

Background to Today's News

As we enter a new administration in Washington, DC, you may have questions about the news you hear. Here is some background:

Cabinet Appointments. You may have been reading recently about controversial hearings in the US Senate. The people Donald Trump has chosen for 1200+ positions in the US government must be approved by a *simple majority* - more than 50% - of the 100 Senators. (There are now 52 Republican Senators, 46 Democrats and 2 Independents who usually vote with the Democrats.) Here is the traditional route a nomination takes:

1) The President (or President-Elect) suggests a person, who is first reviewed by the FBI, the Internal Revenue Service and various ethics agencies, to be sure there are no legal, ethical or financial conflict-of-interest obstacles to the appointment. This year, in a few high-profile cases, the Senate did not wait for this review process to finish before going on to the next step, in an effort to have positions in place on the first day of the administration. This decision was criticized by the Office of Government Ethics.

2) The President/Elect sends a written nomination to the Senate. This officially begins the "Advice and Consent" process outlined in the US Constitution.

3) The nomination is directed to the Senate committee(s) that oversees that position. For example, the Senate Armed Forces Committee reviews the nomination for Secretary of Defense, and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee reviews that of the Secretary of State.

4) These Senate committees may (but do not have to) hold hearings in which they ask the nominee about his/her positions, expertise, and background. These are the hearings you may have watched on TV.

5) The committee then (on the basis of a simple majority vote) sends the nomination to the full Senate "favorably," "unfavorably" or "without recommendation."

6) The full Senate then votes on the nomination. A simple majority is required. Only once in history has the full Senate approved a Cabinet nominee the committee had reviewed unfavorably (the 1945 Secretary of Commerce).

7) If there is a tie vote (50-50), the Vice President (Mike Pence) gets the deciding vote.

That's the basic process. Of course, there are exceptions and possible twists and turns. This year, it seems wise to expect surprises.

Presidents and the Press. Traditionally, the President's press secretary holds daily "briefings" for journalists at the White House. In addition, the President occasionally holds press conferences to answer questions directly - Barack Obama held 165 during his eight years; George W. Bush held 210; Ronald Reagan held 46. Presidents have also found various ways to talk directly to the American public. President Franklin Roosevelt started a weekly radio address tradition, which evolved to a weekly video stream. President Obama made some appearances on late-night/comedy TV to get his messages across. And now, of course, we have Twitter...

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Presidential Facts

- ◆ We say that Donald Trump is the 45th President of the US, but in fact he is only the 44th person to serve as President. Grover Cleveland was President twice, as the 22nd and as the 24th President.
- ◆ One Presidential term lasts four years. Presidents cannot be elected more than twice.
- ◆ Of the 44 people who have served as President, all but one (Barack Obama) were white and of northern European ancestry: 38 were of English, Scottish, or Irish ancestry (or a combination of these); three had Dutch roots, and two were from Swiss-German families.
- ◆ All US Presidents were raised Christian and/or were members of a Christian church. All but one (John F. Kennedy, a Catholic) were Protestants. The most common denomination has been Episcopalian, followed by Presbyterian.
- ◆ Since 1999, the salary of the President of the US has been \$400,000. The last raise before that was in 1969, when it was set at \$200,000. If that salary had been adjusted every year since 1969 for inflation, it would now be more than \$900,000. George Washington was offered \$25,000, but he worked for free. So did John F. Kennedy.
- ◆ The White House, traditionally the President's home, has a tennis court, putting green, bowling alley, movie theater, swimming pool, and jogging track. Air Force One, the President's airplane, has 4000

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President's Day

Most states observe a holiday on the third Monday in February (this year, February 19). The federal government calls it George Washington's Birthday. Many states call it Presidents' Day (or President's Day or even Presidents Day) instead, and honor Abraham Lincoln (born February 12, 1809) as well as Washington (born February 22, 1732). Still other states say the holiday is to honor all Presidents of the US. And, well, a few don't observe it at all (see article below on state vs. federal holidays).

George Washington was the general who led the colonists' army during the American Revolution against England. Later, he was elected to be the first President of the US, unanimously (no one ran against him, as he was such a popular figure). Some call him the "Father of the United States." He is remembered as an

honest man with good judgment. Find his picture on one-dollar bills.

Abraham Lincoln was President during the US Civil War between the northern and southern states. He made slavery illegal in 1863 and was the first President to be assassinated (killed), just after the end of the Civil War in 1865. He is also remembered as Honest Abe. Find his picture on five-dollar bills.

Stories about these two popular Presidents tell a lot about American values — see page 7.

There are no special celebrations or traditions for this holiday. Many schools and government offices will be closed, but many businesses will be open. Stores consider this a good chance to have a sale! Cards and gift-giving are not expected.

State vs. Federal Holidays

Did you know that there are no "national" holidays in the US? The federal government has 10 holidays*. These apply to people who work and live in Washington, DC, and to employees of federal agencies in any state (like the US Postal Service or US Social Security offices). Each state makes its own rules about which holidays it will observe. These state rules then apply to employees of state agencies (like state and local government, public schools, and libraries) and most (but not all) businesses.

In 1968, some holidays were set always to occur on a Monday so employees would get a three-day weekend. Other holidays always occur on the same date because they are tied to a particular calendar day (New Year's Day and Independence Day — or Fourth of July) or to a date with historical or religious meaning (Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas).

* *The federal holidays are: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King, Jr's Birthday, Washington's Birthday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas.*

Groundhog Day

February 2 is Groundhog Day, a light-hearted tradition in which people watch to see if a groundhog, coming out of its hole in the ground, sees its shadow. If so, according to the legend, there will be six more weeks of winter weather. If there is no shadow, spring will come sooner. On TV you will see Punxsutawney Phil, a Pennsylvania groundhog who, they claim, has not been wrong in 90 years...



Valentine's Day

Red hearts with white lace. Heart-shaped candy boxes. Cards that say "Be mine." Red-dyed food. Fat babies (called cupids) carrying arrows. These are the symbols of Valentine's Day (February 14), the day to celebrate love and affection. This is not a legal holiday. Businesses and schools will not close. But Americans who ignore the holiday may end up with an angry and hurt spouse or lover!

The origins of Valentine's Day are not clear. There were several Saint Valentines in early Christian history, each with a feast day on February 14; none of them was linked to love in any clear way. Somehow, by the 14th century in England, Chaucer was writing about Valentine's Day as a day for lovers. Another story (popular but not based in much fact) says that St. Valentine was in jail and fell in love with the jailer's daughter. He sent her a letter, signed, "From your Valentine," perhaps the first Valentine card. Other historians think that the holiday grew out of a Roman celebration, Lupercalia,

held in February. At Lupercalia, names of young women were put in a box. Young men picked a name. The two were considered a "pair" for a year. Early Christian leaders tried to replace the names of young women with names of saints. Young men would pick the name of a saint, and try to be like the saint for a year. The custom of picking young women's names was always more popular...

Today's Valentine's Day is a light-hearted, non-religious holiday in the US. The link to an early Christian saint is gone. On February 14, it is traditional to give the love in your life a card or gift. Chocolate candy and pink or red flowers are common. Stores will urge you to buy more expensive, personal gifts. Young school children often send classmates small Valentine cards. Friends, grandparents and children may also send cards to each other.



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square feet of floor space, including a dining room, a conference area, private quarters, office space, and two kitchens.

- ◆ Donald Trump is only the second US President to have been divorced. (The other was Ronald Reagan (1981-88). Only one president, James Buchanan (1857-60), was never married.

- ◆ Donald Trump (70 years old) is the oldest person to serve as US President. The youngest President to be elected was John F. Kennedy, who was 43. Theodore Roosevelt was 42 when he became President after William McKinley was assassinated.

- ◆ To *impeach* a President means to charge him with serious misconduct in office, and to put him on trial in the Senate. If he is found guilty, he must resign from office. Only two Presidents, Andrew Johnson (1868) and Bill Clinton (1999), have been impeached. Both were allowed to complete their terms. Richard Nixon was the only President ever to resign from office, in 1974. Several days earlier, Congress had threatened to impeach him for his role in the Watergate affair.

- ◆ Eight Presidents have died while serving as President. Four were assassinated. The other four died of natural causes.

- ◆ If the President dies in office, the Vice President becomes President. If the Vice President then dies, the Speaker of the House of Representatives becomes President (but this has never happened).

Translating Relationship Words

In her blog *Marriage 3.0*, Pamela Haag describes 10 words from other languages that don't have a good English translation, but should. See bigthink.com/ideas/41152?page=all for details.

Each one reveals a fascinating cultural nuance. To whet your appetite, here's a preview:

Mamihlapinatapei (Yagan, an indigenous language of Tierra del Fuego): The wordless yet meaningful look shared by two people who desire to initiate something, but are both reluctant to start.

Yuanfen (Chinese): A relationship by fate or destiny, drawing on principles of predetermination in how lovers and friends come together. Are fate and destiny different? Yes, indeed.

Cafuné (Brazilian Portuguese): The act of tenderly running your fingers through someone's hair.

Retrouvailles (French): The happiness of meeting again after a long time.

Ilunga (Bantu): A person who is willing to forgive abuse the first time; tolerate it the second time, but not a third time. There is a complex progression in emotion in the move toward intolerance.

La douleur exquise (French): The heart-wrenching pain of wanting someone you can't have.

Koi no yokan (Japanese): The sense upon first meeting a person that the two of you are going to fall into love. This is less "love at first sight" and more about the idea of a future connection.

Ya'aburnee (Arabic): "You bury me." It's a declaration of one's hope that they'll die before another person, because of how difficult it would be to live without them.

Forelsket (Norwegian): The euphoria you experience when you're first falling in love.

Saudade (Portuguese): The haunting desire for a lost love, or for an imaginary, impossible, never-to-be-experienced love, which leave the lover feeling surprisingly similar.

Black History Month

February is Black History month in the US. You cannot really understand US society today without knowing something about slavery, the post-slavery period of 1865-1960s, and the Civil Rights movement of the mid-20th century. It is especially important to learn this history as the US continues its current discussions about race. A source for TV shows, websites, movies and materials is:

www.readingrockets.org/calendar/blackhistory/ Here are some other resources:

Selma. An excellent recent film about the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his civil rights work, specifically at a protest in Alabama.

Eyes on the Prize. A classic documentary series on the Civil Rights movement from 1954-1965.

Here are links about some of the most famous moments in this Civil Rights era:

- ◆ Rosa Parks, a black woman, refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white man, sparking a year-long bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama: www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5qvNPWSuKM
- ◆ Emmet Till, a black teenage boy from Chicago visiting in Mississippi, flirted with a white woman and was lynched (murdered): www.youtube.com/watch?v=2qsauS-k6y4
- ◆ Nine black students attended a previously-all-white high school in Little Rock, Arkansas: www.youtube.com/watch?v=oodolEmUq2g

Love in the Digital Age: A Quiz

With all the new-found focus on social media and the power of Twitter to shake the world, and it being Valentine's Day season, it seems a good time to ask how social media affects...well...love. Take this quiz to see how aware you are of recent trends. "Couples" below refer to any two people in a committed relationship, whether married or not.

What's Yours Is Mine...Or Not

1. Of people who use the internet, what percent of American couples share a single email account? (That is, they have a single email address, like 'smithfamily@hotmail.com.')

 - a. 5%
 - b. 27%
 - c. 52%

2. Who is more likely to share an email account?

 - a. those earning < \$50,000/year
 - b. those earning > \$50,000/year

Good or Bad?

3. 27% Americans say the internet has affected their couple relationship. (The rate is higher for couples age 18-29 -- 45%.) The majority of these say this effect is:

 - a. positive
 - b. negative

4. On the positive side, some couples say they feel closer because they text or email each other more often or to resolve conflicts. What percent of people who text say they text their spouse/partner while both are at home?

 - a. 5%
 - b. 15%
 - c. 25%

5. On the negative side is the complaint that their spouse/partner is distracted on the phone. Which of these groups complains about this most?

 - a. those earning \$75,000+/year
 - b. 18-29 year olds
 - c. those married 10+ years

6. On-line dating has become steadily more popular. Which of these age groups has seen the largest increase in the last several years?

 - a. 18-24 year olds
 - b. 25-34 year olds
 - c. 55-64 year olds

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ANSWERS - no peeking till you have taken the quiz!

1. b. Overall, the rate is 27%. it increases with age -- only 12% of couples age 18-29 share an email account; 47% of those 65 or older do. But actually, the best predictor of whether couples share an email account is how long they have been together. Recently-committed couples rarely share (10%) while those in longer-term relationships -- since before email was a 'thing' - more often do (38%). "Hey, nifty! Shall we try this new email gadget? You go first. No, let's do it together..."
2. b. Sharing is more common among couples earning \$50,000 or more per year (32%) than those earning less (18%). This is probably a function of the age difference noted in #1.
3. a. Positive, and strongly so - 74%. Just 20% say the effect is mostly negative. However, it is interesting that in 2005, 84% said the effect was positive.
4. c. 25% overall. The rate is higher (31%) among those married <10 years than among those married 10+ years (19%).
5. b. 18-29 year olds (42%). (High earners: 32%; married 10+ years 17%).
6. a. Yes, it's the youngest group whose rate of using on-line dating at least once has almost tripled in the last few years (to what is now the highest rate, 27%). No change in 25-34 year olds (22%). Only a doubling of rate (to 12%) among the 55-64 year olds.

# The Other Side of Love

This month on Valentine's Day, people around you will be talking a lot about love. But if you have recently moved to the US, you may not be feeling so happy with your spouse or partner all the time! Moving to a new country can be difficult for couples, because:

(1) Moving here means being away from family and friends. Spouses and partners may depend on each other more, for advice and friendship. Even in the happiest relationships, this change can be hard because it is so different. In couples who have some problems, the increased time together often raises problems that were always there, but now come to the surface.

(2) Because they are away from those who know them best, some people try new ways of behaving. This can be a wonderful — or a difficult — change for a couple.

(3) The amount of time spouses/partners spend in the family may have changed a lot — sometimes it increases, sometimes it decreases. Either way, family roles have to change. Who cooks dinner? Who talks to the children? Who notices that the sink is broken? Who makes social plans? These may also be big changes for a relationship.

(4) Spouses/partners may have very different day-to-day experiences. Maybe one goes to a job every day, meeting new people, practicing English, and doing interesting and fulfilling work. Of course, that person may feel the responsibility for moving the other one here, and therefore feel guilty if some in the family are unhappy.

The other spouse/partner may not have a job. Meeting people and practicing English is harder then. That person may spend more time doing things that have very different customs — like understanding new school systems, housing, and shopping. If that person

had a job or other important responsibilities at home, the loss of identity (as “a teacher” or “a community leader”) can be very difficult. The simple fact that the members of the couple made different sacrifices means that they face different kinds of adjustment.

So - some advice: Do not expect that you and your spouse/partner will always feel the same way at the same time. Most people who move to a new country go through times of liking their new lives, and other times of being unhappy. It is rare for two people to adjust at exactly the same rate. If your up and down cycles are short, try not to feel abandoned if your spouse/partner is happy when you are sad. And try not to feel discouraged if you are happy when your spouse/partner wants to go home. With time, you will probably meet often at points in the cycles where you both feel fine.

Try not to get stuck into “The Happy One” and “The Unhappy One” roles. When adjusting to a new country feels too difficult, it is common for couples to split their emotions like that. But in couples that adjust most easily to an intercultural move, both members agree that there are both good and bad things about living in the new country. They may disagree about what is good and bad but they both have some things they like, and are allowed to dislike others. If your spouse/partner always seems to talk about how great the US is and you disagree, try talking about something you *do* like in the US. With time, your spouse may say, “Yes, but this part is not so good...”

In the same way, if your spouse/partner seems more unhappy than you, try talking about something in the US that you do *not* like. It may sound backwards. But remember that if both of you can speak to each other about the good and bad parts of living here, you will feel less lonely. And you will return more quickly to the natural cycles of adjustment.

## Academy Awards

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Hollywood's highest honor, the Academy Awards (also called *Oscars*, for reasons lost to history) will be announced at a televised ceremony on February 26. Awards are chosen by the 6000 members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. This is an honorary professional organization — members have to be invited by the Board to join one of its divisions, and have to have “achieved distinction” in some aspect of film making. Members are mostly white, male and over age 60. Efforts are in place to diversify membership, doubling its numbers of women and minorities by 2020.

There are 17 divisions: Actors, Casting Directors, Cinematographers, Costume Designers, Designers, Directors, Documentary, Executives, Film Editors, Makeup/Hairstylists, Music, Producers, Public Relations, Short Films and Feature Animation, Sound, Visual Effects, and Writers.

Academy members nominated films or people for awards in their division — that is, Directors nominate for Best Director; Actors for Best Actor; etc. Members in all divisions can nominate films for Best Picture. The top people/films are the Academy Award Nominees; these are announced in January.

Final winners are chosen by all eligible Academy members, regardless of their membership division. They send their votes to PriceWaterhouseCoopers, which keeps the votes very secret until the night of the Awards ceremony, broadcast on TV and livestreamed. Enjoy the show!

## Birthday Biography: Margaret Knight

Margaret Knight is known as the most well-known female American inventor of the 19th century. She was born in Maine on February 14, 1838.

After the death of her father, Knight took a job (at age 12) in a cotton mill. (This was common in those days, especially in textile mills -- children could fit into small spaces adults could not, and repair the machinery. Child labor was outlawed in 1938, except for agriculture - unlike other types of labor, children as young as age 12 can work as farm-workers, picking food, for unlimited numbers of hours before and after school. By one estimate, children pick a quarter of all the food we eat in the US.)

Knight turned this understanding of machinery into some good ideas. Her first invention was one that automatically stopped a textile machine if something got caught in it. She was awarded 20 patents in her life.

Her most famous invention is one you probably use at least once a week -- the flat-bottomed grocery bag. Her machine folded and glued paper into a shape that held groceries better than flat bags. As she was making a metal sample of the machine, necessary for a patent application, a man stole the idea and applied for - and was awarded - the patent. When she protested, his defense was that a woman could not possibly invent such a great machine. Happily, Knight won the case, and the patent.

Happy Birthday, Ms. Knight.

## Translating the US Kitchen

It is hard enough learning to cook in a new country, with new foods, new ways of measuring, and a new language. What do you do when you finally know how to cook a recipe and ... you don't have the ingredients you need? Here are some substitutions you can make. In most cases, the flavor will be quite similar. By the way, C = cup, T = tablespoon, and t = teaspoon.

### If the recipe says to use...:

1 t double-acting baking powder  
4 extra large eggs  
1 C cake flour  
1 C all purpose flour  
1 C granulated (white) sugar

1 C brown sugar  
1 C buttermilk

1 C heavy cream  
1 C half-and-half  
1 C sour cream  
1 T fresh herbs (like basil or dill)  
1 T mustard

### ...you can use this instead:

¼ t baking soda plus ½ t cream of tartar  
5 large eggs or 6 medium eggs  
1 C minus 2 T all-purpose flour  
1 C plus 2 T cake flour  
1¾ C confectioner's (powdered) sugar or ¾ C honey and reduce other liquid by ¼ C or 1 C brown sugar (packed tight)  
1 C white sugar plus 1½ T molasses  
1 C plain yogurt or 1 C minus 1 T warm milk plus 1 T vinegar or lemon juice (let stand for 5 minutes)  
¾ C whole milk plus 1/3 C melted butter  
½ C light or medium cream plus ½ C whole milk  
1 C plain yogurt  
1 t dried herbs  
1 t dry mustard plus water

Chop: cut in small pieces, or

Mince: cut in very small pieces



Dice: cut in small cubes



Julienne: cut in thin strips



Slice: cut in thin pieces



It is frustrating when a recipe asks for "2 cups of grated cheese" but the store sells cheese by the pound, not the cup. How much should you buy? Here are some guidelines:

### If the recipe says to use...:

3½ - 4 C all-purpose flour  
4¼ C whole wheat flour  
3 C shelled almonds, peanuts, or walnuts  
4 C shelled pecans  
2 C white sugar  
2¼ C brown sugar (packed tight)  
3 C sliced apples  
3 to 4 T lemon juice and 2 to 3 t peel  
3 C chopped onions  
2 C cooked mashed potatoes or 3½ sliced  
2 C grated cheese

### ...buy this amount, then measure:

1 pound  
1 pound  
1 pound  
1 pound  
1 pound  
1 pound  
3 medium apples - 1 pound  
1 medium lemons  
1 pound  
3 medium potatoes  
8 ounces (.5 pound)

# Cherry Trees and Log Cabins

George Washington, the first US President, chopped down a cherry tree when he was a little boy in the 1730s. When his parents asked him if he had done it, he said, "I cannot tell a lie — yes, I did."

Abraham Lincoln, the 16th US President, was born in a log cabin. He taught himself to read, lying on the floor, by the light of the fireplace. He only went to school for one year. One day a book he had borrowed from a neighbor got wet. He worked three days in the neighbor's field to pay for it.

Every school child in the United States knows these "facts" about these two US Presidents. Actually historians agree that the cherry tree story is completely false. But the lessons told in the stories are important anyway.

Lincoln's log cabin is a well-loved symbol of American opportunity. It says, "You can start from a very poor family, and rise to an important position in life and history." The picture of him stretched out in front of the fireplace, reading, says, "Even if life is difficult, you should get an education."

Lincoln's borrowed book and Washington's cherry tree say, "Honesty, above all else, is what is important." Today, Americans are in deep conversation about whether this kind of rags-to-riches social mobility is a reality, and whether politicians are truly honest. But they want to believe the answer is "yes."

Stories about heroes teach children about a nation's values. You can continue to teach your children about your country's values while living in the US. Tell them stories of your national heroes. Who were the famous people in your country's history? What did they do that was important? What do their stories say about

their character and personality? (Bravery? Loyalty? Integrity? Fairness? Wisdom?) If you keep these heroes alive in your family, the values will stay alive too.

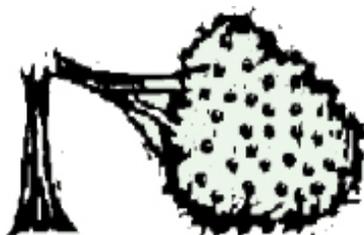
In the same way, stories about parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents teach children about a family's values. In her book *Black Sheep and Kissing Cousins: How Our Family Stories Shape Us* (Penguin), Elizabeth Stone reports on interviews with more than 100 Americans about their families' stories. Some

stories were long and detailed. Others were really just a phrase, told over and over about a person. Some gave the family an identity (as "rebellious people," or as "a family that is loyal to each other even in hard times," for example). Others taught warnings (like "don't be too interested in making money," or "stay away from strangers").

For example, Stone told of her own great-grandmother who was the daughter of a rich man

in Italy. She married the poor town postman who was "able to play any musical instrument he laid eyes on." Stone then describes all her family members who were more interested in the arts than money.

What stories do you tell about your family? What do they teach? Tell these stories to your children, especially now while you are far away. You will keep the link with your family alive.



## Storytelling for Intercultural Reflection

I teach a summer course at the Summer Institute for Intercultural Communication ([www.intercultural.org/siic.php](http://www.intercultural.org/siic.php)) called *Storytelling for Intercultural Reflection*. The course is based on the ideas in the *Cherry Trees and Log Cabins* article to the left. I ask participants to write and tell stories about their own lives and families, and to extract meaning and values from these stories. Join me in July!

Here are some sites you might find interesting as you begin to tell your family stories:

♦ [www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/10/30/magazine/memories-of-meals-past.html](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/10/30/magazine/memories-of-meals-past.html) - a good way to get going telling stories is to remember food; this will get you started (and make you hungry).

♦ [nymag.com/scienceofus/2014/09/dudes-have-horrible-memories.html](http://nymag.com/scienceofus/2014/09/dudes-have-horrible-memories.html) - why men remember fewer childhood stories than women. It may be because mothers talk differently to little boys than little girls; compare this with Gish Jen's suggestion (in her book *Tiger Writing*) that Chinese children get little training in telling stories about their daily lives.

♦ [www.nytimes.com/interactive/projects/your-stories/conversations-on-race](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/projects/your-stories/conversations-on-race) - a moving collection of stories about race in America

OK. So get started. "Once upon a time in a land far away..."

Newcomer's Almanac is published monthly by The Interchange Institute, for people who have recently moved to the United States. Its goal is to promote international understanding by providing information about the American holidays, customs, values, social issues, and language that often confuse and surprise newcomers. It is written by Anne P. Copeland, PhD, who is a clinical psychologist and the Director of The Interchange Institute. She is an American and has lived and worked overseas with her family.

The Interchange Institute is a not-for-profit organization that studies the impact of intercultural transitions on individuals, their families, and the organizations for which they work. From the results of this research, the Institute offers seminars and workshops, produces publications, and provides consultative services to the international newcomers, their organizations, and to host communities, recognizing that change and insight on both sides facilitates smooth transition.

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The Interchange Institute  
Tel. 617.566.2227  
[www.interchangeinstitute.org](http://www.interchangeinstitute.org)  
email: [newcomer@interchangeinstitute.org](mailto:newcomer@interchangeinstitute.org)



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## That Crazy English: Honesty Idioms

On Presidents' Day, we remember two Presidents who were known as honest politicians. Here are some idioms used to talk about truth and lies:

He is *as honest as the day is long*. (He is *completely honest*.)

She is *straight as an arrow*. (She is *completely honest*.)

I know you think I am *lying through my teeth*, but I am not. (I know you think I am *telling a complete lie*, but I am not.)

Don't *swallow his line* — he *has something up his sleeve*. (Don't *believe what he says* — he is *hiding something that he will use later to trick you*.)

The treasurer *cooked the books* but he got caught. (The treasurer *kept false financial records*, but he got caught.)

I hope you will forgive my *white lie*. (I hope you will forgive *my small lie, told for a good cause or to avoid hurting someone's feelings*.)

Is she telling you another of her *tall tales*? (Is she telling you another of her *completely unbelievable and untrue stories*?)

Your joke *hit too close to home*. (Your joke was so close to the truth that it was uncomfortable for the listener.)

## BEFORE YOU KNOW IT, YOU'RE A POET

Read *Valentine's Day* on [page 3](#). The most traditional poem for a Valentine's card is this:

*Roses are red  
Violets are blue  
Sugar is sweet  
And so are you.*

Children often have fun writing new versions of this poem (Roses are red/Violets are blue/ When you are with me/ You smell like a shoe.). Try making a few new ones yourself:

1. Roses are red  
Violets are blue

2) Roses are red  
Violets are blue

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Adults used to write their own love poetry on Valentine's cards. Here are the first lines of some Valentine poems from the 1800s. Add your own lines:

3) Oh! come my love, my own delight, 4) Fly Cupid, fly, and wing thy way,\*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(\*fly away, go on your way)

5) Doubt not - believe each word you see, 6) \_\_\_\_\_  
And treasure up each sacred\* line, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

And I love you.

(\*holy, special)

Now write a 4-line poem in your own language, then translate it into English.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

---

## HOMEWORK

## WITH A PEN

1. Read *Cherry Trees and Log Cabins* on [page 7](#). Write a brief story that has often been told in your family about you, a parent, sibling or grandparent. What does this story say about what your family thinks is important?

2. Read *Cherry Trees and Log Cabins* on [page 7](#). Write a list of 3-5 national heroes in your home country. What is the most famous thing about each? What do children in your country learn about the family or history of each? What lessons do these stories teach?

3. Read *Academy Awards* on [page 5](#). Write a list of 5 American movies you first saw in your own language. Translate the titles, word for word, into English. Is that the title by which the movie was released in the US?

4. Read *Translating the US Kitchen* on [page 6](#). Write a list of foods from your home country that you have not been able to find in the US, and what, if any, substitutes you have used for them.

5. Read *That Crazy English*: on [page 8](#). Write a list of idioms used in your home language that refer to the honesty or truth. Write a word-for-word translation of each, and use each one in an English sentence.

## DOUBLE MEANINGS

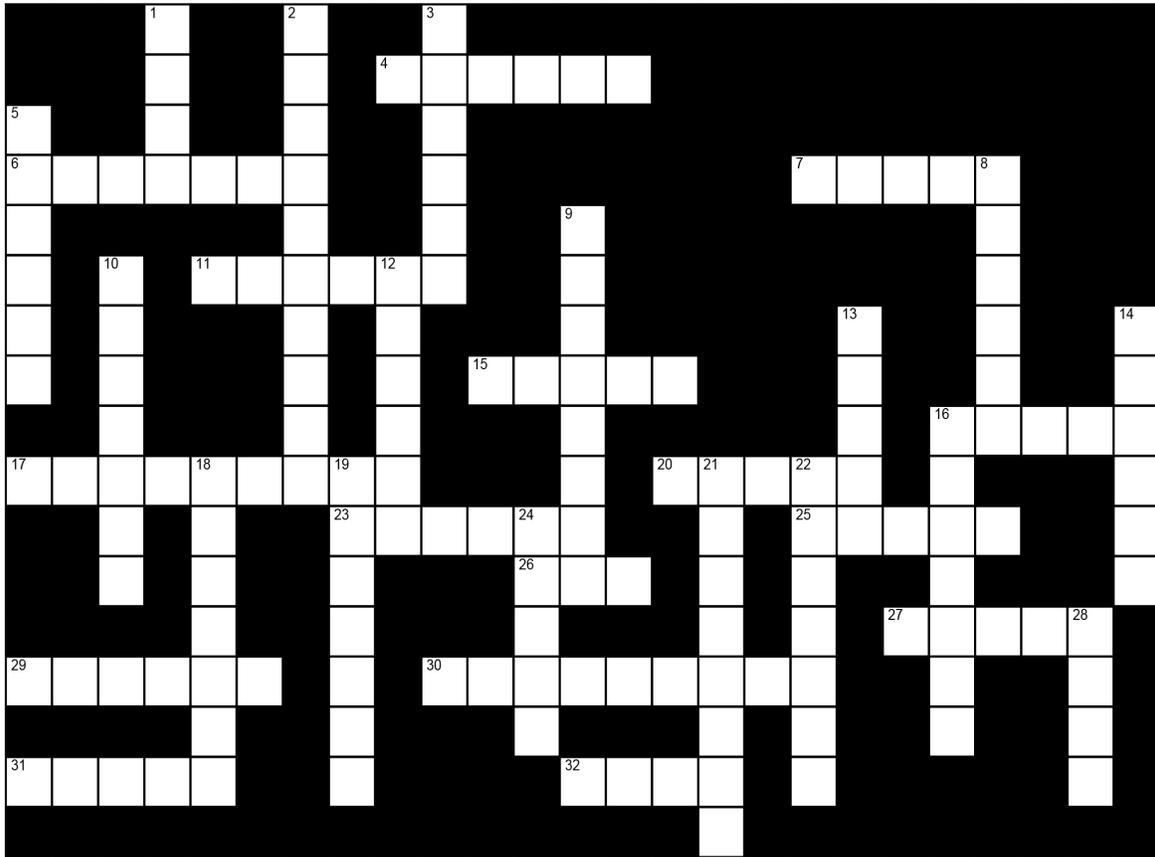
Read *Cherry Trees and Log Cabins* on [page 7](#). The article uses several words that have more than one meaning. Choose the correct meaning, as it is used in the context of the article. The number in parentheses shows which paragraph the word is in.

- |                  |                                |                                      |
|------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. lie (1)       | a) rest                        | b) say something that is not true    |
| 2. lying (2)     | a) resting                     | b) saying something that is not true |
| 3. light (2)     | a) not heavy                   | b) glow                              |
| 4. field (2)     | a) area to grow crops          | b) an area of study                  |
| 5. symbol (4)    | a) metal drum                  | b) sign                              |
| 6. poor (4)      | a) having little money         | b) pathetic                          |
| 7. value (5)     | a) what something costs        | b) morals or beliefs                 |
| 8. character (5) | a) important person in a story | b) personal values or qualities      |
| 9. hard (6)      | a) difficult                   | b) not soft                          |

## FUN, USEFUL, COLORFUL, GREAT AND IMPORTANT ADJECTIVES

Adjectives describe and give meaning to nouns. Read *The Other Side of Love* on [page 5](#). In the left-hand column below, write the adjective used in the article to describe the noun. (The number after the noun refers to the paragraph number in which the noun is found.) In the right-hand column, think of another adjective that could describe that noun.

|                 |               |                |
|-----------------|---------------|----------------|
| <u>happiest</u> | marriages (2) | <u>longest</u> |
| _____           | change (3)    | _____          |
| _____           | work (5)      | _____          |
| _____           | rules (5)     | _____          |
| _____           | customs (6)   | _____          |
| _____           | country (8)   | _____          |
| _____           | cycles (10)   | _____          |



**Across**

- 4. Donald Trump is the forty-\_\_\_ person to be President of the US.
- 6. to charge an elected official with serious misconduct
- 7. cooked the \_\_\_, cheated
- 11. as \_\_\_ as the day is long
- 15. a \_\_\_ lie, one that is small and/or told for a good purpose
- 16. \_\_\_ is a movie about an important Civil Rights march in Alabama.
- 17. Presidential press secretaries usually give daily press \_\_\_.
- 20. February is \_\_\_ History Month in the US.
- 23. Only two US Presidents have been divorced: Trump and \_\_\_.
- 25. another name for the Academy Award
- 26. the traditional color of Valentine's Day
- 27. lying through your \_\_\_
- 29. A famous story says that George Washington chopped down a \_\_\_ tree but did not lie about it.
- 30. a traditional Valentine's Day gift
- 31. 27% American couples share an \_\_\_ account.
- 32. Go to \_\_\_-how.com to learn how to do almost anything.

**Down**

- 1. cut into small cubes
- 2. George \_\_\_ was the first US President.
- 3. a substitute for sour cream
- 5. a \_\_\_ majority, over 50%
- 8. Do not expect that you and your \_\_\_ will always feel the same way at the same time
- 9. cut in thin strips
- 10. Telling family \_\_\_ is a good way to teach values.
- 12. husband or wife
- 13. Rosa \_\_\_ refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white man.
- 14. If a groundhog sees its \_\_\_ on February 2, there will be 6 more weeks of winter...maybe.
- 16. \_\_\_ was made illegal during the presidency of Abraham Lincoln.
- 18. another word for "national" in the US
- 19. Margaret Knight invented a machine to make flat-bottomed \_\_\_ bags.
- 21. A famous story says that Abraham Lincoln was born in a \_\_\_ (two words).
- 22. The Senate must give its "Advice and \_\_\_" to Presidential appointments.
- 24. straight as an \_\_\_
- 28. Cafuné is the Portuguese word for tenderly running your hands through someone's \_\_\_.

**OUT AND ABOUT**

1. Read *Background to Today's News* on page 1. For one week, listen for news of Senate hearings on President Trump's nominations. Which Senate committee holds the hearings? What is the vote?
2. Read *Valentine's Day* on [page 3](#). Go to a store that sells greeting cards. Find an example of a Valentine card that: (a) is for a young child, (b) is for one's spouse, (c) is funny, (d) is serious.
3. Read *Translating Relationship Words* on [page 3](#). Does your home language have a word for each of the words in the list? Have you had trouble translating any relationship or emotion words from your home language to English?

## IF YOU USE THE WEB

1. Read *Valentine's Day* on [page 3](#). Go to [www.wikihow.com](http://www.wikihow.com) and search for how to make a Valentine's Day Card. Then search for something you actually want to know how to do (!), or something you know how to do well so you can compare advice.

2. Read *Black History Month* on [page 4](#). Watch each of the youtube clips mentioned in the article.

3. Read *Academy Awards* on [page 5](#). Go to [www.oscars.org](http://www.oscars.org), the official site of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Go before February 26, when the awards will be announced. Find the list of nominated movies. How many have you seen? Go to this page: [www.oscars.org/videos-photos/academy-conversations](http://www.oscars.org/videos-photos/academy-conversations) and click on a film that interests you to hear a member of the Academy discuss it.

4. Read *Birthday Biography: Margaret Knight* on [page 6](#). Go to [www.youtube.com/watch?v=YMOewutCMQo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YMOewutCMQo) to see her grocery bag invention at the Smithsonian Museum.



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## WITH A FRIEND

1. Read *Background to Today's News* on [page 1](#). Describe to a friend or partner how government officials in your home country are chosen. Compare it to the American system. Then describe how your home country's leader(s) interact with the press.

2. Read *Presidential Facts* on [pages 2-3](#). Discuss two or three facts that surprised you, or that you did not know, or that are very different from your home country.

3. Read *Valentine's Day* on [page 3](#). With a friend or partner, compare how people behave when they are "in love" in your home culture with what they do in the US. If you have Valentine's Day in your home country, how is it similar to and different from what you see in the US? When do men and women exchange gifts?

4. Read *Black History Month* on [pages 4-5](#). With a friend or partner, briefly describe any inequalities or tensions that exist in your home country between race, religious or ethnic groups. How have the tensions changed over time?

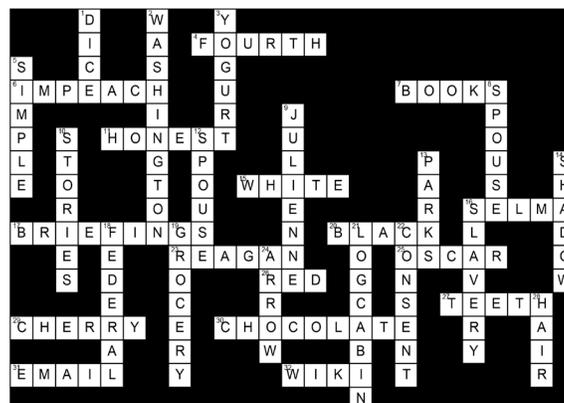
4. Read *Academy Awards* on [page 5](#). Watch the Awards ceremony on February 22, then discuss it with a partner. Were you entertained? Did you enjoy the show? If you have seen any of the nominated movies, tell your partner what you liked or did not like about them. Then discuss your favorite movie of all time. In what country was it made? Describe the plot to your partner.

5. Read *Translating the US Kitchen* on [page 6](#). Describe to a friend or partner what an American would find if he or she looked for these foods in a store in your home country (is it the same as the US? is there something similar? what would other choices be?):

|                             |                   |            |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|------------|
| brown sugar                 | nuts              | flour      |
| heavy cream                 | a pound of cheese | mustard    |
| double-acting baking powder | skim milk         | sour cream |

6. Read *Translating the US Kitchen* on [page 6](#). Tell a friend or partner the most frustrating experience you have had trying cook or buy food in the US. What advice about food would you give to a person coming from your country to the US?

## ANSWER CORNER



### UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU READ

1b 2b 3a 4a

### DOUBLE MEANINGS

1b 2a 3b 4a 5b 6a 7b 8b 9a

### FUN...ADJECTIVES

*wonderful* (or *difficult*) change  
*interesting* work  
*cultural* rules  
*different* customs  
*new* country  
*natural* cycles