

CONNECTION

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at

Community Homes & Services

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Interesting December Facts

December is the last month of the year, and so we started talking about the most interesting things about December:

Poinsettias Are December's Flower

Poinsettias, the bright red plants seen everywhere in December, are originally from Mexico. They became popular in the United States because of a man named Joel Poinsett, who brought them to the US in the 1820s. They are often called "*the Christmas flower.*"



Thea: Do you know anything about poinsettias?

Amy: I know they are poisonous, like mistletoe.

Thea: I heard that too—I think poinsettias are poisonous if your cat eats it.

As it turns out, according to Harvard's website "STAYING HEALTHY Are poinsettias, mistletoe, or holly plants dangerous?" in a study of 23,000 people who had eaten poinsettias, showed that poinsettia consumption is **NOT dangerous to people, or humans.**

So it just goes to show—you can't believe everything you hear!

The First Artificial Christmas Trees Were Made of Feathers

In the 19th century, people in Germany made the first artificial Christmas trees using dyed **green goose feathers**. These trees were invented to help stop deforestation.



Can you think of any birds that have green feathers?

More December Facts

December is a Time for Meteor Showers

What is a meteor?

A meteor is any piece of comet, meteoroid, or asteroid that travels into Earth's atmosphere. When they enter Earth's atmosphere, they burn up and light up the sky!

December brings two meteor showers: *the Geminids* and *the Ursids*. The Geminids (around December 13–14) are one of the brightest and most reliable meteor showers of the year. If you



look up at the night sky in a dark area, you might see "shooting stars"!

Wait a minute, so "shooting stars" are not stars? Nope, they are meteors!

Do you think they should change the lyrics to the "When You Wish Upon a Star" in the 1940 *Pinocchio* movie to "when you wish upon a meteor?"

Yeah, we don't think so either!

Do You Know Which is the Longest Holiday Song Ever?

The song "The 12 Days of Christmas" is one of the longest holiday songs. If you add up all the gifts mentioned in the song, like partridges and golden rings, you would end up with 364 gifts in total!



Do you remember what happened on the second day? Fill in the blanks below:

*"...On the third day of Christmas,
my true love gave to me
Three French hens,
Two _____,
And a partridge in a pear tree..."*



December Holidays

Bodhi Day (Dec. 8)

Also known as Rohatsu, this Buddhist tradition honors the day in which the Buddha—Siddhartha Gautama—is said to have achieved enlightenment. Many Buddhists celebrate it through meditation.

Feast Day of Our Lady Guadalupe (Dec. 12)

Mexicans and Mexican-Americans often celebrate the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico who symbolizes patriotism and devotion.



Yule (Dec. 21)

Yule comes up on December 21, on the winter solstice. It is the shortest day and longest night of the year. Apart from the marking of a new season, the winter solstice also holds a significant symbol for the Sun. It appears to stand still on this day, it's believed that the Sun is going through a rebirth.

Christmas (Dec. 25)

Christians celebrate Christmas largely to commemorate the birth of Jesus. But the festival has also been adopted as a secular family holiday by people of all faiths. Britons gave servants and workers a day off, in addition to giving them a present.



Boxing Day (Dec. 26)

A British tradition that occurs the day after Christmas and dates back to the 1800s when Queen Victoria ruled the throne. At the time, it was a day to ensure that upper class Britons gave servants and workers a day off, in addition to giving them a present.

Happy December Birthday!

12/10 - Dave F and Thea

12/16 - Martha

12/17 - Chris

12/30 - Phoebe

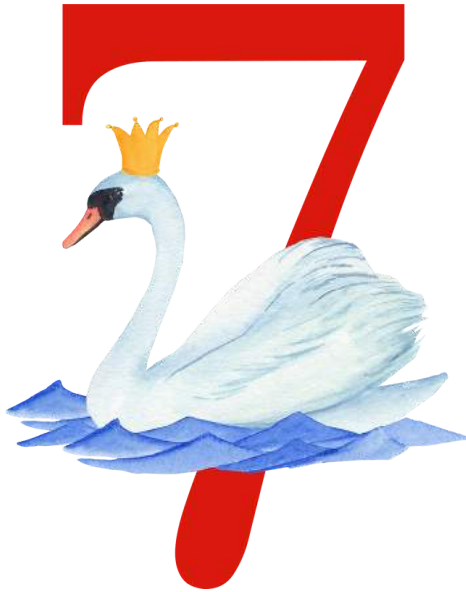


12 Days of Christmas Cutouts!



*On the twelfth day of Christmas,
my true love gave to me
Twelve drummers drumming,
Eleven pipers piping,
Ten lords a-leaping,
Nine ladies dancing,
Eight maids a-milking...*

7 More Christmas Cutouts!



*Seven swans a-swimming,
Six geese a-laying,
Five golden rings,
Four calling birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves,
And a partridge in a pear tree!*

Andrew's Corner

Nutcracker



The nutcracker is commonly made to look like a toy soldier. In German folklore, the nutcrackers are good-luck symbols used to frighten away evil spirits. There is a nutcracker museum in Leavenworth, Washington. American soldiers in West Germany during World War II purchased nutcrackers to send home as gifts for Christmas. Some nutcrackers are modeled after knights or kings. They can also be modeled after miners and forest rangers. The Nutcracker is the world's most popular ballet. There has also been a Barbie version of the Nutcracker ballet released on DVD. I am interested in nutcrackers because of the Disney live action ballet, I really enjoyed it.



Bio: Andrew Newson is a student at Life College and is 25 years old. He likes comic books, video games, hiking, exploring new places with his mom.... and babies. He is an authority in all things Star Wars, Star Trek and great places to go in the Bay Area. He is currently learning Mandarin and loves to research and learn new things.

The Story Behind Friday the 13th

December 13th falls on a Friday. Uh oh. Friday the 13th is thought of as an unlucky day, but why? This belief comes from history and old superstitions.

Why Fridays?

In some cultures, Fridays were seen as unlucky. For example, in Christianity, Friday is believed to be the day Jesus was crucified. Because of this, people thought Fridays were bad days for important events, like starting a journey or getting married.

Why the Number 13?

The number 13 has also been considered unlucky for centuries. Many cultures view the number 12 as "perfect" (12 months, 12 zodiac signs, 12 apostles). The number 13 feels "out of place."

How Did Friday the 13th Become Famous?

A 1907 book called *Friday, the Thirteenth* and the 1980 horror movie *Friday the 13th* made the superstition more popular. People who fear the day have *paraskevidekatriaphobia*.

Not Always Unlucky

Not everyone sees Friday the 13th as unlucky. In Italy, for example, 13 is considered lucky.

What about you? Do you think Friday the 13th is unlucky, or is it just a fun story?

James Mendoza

James is an extremely intelligent, industrious, independent, and fascinating person with many interests, hobbies, passions, and talents.

He is the consummate “handy man” who cannot only fix things but also possesses an amazing ability to create things. More often than not, he is the man for the job!

James has a delightful sense of humor and a charm that is all his own. He is a person who is immediately likable!

James is:

**Professional
A jellyfish lover**

Friendly

A dog lover

Smart

Capable

Respectful to others

Cool!



Watch James' PPP video on our Instagram account
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C3GU6tFP1ys/>

Meet New Instructor Amber

with Amber and Carolyn

Hello CH&S students, family and friends. I am very excited to join the Enterprise Day Program as an Instructor. I have already had the pleasure of meeting almost everyone from both campuses and look forward to making many more connections and memories with you all.

I have 5 years experience working with the special needs population. I strive to guide students to cultivate personal goals to build a more fulfilling life.

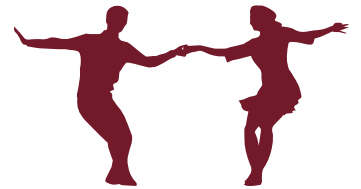
Attributes I find helpful in my career:

- I am very calm which helps others find stillness.
- I have a positive mindset which is helpful in assisting others to make the best of their day!



Carolyn asked Amber some questions on her first day on the job:

Favorite hobby? Dancing east coast swing and fusion!



What did you want to be when you grew up? Hollywood actress or a stunt woman.

What is your guilty pleasure? Trader Joe's cheese crackers.



What is your favorite TV show? Frazier

Describe a perfect weekend: Spending time with family and eating lunch at Amy's restaurant.

Who is your biggest influence? My dad.



What is your favorite ice cream flavor?

Chocolate chip cookie dough.

If you were a dog, what kind of dog would you be?

An Australian cattle dog.





Monkeys

When I lived on the game reserve in Liberia, we had two monkeys: a sweet one and a mean one. The nice one was named Old Danny Boy.

Sam was the naughty one. He tenderized the raw meat for the owl—they always shared food, they were buddies.

Sam bit my mom—she opened my closet door and scared him. She didn't read my sign: "Beware of Monkey Sleeping Inside!"



Once I went into the club with Sam, and he ran off with my Coke! My brother was laughing at me, saying, "You better get that little stinker and take that away from him!" That monkey ran to the other side of the bar and drank my entire bottle of Coke!



Getting to Know New Instructor Judy

with Darnell and Judy

If you're familiar with The Colbert Report, you've probably seen Stephen Colbert present his famous "Colbert Questioner" to his guests. According to Colbert, these questions reveal everything you need to know about someone. Whether that's true or not, we're about to find out! Plus, we've thrown in a few of our own questions for fun:

What is the best sandwich?

Lombardis on Petaluma Boulevard makes a veggie sandwich with horseradish cheddar on a Dutch crunch roll, which is awesome!

What is one thing you need to throw out?

Old clothes, for sure!

What's the scariest animal?

A Jackalope

Apples or oranges?

Depends on the day

Cats or dogs?

Both! I have both.

What do you think happens when we die?

We go somewhere else, then we come back.

What is your favorite smell?

Amber

What is your least favorite smell?

Rotting food. Yuck

Have you ever asked someone for their autograph?

Yes! *Leonard Nimoy!!* (Cool!)

You get one song to listen to for the rest of your life. What is it?

Dear Prudence by the Beatles. It was the song I had in my head when my daughter Max was born.

What number am I thinking of?

Number 9 (speaking of the Beatles, Haha!)

Describe the rest of your life in 5 words.

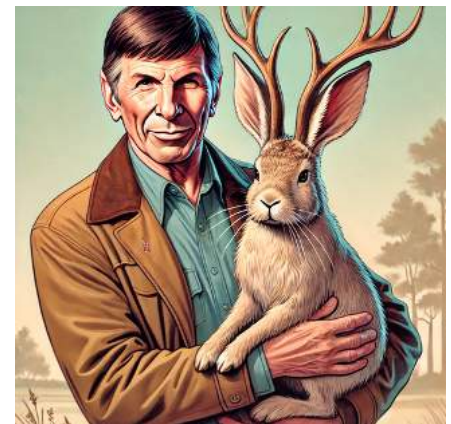
"Ain't no time to hate" (Jerry Garcia).

What famous person have you been told you resemble?

Carol King and Linda Hamilton



Here's Judy and her husband, Andre.



I have known Judy for nearly 10 years. She is one of the most genuine and kind people I have ever met. Anytime her name comes up in conversation among our friends, people always say, "I love Judy!" I feel honored that she has chosen to work with us!

What's Happening at the Project Center?

KUNG FU CINEMA

Happy winter!

Daniel and Joe have been spending a lot of time learning about kung fu cinema history. There's a lot to learn, and a lot of history! From its beginning in Hong Kong with films like *Come Drink With Me*, to modern iterations like the IP Man franchise, martial arts films have been a cultural phenomenon for nearly sixty years. Kung fu cinema began in Hong Kong

with Daniel and Joe



Eighteen year old Bruce Lee and his teacher Ip Man.

<https://www.instagram.com/brucelee/p/DAQCBeYKC5H/>

as a backlash against Wuxia - a fantasy genre that usually took place in ancient China. Wuxia was originally live theatrical entertainment, but was parlayed into a film genre in 1928. It used cheap special effects and fantasy cliches, which opened the door for kung fu. There were some films, like 1983's *Duel to the Death* that combined kung fu and Wuxia, However, according to Hong Kong film director, producer, and movie writer Ronny Yu, Wuxia movies are not to be confused with martial arts movies.

Here are some excerpts from our Kung Fu Cinema class!

- The earliest kung fu film was called *The Adventures of Fong Sai-yuk* (1938). There are no surviving copies of the film.
- Wong Fei-hung was an early kung fu cinema hero and master of the Hung Gar fighting style. He started a martial arts school in Shuijiao in 1863, and also worked as a physician during that time. Wong has been portrayed over 100 times in film and television.



- Kung fu's greatest actor was Bruce Lee. Lee broke Chinese conventions by training outsiders in his style of kung fu - Jeet Kune Do. He is credited with promoting Hong Kong action cinema and helping to change the way Chinese people were presented in American films.
- Some of Bruce Lee's best known films are: *The Big Boss* (1971), *Fists of Fury* (1972), *The Way of the Dragon* (1972), and *Enter the Dragon* (1973).

What's Happening at the Project Center?

KUNG FU CINEMA

with Daniel and Joe

Martial arts films have been produced all over the world, but the genre has been dominated by Hong Kong action cinema, peaking from 1971 - with the rise of Bruce Lee - until the mid-1990s when the industry began to decline. The genre was revived close to the 2000s. Other modern notable figures in the genre include Jackie Chan, Jet Li, Sammo Hung, Yuen Biao, Tony Jaa, Donnie Yen, and Hwang Jang-lee.



An 8' statue of Bruce Lee in Hong Kong's Avenue of Stars

- Modern martial arts movies are still being made today all over the world. Jean Claude Van Damme's movies *Bloodsport* and *Kickboxer* are some modern examples of the genre's continued development.
- The most famous female kung fu practitioner was Ng Mui. is said to have been one of the legendary Five Elders/survivors of the destruction of the Shaolin Temple by the Qing Dynasty. According to legend she is said to have been a master of various martial arts including the Shaolin martial arts, the Wudang martial arts, Ng Ying Kung Fu and Yuejiaquan, and the family style of Yue Fei. She is also credited as the founder of the martial arts Wǔ Méi Pài (Ng Mui style), Wing Chun, Dragon style, and Five-Pattern Hung Kuen.
- Wing Chun is a style of close quarters combat. The origins of Wing Chun are uncertain, but it is generally attributed to the development of Southern Chinese martial arts. There are at least eight lineages, of which the Ip Man and Yuen Kay-shan lineages are the most prolific. Bruce Lee learned Wing Chun as a teenager and incorporated it into his personal fighting style.



Donald, Amber, Darnell, James, Carolyn, and Joe on Ninja Day

Questions & Discussion Stimulants

- Who introduced martial arts to the stunt industry in America? Bruce Lee
- Have you ever practiced a martial art? (Daniel did Northern Shaolin kung fu, and Joe did a bit of Tae Kwon Do as a child)
- Do you have a favorite martial arts movie? (Daniel's is *Enter the Dragon*, and Joe's is *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*)



Daniel proofreading this article

Christmas Around the World

Christmas is celebrated in many countries around the world, and each place has its own special traditions. Here are some interesting ways people celebrate Christmas in different countries!

Mexico: Las Posadas

In Mexico, Christmas celebrations often include a nine-day event called Las Posadas, which means "The Inns." This tradition reenacts Mary and Joseph's search for a place to stay before Jesus was born. People go house-to-house, singing songs and carrying candles, until they are welcomed into a home for a big celebration with food, piñatas, and music.



Philippines: The Giant Lantern Festival

In the Philippines, Christmas is a huge celebration. One of the most exciting events is the Giant Lantern Festival in the city of San Fernando. People create colorful, giant lanterns that light up the night, symbolizing hope and joy. This festival attracts visitors from all over the world and brings the community together.

Sweden: The Yule Goat

In Sweden, a famous Christmas tradition is the Yule Goat, a large straw goat that is built every year in the town of Gävle. People celebrate by visiting the goat, although there's a funny twist—many try to secretly burn it down! This has become part of the tradition, and everyone eagerly watches to see if the goat survives the season.



Summertime Christmas

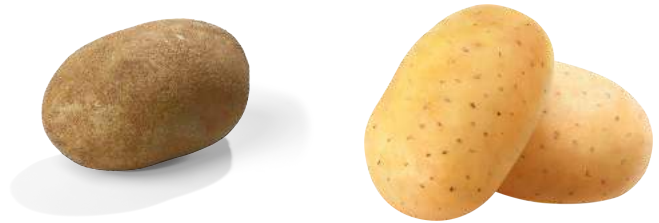
Australia: Christmas on the Beach

In Australia, Christmas falls during summer, so many people celebrate by going to the beach! Families and friends enjoy barbecues, play cricket, and relax in the sunshine. Santa is often seen wearing shorts and sunglasses, making the holiday festive and unique to the warm weather.



Iceland: The Yule Lads

In Iceland, children look forward to visits from the Yule Lads, 13 mischievous characters who come one by one during the 13 nights leading up to Christmas. Each Yule Lad has a funny personality, like "Spoon-Licker" or "Door-Slammer." They leave small gifts in children's shoes if they've been good—or a potato if they've been naughty!



Christmas is a wonderful time of year, filled with joy and togetherness. Exploring how different countries celebrate this holiday shows us the creativity and love that people put into their traditions. These customs make the season special for everyone.

Penguins and Polar Bears



Did you know what penguins and polar bears never meet?

December makes us think of snowy animals, like penguins and polar bears. But did you know they live on opposite sides of the Earth? Penguins live in the Southern Hemisphere (like Antarctica), while polar bears live in the Arctic, far to the north.

Earworms: Why Some Songs Get Stuck in Our Heads

with Amy and Thea

We listened to “Master of the House” from Les Misérables and later as Amy was about to leave, she said, “I can’t get that song out of my head!”

“ME neither,” said Thea, “that song is an earworm!”

“Earworm’ what is that?” asked Amy.

So we researched the term “earworm” the next time we met.



Have you ever had a song play over and over in your mind, even when you’re trying to focus on something else? That’s called an *earworm*! Earworms are catchy pieces of music that seem to get stuck on repeat in our heads. This can happen to anyone, and it is perfectly normal. But why does it happen, and what are some songs that most people can’t seem to forget?

Why Do Earworms Happen?

Songs that get stuck in our heads usually have some things in common, like a simple, catchy melody, repetition, so the brain remembers it more easily, and surprising or interesting lyrics.

This YouTube video explains why earworms get into our heads: *Why do songs get stuck in our heads? Explaining Earworms | Science of Sound* <https://youtu.be/jrvm4UXhROY?si=IX-0Im6uBO0fpnIN>



Songs That Often Get Stuck in Our Heads

Here are some popular songs known to become earworms for many people:

- “Bad Romance” by Lady Gaga.
- “Ma na ma na” by the Muppets.
- “It’s a Small World”

How to Deal With Earworms

- Listen to the whole song from beginning to end.
- Distract yourself with a different activity, like a puzzle or a walk.
- Sing or listen to another song to “replace” the one that’s stuck.
- There are also so-called “cure songs” or “cure tunes” to get the earworm out of one’s head. “God Save the King” https://youtu.be/Sqse9O9j3kg?si=EHJ_vHu_HbzR9ohR is cited as a very popular and helpful choice of cure song.

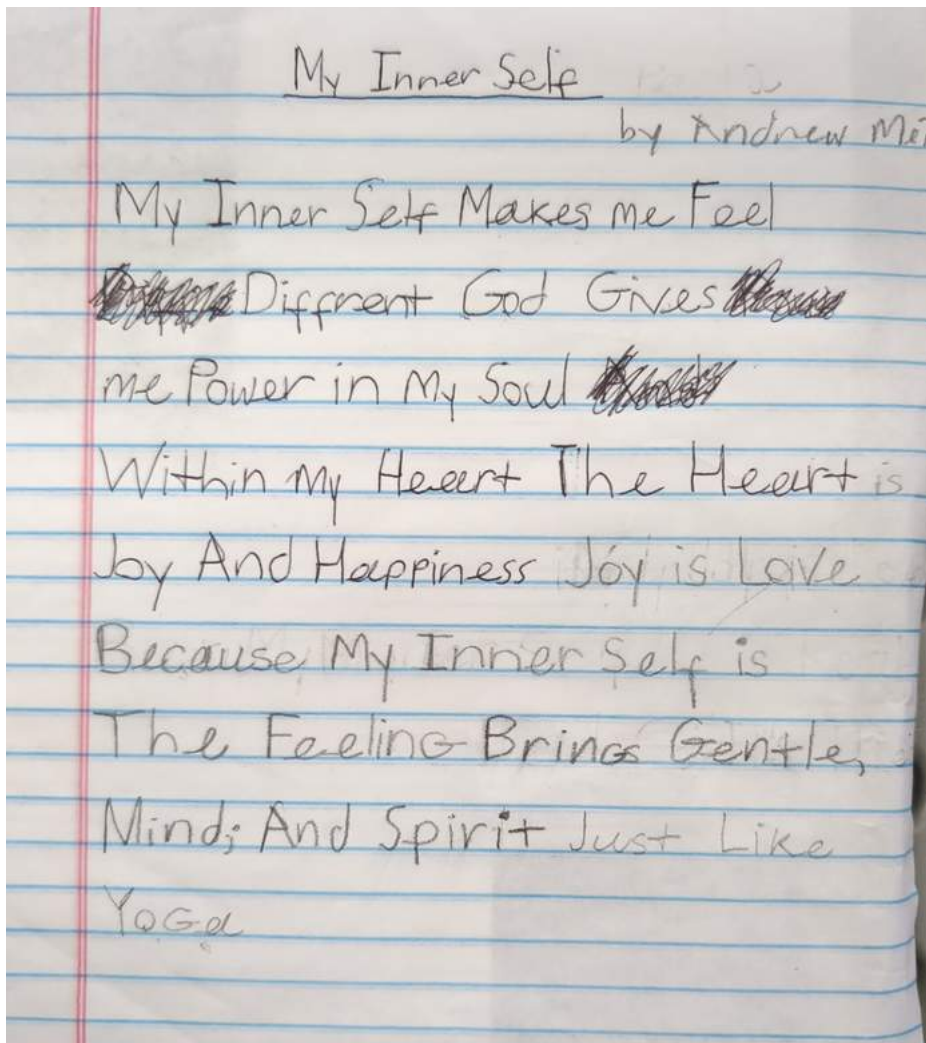


Next time you catch yourself humming a song you can’t shake, remember that your brain is just doing what it loves: enjoying music!

Andrew M., Artist, Poet and Vampire!

Andrew is an amazingly creative man! He loves to create visual art and when he needs time alone, he works on his very insightful poetry! Do you remember Andrew's vampire costume on Halloween?

Here is one of Lord Andrew's latest poems:



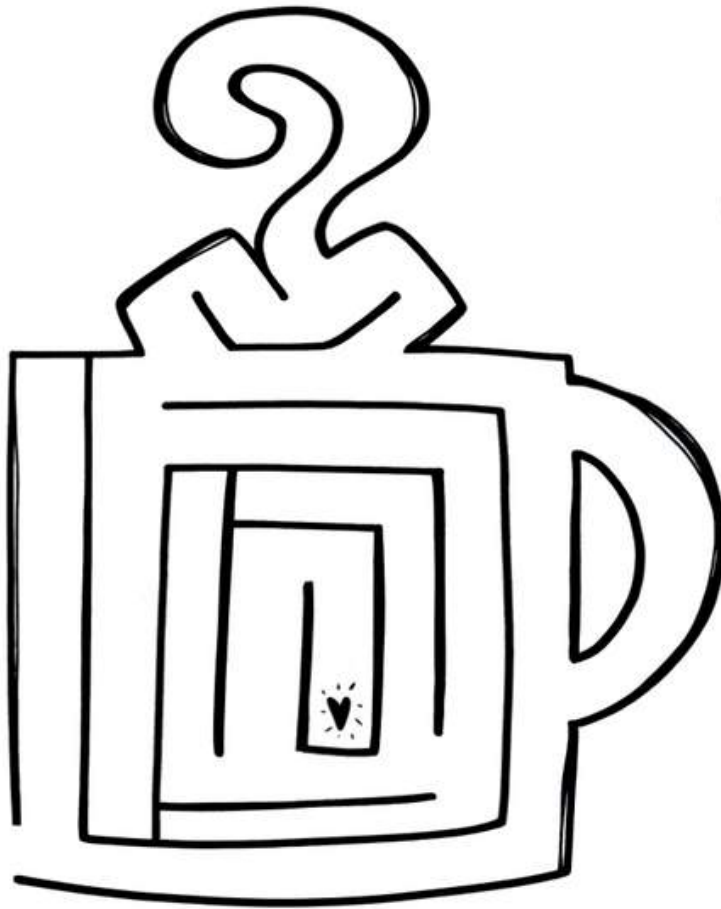
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Hot Cocoa Maze



Hot Cocoa

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