

LIBRARY NEWSLETTER NO.4

Dear Readers,

Welcome to Library Newsletter No.4. The Christmas Library Competition is in full swing with lots of entries already! The stories I have read so far have been brilliant, lots of exciting plots, characters and settings. As for Santa's treats, well, what can I say.... they look delicious! Well done to all the children who have worked hard on their entries and very enthusiastically accessed their amazing imaginations. Good luck to you all! **NOTE:** *Closing date for the competition has changed from the 21st of December to the 17th of December, this will also be announced in the school.*

This month the library is celebrating the 200th anniversary publication of Jane Austen's fourth novel, Emma (1815): *"Silly things do cease to be silly if they are done by sensible people in an impudent way."* And the 150th anniversary of the birth of Rudyard Kipling: *"If history were taught in the form of stories, it would never be forgotten."*

In the world of mathematics, a short discussion will be presented on the famous mathematician Fibonacci and his amazing Fibonacci sequence. *"No student ought to complete a course in Mathematics without the feeling that there must be something in it, without catching a glimpse, however fleeting of its possibilities, without at least a few moments of pleasure in achievement and insight."* Helen A. Merrill

In the grammar world the newsletter will provide an insight into vowels, why they exist and who decided to split the alphabet into consonants and vowels! Plus, a brief history on the origin of alphabets and phonetics.

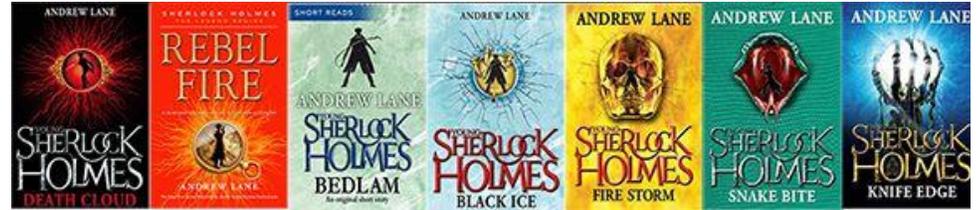
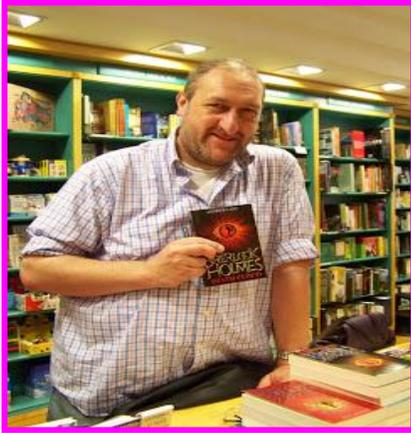
Author of the fortnight is Andrew Lane. Author of the *Young Sherlock Holmes* book series, some of which I managed to purchase at a very reasonable price over the last week. They are already catalogued and on the library shelves eagerly awaiting avid young readers.

A huge **Thank You** to Dympna Devin (sister-in-law to our fantastic caretaker, Davy), for donating to the school library. The books are greatly appreciated by students and staff alike, with some of them already in the hands of Mr. Flanagan's 3rd Class.

Imagine, this is the second last newsletter for this year! Only 15 more sleeps to go!!! Ho! Ho! Ho!

Good reading to you all, Deirdre, Librarian.

Author of the Fortnight



Andrew Lane

Young Sherlock Holmes is a series of young adult Thriller novels by Andrew Lane featuring Arthur Conan Doyle's detective Sherlock Holmes as a teenager in the 1860s, who is faced with numerous crimes and adventures throughout the series.

Books in the series

So far there have been seven books released in the series, with the seventh book released in September 2014. There could potentially be nine in total.

- ✚ **Death Cloud** (June 2010): Fourteen-year-old Sherlock Holmes is sent to live with his Aunt and Uncle in Hampshire and teams up with Matty Arnatt to investigate two mysterious deaths which appear to be somehow related to a black cloud which Sherlock Holmes has to solve.
- ✚ **Red Leech**, retitled **Rebel Fire** for the American market, (November 2010): A few months after the events of the first novel, Holmes investigates the possibility that John Wilkes Booth is alive and well, and living in England. The investigation takes Sherlock to America with his tutor, Amyus Crowe.
- ✚ **Black Ice** (June 2011): Mycroft invites Sherlock and his tutor to London for a visit, but when they arrive at the Diogenes Club they find Mycroft with a dagger in his hand and a dead body on the floor. The adventure takes them from the depths of the London sewers to the frozen Russian landscapes.

- ✦ **Fire Storm** (November 2011): Fourteen-year-old Sherlock has come up against some challenges in his time, but what confronts him now is completely baffling. His tutor, Crowe, and Crowe's daughter, Virginia, have vanished. Their house looks as if nobody has ever lived there.
- ✦ **Snake Bite** (September 27, 2012): Sherlock finds himself facing another mystery after being kidnapped and taken to China on a ship named as the Gloria Scott.
- ✦ **Knife Edge** (October 2013): Takes place in Ireland. Following the events of the last book Sherlock returns home to find himself stuck in the middle of a kidnapping.
- ✦ **Stone Cold** (September 2014): Following his last thrilling adventure Sherlock Holmes has been sent to live in Oxford to focus on his education. But something strange is happening in the university pathology labs. Body parts are being stolen from corpses and are being posted one by one to an address in London. What can these sinister goings-on mean, and what message is someone trying to send? In an attempt to find out, Sherlock finds himself in an isolated manor house where strange things have been happening. Can he get to the bottom of another baffling mystery? Who knows?
- ✦ **Night Break** (September 2015): Sherlock's mother has died, his father has gone missing in India and his sister is acting strangely. The Holmes family seems to be falling apart, and not even brother Mycroft can keep it together. A mysterious disappearance leads them to Egypt and the Suez Canal, where an explosive finale will tear the Holmes family apart!

Background

Based on the success of Charlie Higson's bestselling Young Bond series (as discussed in the last newsletter), the estate of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle authorised a series of books detailing the life of the teenage Sherlock Holmes.

One of Andrew Lane's key aims is to explain some of the complexities of Holmes' character, who is scientific and analytical on the one hand, and artistic and moody on the other. Two new characters introduced in this series, his two tutors, Amyus Crowe and Rufus Stone, will help shed light on the formation of the two sides of his character evident in later life. Further titles in the series may include;

- **The Giant Rat of Sumatra** (mentioned in "The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire")
- **The Remarkable Worm Unknown to Science** (mentioned in "The Problem of Thor Bridge")
- **Colonel Warburton's Madness** (mentioned in "The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb")
- **The Segregation of the Queen** (mentioned in "His Last Bow")

A Sample of Online Reviews by Young Sherlock Holmes Readers:

- **Louis Desforges, age 13** - 'Interesting and exciting read which is a great introduction to the Young Sherlock Holmes series. I would recommend it to readers who enjoy action and adventure stories.'
- **Liam, age 12** - 'This book was very well written by a very good author who I was interested in. When I had finished reading it, I instantly needed to read the next book in the series.'
- **James Harrison, age 11** - 'I really hope a whole lot more of *Young Sherlock* books come out, so, all-in-all I say: 'Go Young Sherlock!'
- **Benjy Randall, age 10** - 'A great all round adventure book, with lots of action. Will keep any young reader full entertained.'
- **Daisy Grundy, yr 7** - 'The book was set with mysteries which would all come together at an exciting climax which the ideas and questions would click together.'
- **Phoebe Allan, age 14** - 'This is a clever book that is full of suspense...His fearless journey is full of action and does not fail to amaze me in a way that only the incredible creation that is Sherlock Holmes can.' Read full review >
- **Mukunth Kowsik, age 12** - 'This book is so good that you simply will not put it down. It is Sherlock Holmes made more easier to understand and to be enjoyed by teenagers.'
- **Elenie Williams, age 11** - '*Young Sherlock; Death Cloud* is a gripping adventure story that is so tense it will make you not want to put it down. Why wouldn't you pick it up?'
- **Jenny Bridgeman, age 9** - 'Cracking thriller that re-introduces a classic character to a modern day audience!'
- **Ella Hollingshead, age 13** - 'Suspense, mystery, criminals, detectives- this book is packed full of such excitement. Set in an English town, *Young Sherlock* looks set to be an exciting series, I can't wait to read the next book!'
- **Jemma Rubens, age 10** - 'This book is the first in a six part series about young Sherlock Holmes. He is accompanied throughout by his tutor, his urchin friend and the tutor's daughter.'
- **Sam Harper, age 10** - 'a thrilling mystery, perfect for anyone who likes solving crimes...A great introduction to the worlds most famous detective.'



Fabulous Fibonacci



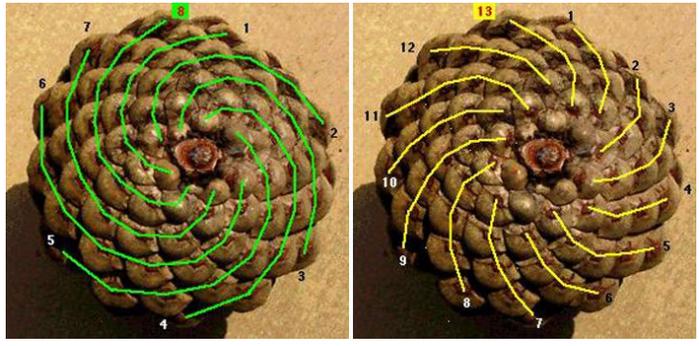
In the early 1200's, an Italian mathematician Leonardo of Pisa (nicknamed Fibonacci) discovered the famous Fibonacci sequence. This sequence falls under the mathematical domain of number theory and its most famous problem concerned rabbits.

Fibonacci numbers are an interesting mathematical idea. Although not normally taught in the school curriculum, particularly in primary schools, the prevalence of their appearance in nature and the ease of understanding them, makes them an excellent principle for young children to study. The *Fibonacci Quarterly* is a modern journal devoted to studying mathematics related to this sequence.

Fibonacci's work in number theory was almost wholly ignored and virtually unknown during the Middle ages. Three hundred years later the same results appear in the work of Francesco Maurolico, (September 16, 1494 - July 21, 1575), a mathematician and astronomer from Sicily.

INTRODUCTION TO FIBONACCI NUMBERS

Have you ever pulled the petals off of a daisy? If you look closely at the centre of a daisy, you will find that the yellow centre is not solid. It is made up of sets of spirals that go out from the centre. It's not just daisies! Nature is all about math.



Look at the pictures of a pinecone. It has those same kinds of spirals. They don't go around and around in a circle - they go out like fireworks. Look at the pictures above to see what that looks like. How many spirals go

in the clockwise direction (green lines)? How many spirals go in a counter-clockwise direction (yellow lines)? Isn't that strange? Wouldn't you expect that they would be the same?

To understand the spirals in pinecones, pineapples, daisies and lots of other things in nature, we refer to Fibonacci. About 800 years ago, he wrote a book in which he included a math problem that went like this:

“A certain man put a pair of rabbits in a place surrounded by a wall. How many pairs of rabbits can be produced from that pair in a year if it is supposed that every month each pair begets a new pair from which the second month on becomes productive?”

(Liber abbaci, pp. 283-284)

Fibonacci's work on this problem led him to this sequence of numbers:

0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, 144 ...

Can you figure out what the next number in the sequence will be?

We call this the Fibonacci sequence, and the numbers are called Fibonacci numbers. To get the next number in the sequence, you add the previous two numbers together. Now go back and look at those pinecone spirals. What do you notice about the number of spirals in each direction, now that you know about Fibonacci numbers?

FIBONACCI IN NATURE

Now that you know what Fibonacci numbers are, you're ready to go on a Fibonacci hunt.



Flowers

Look at the middle flower, (it's a Blizzard Bay daylily, image courtesy of Barossa Daylilies). How many petals does it have? Do you see six? Are you thinking that six is not a Fibonacci number? Look more closely. Do you

see that there are really two sets of three petals? The outside petals with the straight edges are not really petals. They're called sepals. So how many actual petals are there?

Not all flowers have three petals. Some have lots more. Some are hard to count because there are so many petals or they are in rows. And there are a few flowers that don't have Fibonacci numbers for petals. See if you can find a drawing of a daisy. Are the petals a Fibonacci number?

Seed heads

The seed heads of flowers are in Fibonacci sequence spirals like you saw in the pinecones. Look at the seed head of the sunflower (pictured above). Do you see how packed in the seeds are? But none of them gets smashed. The spiral pattern lets the flower fit the most seed heads in the least space.

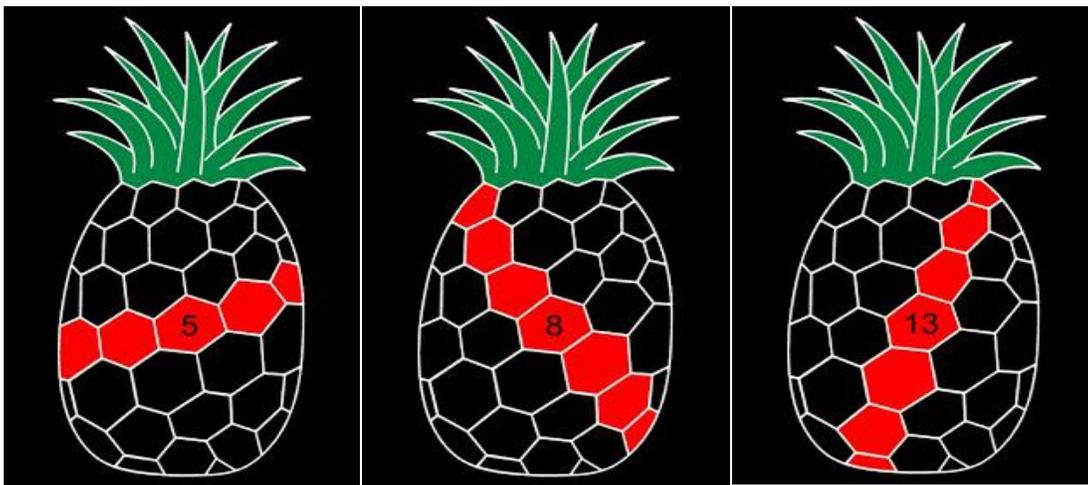
How do you think you could use this information in your life? Do you think it would work to try to pack a suitcase like this? Why or why not?

Food

Look at the picture of a purple cauliflower too. If you look carefully, you can see the centre of it where the little flowers (florets) begin.

Can you see the spiraling?

Pineapple: The scales are patterned into spirals of hexagonal shapes of which three are distinct sets of spirals. One set of 5 spirals ascends at an angle to the right, a second set of 8 spirals rises steeply to the left and the third set of 13 spirals rises very steeply to the right.



WORKING WITH FIBONACCI

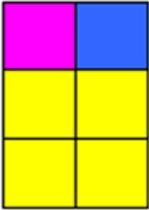
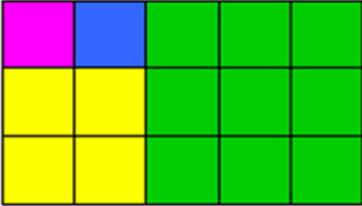
Materials

- Large piece of paper
- Graph paper (If you need graph paper, print some at enchantedlearning.com/math/graphs/graphpaper)
- Ruler
- Compass
- Coloured pencils

Fibonacci Rectangles

Let's draw some rectangles using Fibonacci numbers. This will take us to an amazing place. Complete the Fibonacci sequence below (try to do it without help!):

0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, __, __, __, __,

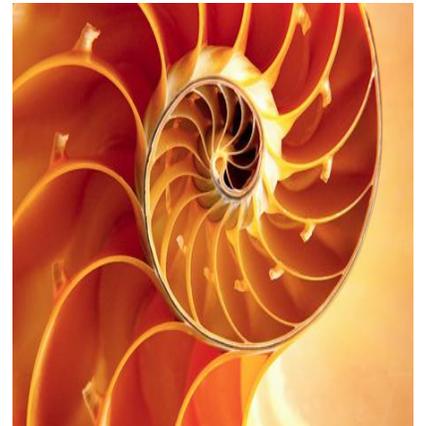
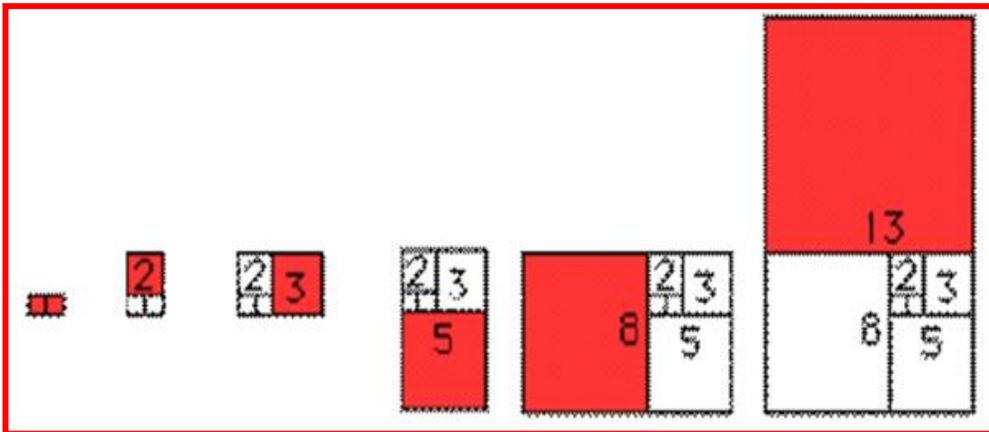
<p>1. Start by coloring in one square. This is a 1 x 1 square because it is one length on each side. Now add another 1 x 1 square next to it using a different colored pencil, so it looks like this:</p> 	<p>2. Now add a 2 x 2 square so it looks like this:</p> 	<p>3. Now add a 3 x 3 square:</p> 	<p>4. Now add a 5 x 5 square. Can you do it?</p>
<p>5. Now look at the Fibonacci sequence you wrote down at the top of the page. What size square should you add next? Do it!</p>			

The interesting thing about making rectangles like this is that the ratio (the number that shows how the sides relate to each other) stays the same, no matter how big the rectangle gets. This ratio gives rectangles called the “Golden Rectangle” because they are said to be the most beautiful rectangles to look at. The ratio is called the Golden Ratio (*Phi*). You can find it by dividing the long side by the short side. So if you have a rectangle that is 3×5 , you would divide 5 by 3. This will give us a number right around 1.61.

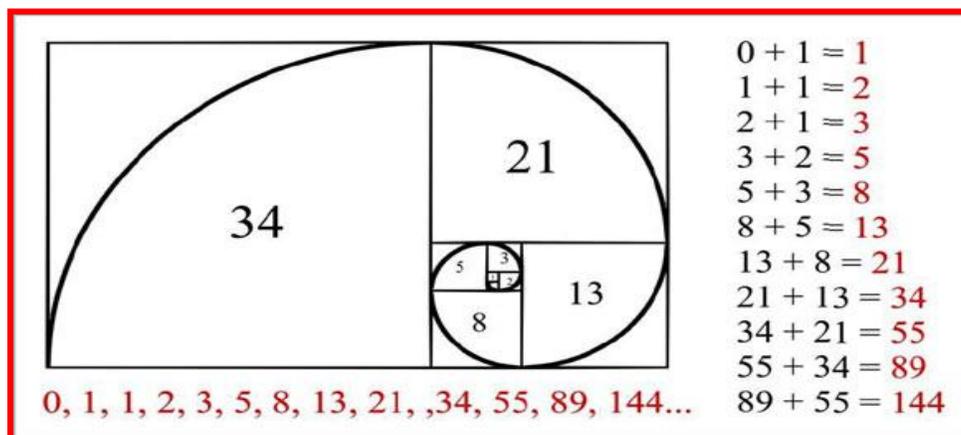
Can you find some Golden Rectangles around you?

Now to create a **Golden Rectangle** on your own (on your large piece of paper, not the graph paper) and see something really amazing!

1. First, draw two squares side by side. Use your ruler to make them 0.5 cm square.
2. Now make a 2×2 square on top of the first square. So if the first square was 0.5 cm, the 2×2 square would be 1 cm square, right?
3. Continue this pattern, making each square the next size in the Fibonacci sequence. So after the 2×2 square, you would make a 3×3 square (1.5 cm \times 1.5 cm), then a 5×5 (2.5 cm \times 2.5 cm), and so on. This is just like what you did with the graph paper, only using a ruler. Keep going until you have made a square that is 21×21 (10.5 cm \times 10.5 cm).
4. Each square will have an edge that is the sum of the two squares before it, just like in the Fibonacci sequence.
5. See the diagram below to find out how it should look. The last one is not done yet. Can you see where it would go?



Now, with your compass, make an arc in the squares with a radius the size of the edge of the square (this means that the arc will be one-quarter of a circle). The arcs in the first squares will be really, really tiny. But look how they grow! Look at the picture of a nautilus shell above. What do you notice?



Art Connection



Look at the above painting by Mondrian, what connections do you find between what you drew and what Mondrian painted? Do all of his rectangles look like Fibonacci-based rectangles to you?

Fibonacci and the Human Form

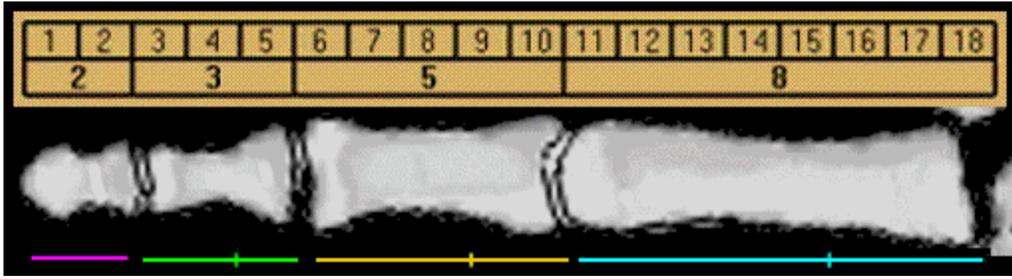
The Fibonacci sequence has also been linked to the human face and hands. Many famous artists, for example, have used golden rectangles in the structure of their artwork. Leonardo da Vinci's painting of the Mona Lisa is based on the arrangement of the golden rectangle. Many argue that this is the reason behind its beauty. The Fibonacci sequence can also be found in the structure of the human hand. Each part of the index finger, beginning from the tip down to the wrist, is larger than the preceding section by about the ratio of 1.618 (the golden ratio).

The Hand

Fibonacci building blocks:



Each line is 1.61804... times longer than the one before it. (Conversely, a section drawn at 0.61804 (or 61.8%) of each line equals the length of the one before it.) Take your hand and look at the proportions of your index finger.



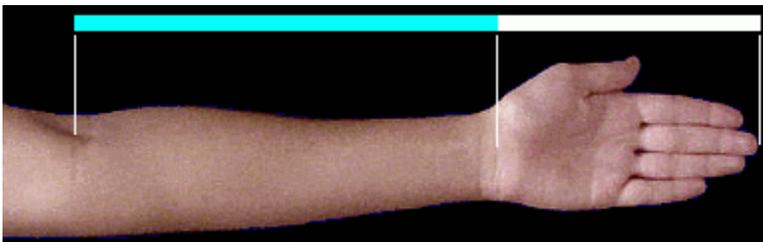
Each section of your index finger, from the tip to the base of the wrist, is larger than the preceding one by about the Fibonacci ratio of 1.618, also fitting the Fibonacci numbers 2, 3, 5 and 8.

By this scale, your fingernail is 1 unit in length.

Curiously enough, you also have 2 hands, each with 5 digits, and your 8 fingers are each comprised of 3 sections. All Fibonacci numbers!

The ratio of the forearm to hand is Phi

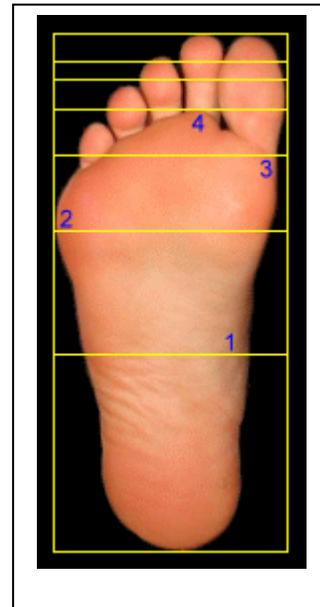
Your hand creates a golden section in relation to your arm, as the ratio of your forearm to your hand is also 1.618, the Divine Proportion.



Even your feet show Phi

The foot has several proportions based on phi lines, including:

- The middle of the arch of the foot
- The widest part of the foot
- The base of the toe line and big toe
- The top of the toe line and base of the “index” toe



Note that not every individual has body dimensions in exact phi proportion but averages across populations tend towards Phi and Phi proportions.

Real World Applications of Fibonacci Numbers

Does the Fibonacci spiral occur in nature simply by chance? One must remember that the sequence appears in *many* but not *all* plants. Does the spiral occur in nature deliberately?

Does the spiral occur regularly in nature because it is structurally very strong? A flower seed petal would not be strong if the seeds grew outwards in a linear path from the centre. Nature has a way of propagating and continuing successful organisms (adaptation) and extinguishing unsuccessful organisms. It follows that so many examples of the spiral occur in nature because the spiral design works.

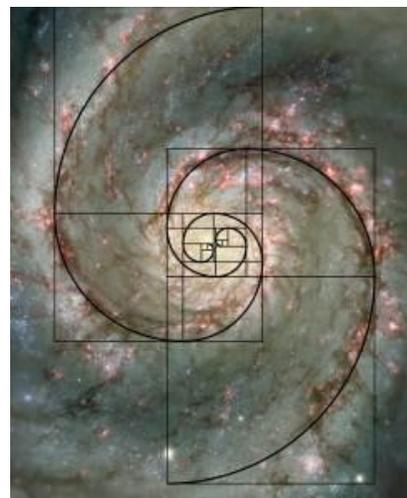
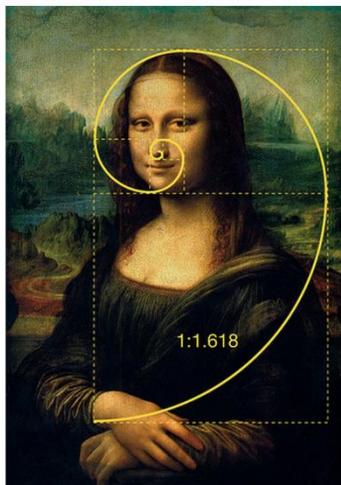
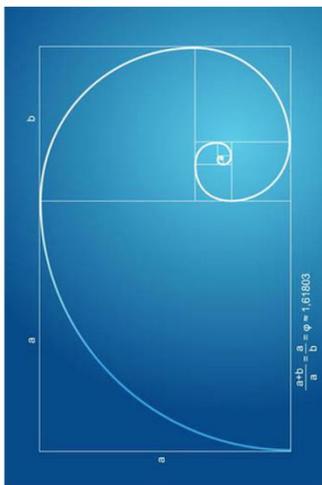
If the above supposition is correct then how are non-botanical examples of the Golden Spiral explained? A few examples of non-botanical spirals are:

- A spiral Galaxy (see image below)
- A Hurricane (see attached page of images)

A plausible explanation for the Spiral Galaxy and Hurricane spiral might be because both are formed from energy. The hurricane is formed from meteorological energy and a spiral galaxy is formed from cosmic energy. Perhaps as these energies expanded outward in rotational patterns a Fibonacci spiral naturally forms because of a logarithmic equation.

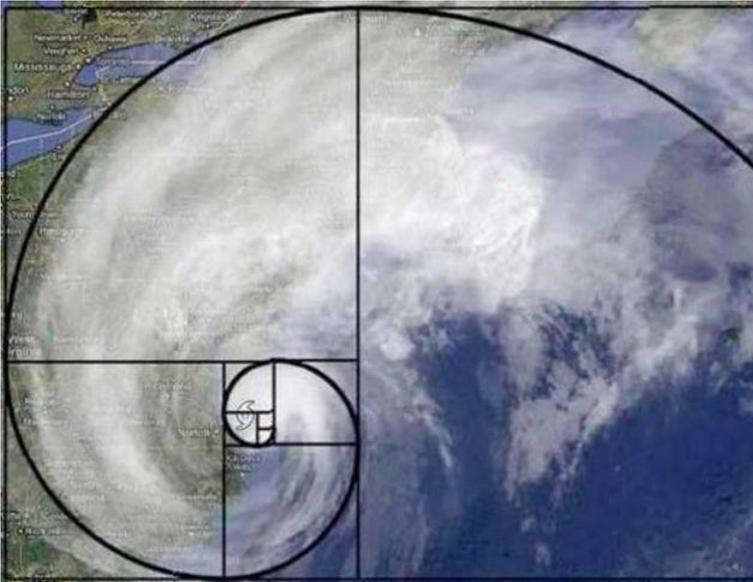
The spiral is also found frequently in art.

- The Mona Lisa
- The Last Supper
- Madonna in the Meadow



The Mona Lisa by Leonardo Da Vinci

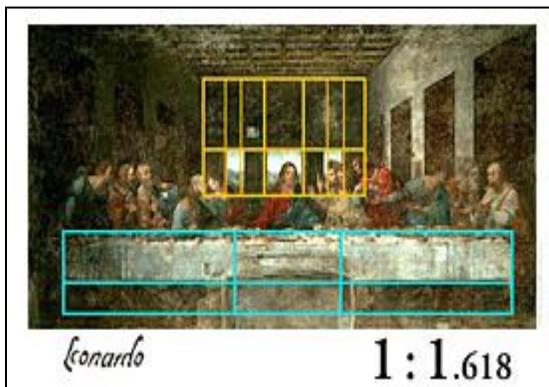
Fibonacci-Spiral Galaxy



Fibonacci – Hurricane



Madonna in the Meadow by Giovanni Bellini

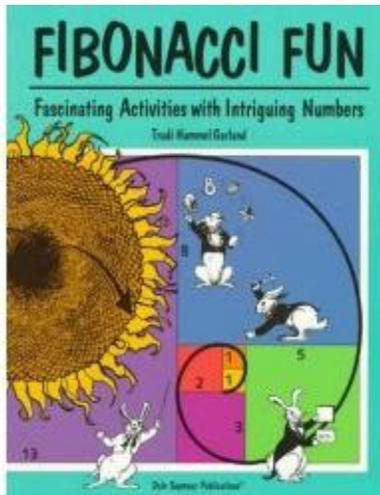


In Leonardo Da Vinci's **Last Supper** fresco, the **Golden Ratio** (rear wall and windows) and other relationships based on Fibonacci Numbers (foreground, table and disciple's feet) may be found in the relationship of elements in the composition.

Although Fibonacci was the first western mathematician to describe the Fibonacci sequence, it has been known to humanity for a very long time. Both the Egyptians and Greeks used the golden ratio in architecture long before Fibonacci was born.

There is no questioning the math of the Golden Spiral, Fibonacci Spiral, logarithmic Spiral, Golden Rectangle and Golden Ratio. The math behind all has been proven. Much regarding the spiral still remains unproven and unsolved. Perhaps that is why the Golden Spiral has captivated and will continue to captivate the human imagination. When it comes to the spiral in nature is it really that important to find an explanation? At the end of the day one can simply enjoy the beauty of a flower petal for what it is, a flower. No further explanation is really required!

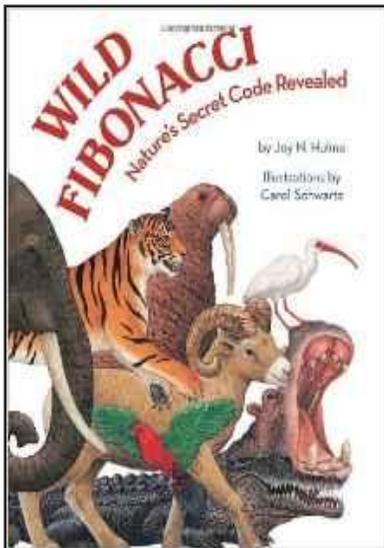
FIBONACCI BOOKS FOR CHILDREN



Fibonacci Fun: Fascinating Activities with Intriguing Numbers - Paperback – 1997 ISBN: 978-1572322653 by Trudi Hammel Garland

From "Raising Rabbits" to "Prickly Pinecones", 24 easy-to-use, reproducible activities and projects introduce students to Fibonacci numbers and the golden ratio.

Ages: 10+



Wild Fibonacci - Paperback - July 27, 2010 by Joy N. Hulme ISBN: 978-1582463247

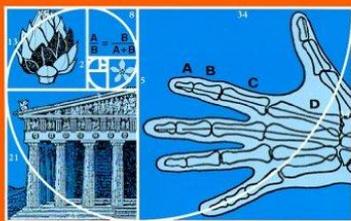
In Wild Fibonacci, readers will discover the mysterious Fibonacci code in a special shape called an equiangular spiral. Why so special? It mysteriously appears in the natural world: a sundial shell curves to fit the spiral. So does a parrot's beak. . . a hawk's talon. . . a ram's horn. . . even our own human teeth! Joy Hulme provides a clear and accessible introduction to the Fibonacci sequence and its presence in the animal world.

Ages: 3-7 years

Fascinating Fibonacci

Mystery and Magic in Numbers

Trudi Hammel Garland



Fascinating Fibonacci - Paperback - by Trudy Hammond Garland

ISBN:

978-0866513432

Explore the Fibonacci numbers, ratios and occurrences in natural phenomena.

Ages: 11+ years



Vowels

In primary school, we all learned the vowels of the English language: a, e, i, o, u and sometimes y. But what makes a vowel a vowel? Vowels and consonants are essentially two different categories of sounds that linguists use to better understand how language sounds work. The study of the sounds that human beings can produce is called phonetics. It's a sub-speciality of linguistics.

According to phoneticians, a vowel is a speech sound that is made without constriction of the vocal tract. What does that mean? It means that when you say a vowel, the sound is not stopped by your tongue, teeth, or cheeks. Try it! When you pronounce all of the vowels, your mouth stays open, but for every consonant, your tongue hits your teeth or the top of your mouth.

The word **vowel** comes from the Latin *vox* meaning voice. **Consonant** means “with sound” from the Latin *com* (with) and *sonare* (sound).

Every language has vowels, though some have more vowel sounds than others. Across many languages, all words have to have vowel sounds, but not all words have to have consonants. This is because the sound and volume of spoken language comes from the vowels. The consonants break up the sound that the vowels generate. That's why it's impossible to say a string of consonants in a row. By nature, consonants stop the air flowing through the vocal tract, which is why you can say a vowel as long as you have breath, but you can't draw out a sound like “l” unless you break it up with more vowels, as in “lalala.” This is also why vowels sit in the middle of syllables. They give language form and rhythm.

Strings of consonants sound like parts of words in English. Think of the phrases, “hmm” or “hmp.” They are not complete words, even though they do have some meaning. Without any vowels in languages, we would be left with meaningless consonant strings. Although some languages, like Polish, can have as many as five consonants in a row, in English, we're typically restricted to three, like *str* in *strict*.

Vowels and consonants are oversimplified categories, of course - sounds are in reality more complicated than that. Take sounds like “s” or “z,” which don’t need to be broken up by vowels to continue. Are they vowels or consonants? You can say “z” forever. It’s the onomatopoeic sound of bees buzzing, to give just one example. These sounds are a subcategory of consonants called *fricatives*, made by pushing air through a very small space in your mouth. What about y? Y is an example of a *semi-vowel*, because a vowel is a sound that is made with the mouth and throat not closing at any point and a consonant is a sound that is made with the air stopping once or more during the vocalisation, ‘y’ is only ‘sometimes’ a vowel depending on which word ‘y’ is being used in. For example, in words like “myth” or “hymn,” the letter takes on a sound like a short “i” and the mouth and throat don’t close when the sound is made. However, in words like “beyond,” it acts as a bridge between the “e” and the “o,” and there is some partial closure, making “y” a consonant.

Another forgotten letter that has the same qualities as “y” is “w.” While “w” is almost always a consonant, it is considered a vowel at the end of words like “wow” or “how.” You can see for yourself when saying these words that your mouth doesn’t fully close while pronouncing the letter.

There are, of course, other differences between vowels and consonants. For instance, in English you can have vowels that are entire words, such as “a” or “I.” You won’t see a consonant that is a word by itself, however. Words in English need vowels to break up the sounds that consonants make. So, while every word has to have a vowel, not every word has to have a consonant.

A Few Facts



- There aren’t any words in the English language that have all five vowels in a row without any consonants in between. There is one word that has five vowels, with a repeated a, in a row: *Rousseauian*. It means “relating to the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau.” More commonly, “queuing” also has a lengthy string of vowels, but without an “a” or an “o.”
- There are also words in English which contain all five vowels (with consonants in between) in order. Some of these include *facetious* (“treating serious situations with inappropriate humour”), *abstentious* (“abstinent”), and *caesious* (“bluish or greyish green”).
- Ever wonder why “w” is pronounced “double-u” and not “double-v?” The Roman Latin alphabet was adapted to be used for Old English. Old English had a “w” sound, but back then the alphabet didn’t have a “w.” Instead, the “v” sound was pretty close, so words that required a “w” were often represented by a “v” instead. In the 7th century, scribes started using “uu” to represent the “w” sound, which is how it got its name. However, printers used to use “vv” to represent the sound, which is how it got its shape.

- There are very few words in the English language that have two u's in a row, and the only two that are used frequently are "vacuum" and "continuum." Nearly all of the "double u" words were adapted from Latin, such as "duumvir," meaning "each of a pair of magistrates holding joint office in ancient Rome." A few are adapted from other languages, such as "muumuu," a loose dress that is traditionally worn in Hawaii.
- Just as you won't find long strings of consonants in English, you also won't find long strings of the same letter. No word in the English language contains more than a double letter, so you'll never see three directly in a row. If a word seems to call for three, it will be hyphenated. For instance, the word for something without a shell is "shell-less" not "shellless." In other cases, a letter is dropped. For instance, "seer" has only two e's instead of the called-for "seer" or "see-er." The only exceptions to this rule are things like "shhh" or "brrr," but these aren't really words.

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE ORIGINS OF THE ALPHABET

"Writers spend years rearranging 26 letters of the alphabet," novelist Richard Price once observed. "It's enough to make you lose your mind day by day." It's also a good enough reason to gather a few facts about one of the most significant inventions in human history.

- What is the origin of the word *alphabet*?

The English word *alphabet* comes to us, by way of Latin, from the names of the first two letters of the Greek alphabet, *alpha* and *beta*. These Greek words were in turn derived from the original Semitic names for the symbols: *aleph* ("ox") and *beth* ("house").

- Where did the English alphabet come from?

The original set of 30 signs, known as the Semitic alphabet, was used in ancient Phoenicia beginning around 1600 B.C. Most scholars believe that this alphabet, which consisted of signs for consonants only, is the ultimate ancestor of virtually all later alphabets. (The one significant exception appears to be Korea's *han-gul* script, created in the 15th century.)

Around 1,000 B.C., the Greeks adapted a shorter version of the Semitic alphabet, reassigning certain symbols to represent vowel sounds, and eventually the Romans developed their own version of the Greek (or Ionic) alphabet. It's generally accepted that the Roman alphabet reached England by way of the Irish sometime during the early period of Old English (5 c.- 12 c.).

Over the past millennium, the English alphabet has lost a few special letters and drawn fresh distinctions between others. But otherwise our modern English alphabet remains quite similar to the version of the Roman alphabet that we inherited from the Irish.

- How many languages use the Roman alphabet?

About 100 languages rely on the Roman alphabet. Used by roughly two billion people, it's the world's most popular script. As David Sacks notes in *Letter Perfect* (2004), "There are variations of the Roman alphabet: For example, English employs 26 letters; Finnish, 21; Croatian, 30. But at the core are the 23 letters of ancient Rome. (The Romans lacked J, V, and W.)"



- How many sounds are there in English?

There are more than 40 distinct sounds (or *phonemes*) in English. Because we have just 26 letters to represent those sounds, most letters stand for more than one sound. The consonant *c*, for example, is pronounced differently in the three words *cook*, *city*, and (combined with *h*) *chop*.

- What are *Majuscles* and *Minuscles*?

Majuscles (from Latin *majusculus*, rather large) are CAPITAL LETTERS. Minuscles (from Latin *minusculus*, rather small) are lower-case letters. The combination of majuscles and minuscles in a single system (the so-called *dual alphabet*) first appeared in a form of writing named after Emperor Charlemagne (742-814), *Carolingian minuscule*.

- What's the name for a sentence that contains all 26 letters of the alphabet?

That would be a *pangram*. The best known example is "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog." A more efficient pangram is "Pack my box with five dozen liquor jugs."



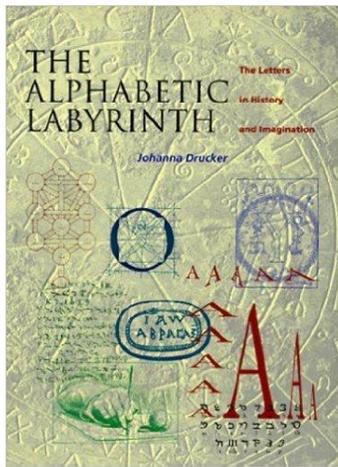
- What's the name for a text that deliberately excludes a particular letter of the alphabet?

That's a *lipogram*. The best known example in English is Ernest Vincent Wright's novel *Gadsby: Champion of Youth* (1939) - a story of more than 50,000 words in which the letter *e* never appears.

- Why is the last letter of the alphabet pronounced "zee" by Americans and "zed" by most British, Canadian, and Australian speakers?

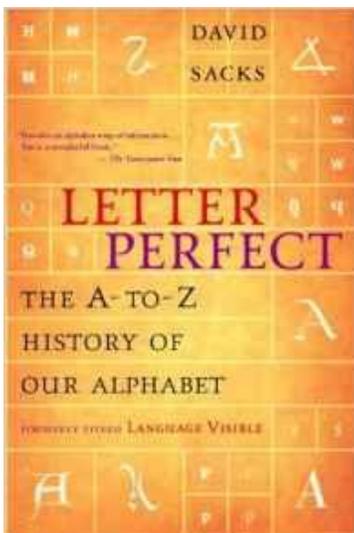
The older pronunciation of "zed" was inherited from Old French. The American "zee," a dialect form heard in England during the 17th century (perhaps by analogy with *bee*, *dee*, etc.), was approved by Noah Webster in his *American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828).

The letter z, by the way, has not always been relegated to the end of the alphabet. In the Greek alphabet it came in at a quite respectable number seven. According to Tom McArthur in *The Oxford Companion to the English Language* (1992), "The Romans adopted Z later than the rest of the alphabet, since /z/ was not a native Latin sound, adding it at the end of their list of letters and using it rarely." The Irish and English simply imitated the Roman convention of placing z last.



The Alphabetic Labyrinth: The Letters in History and Imagination by Johanna Drucker (1999), Paperback, ISBN: 9780500280683

The letters of the alphabet have been the source of some speculation since their invention almost 4000 years ago. Through research this text examines the many ways in which the letters of the alphabet have been used in political, spiritual and religious systems over two millennia. The book also presents the more general history of lettering, printing and calligraphy, as well as using colour illustrations to support the text. The book provides a source to historians studying art, culture or typography.



Letter Perfect: The A-to-Z History of Our Alphabet by David Sacks, (2004), Paperback, ISBN: 9780767911733

A fun, lively, and learned excursion into the alphabet and into cultural history, explaining the letters as symbols of precise sounds of speech, the book begins with the earliest known alphabetic inscriptions (circa 1800 B.C.), recently discovered by archaeologists in Egypt, and traces the history of our alphabet through the ancient Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans and up through medieval Europe to the present day. But the heart of the book is the twenty-six fact-filled "biographies" of letters A through Z, each one identifying the letter's particular significance for modern readers, tracing its development from ancient forms, and discussing its noteworthy role in literature.

Mensa Puzzles

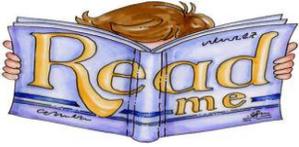
<p>PUZZLE ONE</p>	<p>Which is correct, “All fish have warm blood” or “All fish are warm-blooded”?</p>								
<p>PUZZLE TWO</p>	<p>Alex and Georgina were born at the same hour of the same day to the same mother in the same hospital. They have the same father and yet they are not twins. Why?</p>								
<p>PUZZLE THREE</p>	<p>In the early 18th century Mrs Abigail Eischrank of Cambridge, Massachusetts, gave birth to 13 children. Exactly half of them were girls. Explain.</p>								
<p>PUZZLE FOUR</p>	<p>Leonardo da Vinci carried out the following experiment. He held a sphere of very thin fragile glass above a floor of solid stone. When he dropped it the sphere fell two metres (6 feet, 6 inches) without breaking. How?</p>								
<p>PUZZLE FIVE</p>	<p>Six men drove over 240km (150 miles) in a car at an average speed of 100 k/h (62.5 mph). The trip took 2.4 hours. When they unpacked their luggage they realized that the car had a flat during the whole journey. Why had they not noticed this before?</p>								
<p>PUZZLE SIX</p>	<table border="1" data-bbox="370 1339 1529 1402"> <tr> <td>64</td> <td>49</td> <td>63</td> <td>33</td> <td>61</td> <td>?</td> <td>57</td> </tr> </table> <p>How much is the question mark worth?</p>	64	49	63	33	61	?	57	
64	49	63	33	61	?	57			
<p>PUZZLE SEVEN</p>	<table border="1" data-bbox="370 1528 1529 1591"> <tr> <td>X?</td> <td>5</td> <td>KP</td> <td>7</td> <td>UB</td> <td>8</td> <td>OG</td> <td>6</td> </tr> </table> <p>What letter does the question mark represent?</p>	X?	5	KP	7	UB	8	OG	6
X?	5	KP	7	UB	8	OG	6		
<p>PUZZLE EIGHT</p>	<p>Which is the odd one out: grandfather, sibling, brother-in-law, mother, aunt?</p>								

PUZZLE ONE SOLUTION	Neither – fish are cold-blooded.
PUZZLE TWO SOLUTION	Because they are two of a set of triplets.
PUZZLE THREE SOLUTION	So were the other half.
PUZZLE FOUR SOLUTION	He held it 2.5 metres (8 feet) above the floor. True, it fell two metres without breaking but, on hitting the floor, it smashed into pieces.
PUZZLE FIVE SOLUTION	The flat was the spare tyre.
PUZZLE SIX SOLUTION	1. Starting with 64, subtract 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, missing a number each time and working in a clockwise direction.
PUZZLE SEVEN SOLUTION	R. Number preceding each pair of letters shows how many letters the second letter is after the first, for example, P is 5 letters after K in alphabetical order.
PUZZLE EIGHT SOLUTION	Sibling. All the others refer to a specific gender.

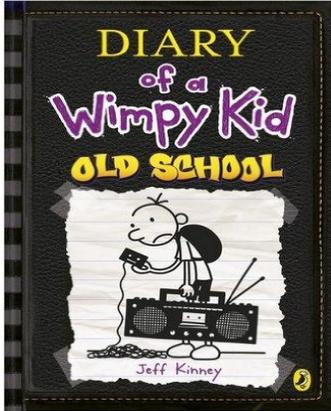


“Family time is sacred time.” (Boyd K. Packer)

Enjoy the puzzles!



Recommended READING

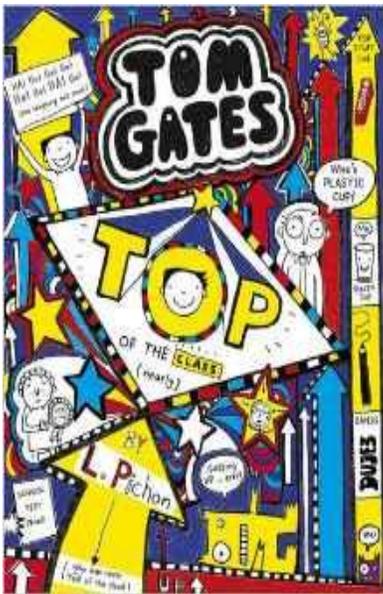


Old School (Diary of a Wimpy Kid book 10) by Jeff Kinney, 3 Nov 2015, ISBN: 978-0141364728, Age: 9+ years.

Life was better in the old days. Or was it?

That's the question Greg Heffley is asking as his town voluntarily unplugs and goes electronics-free. But modern life has its conveniences, and Greg isn't cut out for an old-fashioned world.

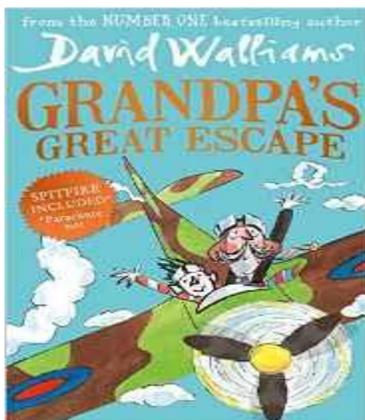
With tension building inside and outside the Heffley home, will Greg find a way to survive? Or is going 'old school' just too hard for a kid like Greg?



Tom Gates 9: Top of the Class (Nearly) by Liz Pichon, 8 Oct 2015, ISBN: 978-1407143200, Age: 9+ years.

Top of the Class (Nearly) follows Tom as he runs for the school council and TRIES to be top of the class. As per usual things don't quite go according to plan... If only Tom could follow his own TOP tips for being Top of the Class!

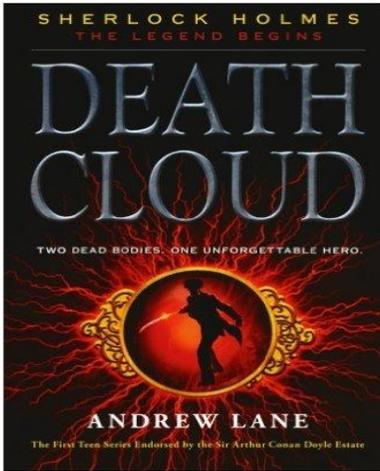
1. Stay awake in lessons (it helps.)
2. Don't draw HILARIOUS pictures of your teachers.
3. AVOID the class bully to stay out of trouble.
4. Don't let Mum and Dad write ANYTHING in your school planner.
5. Don't let your grumpy sister Delia BOSS you around. (Technically not a school issue – but still important.)



Grandpa's Great Escape by David Walliams, 24 Sep 2015, ISBN: 978-0007494019, Age: 9+ years.

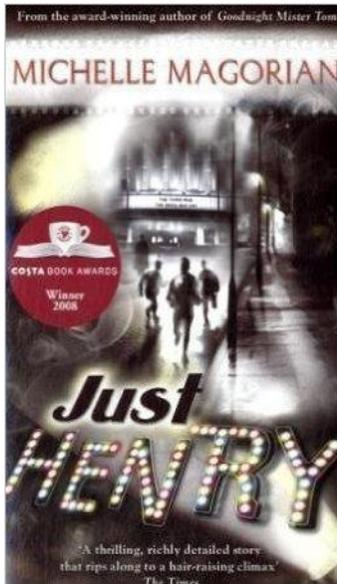
Jack's Grandpa... wears his slippers to the supermarket, serves up tinned tongue for dinner, and often doesn't remember Jack's name. But he can still take to the skies in a speeding Spitfire and save the day...

An exquisite portrait of the bond between a small boy and his beloved Grandpa – this book takes readers on an incredible journey with Spitfires over London and Great Escapes through the city in a high octane adventure full of comedy and heart.



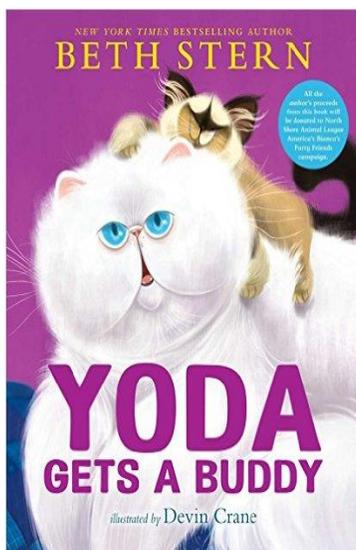
Death Cloud (Sherlock Holmes: The Legend Begins)
Paperback – October 25, 2011 ISBN: 978-0312563714 Age: 12+

It is the summer of 1868, and Sherlock Holmes is fourteen. On break from boarding school, he is staying with eccentric strangers - his uncle and aunt - in their vast house in Hampshire. When two local people die from symptoms that resemble the plague, Holmes begins to investigate what really killed them, helped by his new tutor, an American named Amyus Crowe. So begins Sherlock's true education in detection, as he discovers the dastardly crimes of a brilliantly sinister villain of exquisitely malign intent.



Just Henry (Costa Book Award - Children's Book Award)
Paperback – October 1, 2009 978-1405227575 Age: 12+ years

It's 1949 and life is bleak for Henry. He misses his father who died a war hero, and he escapes from his annoying stepfather and stepsister whenever he can by going to the movies. One day he meets Mr. Beaumont, a man who also loves films and agrees to lend Henry a camera for his school project. Henry is disgusted to learn that he's been put in a group with Jeffries, the son of a man who went AWOL, and Pip, who was born illegitimate. Henry begins to learn that tolerance and friendship are more important than social stigmas when he processes the film and makes an alarming discovery. Like a bomb waiting to explode, Henry's world is about to unravel, and he will need his new friends to keep disaster in check.



Yoda Gets a Buddy by Beth Stern, December 1, 2015, ISBN: 978-1481469692, Age: 4+ Years.

Yoda is busier than ever in the Foster Kitten Room, taking care of litter after litter. Buddy, a blind kitten who is recovering from eye surgery, has been with Beth and Howard longer than any other foster kitten, so Yoda takes him under his wing - or paw - and makes him his fostering partner! While Yoda grooms and scolds the naughty kittens, Buddy is the cat they cuddle up to and adore, mimicking his every move, with no clue he is blind.

One day Frankie, a new foster, is introduced and from the very first moment, none of the kittens like him. Oversized ears and an unruly cowlick make him look goofy. But Buddy loves this new little guy and helps the other kittens see all of Frankie's goodness and sweetness. And when they discover Buddy is the kitten with a true disability and challenge, the other felines learn that love truly is blind when we see each other with our hearts.

Celebrating Books

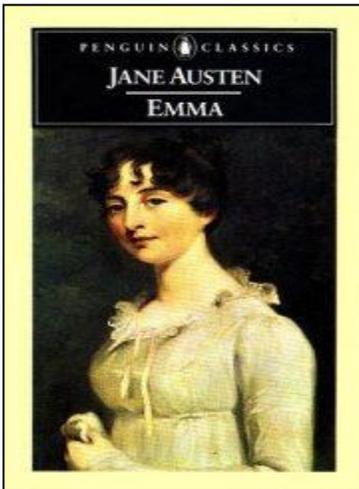
Why Jane Austen's *Emma* Still Intrigues 200 Years Later

The novel was released in December of 1815

For many Jane Austen fans, reading *Pride and Prejudice* is their first and fondest experience with the author. But most critics and scholars agree that her finest work was really *Emma*, the story of an altruistic but self-absorbed, wealthy and beautiful young woman with a penchant for matchmaking who swears never to marry but falls in love anyway.

The shallow but well-meaning Emma Woodhouse turns 200 this month - and if she doesn't sound like a perfectly swoon-inducing leading lady, Austen herself agreed: she once described the character as "*a heroine whom no one but myself will much like.*" Yet her story proved the perfect vessel for Austen to write "*at the height of her powers,*" says Austen scholar Juliette Wells.

Wells, an associate professor at Goucher College and the editor of a new annotated 200th-anniversary edition of



Emma from Penguin Classics, says that in addition to the novel exemplifying Austen's "*most magnificent use of language,*" it combines the best of Austen's two writerly periods. "*We see certainly some of the humor that was present more fully in Pride and Prejudice, and we see some of the moral seriousness that was there in Mansfield Park,*" she says, "*but it's not as overwhelming in Emma.*"

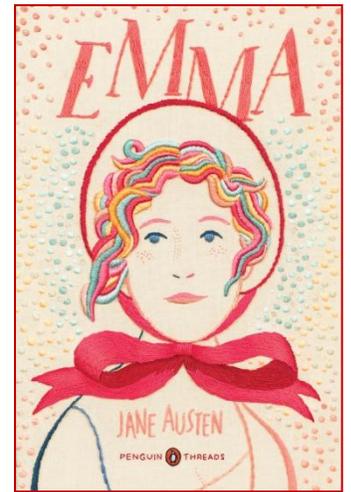
The book marks Austen's best use of free indirect discourse, with the narration hewing close enough to Emma's own perspective that the reader stays blind to the secrets that are also kept from Emma herself but not so close that the heroine's self-absorption becomes unbearable. Austen's execution of the form, still relatively new in that period, marked an important turning point in literature. "*She didn't invent free indirect discourse,*" Wells says, "*it had been used by others - but she's certainly the one who took it the farthest and established its primacy, its necessariness.*"

That *pas de deux* between clarity and obscurity allows for surprises in the novel's denouement - a secret engagement, a proposal and even the sudden delivery of a baby. "*Austen is adhering to the convention that you*

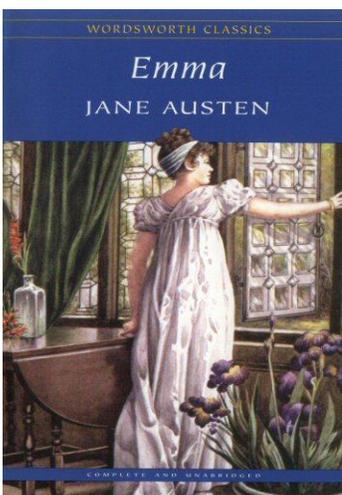
would not talk about pregnancy in the real world or in the fictional world until it had ended, almost,” Wells says. “If you’re reading *Emma* for the first time, you’re not necessarily aware of how old [Mrs. Weston] is or isn’t. And so the pregnancy comes as a surprise there, too.”

But the novel’s endurance is not just a matter of literary quality. As so many Austen fans have noted, human nature hasn’t changed.

Though the pregnancy secrecy may seem foreign today, other elements of the plot are more readily recognisable to modern readers, Wells says. Her students who come from cultures where parental devotion is prized understand Emma’s choice not to leave her father’s household, and others who feel the pressure to wed can relate to the scramble of Regency-period matchmaking - and all of us can recognise our family, friends and acquaintances in the skewered secondary characters, like talkative Miss Bates, presumptuous Mrs. Elton and aloof Jane Fairfax.

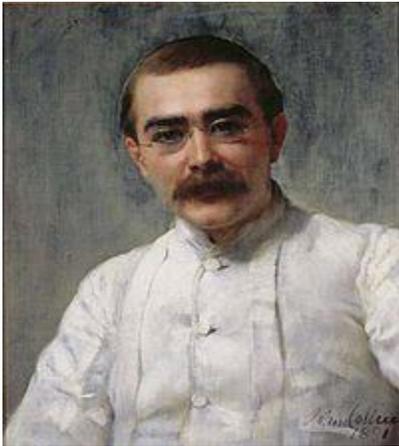


And, though readers today are often uncomfortable with the age gap between Emma and her eventual love, Mr. Knightley, the romance is a modern one in many ways. If it lacks the universal appeal of *Pride and Prejudice*’s Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy, it boasts a realistically gradual arc. Emma is unbothered by the idea that she’ll never find love, and Mr. Knightley doesn’t rush in head-first either. “*You have the sense that he wakes up very slowly to the fact that he actually does desire her,*” Wells says.



Perhaps all that’s missing to get contemporary readers to appreciate *Emma* the way they do *Pride and Prejudice* is a top-notch film or television adaptation. Amy Heckerling’s *Clueless*, a playful 1990’s homage, is “*a work of genius,*” Wells says, but “*there’s not one single period adaptation that everybody loves.*” While the Gwyneth Paltrow-starring 1996 film and a 2009 BBC mini-series were both reasonably well received, “*we’re still waiting for the really definitive great Emma adaptation.*” Maybe all the modern reader needs to fall in love with Emma Woodhouse on the page is to fall in love with Mr. Knightley on screen, Colin Firth lake scene-style.

Happy Birthday Rudyard Kipling

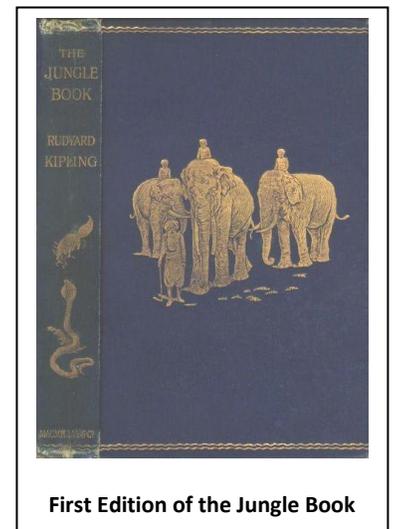


Joseph Rudyard Kipling, 30 December 1865 - 18 January 1936, was an English short-story writer, poet, and novelist.

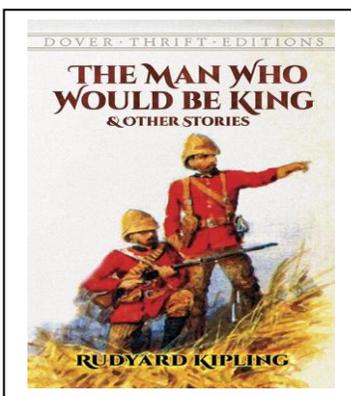
Kipling's works of fiction include *The Jungle Book* (1894), *Kim* (1901), and many short stories, including "*The Man Who Would Be King*" (1888). His poems include "*Mandalay*" (1890), "*Gunga Din*" (1890), "*The Gods of the Copybook Headings*" (1919), "*The White Man's Burden*" (1899), and "*If*" (1910). He is regarded as a major innovator in the art of the short story; his

children's books are classics of children's literature; and one critic described his work as exhibiting "*a versatile and luminous narrative gift*".

Kipling was one of the most popular writers in England, in both prose and verse, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Henry James said: "*Kipling strikes me personally as the most complete man of genius (as distinct from fine intelligence) that I have ever known.*" In 1907, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, making him the first English-language writer to receive the prize, and its youngest recipient to date. He was also sounded out for the British Poet Laureateship and on several occasions for a knighthood, both of which he declined.



First Edition of the Jungle Book



Kipling's subsequent reputation has changed according to the political and social climate of the age and the resulting contrasting views about him continued for much of the 20th century. George Orwell called him a "*prophet of British imperialism*". Literary critic Douglas Kerr wrote: "*He [Kipling] is still an author who can inspire passionate disagreement and his place in literary and cultural history is far from settled. But as the age of the European empires recedes, he is recognised as an incomparable, if controversial, interpreter of how empire was experienced. That, and an increasing recognition of his extraordinary narrative*

gifts, make him a force to be reckoned with."



KEEP

CALM

CAUSE ITS ONLY

15 MORE

SLEEPS!