

Differences in driving culture

The realities of North American driving

by Nick Dasko

North Americans drive in the left lane, would like to go fast, but aren't as skilled as their European counterparts. Oh, and they need a place to put their cup of coffee.



The head of a skilled, focused driver?

Spending too much time in the left lane will cause you to fail your driver's test in the Canadian province of Ontario. But yet, it is a common sight on Canadian and American roads to see a left lane much busier than the right lane. I have vivid memories of my father shouting profanities in several languages while having to weave in and out of a slow moving left lane and passing

people on the right. Making things even more difficult is the fact that it is considered rude by many people to flash your lights in Canada.

The need for speed

North American drivers like to drive fast and there are a lot of songs in this regard. For example, the American band The Strokes wrote a song in 2003 called *Keptilia* in which they sing: "I said please don't slow me down if I'm going too fast," and then: "you're no longer laughing, I'm not driving fast enough." The Strokes are based in New York State, where the speed limits can go as high as 65 mph, which is about 104 km/h. The speed limits on American highways range from just under 100 km/h to close to 130 km/h. This is clearly not 'fast' in comparison to the German autobahn and I shudder to think of the frustration German drivers would experience on American and Canadian motorways.

Speeders and speed limits

In most of Canada the speed limit on the highways ranges from 100 to 110 km/h. Ontario has a law where if a car is caught going 50 km/h over the limit the vehicle can be confiscated for 48 hours and a \$2,000 fine is imposed. This is about € 1,500 and while it makes sense for people caught doing 50 km/h over the 40 km/h speed limit on a residential street, it is controversial in circles of people who do a lot of high speed highway driving. The government classifies these speeders as street racers even if they are the only car on the road. Now while some people

argue that North American highways should not have speed limits, the fact of the matter is that most drivers in North America are not skilled or focused enough to drive on a highway with no speed limits.

What North American drivers really want

When the new Mini Cooper came to North America people complained that they had to pay extra for a cup holder. Even the British sports and race car manufacturer Lotus sells cup holders to appease North American drivers who 'multitask' while driving.

Manual or standard transmission cars are not popular in North America so drivers have a free hand most of the time and they use it to do things unrelated to driving. There is a saying, "Idle hands are the devil's playground." This is very true in driving, as the right hand, which is free as most vehicles are automatic here, can be used to send and read text messages on a smartphone, among other things.

But some people are trying to change this. The editors of *Car and Driver*, an American automotive magazine, have started a campaign called 'Save the Manuals'. This campaign is meant to encourage people to buy manual transmission cars, partly to improve driver habits but also out of fear that the manual transmission could some day disappear. One thing is for sure, a hand that is being used to work a transmission is the hand of a focused, disciplined driver.

POSSIBLE TASKS

- Before you read, collect what you know about driving in North America.
- The author mentions a few distractions while driving. Which other ones can you name?
- Why does the author "shudder to think of the frustration German drivers would experience on American and Canadian motorways"?
- Rank from 1 to 3 the most important and least important accessories you can find a car. Be prepared to defend your answer in a group.
- Finish this statement: The thing I look forward to most when I get my driving licence is ...

The highway to love

Dating and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

by Nick Dasko

The author has realized that one way to a girl's heart is through a shared love of Douglas Adams's famously funny science fiction series about the last surviving man from Earth.

I wish I had read *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* when I was younger. My dad encouraged me to read it and gave me his old copy when I was about 13. I should have read it then. Or I should have read it in high school. I was born in 1987. The copy my father gave me was an edition from the early 1980s. Had I read it when I was a teen, I could have talked about it with all the quirky, cute, nerdy girls I was too shy to talk to in high school. We also could have gone and seen the movie when it came out in 2005. We could have listened to the radio series where the whole project started. We could have also watched the 1980s TV show with terrible special effects.

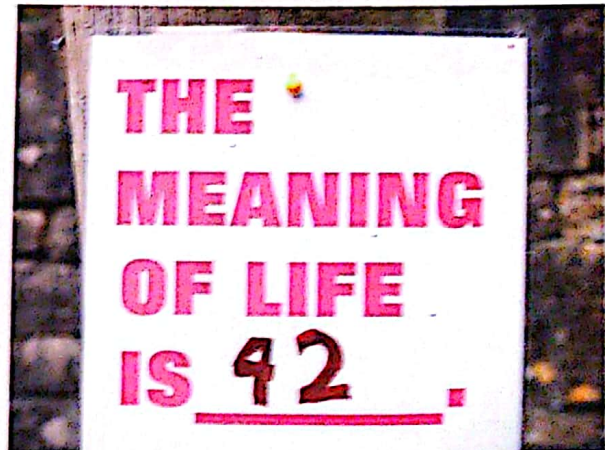
Your mileage may vary

Because it seems that every awesome, cool, artsy girl who I now pursue, having overcome most of my teenage awkwardness and shyness, loves the entire *Hitchhiker* series and read it during high school. Yes, there is a series of books, often referred to as a "trilogy in five parts," because they slowly trickled out over time, eventually becoming a trilogy, before more parts were added.

Now the exact same advice might not work for people of all genders and sexual orientations but are all equally awesome. I am simply a straight guy, writing this from my own experiences. Obviously, I suggest reading these books to meet potential romantic partners, but do so in public. If you see someone you find attractive reading one of the books in the series, go up and talk to them.

About the book

Now this is also advice that could be useful for the book's protagonist, a very normal man named Arthur Dent. The series begins with Arthur waking up very hungover one morning after finding out his house is going to be bulldozed to make way for a highway bypass. As he is attempting to stop the demolition his friend Ford Prefect pulls him away. Now Ford is an alien who writes for the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, a guide published to help travellers get around the universe. Ford picked his name when he landed on earth to blend in with what he thought was the dominant species, automobiles. So, he picked one of the most common names. Ford explains to Arthur that he is an alien and it is at this moment that the whole planet gets a broadcast from a demolition fleet of spaceships that are about to destroy the planet to make room for a hyperspace bypass. Arthur and Ford hitch a ride on a demolition ship just before Earth is destroyed. They eventually meet up with Ford's cousin, Zaphod Beeblebrox, the president of the galaxy. In this galaxy, the president is selected by a council and has very little power. The public actually believes they are responsible for electing this official however. Beeblebrox is a con artist and criminal and in that way, he reminds me a fair bit of Donald Trump. Beeblebrox is travelling with Trillian, formerly Tricia McMillan, a human woman from Earth that Arthur tried to pick up at a party several weeks before the planet was destroyed. But instead she left the



party with a man claiming to be from outer space, who turns out to be Beeblebrox.

Crack the code

I advise you to not be like Arthur. Be brave, be outgoing, be confident and READ THE BOOKS. In these books you will learn where Twitter got their "fail whale", why the number 42 is important, why you should always have a towel, why someone calling you a "hoopy frood" is a good thing, and most importantly, why you should say: Don't panic.

AUDIO

Track 2

According to *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, the meaning of life is 42.

PHOTO © SHUTTERSTOCK

AUTOR

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POSSIBLE TASKS

- Before listening/reading: Describe a childhood experience where you were asked to do something, but didn't.
- While listening/reading: Write down three things you found out about the book, two things you were surprised by and one question you still have about the book.
- In two or three sentences, write down the message that the author wants the reader to understand after reading this text.
- For a favorite book, film or TV series, write a well-developed paragraph that offers compelling reasons and examples for why someone should read or watch it.

Crossing North America

Driving from Toronto to San Diego

by Nick Dasko

The author tells of one of his long drives across the expansive North American continent. There are many ways to travel from the north-east to the south-west, and the drive can have its challenges.

A truck horn awoke me. I opened my eyes and thought, "Oh lord, I'm in Amarillo." I checked the time and took my dog out for a walk before we hit the road again. It had been a very long day and I was expecting an even longer one. I was on my way from my home in Toronto, Canada to my mother's in San Diego, California. This was neither my first time making the journey, nor my last.

A long haul

Heading west gave me a little extra daylight, which I was grateful for, as it was December, and the days were short. I had left my aunt's home in Chicago in the early afternoon and taken a two-hour detour to Wisconsin to buy a special gift for friends in Los Angeles. I was attempting a very ambitious, and very stupid strategy of trying to make it from Chicago to Los Angeles within 36 hours. I drove 7 of them in one sitting, from Chicago to Amarillo and was exhausted when I got to the little city in the Texas Panhandle. I fell asleep around 30 am and woke up seven hours later.

enic geography

was shockingly cold in Texas and as thankful for the warm heat in my car. It had been so cold the it before; my dog had started to er before I turned up the heat er side. I was hoping to drive ght through to Los Angeles, oing south, around the Rocky tains, or so I thought, to avoid evere winter storms of Colo- On a previous journey, I had

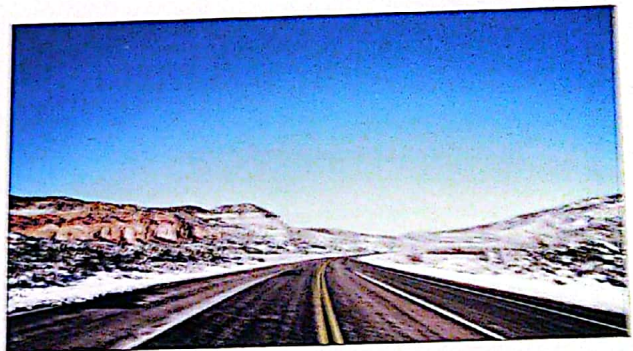
gone from Colorado to San Diego in one day, so Amarillo to Los Angeles seemed doable. I presumed I would be crossing the Rockies and the continental divide in the high plains of the southwest. The continental divide is a point that decides where water drains. On the west side it flows to the Pacific, and on the east side it goes to the Atlantic. But as I drove west through New Mexico, I began to notice bits of snow on the ground, as I climbed and climbed. I had been expecting warmth in New Mexico, but I was mistaken.

A change of weather

My GPS continued to route me west through Albuquerque, instead of heading south to a route along the border with Mexico. As we continued to climb, I was thankful for the turbo in my engine, which kept my power up. I had done the trip before in a car without a turbocharger, and the thin air had made the engine wheezy and weak. The little exhaust-powered fan kept my GTI engine full of air, giving me the power to get away from near accidents as other vehicles slipped in the snow storm I had suddenly happened upon.

The importance of snow tires

I found myself in a convoy of vehicles climbing a mountain pass over the continental divide, through a piney forest. This was not the climate I was expecting. I was thankful for my snow tires, and the police-led snow plow escort that brought us down off the highway. As soon as I saw a sign for a Motel 6 in Gallup, New Mexico,



I was off the road and thankful to be alive.

A winter scenic drive through New Mexico.

FOTO © IAN McDONNELL/ISTOCK

From snow to desert heat

I made myself comfortable with a hamburger and some fries, and the frustration of only have driven about six hours that day. The next day, the storm had cleared and I had a new route, south, to avoid the even higher peaks that lay west of me. I passed through forests with trees buried under a meter of snow and enjoyed the beautiful but shocking landscape. Within four hours I was blasting through a hot desert.

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POSSIBLE TASKS

- Before reading: Find these U.S. states on a map: California, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas and Wisconsin.
- Using the names of cities and other geographical clues, trace the author's possible route from Toronto to San Diego on a map.
- What kinds of challenges does the author face during the drive? Which ones could have been avoided and why?
- Describe your ideal road trip: Where would you travel to, what would you see, where would you stay and how long would you be gone?
- What was the longest drive, train ride or flight you have ever been on? What did you do to pass the time?

The nationality of cars

Car reviews are full of stereotypical language
by Nick Dasko

Reviews of cars in the English-speaking world are full of national stereotypes that are supposed to reflect the national characteristics of a car's origin.

A few years ago, I was sitting with my friend Michael, eating lunch in a restaurant. We discussed his theory about the national characteristics of engines and their relationship to economics. Michael hypothesized that the luxury cars from any nation represent what the people of that country aspire to and one that suits their style of driving. This brings up the interesting idea of how cars are often described by enthusiasts and journalists. In the English-speaking world, cars seem to be described almost exclusively by characteristics that are usually associated with their country of origin. These stereotypes are combined with even more stereotypes to create reviews that have little to no content whatsoever.

Consistent

German cars are often described and seen as sturdy and precise. Most of their cars have power that is accessible very low in the revolution band, which makes them suitable for lots of speed on long highways. But because Germany also has many mountain roads, the country also produces free-revving sports cars that have their power at the top. But no matter what the nature of the engine is, reviewers still describe the cars as reliable and heavy-feeling.

Comfortable

The Swedes are known for building cars that are very sensible, no matter what the purpose of the car is. They are always praised for ergonomic perfection and a style that can be best described as minima-

listic. All of these stereotypes are then dotted in with random, clichéd comments such as using the analogy of a "bolt-action rifle" to describe how a refined manual transmission feels in the hands of the driver.

Unexciting and evolved

Until recently Korean cars were often described as being boring and "appliance-like" but as of late, their reviews seem to be relatively free of cultural clichés. Japanese cars are seen as very well engineered tools. No matter what task that tool is designed to do, a Japanese car is often described as being the best possible version of that instrument. A sporty Honda Civic SI may not feel as luxurious as its rivals from Europe, but it feels spectacularly well put together and described as a joy to rev out. Which is why every review of any four-cylinder Japanese car describes the fun of revving the engine to the max. Every single review of Japanese luxury cars seems to describe how comfortable, but tragically boring they seem to be.

Stuffy

Now if this were 30 or 40 years ago, there would be lots to say about British cars, but all people seem to say about them now is how the interiors look like old men's clubs where they sit in leather chairs and talk about history.

Emotional

The worst nation for car stereotypes seems to be Italy. The use of clichéd expressions and analogies is so bad in reviews of Italian cars

LINK

Top Gear's episode on the Alfa Romeo 159: youtu.be/nkL3t44T50U



that when Top Gear reviewed the Alfa Romeo 159 they challenged James May to do so without using any clichés about the "soul", "passion", or "Italian" nature of the sedan. Naturally he failed as he went on and on about how the car made him feel and how it strung together corners like spaghetti on a fork.

Does this car make you feel Italian?

FOTO © ARQUIMFALK WELER

AUTOR

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POSSIBLE TASKS

- Before listening/reading: What national characteristics do you associate with Germany, Sweden, South Korea, Japan, Great Britain and Italy? Make a grid and write down one or two words that you associate with each country.
- While listening/reading: Take notes on all the stereotypes clichés that car reviewers associate with each country's car and add them to the grid you made above.
- What do you think about the hypothesis that a country produces the luxury cars that its people aspire to and suits their driving?
- Besides cars, what other products do people typically associate with certain countries? Why do you think so?
- Write a review of your favourite car. 1. Tell the reader why it was good or bad and who the vehicle will appeal to. 2. Provide examples of good features and bad features. 3. Make references to the competition where appropriate. 4. Give an overall grade to the vehicle (5 stars, 2 thumbs up, 1 thumbs down, etc.).

Selling Irish babies

Looking back at Ireland's former practice of international adoption

by Nick Dasko

Many Irish babies were adopted by U.S. citizens in the mid-20th century under very questionable circumstances, but thanks to advocate and victim Philomena Lee, light is finally being cast on this dark chapter of Ireland's past.

A few years ago, pop star Madonna adopted a little boy from the African nation of Malawi. This was not a perfectly smooth transaction for the singer who came under backlash from all over the world, when it was revealed that the baby boy from the orphanage actually had a father who was simply too poor to care for his child at the moment, and that Madonna was operating somewhat outside the law.

Adoption and the Irish Catholic Church

Something similar happened in 1951. Jane Russell, who starred with Marilyn Monroe in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, was in Europe trying to find a baby to adopt. She had already been to France where she was unable to find a child, the Italians said no because she wasn't a Roman Catholic and both German and English law forbade adoption of babies to non-residents. Then Ms. Russell found her way to Ireland, where adoption laws were very lax. Ms. Russell got her baby, but the adoption was a scandal and led to Irish adoption laws being tightened in 1952. One loophole was kept open for babies if they were illegitimate. Post-war Ireland was a very conservative place, where contraception and abortions were both very illegal. At this time, any child born out of wedlock was a scandal, and families unable to bare the shame of their pregnant daughters sent them to special homes run by nuns.

Legally adopting children

At these homes, young women would be shamed by the nuns and work until they were ready to give birth. The



A film still from *Philomena* (2013)

PHOTO: © BBC FILM PRODUCTIONS/BFI MAE FILMS/PATHE COLLECTION / IMA

poorer women then would stay for at least a year and work at the home, while their children were cared for. Healthy children were shown to wealthy American Catholic families, who could adopt them and bring them back to America. Adoptions were often done under the table in exchange for a donation. It is unknown how many children came to America this way, but 330 passports were issued in 1952, and this number doesn't include those who came over without paperwork.

Now these mothers didn't willingly give up their children nor would families take children away from mothers knowingly which is why the nuns often lied to these women. The families were often told that the mother was either dead or had left the baby. This trend continued until the late 1960s and the last home was closed in 1972.

Searching for the children

Today, many children and their mothers are trying to reunite but the Government of Ireland and the Catholic Church have adopted a "deny until

they die" policy according to Philomena Lee, an advocate and victim of these homes. Her son was taken from her and she spent years trying to track him down until she partnered with journalist Martin Sixsmith. The two of them found out in 2004 that her son had died in 1995. They also found that the abbey that had adopted him out was aware that both Philomena and her son were looking for each other but did nothing to help. Her story is told in a book titled *Philomena* and was adapted into a film of the same name starring Judy Dench.

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POSSIBLE TASKS

- Before reading: Look at *Philomena*, an Irish film of the same name. Guess where she is might be thinking.
- Explain why foreign adoption is so controversial.
- Explain why the Catholic Church and the Government of Ireland support a "deny till they die" approach.
- Summarize what parents need to think about when they decide to adopt children from a foreign country according to the article.
- Find out more about this issue by watching the film *Philomena*.

From the Commitments to the Deportees

Roddy Doyle's Rabbitte family as a lens into modern Irish history

by Nick Dasko

"The Irish are the blacks of Europe. And Dubliners are the blacks of Ireland. And the Northside Dubliners are the blacks of Dublin. So say it once, say it loud: I'm black and I'm proud." – Jimmy Rabbitte

Roddy Doyle's charming young promoter said the above words on camera in 1991, in the film version of *The Commitments*. This was Doyle's first book featuring the Rabbitte family and the first to be adapted to the screen. It would not be the last as its sequels, *The Snapper* and *The Van* both were adapted into films, although neither was as successful as *The Commitments*.

The Barrytown Trilogy

The three stories make up *The Barrytown Trilogy* and tell the story of the Rabbitte family, who live in the fictional NorthSide Dublin community of Barrytown. The working-class Catholic family has too many children to count, and, being Dublin in the 1980s, unemployment and poverty are regular themes.

Life-like characters

What makes the writings of Doyle stand out are that the dialogue is written in such a colourful manner and the small details make the characters seem realistic. Doyle was involved in writing the screenplay and producing the film.

A soul band

The first book, *The Commitments* (1987), focuses on Jimmy Rabbitte Jr., as he creates a band specializing in covers of soul songs from the 1960s. The band consists of a couple of his old friends, some local young people and a trumpet player who claims to have played with the likes of Elvis and Joe Tex. Just when they start to

get good and recognized, everything goes down the drain.

Unplanned pregnancy

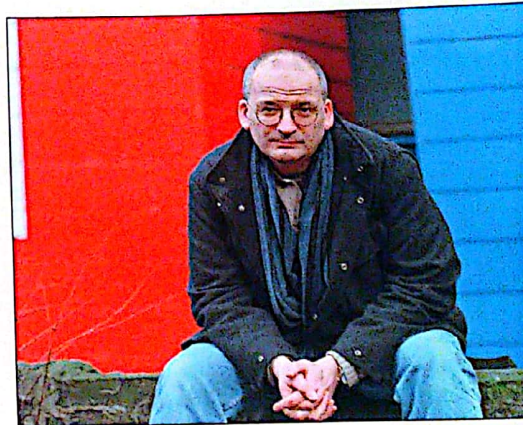
The Snapper (1990) focuses on Sharon Rabbitte, the oldest daughter, who one night, while drunk, is taken advantage of by the father of a friend. Sharon ends up pregnant and lying to the community about who the father is, all the while dealing with gossip and rumours in the very conservative arena that was working-class Dublin in the 1990s.

A travelling chipper

The Van (1991) is about Jimmy Rabbitte Sr. At the start of the book, Jimmy Sr. is unemployed and struggling to provide for his children. He decides that the coming summer and the World Cup would be the perfect time to start a "chip van" business, a food truck that he can park outside of pubs and capitalize off of drunken hooligans. Naturally this all involves unscrupulous methods, but it does lead to some success.

Modern-day Ireland

By the early 2000s however, the Celtic Tiger had arrived and Dublin was no longer a city full of working class people struggling to adapt from an agrarian existence. Dublin was now a clean modern city that had become a magnet for immigrants. This inspired *The Deportees* – a series of stories about the immigrant culture of Dublin. The Rabbitte family features in some of the stories and Jimmy Rabbitte Jr. decides that the music of the



era can no longer be soul, it should be bluegrass.

Take a literary trip to Dublin

The Rabbitte family provides a very interesting view into the zeitgeist of working-class Dublin. The family's adventures make a delightful read or at the very least, a good movie marathon on a rainy day.

The Irish write

PHOTO: © PETE PEITSCHPHOTO

AUTOR

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POSSIBLE TASKS

- Before reading: Make some predictions about on these words: *Ireland, poverty, profanity, hooligans*.
- The quotation at the beginning of the text vocative. What does Roddy Doyle mean by blacks? What do you think of the comparison?
- Which of Roddy Doyle's books would you read? Explain why.
- The word *chipper* is another word for a f in Ireland and the UK. Find out the meaning of the words from Irish slang: *donkey's years*; (pronounced crack).

The bombing of the Rainbow Warrior

French sabotage of the Greenpeace ship in New Zealand

by Nick Dasko

In 1985 France's military blew up a civilian ship owned by the environmental charity Greenpeace in Auckland Harbour in New Zealand. One Greenpeace photographer was killed, and of the six French spies who were involved, only two were tried. Both served two years in French military prison.

In the 1970s France was testing its nuclear technology in the atmosphere above Algeria. After a strong wind brought a nuclear cloud close to continental Europe, the government of France decided to move the experiments to their colony of French Polynesia.

By early 1985 Greenpeace had several years of experience protesting nuclear testing. The charity had bought a former freighter, and converted it into a sailing ship called the Rainbow Warrior. As Greenpeace's flagship, the Rainbow Warrior was used to protest against nuclear tests as well as to move residents of islands away from where testing was taking place.

In July of 1985 France was planning another nuclear test in Moruroa in French Polynesia. Greenpeace had docked the Rainbow Warrior in New Zealand's Auckland harbour, in preparation for a trip back to French Polynesia later that year. What the charity was unaware of was that the French government had infiltrated their organization to get a better understanding of how to cripple it.

Sabotage and sinking

It was on the night of 10 July 1985, at 9:30, that Mike Harris, a local taxi driver, noticed some people rapidly unloading an inflatable dinghy and running into a small white van before abandoning the boat and driving off. This struck him and his friends as suspicious so they quickly took down the license

plate of the van. Then at 11:50 pm a massive explosion shook the entire ship. Photographer Fernando Pereira rushed below deck to his cabin to grab his gear. Within a few minutes a second explosion blasted a hole in the hull the size of a small family car. The ship began to fill with water and sank within minutes.

Police investigation

Over 100 police officers were involved in the investigation that followed. They got their first lead from Mike Harris who reported what he had seen. This allowed the police to stop the French couple as they returned to the rental van. As the New Zealand police interviewed the two French citizens posing as husband and wife, it became clear that they were actually two French secret service agents.

International incident

New Zealand brought in the United Nations to negotiate between itself and France. France used several other spies who escaped by a boat which was picked up by a French submarine and their boat was then scuttled. France agreed to let New Zealand imprison the two spies for ten years. When New Zealand attempted to jail them, France threatened to make it impossible for New Zealand to export its goods to Europe, a major problem since the country depended on exports of sheep and dairy to the UK. In the end, France jailed the two spies for

COPY

Ein Arbeitsblatt mit dem Text, Aufgaben und Vokabelhilfen finden Sie auf der Heft-CD.



two years and the French Defence minister resigned. The spies served their time in a military prison and later received promotions.

Today

After the bombing, the Rainbow Warrior was given a final resting place at Matakauri Bay, in New Zealand's Cavalli Islands. It has become a living reef, attracting marine life and recreational divers.

The Rainbow Warrior recovered on 2 Dec

PHOTO: © GREENPEACE

AUTOR

Nick Dasko ist fre aus Toronto, Kan

POSSIBLE TASKS

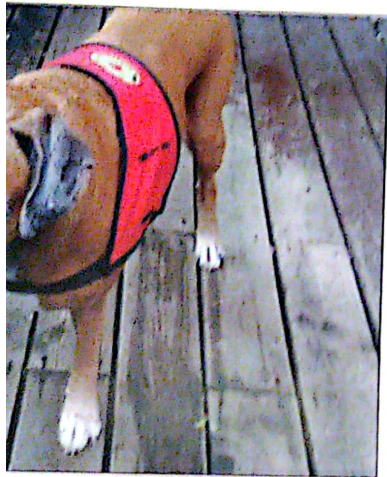
- Before reading: What do you know about the organization Greenpeace?
- Locate the island of Moruroa (French Polynesia Harbour (New Zealand) and the Cavalli Islands land) on a world map.
- Comment on why the French government was away with the bombing for the most part.
- The Rainbow Warrior was named for this Native American prophecy: *When the world is sick and dying will rise up like Warriors of the Rainbow.* Say this relates to the global environment today.

The benefits of therapy dogs

Helping others through the company of dogs

by Nick Dasko

A therapy dog is a dog trained to give love and comfort to people in hospitals, retirement homes, nursing homes, schools, disaster areas, and to people with learning difficulties.



My name is Sheena, and I love my job. Now technically I don't get paid for my job, it's actually volunteer work, but the reactions I get from people for my job is more than enough of a reward for me. Every week I get a ride to a retirement home and I get to listen to people tell me stories, as they feed me and pet me. Oh yes, I forgot to mention, I'm a dog. I am a therapy dog who volun-

teers with Therapeutic Paws of Canada, and it's my job to make others bright-eyed and bushy-tailed like me. (This means very happy and full of energy!)

Specialized therapy dogs

I haven't always been a working dog; I wasn't specially bred to work and didn't spend the first year of my life preparing for my job. Much like service dogs who help the blind get around in public, some therapy dogs get very specialized training so they can work with war veterans or children with autism. These dogs know how to do some really impressive tricks like help their human calm down from a war flashback or difficult new situation. They help with damage that was done inside a person, where it often cuts the deepest, and they do it all with tail wags and sloppy licking!

Hard beginnings

For the first few years of my life, my job was to have lots and lots of puppies; I lived in what my human calls a puppy mill. Once I was about five years old, I got too old and the people at the puppy mill kicked me out. Then some nice people found me and brought me to a shelter. I finally got a new human, Nick, who gave me lots of treats and let me sleep on the couch. Living in a big city was very exciting. I got to sniff the restaurants, stores and other buildings nearby, including a bunch of hospitals.

My true calling

One night, a few months after Nick adopted me, we were walking

around downtown when I heard a little girl in a wheelchair say "Oh look, a boxer!" I tried to wag my tail, but because I don't really have more than a little stump, I wiggled my whole hindquarters and walked over to her so she could pet me. She was staying at the children's hospital down the road and apparently had two boxers of her own at home. They weren't allowed to come visit her at the hospital. Nick started talking to the parents about dog volunteer programs and something called oxytocin. A documentary I saw on TV says oxytocin is a chemical in your brain that makes a person happy. The brain releases it when they hug someone they like, when a mother nurses her baby, or when a human pets a dog. When we got home, Nick said we were going to get into a therapy dog program so we could go visit that little girl.

The advantage of dog therapy

Late that night, Nick started looking into charities that bring therapy dogs to visit the children's hospital. I have spent several years since then cheering people up and I love it. I have seen old people who usually scowl at everyone smile after petting me, and I get to hear stories about dogs that people grew up with decades ago. People don't need as much pain medication after they spend time with me, and one lady with Parkinson's disease even says she walks better after petting me "because it relaxes her." I never did see that little girl again but I hope she is happy at home with her boxers.

view is the position of the narrator
define these four common types:

Objective; Third Person Omnisci-

nal; First Person; and what point
of view or a walk in the

view
A bushy-tailed dog is not a dog
any more, the meaning of these
words is an one's tail, turn his
dog has its day

or another animal improved
around you feel better.

Jane's Walks

How Jane Jacobs shaped the city

by Nick Dasko

An urban activist, journalist, and author fundamentally changed the way we think about urban spaces.

In the early 1940s, Jane Jacobs moved to New York City from the small city of Scranton, Pennsylvania. Making Greenwich Village her home, she adored that the winding streets did not adhere to the rest of New York's grid system, and that its residents ranged from bohemian poets to middle class labourers to former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. In 1958, New York was beginning to see the start of the "white flight." The U.S. was in the midst of a trend known as the "great migration." African American families that had traditionally lived in rural communities in the American South were migrating to Northern cities where high-paying, union-organized jobs were available in large factories.

Two migrations

Americans of the time did not want to see these internal migrants end up in shums as previous communities of European immigrants had. So traditional one-rise, townhouse block communities were demolished to make way for high-rise buildings. Many white Americans reacted to this migration and urban redesign by choosing to leave the cities behind and moved to newly built suburban communities that offered larger homes, and larger properties, things that were often not available in dense cities. These suburban residents often kept their jobs in the cities and as such had to commute in. This led to the redevelopment of cities for cars.

Everyone and their mother

In New York the man behind this redevelopment was a powerful

builder named Robert Moses. Although he was never elected, he at one point held thirteen government positions and grew his construction businesses through large government contracts. Moses would develop a strategy with other developers, then announce public meetings on the day they were to be held so they would go unopposed. In 1958 Jane Jacobs was with her children in Washington Square Park when she heard from a local activist that the city wanted to run a massive extension of Fifth Avenue through the park. Jacobs quickly held a rally and began working to save this park. She managed to get a massive quantity of signatures on a petition against it and to anger Moses and his cronies so much at a public hearing that he famously exclaimed "There is nobody against this - NOBODY, NOBODY, NOBODY but a bunch of ... a bunch of MOTHERS!" Well, that "bunch of mothers" kept their park free from traffic. Jacobs's urban theory career only grew from there.

What makes a city

In 1961, she published *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* which highlighted concepts such as neighbourhoods having to be built in a human scale, meaning buildings should be low enough that people can walk up and down them, without an elevator. Communities should be walkable, and not require a car to get around. They needed to be made up of all economic classes. Streets should be places to gather and socialize. She emphasized public spaces, something that European cities do



5th Avenue in New York City
 FOTO © DANIEL W. STOCK.COM

very well with parks, and car free zones, but North American cities often miss out on.

Walking tours

She eventually moved to Toronto, as she feared for the safety of her sons who were eligible for the draft to serve in Vietnam. It was in Toronto that she saved another city from being ripped apart to make way for more cars. Her legacy is quite impressive and continues to inspire more activists through the Jane's Walks initiative. This neighbourhood walking tour festival is active around the world and offers tours of communities, led by local residents, and highlights the lesser known history of these neighbourhoods.

AUTO
 Nick Dasko
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POSSIBLE TASKS

- Before reading: What would you like to see in the city you live in? Explain why.
- Why do you think the developer Robert Moses got so many people into action with his construction projects?
- Determine to what extent your city is walkable, and what you can do to make it more so.
- The saying 'everyone and their mother' is used to express a large number of people. What do you think the meaning of these sayings is? Learn at your mother's knee; the mother with that mouth?

Telling the story of Hamlet

Are the themes of Shakespeare's work universal?

by Nick Dasko

An essay by an anthropologist described her attempt to tell the story of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to the Tiv people of West Africa. The Tiv people raised many questions about the plot, themes and character motivations that no one before had considered.

Most people find Shakespeare hard to understand. Many current editions of his works devote the even-numbered pages to the original text and use the odd-numbered pages to explain or interpret the text. In university, many of my professors would assign readings that were factually relevant, but these texts were anything but good reads. Thankfully, I did read a few academic essays that I really enjoyed. An anthropologist named Laura Bohannan wrote my absolute favorite essay, *Shakespeare in the Bush*. The essay follows her attempts in sharing the story of *Hamlet* with tribal elders from the Tiv people living in a remote part of Nigeria.

Time for culture

The rainy season in West Africa is a time for the Tiv people to relax between planting and ploughing. People come together with their neighbours (who are generally their relatives), perform ceremonies, tell stories and drink home-made beer. The American anthropologist spent the early 1950s living with the Tiv people as part of her field research. Before she left for Africa, an English friend gave her a copy of *Hamlet* to study, saying that Americans seem to have a hard time understanding the deeper meaning of Shakespeare's writing.

Skilled storytellers

Dr. Bohannan began to join the tribal elders for these drinking sessions and would ask the elders about their customs and history. The elders were very skilled storytellers with high standards. Hearing these stories proved tremendously helpful for her

research and was going well until the elders asked her for a story from her homeland. Threatening to not give her any more of their stories until she told them one, she chose to tell the story of *Hamlet* in order to prove that Shakespeare's story was universal, that is, that the general plot, themes, and character motivations would be clear to anyone, anywhere in the world.

Cultural differences

Demonstrating the universality of *Hamlet* however proved harder than she originally thought. The Tiv men are polygamists, their religion has no afterlife, and they have no concept of ghosts, only zombies and omens. All these issues are further complicated by the fact that in Tiv culture, elders are regarded much more highly than young people. This means that the young Hamlet does not have the right to avenge his father or challenge his murderous uncle Claudius. Moreover, the elders reasoned that if an uncle, who married someone's widowed mother, is your father's full brother, then he will be a real father to you. You can't kill your father! The elders also wondered whether Hamlet's father and uncle had the same mother. In other words, Hamlet's story was somewhat confusing to the Tiv.

Some universality

Eventually some universal qualities were found, the tribal elders agreed with most readers and scholars on the fact that Polonius is clearly a fool. They eventually agreed that Claudius brought Hamlet's vengeance on himself and is deserving of what



ever it brings, but they also believed Claudius was using a witch. This surprised the storyteller because no one had ever considered Claudius' actions from this angle before. The Tiv interpreted other parts of *Hamlet* much differently from conventional views. Bohannan's essay is extremely readable and interesting, and like a good story, people can relate to it. How they relate to it is a matter of interpretation however.

The ghost of Hamlet's father speaks to Hamlet

FOTO © UIG/FOTOFINDER

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POSSIBLE TASKS

- Before reading: Why do you have to read challenging fiction by Goethe, Cervantes or Shakespeare in school? Come up with at least three reasons.
- Agree or disagree: Do you consider the works of fiction by Goethe, Cervantes or Shakespeare to contain universal values? Give your reasons in a comment.
- Summarize some of the difficulties that can occur when retelling a story. Also include what happened to the anthropologist when she retold the story of *Hamlet*.
- How would you explain a ghost to a person who has never heard of one?
- Describe a situation when you had to do something you really didn't want to. Write down what led to this situation, why you had to do it and what happened in the end.

The angel and the demon

Price increases versus price reductions in medicine

by Nick Dasko

Martin Shkreli and Paul Farmer have two very different ways of caring for the sick.

5,556 per cent was the amount American entrepreneur and pharmaceutical executive Martin Shkreli raised the price of a medication used to treat toxoplasmosis. This is a common condition in people who have AIDS. In September 2015 the price skyrocketed overnight, from \$13.50 per pill to \$750. There is no cheaper generic version of this medication available as an alternative. If you needed the drug, you had to pay up.

Swift public reaction

When news of this price hike came out, the news media savaged Shkreli for such a large increase on medication people needed to live. While he refused to lower the cost of this medication, he did offer to look into offering bulk discounts to hospitals, and making low-cost versions of the medication available, but only after he faced extreme criticism, hate mail and death threats. Since then, he has been forced to step down from his position and is being investigated by the U.S. government on charges of running a fraudulent investment operation (a Ponzi scheme) several years ago.

Absence of morals

Shkreli's main portfolio as an investor is based on the concept of buying the rights to medications that have expired patents, but no generic, and increasing their prices massively. Interestingly, thirty-three-year-old Shkreli was raised in a working-class family with strong Catholic values, a church that is known for its work in caring for the sick and the poor. This upbringing seems to have left no effect on him.

Abundance of morals

On the other hand, there's Dr. Paul Farmer. Also a Catholic man of modest means, Paul Farmer went to Duke University on a scholarship and earned a degree in Medical Anthropology. From there he chose to attend Harvard Medical School while earning a PhD in Medical Anthropology. Before his first semester at Harvard, he was in Haiti where he was struck by the abject poverty of the residents. He and some other volunteers chose to start a group called Partners in Health, which provides low-cost and free healthcare to the residents of Haiti. Dr. Farmer has devoted his life to caring for the sick, taking little for his own life.

Solving medical problems

Since then, Partners in Health has expanded through major projects in Peru, Russia and Latin America, to care for the sick. A great deal of its work has been in changing treatment protocols and in the treatment of tuberculosis. While in Peru, Dr. Farmer and his team noticed that many of the people suffering from TB were getting prescribed automatic doses of certain antibiotics. These doses failed to cure the illness but would also cause it to turn drug-resistant. Given the nature of these small remote communities in the Andes, the antibiotic-resistant strains did not have a difficult time spreading from person to person. He also noted these same poor treatment protocols were causing problems in Russia's prisons.

Fighting for price reductions

Dr. Farmer and his team were able



to successfully lobby the drug manufacturers for discounts on their normal TB medications and for free "last resort" antibiotics that are only used on patients who are so sick that no other medication will work. Dr. Farmer is not lobbying for free medications for everyone, but simply for the poorest people when the most expensive treatments are needed. Since then Partners in Health has slowly expanded globally to help the poorest of the poor with severe medical crises.

What's the real medication?

PHOTO © THOMAS

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POSSIBLE TASKS

- Before reading/listening: Is there any moral governments or companies to provide free who are sick?
- While reading/listening: Draw a T-chart and personal motivations for Martin Shkreli and
- Comment on the issue of drug patents: On big pharmaceutical companies have to spend millions of dollars to research and develop the other hand, new drugs can save or improve lives, but they're unaffordable for some.

Nonnas unite

Cuisine as a gateway to the other cultures

by Nick Dasko

The author suggests that food has long been one way to bridge the gap between cultures.

Not too long ago, I was helping my friend Elly pick up a package from her grandparents' home in what used to be the suburbs of Toronto but is now simply the edge of the city. I was without my infinitely practical Golf GTI and was stuck with a rented Jetta while my car was in the shop. Elly is a massage therapist and we were picking up a massage table she had ordered off the internet. She is also of Italian descent, which means we were going to a purely Italian neighborhood, to see her nonna and nonno: Italian for grandmother and grandfather.

At home, yet abroad

When we arrived, she went into the house to speak with her grandparents and left me to load the table into the car. As massage tables are designed to be transported easily, I immediately started tearing apart all the shipping materials to get down to just the table that I could throw in the trunk of the gargantuan Jetta. Once I got the table stripped down and in the trunk of the car, I began working on putting all the cardboard and shipping materials into a box by the side of the house for recycling. Elly's nonna then noticed me and began asking me what I was doing. After explaining several times, in a loud, slow voice, that I was waiting for her granddaughter who knew I was there, she waved me off and slammed the door. As Elly and I drove off she laughed when I told her about my adventure in the land of nonnas.

A generation of cooks

The appeal of sharing culture may be what inspired a new restaurant



in Staten Island, New York, where the cooks are all nonnas, except for the pasta maker who is a nonno of course. *Enoteca Marja* in Staten Island, New York is just a quick ferry ride across the river from Manhattan. This small restaurant attracts guests from all over the world, and features a rotating team of nonnas who cook dishes that have been passed down to them through generations of their families. Every day one Italian nonna and a nonna from somewhere outside of Italy create a menu with their ancient, wonderful recipes. Guests get a unique one-of-a-kind experience and the restaurant even offers cooking classes with the nonnas. This restaurant offers people a chance to share their cuisine, and hence their heritage with a massive audience, in a town so famous for its food.

Food for the soul

Now this brings me to an important thought. Our world is currently experiencing a swing towards nationalism and closed borders. People are becoming afraid of outsiders and immigrants. We are seeing political movements

that push for a monoculture with closed borders. People are voting with fear, which leads to hate. This is why parliaments in Europe are now seeing more members from the far right, and why the Americans have elected Donald Trump. One of the best ways to open people up to new cultures and new neighbors is through eating together, the sharing of meals, or the breaking of bread if you will. The world is a much smaller space when you have dined with someone because you learn a lot about him or her through the wealth of knowledge that is shared over a meal, especially a meal with a nonna.

POSSIBLE TASKS

- Before reading: Who is the best cook in your family and why?
- While reading, make some text connections. How is this text similar to something you have read before? How does this text relate to the world you live in?
- Do you agree or disagree with the author's idea that eating foreign cuisine can lead to a better understanding of the world among cultures?
- How might this saying in English relate to the text? "A man's heart is through his stomach."