

Mrs. Quintero: Putting the Fun Back into Mathematics

By Jacob Lawler

Mrs. Quintero has been involved with homeschooling most of her life and has been employed at WTMA since its beginnings. She was homeschooled from fourth grade onward by her mother, an experienced teacher herself. Homeschooling enabled Mrs. Quintero to devote time to her favorite subject – reading. She often read 4-6 books a week back in the day, before homeschoolers had great resources like WTMA. For the first few months of her homeschooling journey, an encyclopedia and an old algebra textbook were all she needed.

Mrs. Quintero loved reading so much that she worked for her local public library as a high school and college student. At one point, she even considered a degree in library science but ultimately decided on elementary education instead. Mrs. Quintero completed her undergraduate degree at Liberty University and later attended the University of Virginia.



College was where our current chair of math and science fell in love with the language of numbers. Mrs. Quintero hated math as a student and put off taking the required math courses in college for as long as possible. However, it all clicked for her during a 3-week summer calculus intensive in college. To her surprise, she loved it! However, she says her favorite is still the good-old standby, algebra.

Mrs. Quintero's attitude toward teaching changed almost as suddenly as her attitude toward math. As her parents were teachers, she hated the thought of it and would have preferred to enter any other profession. Yet, she ended up with a degree in elementary education. Soon after college, Mrs. Quintero began sharing her newfound love of mathematics with aspiring mathematicians, teaching in private and public Virginia schools.

Mrs. Quintero jumped at the opportunity to teach at WTMA. She was excited to bring math and science instruction to homeschooled students, knowing that parents found these subjects daunting. That passion has continued throughout her career at WTMA, and her reward is now being the chair of the math and science department.

Mrs. Quintero's only complaint about teaching at WTMA is that she cannot see her pupils' faces in real time, making it hard to judge if they understand a problem. However, the energy and eagerness that the students have for every class make teaching a joy for her. In return, Mrs. Quintero does her best to make her classes engaging, often starting with a song and sharing stories. During the COVID years, she had a dinosaur affectionately named Three-Toed Michele that would roar at students whenever they did well on a problem. She likes to remind her students that math and science are like puzzles; the answer is there, and you just have to find it. Overall, she strives to create a learning environment that is focused yet funny.

Jasper



Outside of the classroom, Mrs. Quintero pursues her love of reading, especially thought-provoking mystery stories. She also enjoys acting in community theater productions or putting her math and reasoning skills to the test with logic puzzles. She lives in central Virginia with her husband, Jasper the dog, and Sushi the cat (who is known to walk across the keyboard while class is in session).

Mrs. Quintero is an entertaining, yet rigorous, math and science teacher, striving to make class sessions informative and amusing. With her wealth of experience, as a homeschooled student and teacher, who could better take the lead of the math and science department and put the fun back into mathematics?



Sushi

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the Spring issue of the Well-Trained Tribune! First, I would like to thank our great advisor, Dr. Gentile. She made the process smooth and orderly, offered invaluable advice, and kept everyone on track. Also, amazing work and perseverance from our writing team this year! You have been writing, editing, and agonizing over these articles since the start of the semester.

As you read this issue, you might ask yourself: What exactly do we *do*? During the first week of the spring semester, we meet to brainstorm article ideas. One important thing we must keep in mind is that while it is January now, the paper does not come out until May. So, while an article on Kendrick Lamar's Halftime Show may make sense now, it will not be relevant in five months. So, how do we find topics that we can write about now that will still be of interest in May? Instead of focusing on one event, we choose something that is ongoing, such as the death of the humanities or Trump's immigration policies.

After our first meeting, we spend a few weeks working on our first drafts. Then, we review all the articles together. Usually, we do three to four drafts over the entire semester. To make the paper pop, we gather photos or create our own graphics. Finally, Dr. Gentile puts everything into the newspaper template, a long and harrowing process that barely preserves her sanity. In the end, it always works out! On that note, I hope you enjoy the paper!

Mae Paul, Editor-in-Chief

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Social Media: Overcoming Its Potential Harms

By Grace Lurie and Mae Paul

Humans are very interactive people, so it is understandable (especially after the COVID-19 pandemic) that we feel a strong need to socialize. Connecting with others eases our stress and depression, helps us feel heard and loved, and gives us a diverse worldview.

Yet social media is not all the sunshine it is advertised to be. As Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Discord, and a myriad of other social platforms hog the attention span of millions, users must remember that talking through text will never be the same as conversing in person. Too many hours on social media can lead to depression, loneliness, and sadness. At the same time, you can still find a happy medium between no social connections and being addicted to your phone.

How can teenagers strike that perfect balance, considering both the positive and negative aspects of social media?

Positive Aspects of Social Media

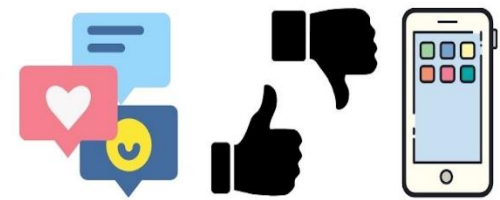
- Communicating with friends and family all over the world
- Making new friends and connecting with old ones
- Sharing creative and artistic endeavors and letting them flourish
- Learning valuable information (news, weather warnings, etc.).

Social media also provides jobs to many Americans. TikTok or YouTube influencers make money by creating videos and ads for brands. If they reach a certain number of followers, TikTok pays them a creator fund. Other professions rely on these apps to advertise their products. So, these sites have become a hub for businesses, models, and artists.

Now let's turn to the negatives. Multiple studies have found a strong connection between heavy social media use and an increased risk of depression, anxiety, self-harm, and even suicidal thoughts, clearly showing that social media can have very harmful (and sometimes life-threatening) impacts. For instance, you may look at a manipulated image, understand it is distorted, yet still feel insecure about yourself.

Users fall into a trap of seeing all these beautiful celebrities on Instagram and TikTok, who seem more popular, healthier, and smarter than they are, making viewers depressed and giving them self-doubt. Humans, especially teenagers, tend to compare themselves to someone else who seems better than they are in countless ways. They then create these unreachable goals and get disappointed when they don't fulfill them. Also, people tend to only share highlights of their lives to make them seem perfect, but behind the scenes, their lives are just as chaotic as anyone else's.

Fear of missing out (FOMO) is a substantial part of what makes social media harmful. Seeing your friends having fun without you could make you feel excluded, even if that was not their intention. The idea of missing out can impact your self-esteem and trigger anxiety. An extreme sign of this is checking your phone every few minutes, which often leads to an unproductive workday, making you grumpy, agitated, and depressed.



Cyberbullying is also a dangerous problem. About 10 percent of teens report being bullied on social media. Big platforms that encourage this, like Snapchat, can spread hurtful rumors, lies, and even abuse that can leave lasting emotional scars. Be extremely careful to prevent cyberbullying from hurting you.

So, what is driving our obsessive social media use? Though the phone is a convenient device, it has some pitfalls. Sometimes, it can feel a little *too* handy. We tell ourselves we're only going on to check one thing, and before we know it, we've been doom-scrolling for an hour.

The constant notifications distract you, even waking you up at night. This is what the companies want. The better they grab your attention and the longer they keep it, the more money they make. Just like addictions to alcohol or drugs, social media is designed to create psychological cravings. When you receive a notification or watch a satisfying video, it triggers the release of dopamine in the brain, just like the "reward" of any other addiction. The more you are rewarded, the more time you spend on social media, despite the obvious signs of its harmful effects.

What are those signs to watch for? To begin with, every person is different, so no one has the same tolerance for staring at a screen for the same length of time. What's most important is how your time spent on screens impacts your mood or other aspects of your life. If you find yourself averse to public interactions, it could be because you are too used to texting. If you are motivated to use social media because you're lonely or bored, it may be time to find a hobby. If your time on your phone exceeds your time with friends and family, you should reduce screen usage.

Don't fall for the trap of thinking you are inferior to some "perfect" Instagram user just because they show you their seemingly glamorous activities, all the food they eat (or don't eat), or their "ideal" body. Trying to shape yourself to the size of someone else's body can lead to eating disorders, which can be fatal. In addition, don't do something you'll regret later just to gain likes.

Sleep problems are yet another issue to look out for. If the first thing and last thing your eyes see when you wake up and go to bed is your phone, you need to change that. The light from your cellphone suppresses melatonin, the hormone that regulates your circadian rhythm. Even if you don't notice it right away, this will give you sleepless nights and odd sleep schedules.

Tips for Healthy Phone Behavior

So, what do you do if you are worried about your phone usage? Here are some suggestions.

Step 1: Reduce your time online. It will be a huge step forward, even for just half an hour. Some ways to reduce that time are:

- Track the time spent on apps
- Turn off your phone before bed and store it in another room at night
- Ban your phone from the bathroom
- Turn off social media notifications

Step 2: Change your focus. Many people access social media out of habit to mindlessly kill time.

- Instead, spend that time with your pet, friends, and family.
- Sew, read, play an instrument, take a stroll, etc.
- There are endless options - almost all better than doom scrolling.

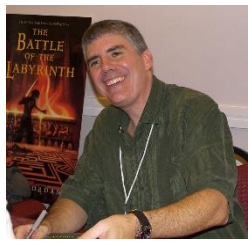
Step 3: Express gratitude and take time to reflect.

- Start a journal.
- Learn how to meditate.
- These will help reduce stress and anxiety.

Soulless Cash Grab: Percy Jackson and Wrath of the Triple Goddess

Review by Kaitlyn Lamb

Rick Riordan is one of the most popular authors of the 21st century, best known for his *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series. The original five books followed the titular demigod and his two best friends, Annabeth Chase and Grover Underwood, as they fought classic characters from Greek mythology in a modern setting. Following his immense success, Riordan wrote over 30 books



connected to Percy. In 2023, as a promotion of the then-upcoming Disney+ television adaptation, the author published *The Chalice of the Gods*.

The first installment of a new trilogy, *The Senior Year Adventures*, was designed as a direct follow-up to the original books, returning to first-person narration and providing a welcome departure from the somewhat over-complicated “Riordanverse.” However, this simplicity is also one of the main flaws of *Chalice* and its sequel, *Wrath of the Triple Goddess*.

In each book, Percy must obtain a college recommendation letter from a god or goddess by completing a task of their choosing. This small-scale conflict can be refreshing, but it's also slightly ridiculous. Percy saves the world multiple times and befriends many deities along the way. It does not make sense that he would need a recommendation letter, and even if he did, it wouldn't take him a whole book to acquire one.

Thankfully, at least *Wrath of the Triple Goddess* tries to explain the plot holes. When Hecate, the goddess of magic, asks Percy to pet-sit, she reveals that she prevented his godly allies from helping. This explanation is far-fetched, but it at least acknowledges the absurdity of the main plot.

While the first *Senior Year Adventure* retained the core spirit of *Percy Jackson*, this sequel does not. The series has been known for its casual tone and sarcasm, but *Wrath* relies on potty humor and slang to appeal to younger audiences. Riordan's uses of “I love that for you,” “dude,” and references to cat videos all feel incredibly forced.

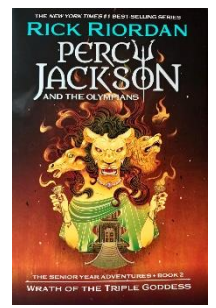
Percy's dyslexia and ADHD make him a relatable hero, but in this book, he is watered down to just plain dumb. Annabeth, Grover, and he all feel like caricatures of themselves. Annabeth's only character trait is being smart. Her fears, struggles, and previous development are forgotten. Supposedly, hosting a haunted house party is her lifelong dream, so, in a random subplot, Percy and his friends aim to throw one at Hecate's mansion. Similarly, Grover is

reduced to the lovable, idiotic sidekick. Except here, he isn't lovable at all. He jeopardizes the mission with his stupidity time and time again. Riordan's books are lighthearted, but they typically have somber moments to balance out the comedy. *Wrath* fundamentally misunderstands the structure of a *Percy Jackson* novel. Nothing is taken seriously. Percy jokes about past trauma, disrespecting both the character and faithful readers. The plot is pointlessly consumed by side quests and wacky hijinks. At one point, Percy's arms are replaced with tentacles, and Annabeth's head is turned into an owl's, resulting in a cringeworthy scene that lasts for several chapters.

Disney owns the film and TV rights to *Percy Jackson*, and Disney's Hyperion publishes the books. Unsurprisingly, *Wrath* is filled to the brim with product placement. The book takes place during Halloween, and nearly all of the trick-or-treaters are dressed as some sort of Disney property, such as Iron Man, the Mandalorian, Cinderella, Mickey Mouse, and Minnie Mouse.

Wrath of the Triple Goddess proves that Rick Riordan has lost his touch. One can hope that season two of *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, set for release later this year, does not reflect his current writing skills.

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From Start to Stardom: Brandon Lake's Music Career

Review by Adelee Baird

Brandon Lake's music is almost “Too Good to Believe,” with nine albums and over forty singles. He is now a well-known musician within and outside of the Christian community. While his career began in 2015, he gained popularity four years later with the release of the song “This Is a Move,” co-written with Tasha Cobbs Leonard. Brandon Lake is—and continues to be—a fantastic musician and composer.

Brandon's love for music began in childhood. Raised in a Christian household, his pastor father encouraged him to learn the guitar and sing when he expressed an interest. Brandon taught himself to play by watching YouTube videos and practicing for hours. As he grew in his skills playing on the worship team at church, he started branching out and doing his own thing. He hosted a crowdfunding campaign that raised \$23,000 and launched his first album, *Closer*, in 2015, drawing the attention of others. Brandon ended up working with several other Christian bands, such as Maverick City, Bethel, and Elevation Worship. Since then, he has collaborated on many songs and written his own works.



Currently, Brandon's top five most popular songs are “Gratitude,” “That's Who I Praise,” “Hard Fought Hallelujah” (which was put out just this year), “Graves into Gardens,” and “Praise You Anywhere.” His catchy songs contain powerful messages and have memorable melodies and tunes. Once they get stuck in your head, you'll be singing them all day. One of his popular songs, “Miracle Child,” was inspired by his mother's struggles with having children. Brandon was her miracle child. The song speaks about trusting God, that there's

“no life he can't raise,” and “your wounds aren't too great,” because “he's a miracle God.” Just as Brandon's mother made it through by trusting in God, so did Brandon.

When Brandon's career began to take off, the transition from a worship leader at his church to a popular musician proved to be difficult. The stress and high demands he suddenly had led to depression. During the podcast “Generational Leadership” hosted by Brandon and his father, he stated that a turning point in his depression was when his friend Micah prayed over him, and he said “as soon as he prayed over me, man ... all of the weight and the craziness in that moment, it broke. I broke, but in a good way, which led to confession.” His album *HELP!* was written about this part of his life, primarily about mental health.

Brandon Lake has become a popular Christian artist, but not without struggle and hard work. Despite his trials, he continues to write music. So far, his career has been chaotic but also awe-inspiring. His music will undoubtedly remain a staple at many churches and for many individual Christians.

Say Goodbye to the Cocktail and Hello to the Mocktail

By Mae Paul



With all the turmoil rocking the world, one might expect people to turn to alcohol as a reprieve. Yet the opposite is happening: Americans are drinking less than ever, leading to an unexpected result – the rise of the humble mocktail.

In 2019, 65% of Americans reported drinking regularly. Now, that number has dropped to 60%. About 4 in 10 young adults call themselves regular drinkers, while about 48% of middle-aged people drink regularly. The roles seem to have reversed – previously, it was common for those ages 18 to 35 to drink more than the generation before them.

These numbers are influenced by the country’s youngest legal drinkers: members of Generation Z. With more information available about the dangers of alcohol, young people are making the healthier choice to either drink less than previous generations, or not at all.

In December 2024, former U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy highlighted the need to warn consumers of the cancer risks of alcoholic beverages, calling alcohol a “well-established, preventable cause of cancer responsible for about 100,000 cases of cancer and 20,000 cancer deaths annually in the United States.”

Overall, members of Gen Z are less likely to drink, more likely to participate in periods of abstinence such as Dry January, and more

likely to be concerned about health risks. Many young adults of drinking age practice what is called “zebra-stripping.” Instead of consuming only alcoholic drinks during nights out, they alternate between boozy and nonalcoholic beverages, keeping themselves less intoxicated and giving them a more enjoyable evening.

Restaurants are evolving with changing tastes. In 2019, mocktails were rare on menus. By 2024, there was a 10% increase in restaurants offering alcohol-free options. People are realizing they don’t have to give up flavor or fun just because they are cutting back on alcohol.

They are learning to enjoy mocktails, making them just as elaborate as their alcoholic counterparts. Nonalcoholic beverage companies are seeing dramatic growth. Athletic Brewing, for example, experienced a 13,000% increase in profits between its 2019 launch and 2021. The company went from brewing fewer than 900 barrels annually to 170,000 in 2022.

Often called “virgins,” many restaurants offer alcohol-free versions of popular cocktails. These are given fun, refreshing names such as Chai Blossom, Rose & Rhubarb Soda, or Tennessee Fruit Tea. Shirley Temple is probably the most famous mocktail – made from grenadine, lemon-lime soda, or ginger ale, and topped with a maraschino cherry.

Mocktail influencers have flocked to Instagram and TikTok, gaining thousands of followers with catchy handles like @mocktailmom and @themindfulmocktail. It remains to be seen how long the trend will last, but for mocktail enthusiasts, now is your time to shine.

The Disunited States: America’s Thoughts on Immigration

By Adelee Baird and Mae Paul



Jan. 20, 2025, ushered in the second Trump era – and Americans are torn over it. One of the issues President Donald Trump has been most vocal about is immigration, which has awaited reform for more than 15 years. Since taking office, he has moved quickly to implement his plans.

While campaigning, Trump proposed many policies he promised to execute if elected. In his inaugural address, he stated, “All illegal entry will immediately be halted, and we will begin the process of returning millions and millions of criminal aliens back to the places from which they came.” His official website makes his immigration plans clear: continuing construction of the border wall, ending asylum for undocumented immigrants, deporting undocumented immigrants – starting with those who have criminal records – suspending refugee resettlement, and rolling back Biden-era initiatives, such as the parole program that allowed immigrants from certain countries to live and work in the U.S. for up to two years. There is no mistaking Trump’s vision – but do Americans agree?

Opinions on Trump’s immigration agenda vary widely, particularly between supporters of Harris and Trump voters. A Pew Research Center [study](#) of registered Democrats and Republicans highlighted these divisions. 88% of Trump supporters backed his mass deportation plan, while fewer than 30% of Democrats agreed. Meanwhile, 72% of Harris supporters favored allowing undocumented immigrants to stay if married to a U.S. citizen, compared to just 37% of Trump voters.

Despite all this disagreement, there is some unity on immigration in general, provided it is legal. After all, immigrants founded America. Both parties approve of increasing security along the Mexican border and limiting access to public assistance for undocumented immigrants. When it comes to providing government services to legal immigrants, Democrats are generally more supportive than Republicans. According to a [poll](#) by Axios, 58% of respondents supported expanding pathways

for legal immigration, and 46% agreed that asylum seekers with legitimate cases should continue to be protected.

Many Americans support a crackdown on immigration – to a point. Thirty-two religious organizations have filed a lawsuit challenging Trump’s policy permitting Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids in houses of worship, which had been prohibited under previous administrations. The church groups claim that attendance is declining as people fear arrest while attending services. Their lawsuit also argues that the administration’s policy violates the First Amendment and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act by “threatening the ability of faithful communities to serve immigrants and refugees.”

While voters hold mixed opinions on Trump’s agenda, how do immigrants themselves feel? In an interview conducted by NewsNation, Lindy Li, a legal immigrant and Democratic fundraiser, described her immigration journey, coming to America with her family and working hard to earn U.S. citizenship. She mentioned people’s frustration with others jumping the line and pouring over the border. Expressing a “serious concern” with illegal immigration, she noted that many people feel it is “very unfair” when others bypass the legal process.

Mohammad, a legal immigrant from Pakistan, shared his thoughts in an [interview](#) with Fox News. “Illegal immigration not only hurts the people who make that choice to come here illegally. It hurts the rest of the country,” he said. While he sympathizes with undocumented immigrants, he said he disapproves of what is happening. Also speaking to Fox News was Sabine Durden-Coulter, who came to the U.S. legally from Germany to live with her husband, an American soldier. When asked how illegal immigration had affected her, she said her son Dominic “was killed by an illegal alien on July 12, 2012.” She urged the government to take action to fix U.S. immigration policy.

Overall, Trump’s plans to address illegal immigration have received a largely positive response among certain segments of the population. While not everyone agrees on Trump’s method when it comes to immigration, many Americans agree on the need to resolve persistent issues.



Photo Credits: “Immigration Protest” by [Photographing Travis](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

The Only Female Finisher: An Interview with Jasmin Paris

By Abigail Garcia

On March 22, 2024, photographers gathered around a yellow gate in Frozen Head State Park, Tennessee, snapping pictures of the moment that would change the sport of ultrarunning forever. Jasmin Paris—coated in dirt, sweat, and scratches—sprints up a hill and touches the gate, immediately collapsing to the ground. She just became the first woman to finish the Barkley Marathons.

The Barkley is far from your average ultramarathon. Composed of five loops, totaling approximately twenty miles each, through an unmarked, uncleared trail in the Tennessee state park, the terrain would be daunting without approximately 60,000 feet of elevation gain and a 60-hour time limit. To make matters worse, runners must navigate through the grueling course without using a GPS, relying purely on a map and compass to return to the yellow gate.

However, this was not the full-time veterinarian's first experience making a splash in ultrarunning. One of her most notable accomplishments was winning Britain's most challenging ultramarathon: the Montane Spine Race. Not only did she finish the 268-mile race over 15 hours ahead of the second-place runner, but she blew the previous record out of the water, all while pumping breastmilk for her daughter at each checkpoint. Still, the Barkley was an entirely different beast; she needed three attempts to finally vanquish.



"The only thing that buckles here is your knees."
by Michael Hodge is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

Nearly a year after Paris's historic finish at the Barkley Marathons in 2024, I sat down with her in Edinburgh via Zoom to discuss her astonishing race. For the interview, Paris had sequestered herself in a corner of a room with bright blue walls. When asked about the hardest part of the race, she admitted, "There's no one single thing that's hard about it." She mentioned the difficulty of navigating the course, primarily due to the poor map, which isn't supposed to be precise, as walkers are not allowed on most of the trails in Frozen Head State Park except during the Barkley.

Discussing the most memorable part of the race for Paris, apart from her finish, Jasmin described a moment during the final loop when she rested in the forest, feeling grounded in nature. "For a moment... I kind of... could feel the forest around me," Visibly filled with delight at the recollection, she added, "I could smell it, I could feel the water and the dampness on my skin, and I really felt like I was part of the forest."

When asked about her memories of the race, Paris replied that there are many races for which she feels satisfaction from finishing, but that the feeling after the Barkley has been unlike her experience with other races. Paris attributes the persisting pride to the fact that she had to dig deeper into herself more than ever before to finish this race, claiming, "I only managed to do it... last year because I never gave up, and because I really believed I could... That leaves you with this real feeling of satisfaction that I think I'll have for the rest of my life."

Paris addressed the claims made by the race's founder, Lazarus Lake, that women weren't tough enough to finish the Barkley, commenting that she wasn't sure when she became aware of his statements, but that they had just become tied up in the Barkley

Paris immediately after her Barkley finish.



Photo credit: Jacob Zochezman 2024 (with permission)

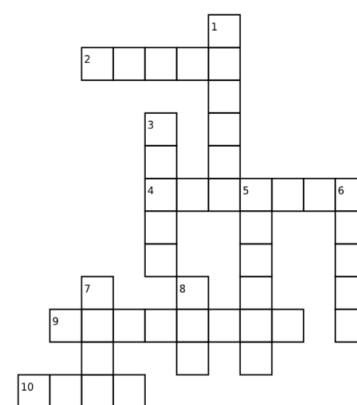
mayhem for her. She then remarked that she finished the race mostly for herself, to prove that she was capable of the athletic feat. She said that, while it was "a real kind of joy" to be able to finish the Barkley as a woman, "it felt a bit afterwards like [she] had done it for women everywhere in a way, kind of breaking through that glass ceiling."

When asked about advice she would give to aspiring runners, Paris stated, "My biggest advice would be to remember to enjoy [running]... Remember to keep that enjoyment in what it is that you do, and if you feel like enjoyment is going out of it, it's time to refocus on what it is you actually want from this."

"The enjoyment for me is what drives everything," Paris said with a smile. "It's not difficult to do it if you love it; you naturally seek out new adventures if you're enjoying it all the time." Paris says that she will likely not attempt the monster known as the Barkley again. Yet, no matter what Paris continues to do with her running career, she has left a mark on the sport of ultrarunning that is unlikely to be forgotten any time soon.

Crossword Puzzle

by Mae Paul



Down

1. Sun in Greek
3. March 14 is known as
5. Cesar _____
6. Bob (musician)
7. Dogs and potatoes have them
8. Character in Huckleberry Finn

Across

2. Red _____ of Courage
4. Platform loved by youngsters
9. Type of bomb
10. Snakes do this

Answer on page 7

Ballet: A Centuries-Long Tradition

By Kaitlyn Lamb

Perhaps more than any other sport or art form, ballet emphasizes tradition with a remarkably consistent and strict technique going back hundreds of years. Like many Renaissance innovations, ballet can be traced back to the Medici family of Italy. In 1533, Catherine de Medici married King Henri II of France and brought with her a love for the arts, including dance. Catherine and her staff turned dance into a spectacle, demonstrating the nobility's power and restoring faith in the monarchy. These Baroque performances included simplistic steps and required little skill, at least in comparison to ballet today.

In 1581, a composer named Balthasar de Beaujoyeux created the first story ballet, *Ballet comique de la reine* (Comic Ballet of the Queen). In 1653, King Louis XIV appeared in the 12-hour *Ballet de la nuit* (Ballet of the Night) as the sun god Apollo, cementing his reputation as the "Sun King." Under his reign, ballet technique was standardized, thanks to the establishment of the *Académie Royale de Danse* in 1661.

There, Pierre Beauchamp created the five positions that are the foundation of ballet. Esteemed choreographer Jean-Georges Noverre banned masks in his ballets to make facial expressions more noticeable, since he preferred pantomime over speaking and singing. This style is known as *ballet d'action*. Noverre also had his dancers remove heels from their shoes to make jumps easier. Though most of today's dancers are women, these performers were usually men, even those playing female characters.

Throughout the 19th century, musicians explored dynamics and other ways to express emotion through their pieces. Authors and philosophers wrote of their appreciation for nature and imagination. This movement, known as Romanticism, was reflected in dance. Ballets frequently featured fairies, sprites, and other ethereal beings. Dancers dressed in flowing white tutus that emphasized the grace and fluidity of their movements.

To make their steps even more otherworldly, they experimented with standing on their toes. In 1832's *La Sylphide*, Marie Taglioni was the first ballerina to move freely *en pointe*, as previous dancers had only ever achieved static positions. These pointe shoes did not have today's elaborate *papier-mâché* designs; they only had a bit of darning



at the toe to minimize pain.

Photo Credit: WhiteAct, CC BY-SA 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

The Classical Period saw the rise of Russian ballet. The Mariinsky Ballet – also known as the Kirov or Imperial Ballet – was the most prestigious in the world. Ballets of this era were typically based on folklore, myths, and literary works, a trend that continued into the 20th century. Character dances – folk dances or variations with a particular emphasis on acting – became incredibly popular and were sometimes requested by the court to appease foreign diplomats. *Coppélia* (first performed in 1870) was famous for its Polish mazurkas, *Don Quixote* (1869) for its Spanish style, and, of course, *The Nutcracker* (1892) featured Chinese, Russian, Arabian, and Spanish dances.



Gilda N. Squire (Gildasquire), CC BY-SA 4.0

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The latter was composed by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, whose other ballets, such as *Swan Lake* (1877) and *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890), remain among the most performed in the world. In order to display ballerinas' footwork and flexibility, the classical skirt was short and stiff. These "platter" tutus also made partner work easier. Typically danced by a man and a woman, the *pas de deux* has been a key feature of ballet since the Classical Period.

The Russian Revolution forced many dancers out of their home country. In response, art enthusiast Sergei Diaghilev created a troupe known as the Ballets Russes. The Ballets Russes combined the works of some of the greatest composers, choreographers, and dancers of its time. Huge names like Stravinsky, Debussy, Prokofiev, Satie, and Ravel were commissioned to write music, while Chanel, Matisse, and Picasso created some clothing, art, and sets. Diaghilev's death in 1929 and the Great Depression forced the dissolution of the Ballets Russes after twenty years. In the early 1930s, the company was revived with the Ballet Russe de Monte-Carlo. Some of the original company's choreographers agreed to join, most notably George Balanchine. During World War II, the Ballet Russe de Monte-Carlo fled Europe and toured the Americas and Australia. For many people in these areas, it was their first time seeing ballet. Ballet as we know it in the US was cemented by Balanchine, who created the New York City Ballet and its corresponding school. Balanchine's abstract, neoclassical style pushed the boundaries of dance technique.

Today, there are six widely recognized styles of ballet: Vaganova (Russian), Cecchetti (Italian), Bournonville (Danish), French, Royal (English), and Balanchine (American). All of these schools still subscribe to the same basic rhetoric. Almost every little girl in America attends a ballet class at some point. Some will continue dancing into adolescence, a few will transition to pointe, and around 3-5% of those students will join a professional dance company.

These dancers will attest to the physical demands ballet places on them; it is an extremely grueling activity. Placing three times one's body weight on just the toes is unhealthy, even with proper training and equipment. Around 60-80% of dancers sustain some sort of injury. Pointe shoes require high arches, which depend on genetics. While flexibility can certainly be improved, in order to reach the professional level, dancers must have flexible feet from birth, which is inherently unfair but also unavoidable.

Though ballet has retained its fundamentals since its inception in the 1500s, it continues to evolve and flourish.

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Feeling Queasy? Exploring the Science behind Motion Sickness

By Skye Miller



Photo credit: Skye Miller

For some, a simple car ride or boat trip can lead to hours of discomfort. Why does motion sickness happen, and what can we do about it? Motion sickness is a common condition that affects many people, with roughly one in three individuals being highly susceptible to it. This condition occurs when there is a conflict among the sensory inputs from the eyes, inner ear, and body. One example of how people commonly experience motion sickness is by reading a book in a moving car. In this situation, your eyes perceive the book as stationary, while your inner ear senses the car's motion, creating conflicting signals to the brain. The eyes, inner ear, and internal sensors help the brain understand the body's position and movement. When conflicting signals are present, the brain becomes confused, resulting in uncomfortable symptoms such as dizziness, nausea, vomiting, fatigue, headaches, and sweating.

The inner ear plays a crucial role in detecting motion and regulating the body's sense of balance. Inside the ear is a network called the vestibular system, which has three sets of fluid-filled semicircular canals. The vestibular system helps coordinate movement with balance, sending information about what is happening around you to the brain. When a person moves, the fluid in the canals shifts, sending signals to the brain about the direction and speed of motion. However, if the eyes do not perceive the same motion, the brain receives contradictory signals, which is believed to be one of the main causes of motion sickness.

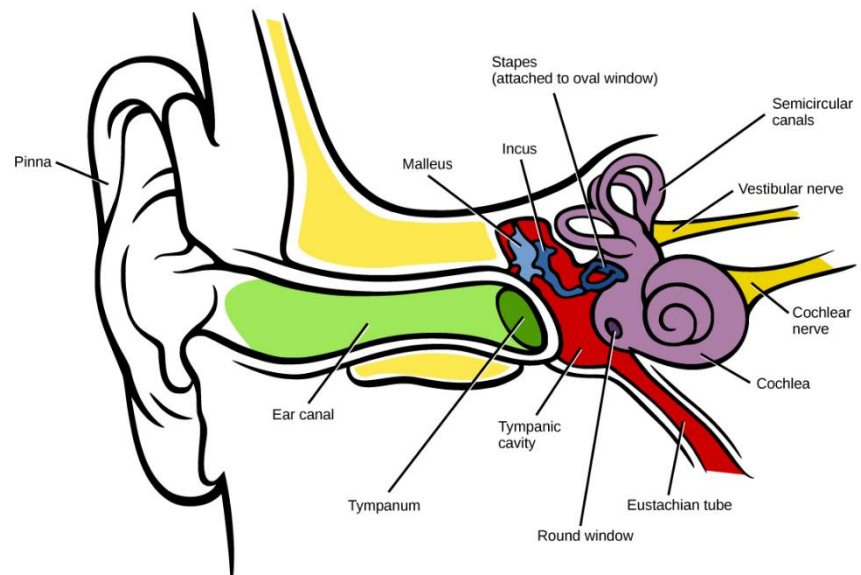
There are different theories about why these conflicting signals lead to nausea. One idea is that the brain interprets the conflicting signals as a sign of poisoning or some other harm. This suggests that the body's response may be a protection against the perceived danger, with the symptoms of motion sickness - such as nausea, dizziness, and sweating - believed to be part of the body's defense mechanism against potential toxins or dangers. Although this evolutionary response is no longer essential in modern life, it remains part of the body's biology.

The most common way people get motion sickness is by traveling in a moving vehicle, such as a car, boat, train, or airplane. However, playing video games can also cause motion sickness. While it does not last long for most people, there are ways to ease the symptoms if they are not going away. To feel better, try getting some fresh air, focusing on distant objects or the horizon, leaning back and closing your eyes, and staying hydrated. Additionally, some studies indicate that ginger root can help reduce nausea and vomiting associated with motion sickness. However, effectiveness may vary from person to person.

While avoiding motion sickness may be impossible, you can do a few things to reduce the chances of having severe symptoms. For example, changing where you sit in a vehicle can make a big difference. Here are some seating suggestions when traveling: sit in the front passenger seat in a car, choose a window seat on a bus, sit in the wing seat of an airplane, select a forward-facing window seat on a train, and sit in the middle section on the upper deck of a boat.

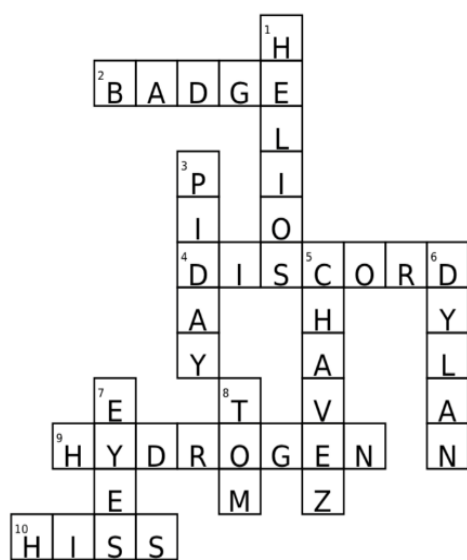
Over time, repeated exposure to motion can desensitize the body to conflicting signals, thereby reducing the likelihood of motion sickness. Understanding the science behind motion sickness not only explains discomfort but also provides opportunities for better management so that your journey may be smoother the next time you travel.

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Answer to Crossword Puzzle

by Mae Paul



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