Reading 01

**Boomerang Kids**

Most people know about the boomerang, the legendary Australian throwing device which, once released, returns to its owner. But have you heard of the "Boomerang Generation"? This refers to a North American phenomenon of people who move back home after briefly leaving their parents' houses for university. Most of these young adults were born between the mid-'70s and mid-'80s. They are likened to the boomerang because they return to their home, just like the throwing device.

Monster, the job search company, reported in a 2007 survey that 48 percent of prospective graduates planned on becoming "Boomerang kids," returning home after graduation. Although many expected to just make a quick stop before getting their own place, Monster discovered that 42 percent of 2006 graduates said they were still living with their parents.

What is the cause of this passive generation? It may not be solely the young people's fault. The long-term economic recession has made it difficult for college graduates to find jobs, while the cost of living has continued to rise. And as a result, many young people have lost hope and self-confidence. Moreover, the unconditional love and support of parents allow the boomerang kids to rely on them without feeling much guilt.

Boomeranging is not all negative. Kids get the chance to reconnect with their parents after university, and parents gain the opportunity to be a big part of their children’s adult lives, which can lead to closer, more mature bonds.

But critics of this phenomenon argue that this situation affects young adults. Without the stress or ambition to succeed, boomerang kids tend to become more passive in their search for good jobs, harming their professional aspirations. And finally, the extra financial burden on parents can become too heavy to bear, leading to deep and often permanent damage in the relationship.

Reading 02

**Alarm Signals in Fish**

The underwater world is a dangerous place, especially if you're a tiny minnow swimming near hungry pike. Minnows are often food for larger fish like pike, but they aren't shy at all. In fact, when a pike attacks a minnow, the minnow's body releases a chemical that attracts even more pike. So why would minnows invite more enemies when they're already hurt?

The minnow's practice of attracting more predators is a survival strategy that allows more minnows to live, not a suicidal tendency. The chemical the minnow releases when attacked is important for two different reasons: It warns other minnows away and attracts more pike. Minnows swim in schools with relatives. If the original minnow gets eaten, its relatives may still survive and reproduce.

The chemical released by the wounded minnow not only attracts more pike, but it also attracts bigger pike. This is because small pike are the only ones who wound minnows whereas bigger pike simply swallow minnows whole. Therefore, when a small pike wounds a minnow, the chemical often attracts even bigger pike. Interestingly, it is not unusual for pike to eat each other. So, when a big pike sees a smaller one chasing a tiny minnow, that big pike will prefer the larger meal, which means it will go after the smaller pike instead of the minnow, allowing the minnow to escape.

Minnows aren't the only fish benefiting from this warning system. Some varieties of fish swim away quickly when they taste the chemical in the water. Other fish swim close together to better protect them all by looking like one gigantic fish instead of hundreds of tiny fish. So the chemical a single wounded minnow releases into the water actually warns many types of related fish and helps get their enemies to destroy each other!

Reading 03

**Alcatraz Island**

Sitting in the frigid and dangerous waters of the San Francisco Bay, the island of Alcatraz was originally named for the pelicans which are called "alcatraces" in Spanish. Throughout modern history, the island with steep rocky cliffs has been better known as a legendary prison that housed thousands of prisoners.

Alcatraz was a natural choice for imprisoning people because it was physically isolated from the city of San Francisco, and the waters surrounding it were so cold and dangerous that everyone thought escape would be impossible. Therefore, the most dangerous criminals in the land were sent to "The Rock," as it was known. Conditions in the prison were dreadful by today's standards. Prison cells were tiny and prisoners spent most of their days in them. Recreation time outside of the cell was short. Furthermore, prisoners were not allowed to talk to one another except at mealtimes and recreation times. This policy left prisoners with little else to do but imagine escape.

The claim that Alcatraz was escape-proof dared its prisoners to test it, and over the course of 29 years, 36 prisoners took that dare. All told, there were 14 attempts resulting in nine deaths. The most famous attempt involved six prisoners who used spoons and an electric drill they made from a stolen vacuum cleaner motor to make a hole in the concrete wall near an air vent, which is a hole that lets air out. They could escape through it. They used raincoats to make a small boat to cross the bay. They also made dummies to fool the guards. It was generally believed that they probably drowned in their attempt, though their bodies were never found.

Alcatraz was closed in 1963 and is now open to visitors. People are drawn there by the prison as well as the natural beauty of the island. It is also home to several species of endangered birds.

Reading 04

**Product Placement**

Have you ever noticed a character on a TV show or in a movie drinking your favorite brand of cola? Or driving your favorite type of sports car? This is called "product placement," or PPL for short, and it is a subtle form of advertising in which a product is inserted into the scene of a movie or TV program. PPL has increased drastically in recent years, and has become some companies' favorite method of advertising their products. If you saw the movie *Spiderman*, you might have noticed ads for Samsung electronics, Toyota cars, and Dr. Pepper soda.

For advertisers, PPL is considered a win-win strategy. Companies love the convenience of PPL: There are no commercials to make, models to hire, nor concepts to dream up. By featuring their product in a popular TV show or movie, that product is naturally associated with an appealing character in a comfortable setting: Take one of the main characters on *Friends*, for example. Think about Rachel in a fine Ralph Lauren suit, working at a Ralph Lauren store in New York City. And entertainment producers love the money PPL brings in ― in fact, the entire production budget for some movies is sometimes paid for by the film’s PPL advertisers.

However, there is mounting opposition to the growing PPL trend. Critics say obvious PPL in movies or TV shows destroys viewers' ability to escape into the fantasy world on the screen. Directors and writers detest having to include a product in a scene, ruining the writing and aesthetic quality of the piece. And consumer groups warn that kids cannot discern PPL. When, for example, a child sees his favorite animation character wiping her lips with a *Kleenex* after drinking a *Coca-Cola*, it is likely that the child would falsely think that *Kleenex* and *Coca-Cola* are the general terms for all similar products. This suggests that PPL can be a powerfully subconscious device that encourages kids to develop preferences for certain brands.

Regardless of how critics feel about it, there is little doubt that PPL will continue to play a significant part in entertainment for the foreseeable future.

Reading 05

**Review of *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button***

Would you believe it if someone said, "A baby was just born, and the baby is 80 years old?" This odd thing happens, though it does only in movies. *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* begins with the birth of an 80-year-old man. Fantastic yet thought-provoking, the film is adapted from a short story by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Benjamin Button is a fascinating character played by Brad Pitt whose existence runs counter to that of those around him in that he ages backwards; born an old man and getting younger as time goes by. In New Orleans at the end of World War I, Button comes into the world in a curious fashion indeed―he has the body of a man in his eighties and, to make matters worse, his mother dies and his father abandons him. Two nursing home employees take him in and he manages to spend his first few years in a nursing home. There he meets a young girl named Daisy visiting her grandmother. As time goes on, she grows up while Benjamin grows younger, and the two come to love each other when they are finally at a similar age. Their love, however, is doomed by the passage of time as Daisy gets older and weaker while Benjamin gets younger.

Such a plot created obvious challenges to the filmmakers. A single actor must play the role of a person at each stage of his life. To make his performance believable, special effects such as make-up and computer-enhanced imaging had to be used. But the filmmakers wanted them to be less obvious so they wouldn't distract the viewer from the more philosophical questions raised in the movie. The viewer is asked to consider aging, love and relationships in a new way.

Some films feature spectacular special effects but do not offer much more. Others have brilliant plots and exceptional performances by the actors, while little concern is given to aesthetics. This film offers both ― superb effects and a unique story. It both entertains and makes viewers think.

Reading 06

**Resurrection Plant**

Most plants die if they lack sufficient water. But one plant, called the "Resurrection Plant," seems to come back to life after being dead. This plant survives long periods of terrible drought, because it actually travels in search of water. Many people claim that one difference between plants and animals is that animals move from place to place to find food and water while plants cannot. But in the desert areas of the American West as well as in the Near East, the resurrection plant proves that it can wander the desert to get what it needs, too.

When there is plenty of rain, the resurrection plant grows like any other plant. It sends roots down into the ground and has green feather-like leaves that collect sunlight. But when water is scarce, the resurrection plant pulls its roots back up and dries up, becoming a ball of seemingly dead roots and leaves. This brown ball gets blown around by the wind and rolls through the desert sometimes for years before it rolls into a puddle of water.

As soon as it touches water, the resurrection plant begins to act like a normal plant again. It begins to drink and it spreads out again, its leaves turning green once more as it starts to grow in its new location. It is "resurrected" or brought back to life again in a new place. Because this plant can survive a long time with no water by becoming dormant, it has become a popular houseplant. For anyone who frequently forgets to water his or her plants, the resurrection plant makes a perfect gift!

The resurrection plant is unique not only because of its ability to go after the water it needs, but also because of the way it reproduces. Unlike most plants, it doesn't have flowers, fruits, or seeds. Instead, it reproduces like bacteria or fungi do, by making single-celled spores.

Reading 07

**Handwriting Analysis**

Do you think we can understand people's characters from the way they write? Many would disagree with that idea. However, some business leaders and a group of people called "graphologists" believe our personalities are revealed in our handwriting.

Graphology is a term used to describe the practice of analyzing people's handwriting to determine what kind of personalities they have. It is thought that certain letter formations and patterns in writing reveal personality traits.

Many organizations in France use graphologists to help in the selection of employees. Applicants are required to submit a handwritten letter so that graphologists can determine if they have the right personality for the job. Handwriting that is big and elaborate is thought to indicate that the writer is outgoing and assertive. Thus, jobs that require such a personality would be given to people with this type of handwriting. People with plain handwriting who use small letters would be thought to be shy and thus not suitable for the job.

The slant of a person's handwriting is also thought to reveal something about his or her character. Writing with a slant to the right shows that a person thinks about the future, while writing with a slant to the left reveals a tendency to be stuck in the past. A person whose letters are round rather than angular would be thought to be friendly.

Though graphology is widely used, it is not supported by scientific evidence. The reason it seems to work is that the personality descriptions revealed are highly generalized. It is much like a horoscope or palm reading, which describes personalities using very general terms. And people tend to notice the parts of the description that are true while ignoring the parts that are not true.

Reading 08

**Hair Detectives**

You can tell a lot about people by looking at their hair — not just whether they brush, spray, or blow-dry. Scientists have found a way to use hair to figure out where a person is from and where that person has been. The finding could help solve crimes among other useful applications.

Water is central to the new technique. The liquid makes up more than half an adult human's body weight. Our bodies break water down into its parts: hydrogen and oxygen. Atoms of these two elements end up in our tissues, fingernails, and hair.

But not all water is the same. Hydrogen and oxygen atoms can vary in how much they weigh. In the case of hydrogen, for example, there are three types according to their weights. Each type is called a hydrogen isotope. And depending on where you live, tap water contains different isotopes.

Can hair record this information? That's what James R. Ehleringer wondered. To find out, he and his colleagues collected hair from hair stylists in 65 cities in 18 states across the United States. The researchers assumed that the hair they collected came from people who lived in the area.

Even though people drink a lot of bottled water these days, the researchers found that people’s hair has the same isotopes as found in the local tap water. That's probably because people usually prepare their food with the local water. Authorities can now use the information to analyze hair samples from criminals or crime victims and to narrow their search for clues. For example, one hair sample used in Ehleringer's study came from a man who had recently moved from Beijing, China, to Salt Lake City. As his hair grew, it reflected his change in location. If you're a criminal, shave.

Reading 09

**War Taboos**

Historically, war has been a huge influence on human culture and behavior. Behaviors that soldiers adopt in order to protect themselves during war often carry over subconsciously into civilian life later. Here are two interesting examples of wartime taboos remaining to this date.

The danger of exposing a soldier's location in war created a habit related to smoking for many Englishmen. Because it was so easy to see a flame or a small fire from a great distance, English soldiers learned to only keep a match lit briefly, causing them to light no more than two cigarettes with the same match. Even today in peaceful times, most English smokers will not light more than two cigarettes with a single match.

Another taboo related to war comes from the conflict between Austria and Hungary in the late 1800s. People frequently say a toast like "Cheers!" when they are drinking alcohol with their peers. However, in Hungary, they do not toast each other when they drink. There is a reason behind this. When Hungary and Austria were at war, every time the Austrian soldiers killed a Hungarian soldier, they made a toast in celebration. This created a feeling of heartbreak, which Hungarians came to associate with toasts later. As a result, Hungarians no longer toast because they don't want to be reminded of the loss of their soldiers during the war.

Warfare has been changing with technological advances. As a result, wartime taboos in the past have disappeared from battlefields, and we can only detect their traces in our daily lives. Nevertheless, even today, wars still bring about new tragedies and they in turn create new taboos in our society.

Reading 10

**Japanese *Kawaii* Culture**

Japan seems to be drowning in a sea of “cute!” “Cute” is literally everywhere you look in Japan: There are Hello Kitty coffee shops, Mickey Mouse golf bags, and Snoopy briefcases. And notice, too, that these are not just adolescent pursuits; indeed, in Japan, an adult is as likely as a child to wear a Winnie the Pooh sweater or carry a Pikachu handbag. And "cute," or *kawaii* in Japanese, has actually become one of the country‘s biggest exports: Analysts estimate that the export and licensing of Hello Kitty merchandise alone brings in half a billion dollars to the Japanese economy.

So why does Japan have such a love affair with cuteness? For one thing, surrounding themselves with childish characters is a way for people to hang on to their youthful idealism. In a stressful world, it is sometimes comforting to hang on to reminders of our childhood, a simpler time when we could just be ourselves.

But a bigger clue comes from the word *kawaii* itself. Although it is often understood to mean "cute," the word actually has a much broader definition. *Kawaii* also refers to the affection of a parent toward a child coupled with the protectiveness for the innocent and weak. Thus a pop cartoon character is considered *kawaii* because it represents the innocence of a child and evokes protective, caring instincts in the viewer. Such characters typically have childlike features, such as oversized eyes, which make them resemble infant humans.

Research on the *kawaii* culture suggests that the Japanese need to conform and not stand out from everyone else. Hiroto Murasawa, professor of beauty and culture at Osaka Shoin Women's University, argues that cuteness is "a mentality that breeds obedience." "In Japan," he says, "individuals who choose to stand out get beaten down." Thus people show their lack of aggression by showing off their *kawaii* characters, sending a coded message that they will not fight back against authority.

Reading 11

**Social Darwinism**

"Survival of the Fittest" was a theory put forward by Charles Darwin to explain how species evolve. This is a biological explanation for how species evolve in nature. But Herbert Spencer, the British philosopher, took the idea and applied it to human society, in a theory known as "Social Darwinism."

Social Darwinism was a theory widely accepted in the 1880s. It was based on an elitist view that the strongest or fittest should survive and prosper in society while the weak and unfit should be allowed to die.

However, Social Darwinism was used in an extreme way to justify unethical human behaviors. Racism, for example, is justified by the "Survival of the Fittest" theory if you make the faulty assumption that one race is inherently more fit than another. It then becomes "natural" for the races to fight with one another to determine which race is dominant. When Europeans were colonizing the New World, they saw it as part of the "natural" order for them to prove their dominance by exploiting the original inhabitants, who they saw as an inferior race.

Survival of the Fittest was also used as a justification for eugenics. Eugenics is the deliberate breeding of humans to weed out undesirable traits and maximize desirable traits. People considered "undesirable" were actually forced to undergo a procedure that would make them unable to have children. In Germany, the Nazis took it a step further and killed six million Jews based on their faulty belief that Jewish people were somehow inferior.

Social Darwinism, though used to justify evil in many cases, was also used for good. For example, instead of giving handouts to poor people, the Social Darwinists promoted the idea of helping poor people help themselves. So, instead of giving money or food to poor people, they suggested providing resources for the poor to better their lot in life. In other words, they gave them opportunity to become "more fit".

Reading 12

**What We Remember during Learning Sessions**

Do you know that our brains remember more or less new information, depending on when the information is presented? Psychologists have discovered that most people find it easier to remember details that are presented at the beginning and the end of a given learning session.

According to an experiment, in a learning session of 40 minutes, participants tend to remember best what comes earliest in a given sequence of information. And they remember second best what comes last in the session. Meanwhile, people tend to show the lowest rate of retention of what comes just past the middle of the session.

Why does this happen? It seems that the first set of new information can be processed within the capacity of the working memory, so it commands our attention. Later information exceeds the capacity and therefore is lost. However, as the learning session nears the end, information in the working memory is sorted into groups to allow for additional processing of the final arriving set of information.

Therefore, in order to make learning more effective, new information or skills should be introduced during the first 20 minutes (prime time), since it is most likely to be recalled later on. And the next 5 minutes (downtime) should be spared for practice or review of the material learned during the prime time, organizing this information for further processing. Finally, closure should take place during the last 15 minutes because this is the second most powerful learning period and an opportunity for the learner to wrap up and really digest what he or she learned in the previous stages. At this time, the learner might be able to grasp a deeper sense and meaning of the information being processed.

Reading 13

**Spider Hunting Wasp**

Have you ever come across a hypnosis session on TV or in a movie? Once hypnotized, he person seems to be asleep, yet they still respond to another person’s words and sounds, and sometimes even images. The hypnotized person becomes more or less like a robot in this state. However, you may be surprised to learn that in the world of animals, there is a more frightening case of hypnosis.

There is a spider named Plesiometa argyra living in the forests of Central America. It spends its days building and repairing its perfectly round web, and eating trapped insects. But sometimes this spider is attacked by a certain species of wasp. When it is stung by the wasp, the spider can’t move for a short time and the wasp lays its eggs on the tip of the spider’s belly. The wasp goes away, and the spider soon starts to move again. For the next two weeks, the spider continues its life maintaining its web and eating the insects it traps. Meanwhile, the eggs on the belly grow into larvae.They stick to the spider’s belly, poke holes in it, and drink the spider’s juice to nourish themselves.

The night before the larvae kill the spider, the spider’s behavior suddenly changes. It stops building the familiar round, flat web. Instead, the spider builds a solid, stiff cocoon that is much smaller and stronger. When the construction is finished, the larvae kill the spider. Then they move into the cocoon it has built. The new structure is completely different from the spider’s usual web, but it is an ideal cocoon for the wasp larvae. It protects them from the harsh environment of the forest.

How does the wasp take control of the spider’s mind? Scientists think the larvae release a hypnotic chemical to make it build their cocoon. Yet, they haven’t discovered what it is or how it works. That’s still a mystery. In fact, the whole process is so mysterious and new that scientists still haven’t given a name to the amazing, mind-controlling wasps.

Reading 14

**The Gordian Knot**

In traditional Greek and Roman myths, tales are told of the "Gordian Knot" ― an extremely complex knot tied by Gordius, the king of Phrygia in Asia Minor. It was such a unique knot that it came to symbolize a problem so difficult it is almost impossible to solve.

According to legend, Gordius was a poor man who drove his oxcart into the kingdom of Phrygia at a time when Phrygia had no king. What Gordius didn't know was that an oracle had told the people of Phrygia that their next king would arrive in an oxcart. So Gordius was lucky to become the king! To honor the Greek god Zeus for giving him such great luck, Gordius tied his oxcart in a place everyone could see it ― and he tied it with a knot no one had ever seen before.

Gordius ruled Phrygia well. After Gordius, his son Midas took the throne. But when Midas died, he left no son to rule the kingdom. The people were without a leader, so they made the difficult trip to consult the oracle. This time the oracle told them that whoever untied the knot tied by Gordius would be their next ruler.

Many years passed and many men tried to untie the famous Gordian Knot. No one succeeded. Then, the Greek conqueror Alexander the Great visited the city in 333 B.C. Of course, as Alexander had set his heart upon conquering the whole world, he looked at this knot with great interest. However, a few moments' careful examination showed him that he would not be able to untie it. He drew his sword and sliced the knot in half. The people of Phrygia were not sure if cutting the knot was the right solution, but they made Alexander the king.

Alexander's approach to the knot was unusual and bold. His solution of slicing the Gordian Knot in half is often called "The Alexandrian Solution." It led to the saying, "cutting the Gordian Knot," which means solving a complex problem by decisive action.

Reading 15

**Polychronic & Monochronic Cultures**

There are two types of culture — polychronic and monochronic. The root of both words is chronic,” meaning “time.” “Poly” means “many.” Polychronic cultures are cultures that favor doing many things at the same time. On the other hand, “mono” means “one,” so we can easily guess that monochronic cultures favor doing one thing at a time. Not only do these types of cultures have different approaches to working, they also view their worlds much differently.

Polychronic cultures are generally found near the Mediterranean Sea and in southwest Asia. Polychronic people often have many things happening at the same time, sometimes working on several jobs at once, or eating a meal while working. They frequently switch from one project to another. They also feel that building relationships is no less important than doing jobs.

Monochronic cultures view things according to strict “deadlines.” People in monochronic cultures carefully plan and carry out schedules. They separate working and socializing because socializing during work is considered to be “a waste of time.” Monochronic cultures are found in North America, Northern Europe, and in certain parts of eastern Asia.

Because of these differences, misunderstandings often occur between the two cultures, and some international businesses even lose millions of dollars. In monochronic cultures, it is very disrespectful to be late for a meeting, but polychronic people don’t see it as a problem. Monochronic people also do not interrupt business phone calls to greet visitors, but polychronic people believe it would be rude not to do so. These seemingly small differences can destroy business partnerships and ruin business deals.

It is hard to say which is right or better. It is just the way people have been brought up to view the world and work. People can neither judge others' cultural beliefs nor force their culture on others.Rather, they should try to learn to appreciate differences in order to work together and utilize the best of what both cultures have to offer.

Reading 16

**Maggot Therapy**

Most people don’t think of flies as being an important part of health care. But baby f lies, the small white or yellow worm-like larvae called maggots, have been used to clean wounds and help people recover from accidents for centuries. Although recently we have become reliant on medicines like antibiotics and other so-called “advanced technologies,” maggot therapy is again being considered for serious use in the medical field.

Maggots are important in nature because they eat anything organic, or natural, that is decomposing or rotting. Garbage and dung are great foods for maggots, as are dead, rotting animals. These things attract flies, which then lay their eggs. When the flies’ eggs hatch, maggots emerge to devour the worst smelling stuff. These maggots have an important job in the world’s ecosystem. They break down organic things so they can be absorbed again by the soil.

Some maggots also have an important job helping doctors. Because maggots only eat rotting flesh, they can be useful in treating humans. In the 1500s, French army doctors discovered that soldiers with wounds infested by maggots healed faster than soldiers without maggots. For hundreds of years, doctors placed maggots in people’s wounds to help clean them out.

With the invention of antibiotics, maggot therapy was no longer desirable. No one wanted fly larvae crawling around if they could just take a pill to deal with their problem instead! But antibiotics don’t work for all patients. In the 1980s, a California doctor began experimenting with maggot therapy, putting 8,000 clean eggs into a patient’s wounds. His patient experienced amazing results!

Scientists have learned that maggots not only eat sick and dead flesh, they even eat harmful bacteria. By doing this, maggots clean wounds and promote healing. They are especially good with burns, bedsores, and bone infections. So the next time you see maggots crawling around in some really bad-smelling stuff, don’t just think they’re disgusting — remember they’re amazingly helpful.

Reading 17

**Ella Fitzgerald**

Celebrities all have their own extraordinary life stories about their childhoods and their dramatic rises to stardom. And here we have one example: Ella Fitzgerald, a girl from Harlem who became the most celebrated female jazz vocalist of the 20th century. The thirteen-time Grammy winner is remembered as one of the legendary figures in music history.

Born in Newport News, Virginia in 1917, Ella never wanted to be a singer at first. At 17, she entered a contest with a dream of becoming a professional dancer. But watching other dancers perform, Ella changed her mind right before the stage call ― this was a turning point in her life. She performed as a singer and won first prize.

After this unexpected debut, people began to hear about the girl with the pure singing voice, great rhythm, and perfect pitch. And in 1935, Ella had a major breakthrough when the famous drummer Chick Webb decided to hire her for his band. Together they produced many hit songs, including "A-Tisket, A-Tasket," which became Ella's first million-record-seller. She also had the striking ability to make her voice imitate other instruments. This special talent of Ella’s began to shine as she helped to pioneer a style called "scat" in the early 1940s. Scat, or wordless singing, uses random vocal sounds to copy the sounds of real musical instruments. Basically, scat singing is replacing the lyrics of a song with such nonsense syllables as "do be do be dos" while it keeps the tune. Ella was a master of scat, elevating the style to a form of art.

After Webb's death, Ella continued her active singing career, touring with different jazz orchestras throughout the world. Celebrated as the top female singer of her time, she sold more than 40 million records. Ella received numerous awards and honors for her outstanding performance and talent. She died in 1996, but her music lives on, enchanting generations of jazz lovers.

Reading 18

**What Do You Do with Your Palms?**

When people communicate they use more than words. People's body language conveys important information just like speech does. When someone lies with their words, their body language often betrays them. The next time you wonder if someone is telling you the truth, try watching their hands.

A person who is being honest will usually expose one or both of their palms to the other person. If a person is beginning to "open up" or share important information, you may notice them turn their palms towards you. Like most body language, this unconscious gesture usually gives the other person the feeling, or intuition, that the speaker is speaking honestly.

When people lie, they tend to hide their palms by putting their hands behind their back or holding them. Others will keep their hands in their pockets if they are lying or trying to conceal information. Salespeople are sometimes trained to watch out for this specific example of body language when a person is trying to bargain with them or trying to convince them they can't afford a product or service. Sometimes professional liars intentionally try to use open-palm gestures to fool others. Seemingly it works, but an observant listener may notice contradicting body language clues such as lack of eye contact and touching or scratching the nose. These actions demonstrate that the speaker may be lying to the listener.

Research has also suggested that if people normally turn their palms to face their listeners, they tend to be more honest themselves. If you want people's honesty, talk to them and ask them questions while keeping your palms turned out. This will create a subconscious pressure on the people you are talking to that will encourage them to tell you the truth.

Human body language, emotion, and communication are directly connected. By showing that you are honest, with your palms exposed to people, your body language will encourage others to be honest with you as well.

Reading 19

**Animals Are Their Own Doctors**

Traditional folklore from around the world gives numerous examples of animals using plants as remedies to cure themselves and others of injury and illness. Until recent studies reinforced the claims in such tales, doctors had dismissed these stories as fiction or simply wishful thinking. Now, however, with the work of scientists like Drs. Cindy Engel and William Karesh, people are paying more attention to the natural medicines animals have used successfully for thousands of years. From house cats to elephants, our world is full of amazing creatures that have learned to treat themselves without relying on a doctor's intervention.

Blood tests done on wild animals by William Karesh's team show many wild animals have been infected by diseases and parasites that would kill most domestic animals. And yet, the wild animals that were tested were remarkably healthy. How do they survive the dangers of the wild without doctors? Chimpanzees chew parts of specific plants to kill internal parasites. Even certain domestic animals retain an instinct to chew grass and eat specific bugs to clean out their stomachs and wipe out toxins building up in their bodies.

Some animals use natural remedies before they get sick. Monkeys, bears, and birds crush plants and insects to rub on their bodies to keep away fungi and biting insects. Mountain gorillas eat special clay to get rid of poisons that may be in their bodies. African elephants journey many miles to an extinct volcano in Kenya to dig rock out of cave walls so they can eat it and increase their sodium, or salt, levels. This increased level of salt helps stimulate the bodily defenses in large plant eaters like elephants, keeping them healthier.

These facts make scientists wonder if wild animals in captivity die early because they can't get to natural remedies and are forced to take less effective man-made medicines. The research now being done on wild animals curing themselves shows us there is still much to be learned from nature.

Reading 20

**Edgar Allan Poe**

Edgar Allan Poe was an American writer who helped shape the course of American literature. Poe's life was filled with tragedy and despair, yet he managed to write some of the most influential American literature of the 19th century and continues to influence writers to this day.

The early life of Edgar Allan Poe was quite miserable. Born in 1809, Poe was not quite three years old when his parents died. Adopted by a wealthy family, he got into trouble at school. He entered West Point Military Academy, but he dropped out without graduating. His misery continued into his adult life. Later, during a failed marriage, he suffered from alcoholism and mental illness. He was so frustrated in real life that he turned to writing; expressing himself in an unreal and imaginary world was his only comfort.

The tragedies in Poe's life influenced the tone, style, and content of his writing. His stories usually involve death. This obsession with mysterious and sometimes horrifying narratives helped build his reputation as a master of "dark" literature. Poe's short stories, like *The Black Cat* and *The Tell-Tale Heart*, often portray man's descent into insanity and loss of control. In *The Tell-Tale Heart*, the narrator goes crazy and murders his roommate, hiding the body under the floorboards while in *The Black Cat,* the narrator murders his cat and then his wife in a fit of madness and hides his wife’s body behind a wall.

Poe died mysteriously at the age of 40 in 1849. His life was tragic and short, but his legacy is enormous. Poe is credited with creating crime fiction, and many claim he contributed greatly to the emergence of science fiction. Fascinated by the scientific theories and new inventions of his time, he wrote about imaginary societies in the future. Writers such as Arthur Conan Doyle, the author of Sherlock Holmes, claimed Poe as the father of detective fiction. Jules Verne, a French writer who helped popularize science fiction, said Poe's work had a direct influence on the stories he wrote.

Reading 21

**The Water Crisis**

The world's supply of fresh water is running out. Within the next fifty years, population growth ― coupled with industrialization and urbanization ― will result in an increasing demand for water and will have serious consequences on the environment. Dozens of the planet's greatest rivers are already running dry long before they reach the sea. They include the Nile in Egypt, the Yellow River in China, the Indus in Pakistan, and the Jordan in the Middle East.

Nowhere is the impact of water scarcity felt more than in the Middle East, where every major river crosses at least one international border, and up to 50 percent of the water needs of any specific country find its source in another country. Here millions of people continuously compete for a share in ever-diminishing supplies. Such is the significance of water in the Middle East that its distribution is prominent in all existing peace treaties and will be sure to play a major role in all future negotiations between countries.

"Hydro-politics or water politics plays a central role among countries in river basins, such as the Tigris-Euphrates, the Nile and the Jordan, as well as those sharing the underground water sources of the West Bank," explains Robert B. Packer, professor of political science at the Pennsylvania State University. He points out that the actions and decisions of upstream countries often have great impact on downstream farms and cities that have little control over the water source. For example, the tension in the Euphrates region shows how vital water is to international politics: Iraq and Syria have protested Turkey's decision to build hydroelectric dams, which will eventually reduce the rivers' flow downstream. But Turkey has been ignoring the Arab countries' opposition, saying "We don't control your oil, you don't control our water!"

Although dominance over water will bring about political tension among countries, our future need not be dominated by water wars. Specialists also believe that there is still hope as long as we have preventive measures, such as forming international organizations to resolve river claims, reinforcing conservation efforts, and encouraging cross-border management of scarce freshwater resources.

Reading 22

**Crime Fiction**

Do you enjoy crime fiction or movies featuring brilliant criminals and clever detectives? Even if you don't, you're probably heard the names of such popular characters as Sherlock Holmes and James Bond. Loved by many, these characters helped bring criminals to justice in creative ways. Why are stories filled with crime and suspense so popular? What makes them intriguing and exciting?

Establishing and maintaining a tense atmosphere is important when creating crime fiction. To ensure effective and dramatic communication with readers, writers describe scenes very specifically, using adjectives and adverbs to bring readers into the story. Instead of writing, "He entered the room," a writer might write, "He entered the room on tiptoes" to show detail. Such care is reflected in crime movies as well. A movie's director focuses on details, for instance, using dim lighting when the crime is committed. Audiences concentrate on exactly what the director wants, and in a dark theater sound effects become powerful devices. A director may have something jump in front of the hero, accompanying such a surprise with a blast of music. The combination startles audiences.

When readers or movie viewers connect with the atmosphere of a crime story, they begin to search for evidence as if they were detectives. But in the process if they can identify either too many or too few clues, their excitement turns into boredom. This is why the creators of crime stories are extra careful in delivering every line and scene of their work. In this respect, subject matter must also be powerful enough to hold the audience's interest throughout the story. Using murder, writers often come up with intriguing stories where the victim is dead without a witness. This type of plot invites the curious audience to solve the crime.

Although there is a variety of literary and cinematic devices, setting up an atmosphere and giving evidence are most fundamental to a successful crime story. By understanding their importance, you will be able to appreciate the genre with better insight.

Reading 23

**Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty**

Ever since the U.S. dropped the first nuclear bomb on Japan in 1945, people around the world have tried to control the spread of nuclear weapons. The first plan was to prevent any country from gaining the technology necessary to make nuclear weapons. Thus, in 1957, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), a branch of the United Nations, was established to help countries to create peaceful nuclear energy while preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. That did little to halt the growth of nuclear weapons programs. So, on July 1, 1968, the Non-Proliferation Treaty, or NPT, was enacted. One hundred eighty-nine countries have signed the NPT, five of which have nuclear weapons: the U.S., the UK, France, Russia, and China. There are only four countries who are not parties to the treaty: India, Israel, Pakistan, and North Korea.

The four countries complain that the UN is unfair in its demands, as it officially allows some countries to have nuclear weapons, but denies other countries the same right. They point out that the U.S. and Russia are very selfish and unfair because both countries experiment with nuclear arms without any interference from the IAEA, while the two nations still demand that other countries refrain from the same behavior. Of the four countries, Israel has neither confirmed nor denied having nuclear weapons and generally refuses to discuss the matter. India, Pakistan, and North Korea have tested weapons openly and are presumed to possess nuclear bombs. North Korea actually did sign the NPT, but violated it and eventually withdrew from the agreement in 2003.

While nuclear weapons continue to be a source of worry for everyone in the world, the news is not so gloomy. The number of nuclear weapons has been dropping steadily since 1985, when there were 65,000 nuclear warheads. Today that number stands at around 20,000 and is expected to decline by 30-50% over the next ten years.

Reading 24

**Endangered Species**

A growing number of rare animals and plants are disappearing, mainly due to loss of habitat. Considering that there are up to 30 million species of living things on Earth, might it be a problem to lose some of them? Yes! In fact, according to a survey of 400 scientists, the extinction of species was ranked as one of the planet's gravest environmental crises. For this reason, many people argue that we need to protect all endangered species.

First is the argument that we should conserve all species and their habitats because they are beautiful and enrich our lives. We may be easily bored with man-made, artistic works, but we are never bored with the beauty of nature because of her tremendous diversity. This "aesthetic" argument emphasizes that every endangered plant and animal is precious because of its unique physical beauty. Nature has always been the ultimate source of inspiration for all forms of art and religion.

Second, there are clear practical benefits in conserving rare species. This "economic" view is common among medical groups. According to one study, more than a quarter of all medical prescriptions contain chemicals discovered in plants and animals. If organisms become extinct before their unique chemistries are discovered, their secrets will die with them. For example, fungi are used to make penicillin, which cures various human diseases. If these fungi became extinct, penicillin would be lost forever. Furthermore, all of nature's species are interconnected. So even if a particular species is not useful to humans, there is probably a more useful species that relies on it. The loss of any one species could endanger the survival of others.

While the above arguments are more focused on the advantages that humans can gain from nature, this last one, namely the "ethical" argument, maintains that all species have the right to exist. Since humans affect the environment more than any other species, we have a moral obligation to protect all other species from the threat of extinction.