We Care on National Prison Radio he's able to share his experiences and knowledge. Through the series, we'll also hear from youth homelessness advisors and local authorities across the country to discover what services are on offer.

Care Leavers Week started on Monday 26 October and this year the theme is influential people who have been in care. We'll be hearing from the Metalheadz founder Goldie, who spent time in care as a child. He's got good advice, particularly for young people who have been in care and now find themselves in the criminal justice system.

We'll also be hearing about Malcolm X's story - he spent time in state care as a youngster and went on to change the world.

Other organisations who offer support to people with a background in care include The Rees Foundation (an organisation that supports adults with foster care or residential care experience), and Coram Voice, who advocate for people with care experience.

'We Care' broadcasts on NPR Tuesdays at midday and 6pm and Fridays at 4pm. Care Leavers Week runs from 26 October to 1 November.

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COVID-19 UPDATE - THANK YOU!
We hope everyone is well and is staying safe. This update gives us the opportunity to **thank you** for your patience and loyalty over the last few months. We experienced an unprecedented demand for our services during this time and this, coupled with a scaled back workforce, resulted in us being unable to maintain our usual high standards regarding replying to your letters, prompt order turn around times and product fulfilment where some products e.g. PlayStation 2s totally sold out. We have also been unable to produce our usual 'Summer Supplement Catalogue'. We understand that means you have been unable to obtain New Release CD & DVD information so we promise to make our 'Winter Supplement Catalogue', due later this year, a very special one - set to include some very exciting products! If you have any queries, please don't hesitate to write to us: PO Box 54, Reading, Berks, RG1 9JP.

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