Tiger Prints

November 2025

The Official Newspaper of Pierre Van Cortlandt Middle School

Vol. 1

Turkey Through the Ages

by Lily

As Benjamin Franklin once said, “the Turkey is in Comparison a much more respectable Bird,” a “Bird of Courage, and [who] would not hesitate to attack a Grenadier of the British Guards who should presume to invade his Farm Yard with a red Coat on.” While there are no more redcoats occupying the American colonies today, Franklin’s statement praising the noble turkeys has stood the test of time. Centuries later, the bird has become the centerpiece of Thanksgiving dinners and feasts across the United States, with nearly 9 out of every 10 of Americans stating that they celebrate this holiday by eating these birds. In 2024 alone, a whopping $983.3 million was spent across the country on Thanksgiving turkeys. To understand the history of the turkey and its significance on the Thanksgiving platter, we must first go back to the beginning.

Turkey at the First Thanksgiving

Contrary to popular belief, historians aren’t even entirely sure if turkey was a part of the First Thanksgiving in 1621. The only primary source document that mentions the food of the original feast is the journal of Edward Winslow, former governor of the Plymouth colony. While he didn’t include much about the menu, he did write that the Wampanoag brought five deer and that the meal had “fowle,” which could have referred to any of the wild birds found in the area: ducks, turkeys, or geese. It was, however, noted in his writing that turkeys were especially abundant that year, so people have come to assume fowl to be a reference to turkey.

What experts do know is that corn, squash, and shellfish were at the celebration, though they’ve ruled out pumpkin pie and cranberry sauce due to the lack of wheat flour and a shortage of sugar in New England at the time.

Continued page III



Pollinators of Our Town

by Willa

Some people might think bees are scary, but they're actually really beneficial for the environment! Don’t believe me? See for yourself by reading this article. If you would still say the same about bees, then I guess that’s fine. But I really hope that you change by reading this newspaper article. Not just bees, but all kinds of pollinators that are in our town, Croton-on-Hudson.

The Pollinator Crew

Like I said earlier, bees aren’t the only pollinators here. The Eastern Tiger Swallowtail pollinates plants here. Maybe you’ve seen it a few times. The yellow and black one? Sometimes with white and blue? Some pollinators aren’t even insects at all, like the ruby throated hummingbird! You might have seen one in your own yard! Another one is the hummingbird moth. There are also plants here that support these pollinators, like Black-eyed Susans and coneflowers. Instead of planting invasive species, you can help by growing helpful plants for our pollinators, who help flowers bloom and fruits grow.

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Tips and Tricks to Stay Productive

by Lily

Similar to New Years, with the start of a new school year comes a lot of new resolutions. Getting better grades, studying more, improving at sports… But once you get into the full swing of the year and the workload piles up, it can be hard to make yourself stick to your plan and be productive. But first off:

What is Productivity?

Productivity can be simply defined as, "the measure of how efficiently inputs are converted into outputs." In other words, productivity is the measure of the amount of goods, services, or work you can complete (the output) in a given amount of time (the input). The less time you spend doing more work, the more productive you are. So how can you improve your productivity and work more efficiently?

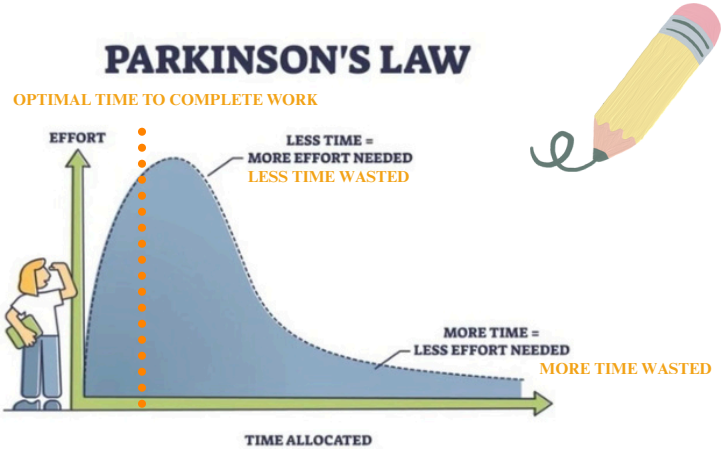
Parkinson's Law

Parkinson's Law states that, "work expands to fill the time available for its completion." In other words, the more time you give yourself to work on something, the less effort is needed to complete it, so the less productive you will be. Additionally, having a big amount of time to work on something tricks your brain into thinking that you have loads of time to complete the task, leading to procrastination and inefficient work. In contrast, when you have less time to complete a task, more effort is needed and the pressure's on, so you procrastinate less and work more productively.

1. Fixed and Flow Tasks

How can you apply this to your own work? Organize your tasks into two groups: fixed and flow tasks. Fixed tasks are the ones that take a certain, fixed amount of time to complete, like solving ten questions or reading a chapter. Flow tasks can have fluctuating completion times, and can very much or very little time depending on how you work on them, like creating a presentation or completing a project.

Instead of having Parkinson's Law work against you, complete fixed tasks before flow tasks, so instead of spending three hours doing a project and then scrambling to complete your questions, start with your questions first, knocking those out and giving you slightly less time to work on your project, but making you more productive in that time.



2. Start Small

As cliche as it sounds, start with the small tasks, and break the big ones down into smaller parts. By completing the tasks that require the least amount of work and focus *first*, like reading an email or buying a new notebook before you start on your homework, you free up space in your brain and have to focus less on more unimportant tasks. This gives you more brainpower to work on the urgent tasks afterwards.

For big tasks, decompose them into smaller tasks. For example, if you have a big essay, delegate one day to working on the intro, the next for finding evidence, and so on.

3. Soft Deadlines

I've you're especially having trouble getting started on an assignment, or are having trouble being productive, try setting a fake, also known as a soft, deadline for yourself. If a paper is due in 10 days, create a shorter, "soft" deadline in about six days for you to work towards. This uses Parkinson's Law to trick your brain into thinking it has less time, making you more productive, and also gives you four extra days to revise and edit.

When you're doing this, just be careful to make sure you're setting reasonable and realistic deadlines to ensure that you're still giving yourself enough time to do your best work.

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Turkey Through the Ages



continued…

Turkey in the 19th and 20th Centuries

Turkey first became a staple of Thanksgiving over two hundred years lated, thanks to Sarah Hale. Born in 1784 in New Hampshire, she wrote the nursery rhyme Mary Had a Little Lamb, and zealously fought for Thanksgiving's acceptance as a national holiday to commemorate the Pilgrim's and Native American's three day feast. After advocating for 36 years, the event was finally recognized in 1863 by President Abraham Lincoln.

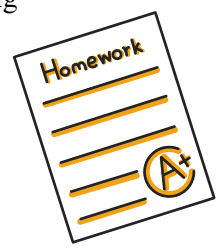
Just like modern historians, at the time, Hale and others fighting for the cause assumed that the pilgrims ate turkey at the original celebration because of the abundance of wild turkeys in New England that year in 1621, mentioned in Edward Winslow's journal. At this time during the 1800s, turkeys were raised mainly for their meat, and their big size made them substantial for feeding a large gathering or family. With help from Hale's influence, turkeys become the practical, ideal choice for the Thanksgiving meal.

Throughout the 1900s, this tradition only continued to grow. So this Thanksgiving, as you sit down at the table and get ready to eat, remember how that turkey got onto your plate, starting hundreds of years ago.

Word Search

by Sebastian

1. Thanksgiving
2. Turkey
3. PVC
4. Homework
5. Stuffing
6. Feast
7. Beans
8. ApplePie
9. Cranberry
10. Family
11. Fun
12. Lights





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A L N A X P F F N X M F U M H E A O H Q
K E Q J W U M W Z H X B G W N O G P T F
A B X S N T S I W G F P G B L K D H R K
G N Z P T V W C Z C V T B W F E A S T P
W I V P J J O R Z A U X H A G N M Y A L
A R A L M U L A K V J L H I K C S P T D
I T O I T F H N T F S P K S P W C B Y N
U Q N G O N F B Z I V F G B P G F J Z R
O V Q H M E D E M C M I Q I V N V K Y B
F W A T S N G R K T V P Y I B P D Y S X
K B Y S F O G R S I U V D I F O W O T G
L T Y W N D I Y N A P P L E P I E Q R N
W N U A K H R G V B D W A K F R B W W C
B P A R A W D Q B N U K D E C A T T K A
E S M Y K H O M E W O R K P G K E O H Z
A D C D L E U Z Z X S C D N P Q W P C S
N H X T U M Y S C K J N T D L R O Y J U
S N H F A M I L Y H W T U F P Z Q L Y S
Q F S S T U F F I N G E M M X V O B D N
W C X G H F U W G N J S C G Z S Q H Q L

The Forest

by Alice and Ally

My eyes opened., I am in a green field, full of strange flowers. Green trees surround me. I am lying in the long grass.
"What?!" I wake up panting, "Why am I here?!"
I stare down at my arm, and see it covered in a white scar, like a pattern.
"What?! What is thi-" I stare down at my body, and see one that isn't familiar. But then again nothing is. I realized my memories have been erased. Not much was salvaged, not even my name. I try to remember anything about what happened, but I realize when I close my eyes and try to remember anything—myself, my family—all I can remember is a flower. It's white with a yellow center. When I really concentrate I can remember only two other things: the year 2121, something about it seemed… important. And one word came to mind; resistance. When I stand up, I realize I am in a black body suit with pockets on the side. I want to see what is in them but when I try to move my left arm, the one that has the white scars, it moves extremely painfully. My right hand moves without pain though, and I reach for the pockets, but there is nothing there, and I still can't remember who I am.

Something rustles in the distance. "Hello! I scream at the top of my lungs."Who is it?!" I pick up a long stick, in case anything dangerous is out there. Pain rushes through my body, like a sharp knife. I wince. "Great." I think to myself, "I can't use my right arm. I switch the stick to my left hand and crouch down. The rustles stop. Something still feels…off. I walk out of the field and into the forest. The crunch of breaking sticks makes me flinch. Every corner of this forest looks identical to me, with dead trees around me, and spikey brown bushes everywhere. Though I still see those strange flowers around me... The delicate branches of the trees are everywhere, and the large trees are so tall I can barely see the top. I'm starting to feel very lost, but then I see some green in the distance…

I have walked through the forest many times now, always coming back to the same empty field. But this time when I come back from the forest the field is no longer empty. Inside the center there is a boy facing away from me. He is about my age with jet black hair falling over his eyes. He is wearing camo pants and a black t-shirt. An instinct comes over me—what if he is a threat? I quietly creep toward him and attack. I flip him over onto the ground and put the point of the sharp stick I was carrying to his throat. After I wondered how I was able to attack him, he looked me in the eye, and he almost looked…scared?

He pushed me off and started to run, really fast. I tried to stand back up, but when I did, I almost instantly collapsed. The pain from my left arm was lingering throughout my body. I saw him run to a tree, and mutter the words, "You're not supposed to be here." Though he hadn't left the tree, and when I finally could stand, the boy was gone.

I have checked multiple times but the mystery boy was gone. There was no trace of him except a piece of engraved metal that must have fallen out of his pocket when I attacked him. The metal is a silver color, but the eerie thing is, engraved into the metal is a pattern of lines, then same pattern of lines that is on my right arm. I don't know what this means, who that boy was, what the flower, the year 2121, and the patterns on my arm all have to do with one another. But I will find out. I slip the piece of metal into my pocket. I will find out, but not today. I curl up into a ball and then fall asleep.

When I wake up I have a gut feeling that something is…off. I open my eyes slowly and hear a crunch in the leaves. It's the boy, he's back. I close my eyes. He must be back for the engraved metal piece he dropped. He walks forward, just when I can sense him about to grab for the metal shard. Once he comes close I stand up and shove him against a tree.
"What is this?!" I ask, him showing him the metal shard.
"Well…" He said.

To be continued in Issue II



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It's Thanksgiving!

by Flora









Across

3. A thanksgiving dessert: Pumpkin___

4. A sauce that you put on mashed potatoes

5. The season that Thanksgiving is in

7. A meat you might eat at a Thanksgiving feast that's not turkey

8. The sport that people like to watch around Thanksgiving

Down

1. The most popular meat to eat on Thanksgiving

2. Something you do to make turkey

3. A person who shared the first thanksgiving feast with the Native Americans

6. Thanksgiving is a holiday to give_____

9. Something that you have a lot of after a Thanksgiving feast

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Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree

by: Lily



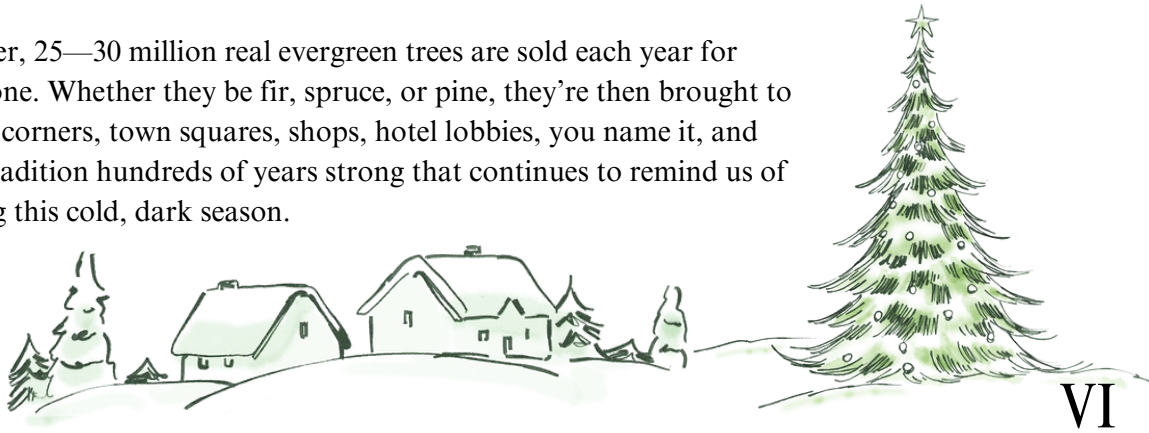
It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas, everywhere you go… And as 77% of Americans that celebrate with this famous tradition can tell you, the holiday season just isn't the same without the tree, bedecked with its tinsel, garlands, lights, and ornaments, and nesting on top of some of the best parts of the holiday season: the presents! But where did this worldwide tradition come from, and why?

The practice of decorating Christmas trees can be traced back to the ancient Romans, who celebrated their winter festival Saturnalia, a tribute to Saturnus, Roman god of agriculture, by adorning trees with small pieces of metal. This practice later spread to Western Europe, which is credited as the birthplace of the modern tradition of tree decorating. In the year 1419, a group of people in Freiburg, located in the Black Forest region of Germany, set up a tree laden with flour-paste, wafers, gingerbread, apples, and tinsel. Some trees were even decorated with straw, wool threads, pretzels, and nuts.

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries in Austria and Germany, the tops of evergreens were cut and hung upside down in a living room center, and decorated with strips of red paper, apples, and nuts. Christmas tree decorating was later brought over from Germany to the United States in the 19th century. While real trees were not used, wooden pyramids were covered with evergreen branches and decorated with candles. By 1851, Christmas trees had started being sold commercially in the United States, and people switched from decorating small, nightstand-sized ones to bigger, floor-to-ceiling trees. By the end of the 19th century, the first glass ornaments were introduced into the United States, a tradition also brought over from Germany.

But how come all these Christmas trees are evergreens? Instead of shedding their leaves in the fall like other trees do, evergreens keep their greenery year round, and as such have been symbols of life and hope for the coming spring since ancient times. Additionally, evergreen trees with apples attached to the branches are a symbol of the "Tree of Paradise," which in the Bible refers to the sacred Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden.

Even today, hundreds of years later, 25—30 million real evergreen trees are sold each year for Christmas in the United States alone. Whether they be fir, spruce, or pine, they're then brought to their respective households, street corners, town squares, shops, hotel lobbies, you name it, and decorated, carrying with them a tradition hundreds of years strong that continues to remind us of light and the coming spring during this cold, dark season.



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How Does Language Shape the Way We Think?

by: Lily

Did you know that today there are over 7,000 different languages spoken around the world? Whether it's English, the world's most widely used language with approximately 1.5 billion speakers, or Taushiro, a nearly extinct language that as of 2025 was spoken by only one person on Earth, languages are all around us, shaping not just the way we communicate but work, see, live, and interact with others and our world. That raises the interesting question which for centuries scientists have been trying to find the answer to: How exactly does language affect the way we think?

Cognitive scientist Lera Boroditsky is one of the many researchers investigating this question. She visited an Indigenous community located at the west edge of Cape York, Australia, called the Kuuk Thaayorre. What's interesting about this tribe is that instead of using words like "left" or "right," everything is described in relation to the cardinal directions of north, south, east, and west. Here, instead of saying things like, "There's an ant on your left leg," people might say, "There's an ant on your southwest leg," or, "Can you move your head to the northeast so I can see the board?" This constant awareness of direction, which has been drilled into the heads of these indigenous natives since the moment they started learning their language, has fascinating effects on the way they think and live. Because of the way their language and society is built, the Kuuk Thaayorre are more attuned to their surroundings, and as a result, their orientation skills and sense of direction are far superior to people like you and me who don't grow up speaking their language. A five year old in the Kuuk Thaayorre could easily pinpoint every single cardinal direction, a feat most of the world's population wouldn't be able to do without a compass or lucky guess.

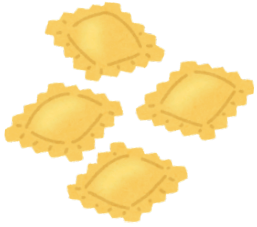
Language, however, impacts more than just our orientation skills—it affects how we count, calculate, and reason. Almost every language in the world—English, Spanish, French, Swahili, and countless others has a system of numbers, counting, and counting. However, some languages like Pirahã, spoken in remote parts of the Amazon, have no number words or color names besides "light" and "dark." That means speakers of this language lack the ability of performing basic arithmetic or naming colors, not because they lack intelligence, but because their mother tongue simply does not extend to that ability. In other words, if a language doesn't have words for numbers or colors, the mental tools to process these ideas are limited or even inaccessible.

Last but not least, a language's grammar has a surprisingly big effect on how we view the world around us. If you're taking Spanish or French in school, or learning another romance language, you'll know that nouns, (words for people, places, or things,) are assigned a grammatical gender, usually of masculine or feminine, though some languages like Polish or Russian have a neutral one. For example, in Spanish, the word for the moon, "la luna," is feminine, while in German, "der Mond," which also translates to this, is masculine. This distinction of nouns into different genders has a profound effect on people's perspectives of the same object. For example, the word for "bridge" in German, "die Brücke," is feminine, while in Spanish, "el puente" is masculine. When asked to describe a bridge, German speakers were more likely to call the structures beautiful, elegant, and slender, words thought of as stereotypically feminine, while Spanish speakers were more inclined to call them long, strong, and sturdy, adjectives generally thought of as masculine.

Just as people viewing the same event can develop completely different perspectives, the same directions, flow of time, colors, numbers, objects, or events can be seen through different languages, different minds, and completely different lenses. As evident in these many studies, language not only affects how we think, act, and live—it builds how we see the world and live in it.

Fun Fact

Submitted by Dahlia



The singular form of ravioli, or one piece of ravioli, is called a raviolo, while the singular of confetti, meaning one piece of confetti, is known as confetto.

Share a fact you want featured in the next issue ***here***

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PVC's Favorite Seasons

by: Lily

A survey on people's favorite seasons within our school community



Season	Votes	Percentage
Spring	6	13.30%
Summer	14	31.10%
Fall	14	31.10%
Winter	11	24.40%

Based on the results of the survey, out of the people interviewed, summer and fall were the most popular seasons.





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Editorial



Did you know that the average human spends 3 hours and 15 minutes per day doomscrolling on social media? Whether it's TikTok, Instagram, or even just YouTube, we've all had our fair share of screen time on such platforms, which raises the question: What makes social media so addicting that the average person spends 20% of their waking hours mindlessly scrolling for the next satisfying, engaging piece of content?

Most people rightly point the blame to dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure and reward that makes us crave instant gratification and causes us to keep swiping until we find something momentarily satisfying. But there's another factor at play: Algorithms, an online tool used to carefully curate the content on our feeds, tailoring it specifically towards our interests as observed by our activity on a specific platform. These tools have been given a bad rep, responsible for the clever planning that makes you addicted to screens, but not all they do is bad.

First of all, what even is an algorithm, and how does it work? In social media, algorithms can be defined as a way to sort content like posts, videos, and messages based on relevancy in order to present the videos the browser believes you will be most interested in to keep you engaged. As explained by the Internet Just Society, algorithms are like libraries that keep records of all the content, posts, videos, and photos on a platform. The purpose of an algorithm is to filter through the large amount of content that is available on each platform, and deliver relevant content to users that is potentially more interesting for a user. Algorithms mostly pop up with content-based results by analyzing your past views, if you post or create your own content in a specific interest, and through consideration of your profile. Once users show interest in a tag or category, they are directed to other items in the same field.

Algorithms are often created with the intent of increasing awareness or interest in a certain topic online. They can personalize a user's experience and deliver more meaningful, enjoyable, interesting, and engaging content. Algorithms can also make it easier to find interesting content that momentarily satiates our desire for interesting content, and make it so you don't have to sift through thousands of videos, posts, and webpages, which can be overwhelming and difficult, to find something satisfying to watch.

So what's the controversy? Algorithms are often blamed as the cause for excessive doomscrolling, keeping us glued to our phones for hours in search of the next post, the next video, the next message that will stimulate dopamine in our brain, and bring us that momentary pleasure which motivates us to keep swiping and continue the cycle. But there's another reason why: algorithms do these things by examining the personal data of the social media user, analyzing information like their geographical location, friends and people they contact on those platforms or interact with, the pages and hashtags that they search for the most, the topics they visit, and other sensitive information in order to know the most stimulating content to display on the social media platform for that specific user. The results are tailored to what content on the platform it believes the user will find the most interesting and relevant, which is determined by extensive research into your personal information, which many believe is a breach of privacy. Would you want just anyone to know what you were searching up on a platform that's supposed to guarantee you privacy?

So what can we do? It's okay to spend time on screens, but once it starts consuming our lives, and we prioritize it over school, homework, and sports, we need to take a step back. Try going outside for a little bit, taking a walk, or talking to a friend or neighbor. Whether you believe they are helpful or hurtful, the facts are simply that algorithms are all around us online. They're a tool, but as technology, AI, and algorithms continue to grow smarter and more efficient at their jobs, we have to learn how to not let this tool control us.

Thank you for reading this issue of *Tiger Prints*, PVC's official school newspaper! If you enjoyed this issue, stay tuned for our next one, or check out some of our ***past volumes***.

Editor Lily
All pieces edited by Lily
Newspaper designed by Lily