

BOOK STUFF

#38

'Take a good book to bed with you – books don't snore.'



Two poetic moods for Spring



Things

There are worse things than having behaved foolishly in public. There are worse things than these miniature betrayals, committed or endured or suspected; there are worse things than not being able to sleep for thinking about them. It is 5 a.m. All the worse things come stalking in and stand icily about the bed looking worse and worse and worse.
Fleur Adcock

The Coming of Good Luck

So good luck came, and on my roof did light,
Like noiseless snow, or as the dew of night:
Not all at once, but gently, as the trees
Are by the sunbeams tickled by degrees.
Robert Herrick



A bit rich?

'Without a doubt we live in a grossly unequal society. Numerous people, through no fault of their own, scrape by on low wages or no wages at all – and, if the latter, are at the whimsical mercies of state benefits. The poor have pretty dreadful living conditions and unhealthy lives, with little scope to improve them selves. Their children typically find themselves following suit. Okay, some of these 'poor' are, I guess, scroungers and not really poor at all, but that does not mean we should ignore the many who are genuine. Society should be far more egalitarian; there should be far greater equality between people's standards of living and access to health and education – and far greater equality of opportunity. And then there's global poverty...'

Polly – Polly Titian – is in full flow, interviewed in a pub near the Houses of Parliament. On her way out, she drops a pound coin into a beggar's hat and then is whisked off, in her chauffeur-driven Rolls, to her mansion in Hampstead; she needs to pick up her children, just returned from a well-known public school, before they all fly off to her yacht near St Tropez. While on holiday, her children receive additional tuition; Polly wants them to do exceptionally well in their school examinations.

Can you sincerely want a more equal society while knowingly being wealthy?
From Peter Cave, *The Big Think Book, Discover Philosophy Through 99 Perplexing Puzzles*



A Spring Quiz

1. When and what is the Spring equinox?
2. Spring flower anagrams: scoruc; folifadod; plilut; somerrip; yicthinh
3. Who painted Primavera or The Allegory of Spring?; David Hockney, Rembrandt, Banksy, Botticelli, Raphael
4. Who wrote the music for The Rite of Spring ballet: Stravinsky, Benjamin Britten, Leonard Bernstein, Rachmaninoff
5. Fill in the blank: TS Eliot's famous poem The Waste Land begins '_____ is the cruellest month'
6. Puffins return to British shores during April and May to have their young. What are baby puffins called?
7. The best time to see pipistrelles, the UK's most common bat, is dusk on a Spring evening. How much does a pipistrelle weigh: 5 grams, 50 grams, 100 grams

The Memory Priest of the Creech People

One person alone, always a man, serves as the memory for all the dates and names and events of the Creech... This person possesses an entire history of the people and may spend as much as a week, day and night, reciting the various genealogies.

This Memory Priest reminds the Creech of who they are and what they have done. He is their entertainment and their historian, their memory and mind and imagination. He keeps the Creech amused and informed. The Creech have no chief or headman. The Memory Priest serves as the sole authority.

The Memory Priest is awarded his title at birth. As soon as he is able to talk he is given to understand that he is the repository of all the Creech lore.

His is not an easy career. He must memorise great lists of family names and must be able to recite all the events that took place from the moment of his birth.



The Creech are mostly placid, though they are subject to odd fits of violence. Biting themselves in order to show remorse is not unknown, and clawing their own faces is common. They are also untruthful and unreliable, prone to thieving, gossiping, gambling, and sudden spasms of the most aggressive behaviour. What the Memory Priest knows, the immensity of his storehouse of facts, is nothing compared with the one fact that he does not know, a secret that is withheld from him: after thirty years have passed, and he is old by Creech standards (possibly toothless, almost certainly wrinkled and shrunken) a meeting is convened. He recites the Creech history, and at the conclusion of this he is put to death. He is finally roasted and eaten by every member of the Creech, in a ritual known as the Ceremony of Purification.

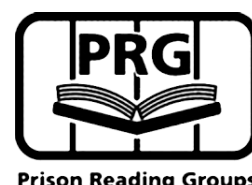


The next male child born to a Creech woman is designated Memory Priest and elevated; history begins once again. Nothing that has taken place before his birth has any reality, all quarrels are settled, all debts nullified. So the Memory Priest, now an infant, soon a man, learns his role, believing that history begins with him and never aware that at a specified moment his life will end. Yet it is the death of the Memory Priest that the Creech people live for and whisper about, the wiping out of all debts, all crimes, all shame and failure. They eagerly anticipate the amnesia his death will bring. Throughout his life, though he is unaware of it, he is less a supreme authority than a convenient receptacle into which all the ill-assorted details of the Creech are tossed. Secretly, he is mocked for not knowing that it will all end in oblivion, at the time of his certain death.

Paul Theroux

Answers
1. On or about March 23; it is one of two days in the year (the other is around September 23) when the Sun is exactly above the Equator, which makes day and night of equal length.
2. crocus, daffodil, tulip, primrose, hyacinth
3. Botticelli
4. Stravinsky
5. April
6. puffings
7. 5 grams: the same weight as a 20 piece

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