

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 22 Issue 09 2014-02-28

In Conversation

Adrian Sutherland

Going the Distance

Invigilating Choice

Grading DNA

Naturally Smart?

Plus:

From Where I Sit

The Writer's Toolbox

and much more!



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www.voicemagazine.org

500 Energy Square
10109 – 106 ST NW
Edmonton AB
T5J 3L7

800.788.9041 ext. 2905

Email
voice@voicemagazine.org

Publisher

AU Students' Union

Editor-In-Chief

Tamra Ross

Managing Editor

Karl Low

Regular Contributors

Hazel Anaka
Barbara Lehtiniemi
S.D. Livingston
Wanda Waterman

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to voice@voicemagazine.org, and please indicate if we may publish your letter.

EDITORIAL

Karl Low



Testing, Testing

Well, it's over. The election is done, the referendum is done, and life returns back to as normal as it gets for the student union. You can find the results of both of these on the AUSU front page, or you can just skip down to the "Did You Know?" piece in this week's *The Voice Magazine* for the short version.

Also this week, you can find a very informative article by Barbara Lehtineimi on exam invigilation. Many AU students are located in major urban centres, with the largest group being located in Calgary, so this might not seem terribly useful, but if you've had the unfortunate occasion to go to an exam in the new Bow Valley College centre here in Calgary, the notion that having to go to the defined exam centre is only preferred, not mandatory, could be a godsend.

While I don't know the conditions at the Edmonton testing centre (any Edmonton readers out there please write and tell me, I'd love to hear about it) I know that here in Calgary, the restrictions are almost draconian. Beyond the obvious restrictions of no outside books or notes, in Calgary you are not allowed to bring in anything beyond your writing instruments and exam materials. No, you can't take in your jacket or sweater unless you intend to wear it throughout the exam. No, your cell-phone cannot go in with you, even if you put it on vibrate only and are worried about some sort of family emergency. You're in an accounting course? You're allowed to take in the calculator they've provided you with. That's it. No back-up calculator allowed, so make sure your battery isn't low and that you don't drop it while you're in there. And forget about your purse. That doesn't come in either. They don't even allow you to bring in a drink, which I find particularly stupefying. Even if I did carefully peel off the label, write an answer or three on it, and then painstakingly glue it back on, it's water. It's clear. You'd probably be able to see it if I'd done that! Never mind bringing in a can, I don't even know how that could be used to hide answers.

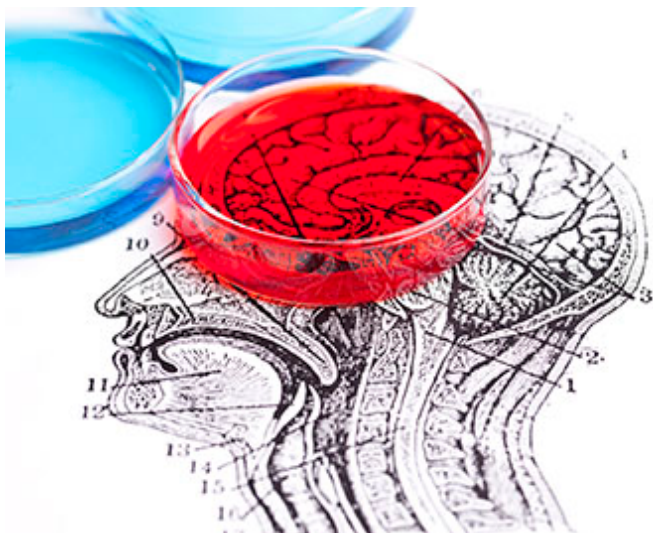
Now, you can store all of this stuff in the locker outside the room, but they don't have locks, and AU doesn't supply any. AUSU used to, but apparently too many of them were having to be removed for the program to continue. Alternatively, if you ask nicely, they will allow you to store some items in the invigilator office on the other side of the glass, but the invigilator is not going to know if someone is going through your bag or their own once they leave the exam, and since they're stored on the floor, neither will you. All of these concerns just add to the tension students are already feeling when they go to take an exam, so for some the final straw is learning that the exam door is locked.

It's the type of lock that allows you to open it from the inside, but for people who are already nervous about having to take an exam, not being able to take a drink while they do it, and leaving their stuff where they can't see it, the idea that that lock might malfunction, even if it's a remote chance, is simply enough to make them decide it's not worth it. I know people who choose courses based on trying to avoid AU invigilated exams, and people who've dropped courses because, even though they knew the material, the stress of the exam room and regulations were too much for them to handle.

So the idea that maybe, even if we're in Calgary, we can choose another invigilation centre, perhaps even takes a bottle of water into an exam, is an idea worth knowing.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karl'.

Primal Numbers



S.D. Livingston

Making the Genetic Grade

Do you have Neanderthals in your family tree? Are you at risk for certain kinds of cancer? These days, lots of people are getting answers to those questions and more by handing over samples of DNA. But there's one type of genetic link that we're still not keen to explore: intelligence. Now, one psychologist wants educators to pay more attention to genes—and his theory could transform the way we teach.

The idea that nature trumps nurture in the classroom isn't new. As this [Telegraph article](#) explains, a 1969 research paper concluded that

"80% of variance in IQ scores was attributable to genes, not environment." The notion was divisive back then, too. One psychologist who backed it was "punched on the nose" while delivering a lecture.

Fast forward to 2014, when genetic testing for everything from cancer to ancestry is the latest trend. Everything, that is, except native intelligence, and that's where researchers like Professor Robert Plomin come in.

He's a professor of (and holds a PhD in) behavioural genetics at the MRC Social, Genetic and Developmental Psychiatry Centre at the Institute of Psychiatry in King's College London. He's been active in the field of behavioural genetics since 1974, and has spent the past decade working to identify the genes that are responsible for psychological traits. In other words, he knows a thing or two about how our DNA makes us tick.

Similar to the findings of [other researchers](#), Plomin's studies show that the more we equalize the environment, the more that genetics account for differences in cognitive ability.

Suppose, for instance, that a group of kids from different socioeconomic backgrounds are educated in exactly the same way. The same school setting, the same books and supplies, the same extracurricular activities. They will, of course, go home to differing environments after school. But for a large part of their day, they're being shaped on a level playing field. The cognitive differences between them, then, come down to genetics instead of environment.

So what does that mean for kids in the classroom? Ideally, we could use DNA analysis to create personal learning plans for every student—the opposite of a one-size-fits-all strategy that sees so many students fall through the cracks. After all, as Plomin told *The Telegraph*, "It's wholly accepted that preventative medicine is the way to go. Why not preventative education?"

Why not, indeed?

Because technical issues aside (those IQ genes have yet to be isolated), humans have long held a very narrow view of intelligence, and a shameful history of how we treat those who don't fit the mould. One example is the widespread sterilization laws created in the 20th century. Many US states enacted them, with North Carolina performing state sterilizations as recently as 1974. This [map](#) on the DNA Learning Center blog offers a fascinating look at the history of the practice.

To be absolutely, abundantly clear, that's not what Professor Plomin is suggesting. Instead, his goal is to use DNA to create a customized Learning Chip, a "reliable genetic predictor" that will give students, parents, and teachers a clear picture of where each child needs help and where they naturally excel.

Unfortunately, while the work of researchers like Professor Plomin could be used to help students, we can't ignore the potential pitfalls.

Suppose it's that momentous day you and your child have been waiting for—the first day of school. Every teacher, from kindergarten to high school, could potentially see the DNA report that shows little Sophie's inherited lack of math skills. Will that create a self-fulfilling prophecy, in which everyone's assumptions lead to low expectations because, after all, she's not genetically meant to win a math scholarship?

And how might DNA insight affect admissions to prestigious universities? Money and connections already skew your chances of getting in. But what if you love science in spite of struggling to get good grades, yet your file shows that you aren't the right genetic material for MIT?

Those concerns shouldn't stop promising research like Professor Plomin's. But we can't forget that it's often the intangibles—things like perseverance and resourcefulness—that make all the difference in making the grade.

S.D. Livingston is the author and creator of the Madeline M. Mystery Series for kids, as well as several books for older readers. Visit her [website](#) for information on her writing.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Cheating as a Way of Life

CBC is reporting that, with more and more universities, including AU, using various online services to catch plagiarized papers, some people are now making a living by being paid to provide customized papers to students. One writer says he produces essays for more than 100 students per year and makes 30k annually, by using a library that is not yet known by anti-plagiarism software and somewhat customizing each paper.

While this kind of work is difficult for anti-plagiarism programs to detect, universities are increasingly keeping students papers for many years and if they detect cheating after the fact, can even cancel former students' degrees.

Around the World: Girls in Pakistan Receive Sex Education

In the Guardian it is being reported that girls in Johi, Pakistan are starting to receive sex education in school once they turn eight years old. The education includes discussions around puberty, human rights, and how to defend themselves from attack. It also includes lessons on marital rape, which is a revolutionary idea as the practice itself is not illegal. Lessons are taught alongside more traditional subjects and parents are informed about the curriculum before their daughters enrol. So far, none have objected and the school has faced no opposition, which is markedly different from the experience of sex education being put in place here in Alberta.

Exam Invigilation Going the Distance

Barbara Lehtiniemi



Writing an exam can be stressful, and getting there is not half the fun. The last thing I want to worry about on the big exam day is the drive. When I prepared to write my first AU exam, I checked AU's invigilation network list to find the closest site. The nearest approved invigilator was sixty kilometres away, which is within AU's guideline of up to 100 km.

Distance is relative, and 100 kilometres can seem short or long. What if 100 kilometres means taking a ferry or driving through Montreal? What if it's snowing? What if you rely on public transportation and need to take three buses and a long hike to get to

the nearest invigilator? In those cases, the distance becomes a bigger barrier.

I scheduled my first exam in late winter. In addition to the usual pre-exam anxieties, I also had Canadian weather to worry about. March straddles winter and spring, and weather-wise it can go either way. Fortunately, on the day of that exam, the weather cooperated and I had an uneventful drive.

Knowing that I had many more courses to take and exams to write, I resolved to find an invigilator closer to home. After all, I won't always be as lucky with the weather as I was that first time. As it says at the bottom of this article, I live on a windswept, rural road. When it's snowing and blowing it can be treacherous and ill-advised to drive six kilometres, let alone sixty.

The exam request form states "if you live within 100 km of an AU approved invigilator, you are required to write your exam at that location." That sounds pretty definitive. But, wait--the AU Undergraduate Calendar page on [examination centres](#) states that "it is preferred that students who live within a 100 km radius of an AU-approved invigilation centre, write their examinations at that centre" (6.1.3.2).

"It is preferred" sounds more flexible than "you are required." Even though section 6.1.3.2 appears to refer only to AU examination centres in Athabasca, Calgary, and Edmonton, I decided to test the waters and submit my next exam request with a newly-proposed invigilator closer to my home.

Finding a local invigilator, or proctor as they are often called, was not difficult. Many institutions are already set up to supervise exams. In my case, the local public library system already had a policy for proctoring exams. After contacting the library and setting up a tentative exam date, I submitted my exam request to AU.

The first response from the exam unit was to point out that there was already an approved invigilation centre within 100 kilometres. I sent them an e-mail to explain my concern about the distance in winter, and to point out that the local library system had a number of branches spread over three counties, making them an ideal institution for AU exam invigilation.

My request was ultimately approved. My next exam was written at a quiet library branch only twelve kilometres from my home. Now the drive is one less thing to worry about as exam day approaches.

If you're hampered by the distance to your nearest AU invigilation centre, you might consider proposing a new invigilator. Many institutions can accommodate a supervised exam, with colleges and universities being the obvious locations. In smaller communities or remote areas, think about other institutions that offer training, courses, or public services. Public libraries are often willing to offer this service even if you are not a patron. Check AU's existing [invigilation network](#) for ideas.

Once you've identified a potential invigilator, contact that institution to find out if they already have a practice of proctoring exams. If not, be prepared to provide them with information on what would be required and have them contact AU's exam unit if they need additional information. Ask if they can accommodate online as well as paper exams. Read the [invigilator guidelines](#) in AU's Undergraduate Calendar to ensure there is no potential conflict of interest between you and the invigilator. Contact the [exam unit](#) if you're not sure.

Request approval for a proposed invigilator right on the exam request form. You'll need to submit your request at least 60 days before your scheduled exam date to allow time for the new invigilator to be considered by the exam unit. If your request for the proposed invigilator is denied and you believe you have compelling reasons why it should be approved, contact the exam unit. Be prepared to justify your request. The exam unit, however, has the final say.

Wherever you write your exam, confirm the location, date, and time with the invigilator ahead of time. Plan to arrive early so that you won't be anxious about any delays during your drive. And relax--you'll do fine.

Barbara Lehtiniemi is a writer, photographer, and AU student. She lives on a windswept rural road in Eastern Ontario.

DID YOU KNOW?



Your new AUSU Council has been elected and now consists of three incumbents: Jason Nixon, Kim Newsome, and Evan Schmidt; and six new councillors: Megan Daigneault, Alexander Poulton, Shawna Wasylshyn, Corrina Green, and Bonita Arbeau.

The Referendum for the proposed Student Health Care Plan passed with 95% approval. While only 288 students voted, the high approval rating means that this can be projected to be representative of the overall opinion of the student body with a high degree of confidence. And when considered as a percentage of AU's full-load equivalent (that is, if all the courses taken at AU were taken by full time students, like at most universities) that's about a 27% voting rate. Still not a stellar turn-out, but certainly a reasonable one. This means that the plan has been approved and will be moving forward, with the current date it is expected to come into operating being September 2014.

In Conversation With Adrian Sutherland of Midnight Shine

Wanda Waterman



Midnight Shine is a new Ontario band grounded in classic rock and roots, and renowned for their energetic onstage persona and relevant lyrics. Their just-released self-titled debut disk was recorded at Toronto's elite Noble Street Studios under the guidance of accomplished producer Douglas Romanow. Recently lead vocalist Adrian Sutherland took the time to answer Wanda Waterman's questions about balancing life in a rock band with a traditional Cree lifestyle.

Tell Me About Your Childhood.

Adrian grew up in Attawapiskat in northern Ontario, and the rest of the band's members are from other nearby First Nations communities.

"My childhood was hard," Adrian admits. "I do have many fond memories—there was a strong emphasis on hunting. But I wouldn't say my childhood was happy; it was mostly tough."

One of the bright spots was the presence of music in his home: "I always was around music; my mother played guitar and piano, and all my uncles played in a rock band."

How We Came to Be

Adrian was a lone singer/songwriter in 2011 when the famous Canadian band Trooper invited him to open for their concert in Timmins, Ontario, on the condition he be accompanied by a band. Wasting no time Sutherland recruited guitarist Zach Tomatuk, bassist Stan Louttit, and drummer George Gillies. The crowd was ecstatic, and that was the beginning of Midnight Shine.

The band has real chemistry; Adrian cites his most mesmerizing musical experience as having occurred during a rehearsal. "I felt something spiritual during one of our songs," he remembers. "It was awesome!" Every band member brings with him a love of classic rock; lead guitarist Zach Tomatuk cites a love for the Beatles, Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, Thin Lizzy, Rush, and Jeff Beck, as well as classic films with great soundtracks. Drummer George Gillies is a long-time fan of Creedence Clearwater Revival, Johnny Cash, and the Beatles.

First Nations Conscience and Consciousness

"Aside from my album," says Adrian, "I'm a very traditional person (but not a 'new traditionalist'). I was raised to practice what it truly means to be Indian. I speak Cree fluently, net fish, harvest moose and caribou, and pick herbs and berries with my family. I've fasted every year since I was young, and I sing on the drum with my brothers."

Passing on the wisdom of ages is an important part of Sutherland's lyrical palette.

"In the song 'James Bay,'" he says, "I'm speaking for myself; I wanted to get out a message about the old people who had such a strong belief in what was given to them—they believed in the animals, birds, water, and land. We need to pass this on to our children and grandchildren."

Does being First Nations within a larger culture have an impact on his writing?

"Yes, sometimes my music is politically driven; I want people to understand me as I am. I think that there are misinterpretations on both sides of the table. Canada needs to work with us First Nations people, and we as First Nations people need to be clear about what we need in our communities. I'm tired of being told what I need to do, or become."

Adrian balances his burgeoning rock career with performing in a traditional First Nations drum group as well as serving as Chief Operations Officer for economic development in his community.

On the Horizon

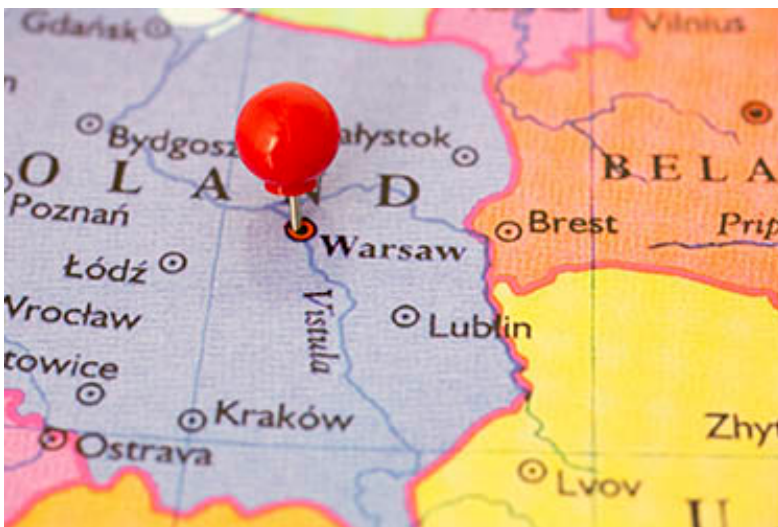
What's next for Midnight Shine?

"We have a new album coming out in the near future," he says. "We want to focus on getting to the next level in the music biz."



Planning for Poland

Barbara Godin



I never really thought much about Poland until I met my husband, Stan. At that time I was just finishing my degree at AU. Stan was born in Poland, but his family came to Canada when he was three years old. He always hoped to return for a visit some day, and it was while we were dating we began talking about visiting Poland when I finished university. Shortly after I graduated we were finally ready to seriously consider the trip. So, I began to research this country, this Poland, that I knew literally nothing about.

In my investigation I discovered some interesting facts about Poland. For example, Poland is the 9th largest country in Europe and Warsaw, the capital city, is represented by the symbol of the mermaid. Seventeen Nobel Prize winners are from Poland. Some recipients include Maria Skłodowska Curie (Physics 1903); Gunter Grass (Literature 1999), well known for his novel "The Tin Drum"; and Frank Wilczek (Physics 2004). Other famous Poles include writer Joseph Conrad; Michael Mark, the cofounder of the retail outlet, Marks & Spencer; and of course cosmetics entrepreneur, Helena Rubinstein. But the important bit of information for the international traveler to Poland is that public toilets carry the sign of a circle for women and a triangle for men.

Although there are many attractions to see in Poland, we are trying to focus on a few that would appeal to both of us. The town of Przemyśl, where Stan was born, will undoubtedly be at the top of our list, where we hope that we will be able to locate some of Stan's long lost relatives.

During the Second World War several concentration camps were located in Poland. The most well-known was Auschwitz-Birkenau, located 50 km west of Krakow, which was the former capital. Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Museum will undeniably be a moving experience for us to visit. An interesting fact I discovered was that the Polish people were responsible for rescuing approximately 450,000 Jews from the massacre of The Holocaust. The Polish were the largest group of people of a single nationality to have accomplished such an amazing feat. This fact alone makes the Polish a remarkable group of people. Unfortunately, after WWII, Poland fell under Soviet leadership, became a communist country, and succumbed to serious economic struggles. Perhaps this explains the exodus of Poles leaving their homeland after the war. Although Stan did not discuss these issues with his widowed mother, looking back, this may shed light on why she would have taken four young children and undertaken the arduous task of leaving her homeland and beginning a new life in a strange land. Fortunately, she had family in Canada to sponsor her and her children.

Another site for us to see is Krakow, which has been chosen twice as the European City of Culture. The architecture of the area, including cathedrals, churches, and castles, is said to be a breathtaking site to behold. We look forward to seeing the marketplace which includes displays of Polish paintings, wood carvings, and various other artistic items. Krakow's museums contain Leonardo da Vinci's "A Lady with a Weasel" and Rembrandt's "Landscape with a Good Samaritan" among other noteworthy artists. The Jewish Museum, also located in Krakow, provides a further view into the culture of the many Jews who have resided in Poland. As well, Krakow offers an exciting nightlife with numerous restaurants and pubs.

The Wieliczka Salt Mine is described as a phenomenon to behold. Since it is only 20 km from Krakow it is still within driving distance for us. The Wieliczka Salt Mine has a depth of 180 meters, 380 steps deep into the earth. The sights are purported to be breathtakingly beautiful, as ponds and lakes are contained within the mine. It is so immense that boats are lowered into the mine as a means to maneuver around. In addition, chapels and religious statues carved out of salt surround the walls. Sounds awesome!

Zakopane, a popular mountain resort, would definitely be a must on our list to visit. Zakopane is well known throughout the world for its earthly activities such as hiking, climbing, and skiing.

Finally the Bieszczady Mountains, believed to appeal to the romantic within all of us, are described as one of the most secluded areas of Europe. The Bieszczady Mountains are definitely a place to visit at any time of year, providing many activities such as hiking, biking, and skiing in winter. These mountains are not a popular tourist area, but, because of their location, which is close to Przemyśl, Stan's hometown, they will definitely be part of our itinerary.

I hope that we can visit all of these popular destinations and more on our long awaited trip to Poland, which should take place in the near future.

Barbara Godin is a graduate of AU, and loves reading and writing.



Taking Back My Space

The March 2014 issue of *O, The Oprah Magazine* is themed around the topic of de-cluttering. From Oprah's opening bit ("Here We Go!") to the last page's "What I Know for Sure" the message is clear. Freedom and clarity of purpose is yours if you get rid of the superfluous in your life.

A six-page spread about Oprah's own efforts featured just some of the hundreds of pieces of art, furniture, accessories, and knick-knacks that were auctioned off last November. Proceeds of over \$600,000 went to the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy Foundation College Fund. Like most of us she has changed, grown, and evolved. And she had the courage to act on it.

The letting go of purchases and gifts was difficult but the result was worth it. Now, apparently, Oprah's surroundings reflect her current priorities in life. The lesson she has been learning is that 'knowing what you need is more than knowing what you want.' And what she needs is 'dogs and books, light and space.'

Naturally, her friend and organizational guru, Peter Walsh, has something to say on the subject of de-cluttering. A foldout calendar challenges us in March to take back control of our lives in blitzes of one to thirty minutes. From cleaning the car, the fridge, and the sock drawer to giving back through donations to Goodwill, he's managed to make the exercise fun and conquerable through bite-sized chunks.

A series of thirteen rules urge us to give it away now, use what you have, fork it, finish the cycle, and more. From dealing with an estate or a divorce, from selling versus giving, from using mantras to getting permission to get rid of..., there is page after page of inspiration and tips.

This attention on our accumulation of stuff is not new. There are careers, TV programs, speakers, and books dedicated to the mission. It's certainly not the first time I've written (or done something) about it.

What is different is a new tactic I've tried. Late last fall I entered the world of consignment. I gathered up clothing, scarves, and purses that were no longer serving me. With weight loss came items like leather jackets that no longer fit. The frugal me felt a need to try to recoup some of the money I'd spent on these items.

So, after making an appointment with a shop, I brought in a selection of items to be assessed. Intellectually I understand they know their customer, their inventory, and their business. That didn't stop me from being offended when they rejected some items. However, victory was mine when another shop took all the leftovers. Better still, every single item except one purse has now sold. When I go to pick up my cash I'll be bringing spring/summer items to consign. The forty percent of sales from the first shop put over fifty dollars in my pocket. I'm saving all the moola for something special. In the process I'm also taking back my space, from where I sit.

Hazel Anaka's first novel is *Lucky Dog*. Visit her [website](#) for more information or follow her on Twitter @anakawrites.

Writer's Toolbox

Christina M. Frey



These Rules were Made for Talking

“Grammar saves lives,” says one meme. Another admonishes, “Don’t be a psycho; use a comma!” Compare “Let’s eat, Grandma!” to “Let’s eat Grandma!” and you’ll have a laugh—and see how misplaced punctuation can change the meaning of a sentence.

Aside from social media sharing, though, grammar and usage rules don’t generally elicit a happy response. Frequently they’re seen as rigid structures created by curmudgeonly editors to make the lives of writers miserable. While editors may indeed be curmudgeonly about the rules, they’re actually trying to make things easier for both writers and readers. With National Grammar Day approaching on March 4, it’s the perfect time to ask ourselves why exactly these rules exist—and what they can do for us.

Clarity

Many of the much-maligned grammar and punctuation rules developed out of the need for clarity of meaning. The “Let’s eat, Grandma” joke above is just one example, but clarity of meaning goes beyond a simple punctuation mark. Take, for example, the words *complimentary* and *complementary*; the first means free of charge (or refers to the act of offering a compliment), while the second implies that things work together well. The words are frequently used interchangeably, but this misuse could engender disappointment or worse:

Example A: Complimentary paintings adorn the hotel room. This means that the paintings are free—so pop one in your suitcase.

Example B: Complementary paintings adorn the hotel room. This, however, means that the paintings go well with, or match, the decor in the room. It doesn’t mean they’re free, so if you were to take a painting, you might be arrested—and lack of knowledge of grammar isn’t a great defense in court.

Not all grammatical rules create such drastic situations, but most exist to make sure that the reader understands exactly what you’re trying to say.

Consistency

One big issue for editors is consistency, or treating like situations alike. For example, in a book involving internal monologue and regular dialogue, the internal monologue should always be formatted the same way (e.g. italicized, if that’s what the author and editor decide). Why? Inconsistency in style and usage can create confusion, but even if the meaning is still clear, inconsistency can be jarring to the reader. A distracted reader is one who’s less likely to “get” the message or story you’re trying to communicate, which means that your whole purpose of writing may be undermined.

Content

The final major reason for grammar and style conventions is content. When Marshall McLuhan wrote, “The medium is the message,” he may have been referring to the differences between media like print and television, but the concept goes deeper to cover tone and style. Different purposes of communication require different levels of formality; adjusting the grammatical and usage rules to fit the occasion can affect the way the writing is perceived. Just like a three-piece suit blends in well at a formal party but would look silly on at the beach, so does formal language seem out of place in, say, dialogue between teens. On the other hand, full sentences and parallel structure give the impression of an organized mind—so when you’re applying for a job or writing a thesis paper, matching the grammatical style with the occasion is just as important as making sure you’re professionally dressed for your interview or dissertation.

Far from being an obnoxious set of norms imposed by cranky editors, writing rules are there to ensure that your readers understand what you’re trying to tell them. Writing’s all about communication between you and the reader—and grammatical rules and style conventions are the key to making that communication happen.

Christina M. Frey is a book editor and a lover of great writing. Chat with her on Twitter about all things literary @turntopage2.

Click of the Wrist

Viral Headlines

Tired of those desperately overblown headlines designed to get more clicks for Upworthy, Viralnova, and other purveyors of procrastination? This week’s links explain the trend, poke fun at it, and—best of all—show you how to keep the headlines from popping up in your feed. You won’t believe what happens next.

One Weird Browser Extension That Will Change Your Life

If the constant influx of so-called Viral Headline English is making you consider renouncing the Internet, give this new Chrome browser extension a try. Called Downworthy, it searches for popular headline terms and substitutes words to tone down the hype. For example, “Incredible” is changed to “Painfully Ordinary,” and “Will Blow Your Mind” to “Might Perhaps Mildly Entertain You For a Moment.” You Must Be Mildly Curious to See How This Painfully Ordinary Extension will Barely Affect Your Life At All.

Read What Happens Next

Classics, schmastics—if the greats of literature had really wanted their books read, they’d have made their titles much more clickable. Fortunately, culture magazine *The Millions* has done it for them. From *Watch This Kid Burst Into Tears When He’s Refused Some More Porridge (Oliver Twist)* to *The Most Powerful Dark Wizard in the World Tried to Kill Him When He Was a Baby. On Page 4,305 You’ll Find Out Why. (Harry Potter)*, you’re sure to find something worth clicking—or reading.

Ancient Secrets to Twitter Success

What is it that makes headlines and stories go viral? How are social media experts using these elements to get more clicks? This *New Yorker* piece examines the truths behind viral marketing—from Aristotle to the modern day.



Mindful Bard**Wanda Waterman****Books, Music, and Film to Wake Up Your Muse and Help You Change the World****Film:** *The Piano in the Sands (Le Piano Des Sables)***Director:** Arnaud Petitet**Genre:** Documentary**Every Day We'll See the Dust
(Too much, the Sahara Bus)**

"I can assure you that there is a real beauty of the human being—there is sheer refinement. Man is really immeasurably big and beautiful, and he doesn't always know it."

- Marc Vella

Hey, let's put a baby grand on the back of a bus and tour the Maghreb. What could possibly go wrong?

Marc Vella, a piano virtuoso, has been doing this for more than two decades, visiting more than forty countries in the process. All in a mission to "celebrate humanity" as a participant in International Decade for the Promotion of a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, coordinated by UNESCO. And in this case, aside from getting stuck in the sand a few times, very little goes wrong. In fact, a whole lot of things went deeply, meaningfully *right*.

I was beside myself. Here was a man who was not only the perfect example of the kind of artist/social activist that the Mindful Bard adores. He's been exploring the same musical geography that I've been obsessed with for years: the long trade routes through the Sahara that for centuries connected musicians from a host of different tribes and lead them to merge and create the genres that helped spawn American jazz and blues.

I'm not disappointed. The bus follows the same route taken by slave traders centuries ago, but in reverse. Thus, we're able to follow certain habits of instrumentation, rhythm, vocalization, and modes back to their fountainheads of inspiration. But it's when I hear the moors of Mauritania singing and playing their traditional stringed instruments that the connection between the Sahara and the Mississippi becomes truly palpable.

Now, as then, the life of the nomadic musician in the Maghreb is precarious. Vella arrives in Morocco to discover that the country has decided to spend a month of mourning for Palestine and so all his concerts there have been cancelled. But he's cool with it. He sets up his baby grand on a cliff at the edge of the Bay of Tangiers and starts playing. Soon he's surrounded by people of all ages, some even sitting beside him and playing his piano while he coaches them.

He's playing piano music in the western classical tradition, and even though it's very different from what these people are used to hearing, they're mesmerized, obviously overjoyed at this unexpected and compassionate outpouring of music. No one is checking smart phones, yawning, or chitchatting.

It's all a blast from the past, a revolutionary initiative with a sixties flavor, right down to the transportation. Marc was given a tour bus that he painted in bright, cheery colours and labeled "Piano Bus Sahara." With it, he and his crew tour Morocco, Mauritania, and Senegal. They stop at odd places for impromptu concerts and collaborations. Sometimes he just plays the piano perched at the end of the open bus, playing for the children who chase the bus through narrow streets, surrounded by the typical Maghreb traffic of pedestrians, cars, buses, scooters, and donkeys.

He plays for Amazighs, desert nomads, lepers, orphans, and street people. He plays piano duets with the *bendir*, *oud*, *kora*, *djembe*, *tidinit*, and *tbal*, not to mention scores of gorgeous voices who just happen to show up and want to sing.

It's not completely haphazard; he also picks a few specific targets. He plays outside a jam factory in Tangiers, to the delight of the female workers. He sets up his piano in the legendary Jema El Fna Square in Morocco and plays his piano accompanied by Sufi musicians. He plays for abandoned children at an SOS village.

The social activist mission is commendable, but it's also very much about the art. "My dream was to play the piano in the desert," says Vella in the film, "in the dunes, in the silence . . ." These artistic pipe dreams generated by an excitable muse obviously don't preclude opening one's heart to humanity. Nor do they justify "art for art's sake."

It's beautiful to observe how Vella's piano interprets the different *maqams*, melodies, and rhythms of the region. But the music is not all that inspires him. We see him playing alone beside the sea while the waves crash against the pocked rocks. He contemplates the dramatic movement and sound and watches the foam slowly ooze back down the rocks.

He's also clearly inspired by every person he encounters on this long, strange trip. His puckish grin, boyishly tousled curls, and readiness to hug everyone in sight belies the dark reality that his life's mission addresses: the fact that he is wandering through a vale of tears, a world of misery, inequality, injustice, fear, and terrible suffering. His music ministers to people who face hopelessness and danger every day.

The camera doesn't flinch or gild the lily; we're shown sights of a world totally unfamiliar to North Americans—lepers, ruins, and the rotting hulks of great warships slowly sinking into the harbor in Mauritania—and yet it all seems so startlingly familiar.

As the bus moves from the greenery of northern Morocco to the golden dunes, cliffs, and canyons of the Sahara, it feels like a primordial dream filled with beautiful people still dressed in the traditional nomad garb. Whose singing and musicianship must surely draw the envy of angels.

The Piano in the Sands manifests eight of the Mindful Bard's criteria for films well worth seeing: It's authentic, original, and delightful; it poses and admirably responds to questions that have a direct bearing on my view of existence; it harmoniously unites art with social action, saving me from both seclusion in an ivory tower and slavery to someone else's political agenda; it provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavor; it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; it renews my enthusiasm for positive social action; and it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomena, making living a unique opportunity.

Wanda also penned the poems for the artist book **They Tell My Tale to Children Now to Help Them to be Good**, a collection of meditations on fairy tales, illustrated by artist Susan Malmstrom.



Dear Barb

Barbara Godin

Dear Barb:

Hi, I have been dating my boyfriend for six months. We get along great and I am in love with him. The problem is that he is still in touch with his ex-girlfriend on Facebook, plus he has her number in his cell, and I know he has called her a few times. I really feel uncomfortable about him communicating with her. When I mention it to him he says I am over-reacting and that they are just friends. I really don't feel it is good to remain in contact with an ex. Am I way off base?

Tara

Hi Tara:

I would not say you are way off base, but some people choose to remain friendly with their ex, especially if there are children involved. If you are not comfortable with your boyfriend remaining in contact with his ex, then he should reconsider whether this relationship is worth the problems it will cause between the two of you. Perhaps if you can't come to a resolution you may want to speak to a counselor together, as this will help your boyfriend to understand how you feel. Good luck!

Dear Barb:

I love Facebook and playing games, particularly Candy Crush, but I think it is taking over my life. I started out just playing occasionally, now I find myself really looking forward to playing this game. As soon as I finish breakfast I grab my tablet and play candy crush. When I pass a level I am so excited. When I'm not playing I'm thinking about playing. Do you think I have a problem or am I just having fun and passing time?

Kerry.

Hey Kerry:

Interesting question! Candy Crush is a popular game that I also play. After reading your question I began to wonder if I was addicted, so I went online to do some research. I found all kinds of information, [this list](#) from the website Geek in Heels being just one of them.

That's a humorous view, but I'm sure all of us Candy Crusher's can identify with some of the points. As with any addiction you might want to try to focus your attention on other things. Pick up a book instead of playing Candy Crush. Go for a walk, call a friend, do anything other than playing Candy Crush. As it consumes less of your time, your focus will shift to other things. Actually the fact that you are recognizing that this may be a problem is a good sign. Thanks for your great question Kerry.

Email your questions to voice@voicemagazine.org. Some submissions may be edited for length or to protect confidentiality; your real name and location will never be printed. This column is for entertainment only. The author is not a professional counsellor and this column is not intended to take the place of professional advice.

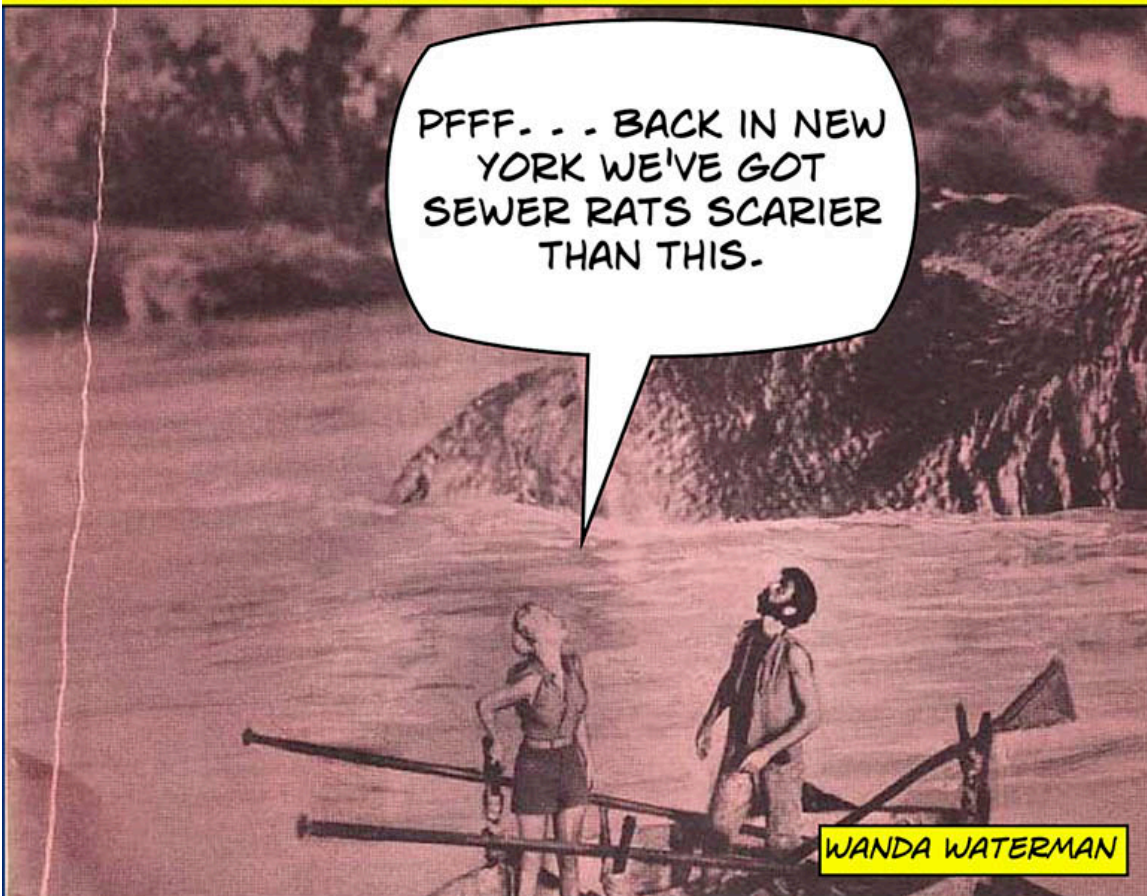
Comic

Wanda Waterman



OGOPOGO (N'HA-A-ITK IN SALISH) IS A LEGENDARY AQUATIC MONSTER ALLEGED TO BE LIVING IN OKANAGAN LAKE, BRITISH COLUMBIA. THE "MONSTER" IS BELIEVED TO BE, IF NOT A DRIFTING LOG, A PRIMITIVE TYPE OF WHALE.

MANY INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS CLAIM TO HAVE SIGHTED OGOPOGO, AND ALL REPORT SEEING THE SAME KIND OF UNDULATING MOVEMENTS IN THE WATER.



WANDA WATERMAN

AUSU UPDATE



Dear Members,

You may have recently seen information on the internet speculating about the future of Athabasca University. These reports suggest that the Alberta government may broker a merger between AU and University of Alberta, and that this may result in drastic changes to the services and programs offered to students AU students.

We want you to know that AUSU is aware of these rumours and is actively investigating the source – we will keep you informed as we know more.

We can tell you that AU is governed via a bicameral structure with two main governing bodies: the General Faculties Council (formerly Academic Council) and the Board of Governors (formerly Governing Council). AUSU has representatives on both of these governing bodies and we can confirm that there has been no formal discussion of a university merger among these groups. The AU president, Frits Pannekoek, has also assured the press that there is no truth to the rumour. On behalf of our members, we are seeking more information from the Board of Governors, the minister, and AU executives.

At this time we simply have no evidence that a merger is being seriously considered by AU, the U of A, or the Alberta government, and we note that among the many committees and working groups of AU, planning and development for the future continues as usual.

We know that our members are worried and want more information. We will update you as soon as we know more. At this time we do not feel there is any reason for students to worry or make changes to their study plans.

Do not hesitate to contact our office if you wish to talk about this or any other issue affecting AU students.

AUSU.

This column is provided by AUSU to facilitate communication with its members. *The Voice* does not write or edit this section; all content has been exclusively and directly provided by AUSU, and any questions or comments about the material should be directed to ausu@ausu.org.

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THE VOICE

500 Energy Square - 10109 - 106 St NW - Edmonton AB - T5J 3L7
Ph: 855.497.7003 - Fax: 780.497.7003 attn: Voice Editor

Publisher Athabasca University Students' Union
Editor-In-Chief Tamra Ross
Managing Editor Karl Low

Regular Columnists Hazel Anaka, Barbara Lehtiniemi, S.D. Livingston, Wanda Waterman

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