

POTPOURRI #646: Damien Hirst



Pelican spiders hunt & kill other spiders—even though they are the size of a grain of rice. They use a long neck with long jaw-like appendages that inject venom into prey, then wait until it dies. —*James Gorman*

PLANNING FOR PROFIT

The **EPA** is run on behalf of polluters, the **Interior Department** by those who want to loot federal land, the **Education Department** by the for-profit schools industry, etc. —*Paul Krugman*



PLASTIC BANK

A worldwide chain of stores where everything from school tuition to cooking fuel and more is available for purchase in exchange for plastic garbage -- which is then sorted, shredded & sold to brands who reuse plastics in their products. —*David Katz*



BILLION-DOLLAR BLESSINGS

Founded by Jerry Falwell, **Liberty University** is the second-largest provider of online education in the U.S., behind *University of Phoenix*.

In 2016 they paid *Google* \$16.8 million for ‘admissions leads generation,’ used by 300 phone recruiters working two shifts from 8 am to 8 pm with a goal for each to sign up 8 new students/day. Applicants must submit past transcripts but any GPA above 0.5 [or D-] would suffice.

Recruiters are not told about Liberty’s Christian orientation until they sign the online agreement.

The first courses are ‘orientation’ and three required bible-studies classes—which are not usually transferable.

The online program subsidizes the 15,500-student campus with its \$7 million ‘*Snowflex Centre*,’ for year-round skiing, \$3 million shooting range, and \$40 million football-stadium upgrade.

Liberty University spends only \$2,609 on instruction per full-time-equivalent student across both categories—a fraction of what traditional private universities spend [*Notre Dame spends over 10x as much*], but also well behind the *University of Phoenix’s* \$4,500/FTE.

In 2013, Liberty U. receive \$749 million in tuition & fees, and spent only \$260 million on instruction, academic support and student services.

Last year their students received \$772 million in aid from the U.S. Dept. of Education: ranking it #6 in the nation—plus over \$42 million from the Veterans Administration. —*Alec MacGillis*

KWIKWIZ

3121. How many people identify as members of Indian tribes in the U.S.?
3122. What's the annual number of U.S. deaths from smoking cigarettes?
3123. Where did Christopher Columbus first set foot in what is now America?
3124. Which CEO claims to have kept track of employees by knowing their license plates?
3125. In the book, what was Frankenstein's first name and position in life?

AMERICAN ENTITLEMENTS:

Guns,
but not universal health care,
not quality schools for all,
not a livable wage.

The best single way to break cycles of poverty is probably with early childhood programs for at-risk kids —or, they can just *Be Best*.



HI-SPEED TRAINS

England: Eurostar 186mph 2-1/2 hrs London-Paris
Japan: Nozomi 186 mph 2-1/2 hrs Tokyo-Osaka
Spain: AVS 103 217 mph 2-1/2 hrs Madrid-Barcelona
China: Fuxing 248 mph 4-1/2 hrs Beijing-Shanghai
U.S.: Acela 135 mph but half that from DC-NYC
WHY? Some rails are over 100 years old and shared w/slow freight & local commuter lines.
Infrastructure Legislation: Where Are You?



How does the head of intelligence brief a president who isn't interested in facts?
—Michael V. Hayden

Video of NYC in 1911
—GeorgeG

<https://www.wimp.com/1911-a-trip-through-new-york-city/>



“POST-TRUTH”

Oxford Dictionary's 2016 word of the year: A condition where facts are less influential in shaping opinion than emotion & personal belief.
“To abandon facts is to abandon freedom. If nothing is true, then no one can criticize power because there is no basis to do so...
‘Post-Truth is Pre-Fascism.’
—Timothy Snyder via Michael Hayden

KWIKWIZ answers:

3121. About 3 million in 500 tribes. —Peter Schjeldahl
3122. 480,000 —Sheila Kaplan
3123. He never did...he landed in the Bahamas
3124. Bill Gates —Philip Galanes
3125. Victor was a university student —Jill LePore



The history of civilization demonstrates that equality is impossible to achieve without creating human catastrophe.

--economic historian Walter Scheidel

D. Trump predicts the media will insist on his **re-election** because he's such reliable *clickbait*: "*So they basically have to let me win.*"

The **common cold** is infectious to others for 3 days after onset of symptoms. The contagious time for the **flu** is a week. —Richard Klasco

False claims were 70% more likely than the truth to be shared in *Twitter* from 2006 through 2017. —Steve Lohr

*Islam is a **spectrum** as is Christianity: from cloistered monks to abortion killers.*

Aristotle described **envy** not as benign desire for what someone else possesses but "*as the pain caused by the good fortune of others.*"
—Gordon Marino



HOW TO LIVE LONGER

Beginning in the 1970s, activists and governments collaborated to outlaw leaded gasoline worldwide and to reduce other sources of lead exposure.

It is one of the best '*lifestyle choices*' that we humans have ever made.

Average lead levels in our blood dropped by more than 80%—a huge health benefit, because lead exposure can increase the risk of heart disease and probably also dementia [*let alone the damage to young brains*].

Unfortunately, we have yet to tame many other pollutants, like the particulate matter spewed by diesel engines and coal plants.

"...since 1900, the average life span in the U.S. has increased by more than 30 years; 25 years of this gain have been attributed to public health advances."

—Dr. Thomas Frieden, former director of CDC

The new appointee to the **EPA's Scientific Advisory Board** has said that he believes our air is "too clean."
[*Stav Tuned!*] —Pagan Kennedy

CHALLENGE #645 was: Which author first used "*haha*" to convey merriment in his writing, and which preferred "*ha, ha, he*"? **ANSWER:** Chaucer then Shakespeare. **Only JerryR and RobK got this one.**

CHALLENGE #646: He died a poor man a dozen years after he was a household name as an innovative genius and on the cover of **Time** magazine—and months before the Supreme Court ruled in his favor over critical patents.