

# CONNECTION

Sharing the day-to-day learning experience  
at

Community Homes & Services  
PO Box 744, Novato CA 94948  
415-408-3604

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## The Valentine Card Tradition

The classroom Valentine card exchange continues to be a long-standing practice among elementary school children.

Early Valentine's cards may have originated from the German tradition of friendship cards. In 496 AD, Pope Gelasius designated February 14 as the Feast of Saint Valentine to replace the pagan Feast of Lupercalia. Originally tied to health and fertility, the Feast of Saint Valentine gradually evolved into a celebration of love, shaping the Valentine's Day we know today.

The earliest known suggestion that Valentine's Day was a day for romance and love comes from Geoffrey Chaucer's 14th-century 700 line poem "The Parliament of Fowls," in which "Seynt Valentynes day" is the day "whan every...





# Will You be my Valentine?

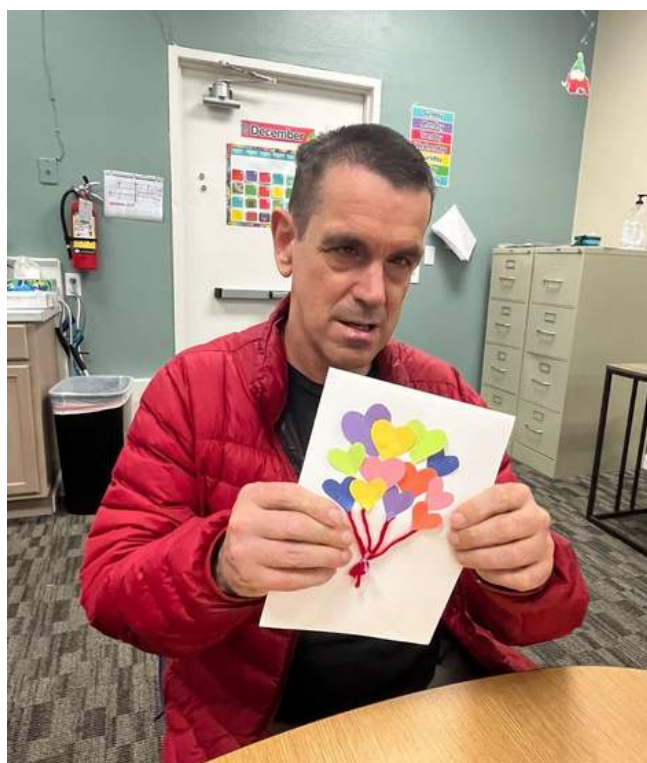


foul cometh ther to chese his make" (this means when birds come to choose their mates). Maybe birds could not wait until spring and went mate-shopping in wintery mid-February back in the day.

In the mid-19th century, advancements in printing technology led to the introduction of mass-produced cards. The 20th century saw the rise of readily available boxed cards, and innovative designs by companies like Hallmark turned Valentine's Day into a significant commercial venture. Yes, you can buy a Valentine's card, but we think making our own cards is much more personalized and special!



Happy Valentine's Day from Jenet, Mike, Gina (front page), Gregory and Dave (below)!



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## FEBRUARY 2024 NATIONAL DAYS

- 2/1 - Optimist Day and National Serpent Day
- 2/2 - Groundhog Day and National Tater Tot Day
- 2/3 - National Day the Music Died Day
- 2/4 - National Homemade Soup Day and Rosa Parks Day
- 2/6 - **National Chopstick Day**
- 2/7 - National Send a Card to a Friend Day
- 2/8 - National Kite Flying Day
- 2/9 - **National Pizza Day**
- 2/10 - Global Movie Day and Chinese New Year Begins
- 2/11 - Super Bowl Sunday
- 2/13 - Galentine's Day and **Fat Tuesday and Mardi Gras**
- 2/14 - Valentine's Day
- 2/15 - World Anthropology Day and Singles Awareness Day
- 2/16 - National Tartar Sauce Day
- 2/17 - Random Acts of Kindness Day
- 2/19 - Presidents Day HOLIDAY**
- 2/20 - National Comfy Day and National Muffin Day
- 2/22 - Ash Wednesday and **Cook a Sweet Potato** and Margarita Day
- 2/23 - National Dog Biscuit Day
- 2/24 - National Tortilla Chip Day
- 2/25 - National Clam Chowder Day
- 2/26 - National Set a Good Example Day
- 2/27 - National Retro Day and **National Polar Bear Day**
- 2/28 - National Floral Design Day
- 2/29 - Leap Day



# students + projects

with Joe

## PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

*What is a "project"? The loose definition is "an individual or collaborative enterprise, which is intended to achieve a specific aim". So, basically anything you want to get done can be seen as a project. When I think of "projects" home maintenance comes to mind: painting, organizing, fixing things that have broken, etc. But I also have projects on my mind that don't involve making changes to my surroundings at all. Reading a certain number of books in a year could be a project. Or observing and cataloging the birds I see outside my window. To me, a project is something that takes longer than a basic task, and also involves a bit of thought and creativity. An undertaking that is rewarding in some way, even in its initial stages. I started to write about how, for example, turning the light off in the bathroom wouldn't make a great project. But couldn't it? If remembering to flip the switch at the end of our daily routine is the objective, maybe we could reinforce its importance in the steps leading up to it. We could even write a song! (to the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star")*

*"Light switch, light switch on the wall, I'll turn it off last of all.  
Brushing teeth and combing hair,  
picking out which clothes to wear,  
light switch light switch on the wall,  
I'll turn it off last of all"*

*Not the most inspired song out there, but it does the job. This little tune could be expanded in infinite directions just by doing a little digging. For example, did you know that the rhyme scheme used in "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" is what's called a "couplet" (meaning it contains two line phrases that both rhyme and have the same amount of syllables)? Maybe just the act of learning the basic history of an ancient lullaby could be the spark that ignites someone's interest in poetic metre. It's really just up to us and our willingness to maintain an open mind and a playful spirit.*



# PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

*Of course we're going to do some big stuff in the coming months and years at Community Homes and Services' new Project Center, but we've always been a project-oriented program! Here are some of our favorites throughout the years:*



Photography for the magazine!



Learning about local Industries



Botany!



Collaborative learning and problem solving!



Cooking!



# What is your Ideal Valentine's Date for 2024?



We asked our favorite couple “What makes for a good Valentine's Day?” And Katie, the hostess with the mostest, offered these suggestions for her perfect Valentine's date in 2024. It all begins with a coffee date/brunch with Jason (Katie's husband) at Creekside Bakery. Katie's order is iced mocha with whipped cream and either the savory waffle or biscuits and gravy. Jason's order is a cup of coffee with a breakfast sandwich—brioche bun with egg, bacon, avocado, cheese, and chipotle sauce!



Katie prefers going out in the morning because it's less pressure than an evening date. Katie and Jason prefer a low-key Valentine's Day and in the evening, Katie likes to hot tub with her hubby before making dinner together. One of their favorite home-cooked meals is chicken parmesan, garlic bread, and a yummy Caesar salad—how romantic! And if Jason gives Katie baby pink roses—that is icing on the cake!

Katie recommends the following dessert choices:

- Chocolate-covered strawberries (homemade!)
- Chocolate chip peanut butter cheesecake with an Oreo crust (also homemade—we're getting the impression that Katie is quite the baker!)
- Chocolate mousse made with love (homemade of course).



Katie says that if you don't have a Valentine, you can be your own Valentine or you can do a *Galentine* on February 13th with your besties! Galentine Day was made famous by Leslie Knope in the TV series *Parks and Recreation*. This fictional holiday has gained a lot of traction in the real world ever since the initial “Galentine's Day” episode aired in 2010. And as Leslie described it, “It's only the best day of the year! Every February 13th, my lady friends and I leave our husbands and our boyfriends at home, and we just come and kick it—breakfast-style. Ladies celebrating ladies.”





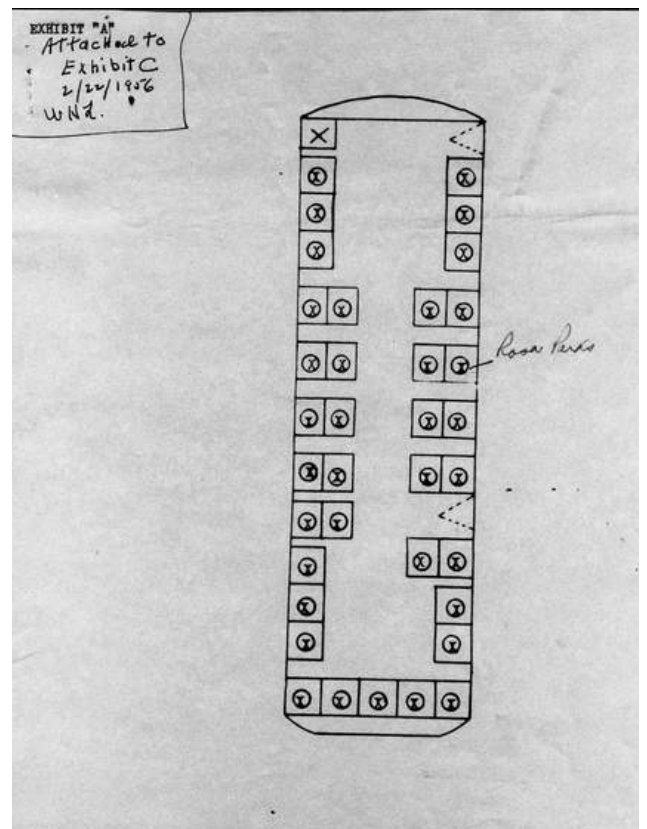
Rosa Louise McCauley Parks (February 4, 1913 – October 24, 2005) was a key figure in the civil rights movement. She became famous for refusing to give up her bus seat to a white passenger in Montgomery, Alabama, on December 1, 1955. This sparked the Montgomery bus boycott, where the Black community refused to use the buses for over a year.

Parks' case led to a court decision in 1956 that declared bus segregation unconstitutional. Despite facing hardships like losing her job and receiving threats, Parks continued her activism and became an international symbol of resistance to racial segregation.

After retirement, she wrote her autobiography and remained committed to the fight for justice. Parks received numerous honors, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Parks is known as the "mother of the freedom movement," and she passed away on October 24, 2005. Parks was the first woman to lie in honor in the Capitol Rotunda. Several states commemorate Rosa Parks Day on February 4 or the anniversary of her arrest on December 1.



Rosa Parks with Dr. Martin Luther King jr. (ca. 1955)



The seat layout on the bus where Parks sat, December 1, 1955.

# Knowledge Class: We Love a Parade!

with Jennifer and Michelle

## We Love a Parade!/Facts & Talking Points

**\*What is a parade?** A parade is a large or small group of people who walk together and are often dressed in costumes followed by marching bands and floats. A parade float is a decorated platform, either built on a vehicle, or towed behind one. Parades are often held on a holiday or to honor someone, and are usually a celebration of some kind.

## Holiday Parades:

**\*The Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, California is held every New Years Day.** The 5 ½ mile long parade has been a tradition since 1890, making it one of the oldest parades in the United States. What started out as a small procession of horse-drawn carriages has become a grand spectacle viewed by millions of people around the world! Each float in the Rose Parade is decorated entirely with living materials, including fresh flowers, seeds, bark, and leaves. There is also a Rose Parade held in Santa Rosa!



**\*The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade is held in New York City on Thanksgiving morning.** This three hour long parade features giant balloons, marching bands, performances from Broadway shows, and ends with the appearance of Santa Claus himself to kick off the Christmas season. The first Macy's parade in 1924 featured animals borrowed from the Central Park Zoo that were decked out in costumes and Macy's banners! Before it was first televised in 1946, you'd have to use your imagination to picture the parade, as it was broadcast on the radio. One tradition that was short-lived was releasing the balloons after the parade. The balloons were originally allowed to float away, and anyone who found them earned a Macy's gift certificate. You can't get married or engaged at the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, which apparently has come up enough to make it to the FAQ's page on their website. The people who design the balloon floats are known as "Balloonatics"! Well known character balloons include Felix the Cat, Mickey Mouse, and Snoopy, who has appeared in the parade more than any other character. The people who hold and direct the balloons are called balloon pilots. (Do you think we could put together an entire Professionalism class about parade jobs?) Balloons get filled up most of the way the night before the parade, which is an event unto itself, and since helium expands in the sunlight, they are topped off the morning of the parade to full capacity before they hit the road! It only takes about 15 minutes to deflate the balloons, and involves volunteers laying down on them and rolling around to squeeze the air out. That would probably be fun to watch as well.



# School Parades!

**\*What are other parade holidays you can think of?** The ones on our list to research are: Mardi Gras/Carnival, Chinese New Year (please see Andrew and Connor's article!), St. Patrick's Day, 4th of July, Oktoberfest, Day of the Dead, and Christmas. Let us know if there are any parades we might have missed!

## School Parades:

**\*Halloween costume parades are a chance for classmates and families to see all student and teacher costumes on Halloween.** They are usually held first thing in the morning, so kids can take off bulky or distracting costumes and (try) to get some learning done the rest of the school day.



**\*Homecoming graduates come back “home” to their school and take part in different events, such as dances and class reunions.** Although there are many activities involved in homecoming, the focal point is almost always a sporting event, usually a football game. A homecoming court of the king and queen is crowned and featured in the parade. Novato's homecoming parade goes down Grant Ave downtown, and Jennifer can see it from her balcony/hear it from inside her apartment (as teenagers on floats are fairly loud).

**\*Colleen was in a high school club for Black History, and was in a Black History parade, where she got to hold a banner.** She was even featured in the newspaper!

**\*During Covid lockdown, many school graduation ceremonies took to the open road and transitioned to parades.** Michelle's son graduated from high school in 2020—it was held at the Civic Center and was a drive-in, with a giant blowup screen showing pictures of each graduate. People were encouraged to decorate their vehicles, which of course Michelle did (she even borrowed a white van because her car clashed with the school colors!) The students wore their caps and gowns, and were the only ones allowed to exit the vehicles due to Covid restrictions and social distancing. After the ceremony, they paraded through the neighborhood of the high school, and Michelle and her son were the VERY FIRST car behind the fire engine leading the parade! Her son stood out of the sunroof and waved to the crowd, who had banners and balloons. They made it very ceremonial and fun in spite of the pandemic, she said.

# Parade Cultural References!

## Cultural References/Related Topics

\*Movies have a trope that can be best described as, “Hey look, a parade!” Action movies, especially, if they need to crank the action up a notch, can have their characters come across a parade! One memorable example is 1993’s *The Fugitive*, in which Harrison Ford narrowly escapes the clutches of Tommy Lee Jones by donning a discarded green hat and inserting himself into Chicago’s St. Patrick’s Day Parade. Also in Chicago but a decidedly more comedic movie, Matthew Broderick’s *Ferris Bueller* hops on a float in the Von Steuben parade and lip syncs “Danka Shoen” and “Twist and Shout”. This scene was shot during the actual German festival and parade on September 21, 1985. In *Animal House*, Delta Tau Chi steals and takes over the homecoming parade, and utilizes 10,000 marbles to trip the ROTC trying to thwart them.

\*Parade songs include: “Welcome to the Black Parade” by My Chemical Romance, “The Street Parade” by the Clash, “Soft Parade” by the Doors, “Macy’s Day Parade” by Greenday, and “Bulls on Parade” by Rage Against the Machine.

## Idiom Alert!

\*\***“Don’t rain on my parade!”** Have you heard that idiom before? It means you shouldn’t bring negativity to something that someone else is happy about.

\*\***“Hold your horses!”** This saying has come to mean “wait, or slow down”, but it originates from the circus and literal horses being held onto. Back in the olden days before phones, the circus coming to town was a big deal, and to get folks excited to spend money on tickets, they would hold a parade through town as a sort of preview for the show. When the elephants were due to parade down the street, the circus barkers would announce, “The elephants are coming—please hold your horses!” because horses might panic and cause injuries when they saw/smelled elephants for the first time. (Horses are notoriously chicken.)

\***Comic Con, which is a convention of all things comic and popular media, often holds a costume parade for attendees who dress up as their favorite character.** If you were to dress up as your favorite tv or movie character, who would you choose? What kind of costume would you need?

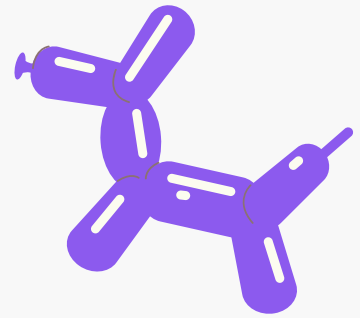




# Happy BIRTHDAY



2/1 Gregory Hall  
2/2 Jenet Lashmett  
2/16 Rebecca Diaz  
2/17 Andrew Mei  
2/18 Linda Bonino



## Welcome New Instructor, Dylan!

Dylan Johnson is a self-proclaimed nerd for animation and Sci Fi. He was born in San Francisco and his favorite color is blue.

More about Dylan:

- What is your favorite meal? "Spaghetti with meatballs."
- What is your favorite book: *American Gods* by Neil Gaiman.
- What was your favorite recent vacation? "I went camping at Pinnacles National Park and hiked for 20 miles."
- What is your favorite concert/band? "In 2005, I saw Green Day and Flogging Molly during the American Idiot World Tour!"
- Do you have any siblings? "I have six older brothers and two younger sisters." One of those "younger" sisters is his twin sister.
- What is your favorite movie line? "This is my BOOM STICK!" from *Army of Darkness*.

Dylan says that working at CH&S is an evolution of the work he has been doing for the last nine years. Welcome to our team, Dylan!



# The Day the Music Died Day - February 3

with Amy and Thea

On February 3, 1959, a tragedy took three incredible musicians from us – Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and The Big Bopper (J.P. Richardson). The small plane they were on crashed near Clear Lake, Iowa, on a day forever known as "The Day the Music Died."

Buddy Holly, just 22 years old, gave us hits like "Peggy Sue" and "That'll Be the Day." Ritchie Valens, only 17, made us dance to "La Bamba." The Big Bopper, with his lively performances, had us singing along to "Chantilly Lace."

Amy knew a lot about this historical day and regaled Thea with the chronology of events. The musicians were not treated very well on their Winter Dance Party tour. They had to travel in a circuitous manner in unheated, rickety, old school buses to get from one venue to another. Weather conditions caused one performer to be hospitalized for frostbite, and others came down with the flu. The buses

kept breaking down. Buddy Holly decided to avoid the cold and rent a private plane to fly himself and some of the musicians to their next gig in Fargo, North Dakota. The Big Bopper was suffering from flu and swapped places on the plane with one of Buddy Holly's band members, Waylon Jennings. Guitarist Tommy Allsup lost his seat to Ricky Valens on a coin toss. It is said that when Buddy Holly learned that Jennings was not going to fly, he said, "Well, I hope your damned bus freezes up." Jennings responded, "I hope your ol' plane crashes."

Soon after takeoff, late at night and in poor, wintry weather conditions, the pilot lost control of the light aircraft, a Beechcraft Bonanza, which crashed into a cornfield, killing all four on board.

Despite the controversy, what's important is celebrating the music they left behind. Buddy, Ritchie, and The Big Bopper may be gone, but their songs continue to bring joy and make us move.

## Big Bopper - Chantilly Lace (1958)

[https://youtu.be/\\_0DnC3y64I?si=iqlKGI5UGJ2w9XaS](https://youtu.be/_0DnC3y64I?si=iqlKGI5UGJ2w9XaS)

## Richie Valens Come on Let's Go

<https://youtu.be/rEuBtgmlql8?si=V93jwaMUy1xZU3co>

## Don McLean - American Pie (Lyric Video)

[https://youtu.be/PRpiBpDy7MQ?si=TI\\_5RsaURnIULeJb](https://youtu.be/PRpiBpDy7MQ?si=TI_5RsaURnIULeJb)



PD-US, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=72656758>





# ON TREES

with Pam and Carolyn

"I love drawing dead trees," said Pam. This makes sense because we know Pam as an avid gardener, landscaper, and outdoorswoman. "I see the beauty in the tree, and when I get upset, I go and sit under a tree," added Pam.

Pam's words are ancient and wise indeed. The Buddha sat under the bodhi tree and vowed not to move until he attained enlightenment. According to a National Library of Medicine article grounding (aka *earthing*) has been shown to decrease inflammation, increase the immune response, increase wound healing and prevention, and treat chronic autoimmune diseases. Yes, there are many benefits to direct skin contact with the surface of the Earth (such as with bare feet or hands). People have said that walking barefoot on the Earth enhances health and provides feelings of well-being – this can be found in the literature and practices of diverse cultures from around the world! Maybe we'd all have a better sense of well-being if we sat under trees for a while!

Trees, whether living or dead, can be beautiful and life-giving. According to the National Wildlife Federation [www.nwf.org/Garden-for-Wildlife/Cover/Trees-and-Snags](http://www.nwf.org/Garden-for-Wildlife/Cover/Trees-and-Snags), dead trees provide vital habitat for over ONE THOUSAND animals!

## Dead Tree Vocabulary



**Snags** - The name for dead trees that are left upright to decompose naturally.

**Logs** - When a snag (or part of a snag) falls on the ground, it becomes a log—also very useful for wildlife habitat.

Pam mentioned that she once found a *log* (which she carved into a very cool walking stick!) Did you know that Jason, Pam, Willy, and Carolyn used to walk barefoot around the Enterprise neighborhood Enterprise and in the sand on Stinson Beach?

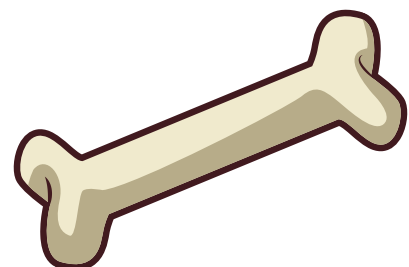
Wildlife use dead trees in every state of decay for food, a place to live, a "crow's nest" in the higher branches to look out for predators, and decaying logs refresh the soil with mosses, lichen and fungi!

Next time you notice a dead tree, you may want to stop and appreciate how from death comes much life, right Pam?



## DOG BISCUIT DAY - 2/23

To celebrate Dog Biscuit Day on February 23rd, Randall, Cat, Nino, and Jennifer took a crack at making some doggie treats from scratch. Meatball volunteered to taste-test, and was remarkably honest with his feedback. First, we made pumpkin peanut butter treats in a special dog-bone shaped waffle iron. While they didn't look nearly as pretty and picture-perfect as they did online, they smelled delicious when they were cooking up, and Meatball devoured them with little to no chewing. Next, we made spinach and carrot treats with applesauce and banana, which looked horrific AND stuck to the waffle iron, in a physics-defying combination of burnt and raw dough. So we switched gears and baked them off in the actual oven as drop biscuits (the bone shape wasn't that great when it WAS working). They didn't smell terrible, but emerged looking as though they'd been consumed and regurgitated. Meatball politely accepted them and promptly spit them on the ground. Randall and Nino gave him several more of the peanut butter bones to cleanse his palate/keep him from being mad at them for feeding him something gross.

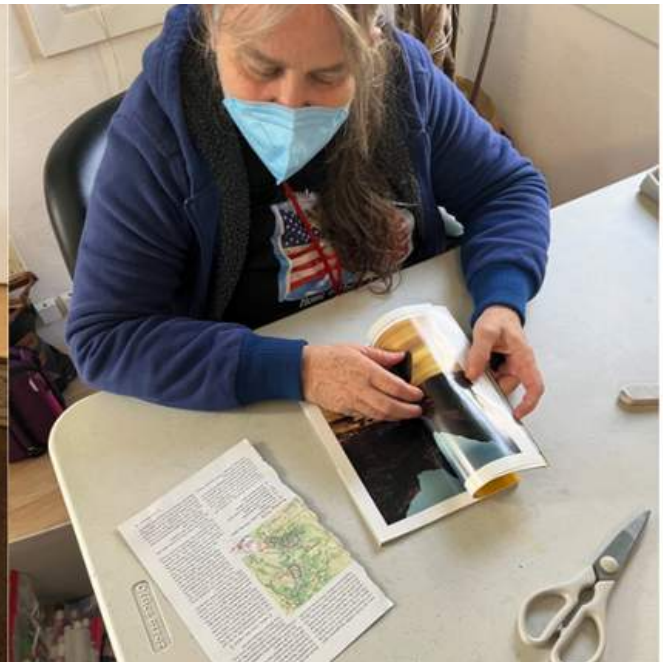




# ART



Bruce's knowledge class on technology evolved into a collaborative art project! (We love it when classes turn into something else.) Colleen, Iris, Zachary, and Kyle have been scouring magazines for images of tech that the cell phone has rendered obsolete. What are some items you can think of that your cell phone replaced? Fingers crossed they come across a pic of a Rolodex, or a Thomas-Guide mega-map...



# Nino Surveys the Situation

## What's your favorite movie?

Justin- Home Alone 2  
Connor- Airplane movies  
Michelle- Truly, Madly, Deeply  
Cat- Beauty and the Beast  
Colleen- Shazam!  
Zachary- Sonic Underground  
Andrew- Star Wars  
Iris- Bonanza  
Martha- Return of the Jedi  
Bruce- Alien  
Randall- Elemental  
Jennifer- Jurassic Park

## Fortune Cookies:

Do you read it first, or scarf it first?  
Life College had more readers than scarfers,  
with a few passers altogether.



**If you had to wake up to the same song every morning forever ala "Groundhog Day", what song would you pick?**

Randall- Yesterday  
Zachary- I Wanna Rock  
Iris- Debbie Gibson  
Justin- Classic rock  
Martha- Jolene  
Andrew- Weird Al  
Matthew- Overkill  
Michelle- And I Love Her  
Bruce- Three Little Birds  
Colleen- Ain't No Other Man  
Jennifer- Bang Bang  
Cat- Breakdancing





# YEAR OF THE DRAGON!

By Andrew Newson and Connor Richey

Edited by M.L. Stone

We are writing about Chinese New Year. The Spring Festival, colloquially known in the U.S. as “Chinese New Year,” is celebrated throughout east Asia and by Chinese immigrants across the globe. Its first documented celebration dates to between 475BCE-221CE during the Warring States Period of Feudal China. The festival is known for many cultural traditions from the various provinces of ancient China. Such traditions that survived to today's Spring Festival include: fireworks, dragon costumes with dancers and performers, gifts of “lucky money” that are burned to appease the ancestors, votive offerings of food, and puppets of which celestial animal the zodiac is upon that year to welcome in that animal's luck and good fortune.

Because China still utilizes a lunar calendar, the New Year shifts in respect to the U.S.'s fixed Gregorian calendar. This means that the Spring Festival occurs on different dates from year to year in the U.S. This year, we are entering into the year of the Dragon on February 10th, but there is more. Along with the 12 animals of the Chinese/Taoist zodiac are five elements (hsing) that progress every two years, so we are not just entering the year of the Dragon, but the year of the FIRE DRAGON! RAAAAWRRR!!! It takes 60 years for the zodiac to cycle through all combinations of animals and hsing (5 hsing x 12 animals = 60 combinations over 60 years). For example, its been 60 years since the last time we were in the year of the Fire Dragon.

The significance of the Dragon (for those born in 1964, 1976, 1988, 2000, 2012, 2024) is:

- In Chinese astrology, the Dragon represents good luck, strength, health, and the masculine Yang.
- People born under this year are seen as intelligent, cunning, charismatic, powerful, confident, lucky, and gifted.

While the origins of the dragon myths are shrouded in the mysteries of time, some theories offer us a plausible origin to such fabulous tales. From *An Instinct for Dragons* by David E. Jones, we read the possibility that our stories and myths for these monstrous creatures may have sprung from a natural primate fear of snakes and many thousands of years of creative license. Adrienne Mayor, in *The First Fossil Hunters: Dinosaurs, Mammoths, and Myths in Greek and Roman Times*, argues that some ancient stories of such mega-creatures may have been inspired by early discoveries of fossilized dinosaur remains and *Dragon Bone Hill: An Ice Age Saga of Homo Erectus* by Noel Thomas Boaz and Russell L. Coichon offers a collection and analysis of modern practices that support Mayor's arguments, but let's not be too much of a wet blanket on some fascinating and engaging folklore.

For a shift and appreciation of the cultures that bring the Dragon to us this season, we thought it would be good to understand the cultural perception of Dragons if we included a couple ancient



# THE DRAGON'S PEARL

tails... I mean tales. The first is:

## THE DRAGON'S PEARL

Once there was a boy and his aging mother, who lived in a village near the Min River. Times had grown hard. The rain had stopped falling, and the mighty Min River became shallow. The villagers whispered that the River Dragon had lost his power to send the rains. For, you see, dragons have mighty powers that control the forces of nature. Soon many of the villagers were starving.

To feed himself and his mother, the boy had to cut grass and sell it in exchange for a tiny bit of rice. As the drought got worse, the boy had to go farther and farther from his home in search of any green grass. Then one day, after walking farther than ever before, he discovered a patch of the tallest, greenest grass he had ever seen. He cut it at once and returned to his mother. "Mother, look at this! I must return to that spot again tomorrow!" He did return and found that the same patch of green grass had regrown in the night. "Impossible!" said the boy, but it was so. Day after day, he returned to the same spot and harvested the lush grass, which they sold for rice.

Although the boy and his mother now had plenty to eat, it was such a long way to walk every day. So the boy's mother made a suggestion. "My son, dig up the patch of grass and replant it here. Then you will not have to leave me every day."

The son thought this was a good idea, so he walked to where the grassy patch was and began to dig in the ground. As soon as he did, he uncovered a shining, white pearl in the soil. He ran all the way home leaping for joy! Now he and his mother would be wealthy!

"This is good fortune!" said his mother, and she hid the pearl at once in the family's rice jar. "But we must not let anyone see!"

The next day, when the boy returned to the patch of tall grass, it was withered and brown. It seemed the miracle had ended. The boy returned home heartbroken, but his mother called out to him as he entered their house.

"Look! Look!" She pointed to their rice jar, now overflowing with rice. "This must be a magic pearl!" she said. "It made the grass grow, and now it makes the rice increase." So they put it into their money box, which had been empty for so long. The next morning, the box was overflowing with coins.

"Do you know what this means?" the boy said. "Our village is saved!"

The kind mother and son used the magic of the pearl to increase their wealth and food, and they shared this prosperity with the other villagers. Soon, everyone in the village had plenty to eat and plenty of money in their money boxes.



# THE FOUR DRAGONS

But some people in the village wanted this fortune for themselves. These wicked neighbors spied on the mother and son in their hut and saw them using the magic pearl. They beat on the door and shouted, "You have been hiding a treasure from us! Hand it over!"

"We must not let them find the pearl!" cried the mother.

The mob was about to break in, so the boy slipped the pearl into his mouth to hide it. But as he did, his mouth and throat burned with thirst. "Water! Water!" he cried, running out of the house and down to the river, with his mother following behind him. The river was low from the drought, but the boy fell on his knees and began to guzzle up what water was left. As his mother watched in shock, he drank the whole river!

Then his eyes became golden, his body lengthened, his skin turned to brilliant scales, and his head grew beautiful horns. He had transformed into a mighty dragon.

"I see now!" cried his mother. "The magic pearl once belonged to the River Dragon. He lost it, and you found it!"

The boy-turned-dragon opened his mouth, and water flowed out again, filling the river to the brim for the first time in many years. Then he turned to dive into the water. His mother tried to hold him back, crying, "No, my son! Don't go!" The boy looked back at her one last time before he vanished into the river forever.

As his mother sat crying on the river bank, she said, "My son, you have stopped the drought caused by the dragon's lost pearl. But now you must take the dragon's place. You must watch over us and make sure there is always plenty."

The great dragon, deep in the river, heard his mother and did exactly as she said.

Next:

## The Four Dragons

Once upon a time, there were no rivers and lakes on earth, but only the Eastern Sea, in which lived four dragons: the Long Dragon, the Yellow Dragon, the Black Dragon and the Pearl Dragon. One day the four dragons flew from the sea into the sky. They soared and dived, playing at hide-and-seek in the clouds.

"Come over here quickly!" the Pearl Dragon cried out suddenly.

# THE MOUNTAIN GOD

"But," said the Long Dragon after thinking a bit, "we will be blamed if the Jade Emperor learns of this."

"I will do anything to save the people," the Yellow Dragon said resolutely.

"Then let's begin. We will never regret it," said Long Dragon.

The Black Dragon and the Pearl Dragon were not to be outdone. They flew to the sea, scooped up water in their mouths, and then flew back into the sky, where they sprayed the water out over the earth. The four dragons flew back and forth, making the sky dark all around. Before long the sea water became rain pouring down from the sky.

"It's raining! It's raining! The crops will be saved!" the people cried and leaped with joy.

On the ground the wheat stalks raised their heads and the sorghum stalks straightened up. The god of the sea discovered these events and reported to the Jade Emperor.

"How dare the four dragons bring rain without my permission!" said the Jade Emperor. The Jade Emperor was enraged, and ordered the heavenly generals and their troops to arrest the four dragons. Being far outnumbered, the four dragons could not defend themselves, and they were soon arrested and brought back to the heavenly palace.

"Go and get four mountains to lay upon them so that they can never escape!" The Jade Emperor ordered the Mountain God.

The Mountain God used his magic power to make four mountains fly there, whistling in the wind from afar, and pressed them down upon the four dragons. Imprisoned as they were, they never regretted their actions. Determined to do good for the people forever, they turned themselves into four rivers, which flowed past high mountains and deep valleys, crossing the land from the west to the east and finally emptying into the sea. And so China's four great rivers were formed -- the Heilongjian (Black Dragon) in the far north, the Huanghe (Yellow River) in central China, the Changjiang (Yangtze, or Long River) farther south, and the Zhujiang (Pearl) in the very far south.

We hope you enjoyed learning about the Spring Festival, Chinese/Taoist zodiac, dragons, and the year of the Dragon as much as we did. We are also working on a larger project that includes all of the different animals and hsing, so everyone can learn about the years they were born and what elements they might be associated with.



# ZODIAC ANIMALS

Zodiac Animals	Wuxing: the Five Elements (Hsing)
Rat: 1948, 60, 72, 84, 96, 2008, 20	Earth: dates ending in 8 (yellow/masculine) and 9 (gold/feminine)
Ox: 1949, 61, 73, 85, 97, 2009, 21	Metal: dates ending in 0 (white/masculine) and 1 (silver/feminine)
Tiger: 1950, 62, 74, 86, 98, 2010, 22	Water: dates ending in 2 (black/masculine) and 3 (gray/feminine)
Rabbit: 1951, 63, 75, 87, 99, 2011, 23	Wood: dates ending in 4 (green/masculine) and 5 (blue/feminine)
Dragon: 1952, 64, 76, 88, 2000, 12, 24	Fire: dates ending in 6 (red/masculine) and 7 (purple/feminine)
Snake: 1953, 65, 77, 89, 2001, 13, 25	
Horse: 1954, 66, 78, 90, 2002, 14, 26	
Goat: 1955, 67, 79, 91, 2003, 15, 27	
Monkey: 1956, 68, 80, 2004, 16, 28	
Rooster: 1957, 69, 81, 2005, 17, 29	
Dog: 1946, 58, 70, 82, 94, 2006, 18, 30	
Pig: 1947, 59, 71, 83, 95, 2007, 19, 31	



# Titanosaurs:

## Earth's Enormous Land Dinosaurs

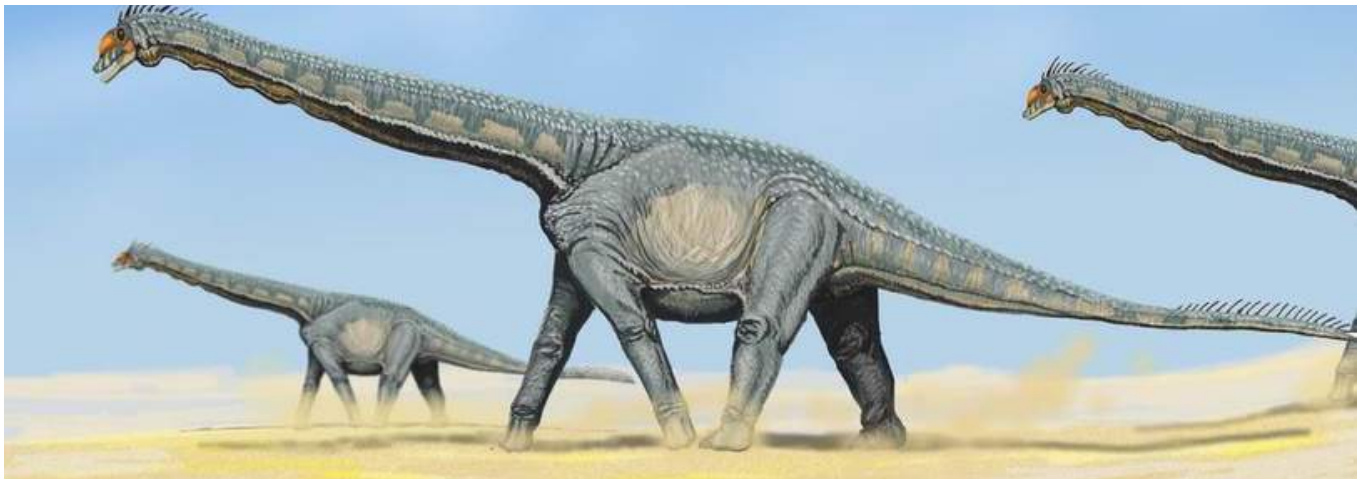
Colossal creatures once roamed the land, and they were HUGE! While the blue whale is currently the planet's largest living mammal, the title of the largest land animal belongs to the elephant. But in the Mesozoic Era, the world was dominated by land giants—dinosaurs that exceeded the size of modern elephants, hippos, and rhinos. Here are three of the most humongous!

### Sauropods: Titans of the Past

During the Mesozoic Era, spanning approximately 252 million to 66 million years ago, the Earth was home to awe-inspiring sauropods. These four-legged herbivores had long necks and tails, forming a subgroup known as Titanosauria. They were the apex predators of their time. Titanosaurs reached their peak during the Cretaceous Period (145 million to 66 million years ago).

What is an "apex predator"?  
Are people apex predators?

Some sauropods formed herds:



By DiBgd, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2443100>

### Dreadnoughtus: A Gargantuan Marvel

Among these colossal creatures was Dreadnoughtus, a behemoth that was unearthed in 2009 in southern Patagonia, Argentina. This sauropod measured an astonishing 85 feet in length and tipped the scales at an estimated 65 tons.



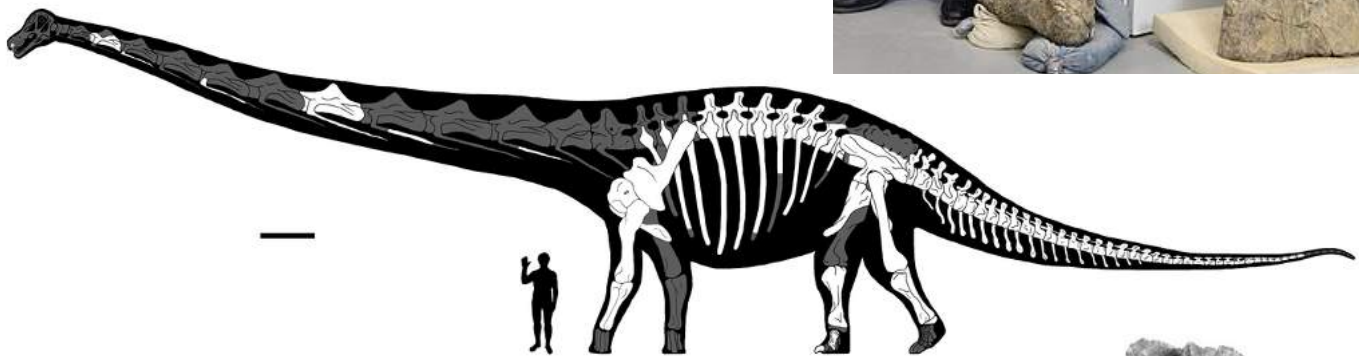


# More Titanosaurs

American palaeontologist Kenneth Lacovara discovered the species in Santa Cruz Province, Patagonia, Argentina in 2005. Lacovara chose the name Dreadnoughtus, which means "fears nothing", stating "I think it's time the herbivores get their due for being the toughest creatures in an environment."

Here is Locavara with them big bones (right).

By ArcaneHalveKnot - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0,  
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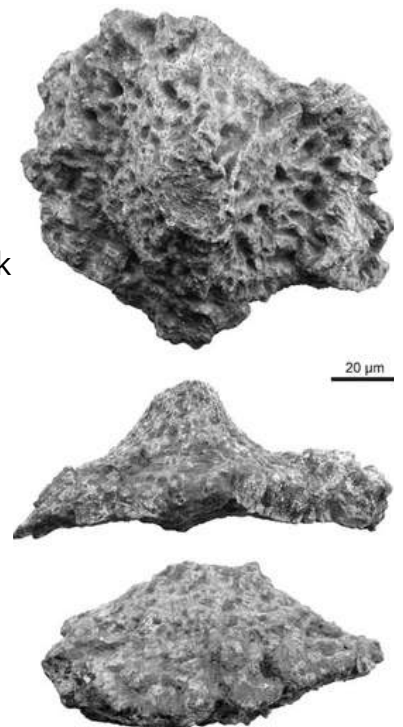


By ArcaneHalveKnot - File:Dreadnoughtus\_Published\_Reconstruction.jpg, CC BY-SA 4.0,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=73426618>

## Saltasaurus: Armored Guardian of the South

Named after the city of Salta in northern Argentina, Saltasaurus took a different approach to defense. Measuring a relatively modest 40 to 42 feet and weighing just under 8 tons, this titanosaur employed an ingenious strategy. Covered in *osteoderms* (see pic at right) or bony armored plates, Saltasaurus made it challenging for predators to penetrate its flesh!

What other animals have osteoderms?



Why do you think titanosaurs no longer wander the earth?

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Join us for the Snail Mail Pen-Pal Club!

The Snail Mail Pen-Pal Club meets on the first Friday of each month at the Project Center at 866 Grant Avenue Unit 3 in Novato, from 10-12. Stationary, stamps, light refreshments, and outstanding company will be provided.

Our next meeting is Friday, February 2nd—we'll have a Groundhog Day art project 🐻 and a groovy lava lamp Valentine's Day card to work on! 😊 Feel free to call Jennifer Harter at CH&S Life College at 415-897-8676 with any questions. Hope to see you there!





# A Valentine

by Edgar Allan Poe

For her this rhyme is penned, whose luminous eyes,  
Brightly expressive as the twins of Loeda,  
Shall find her own sweet name, that, nestling lies  
Upon the page, enwrapped from every reader.  
Search narrowly the lines!—they hold a treasure  
Divine—a talisman—an amulet  
That must be worn at heart. Search well the measure—  
The words—the syllables! Do not forget  
The trivialest point, or you may lose your labor!  
And yet there is in this no Gordian knot

Which one might not undo without a sabre,  
If one could merely comprehend the plot.  
Enwritten upon the leaf where now are peering  
Eyes scintillating soul, there lie perdus  
Three eloquent words oft uttered in the hearing  
Of poets, by poets—as the name is a poet's, too.  
Its letters, although naturally lying  
Like the knight Pinto—Mendez Ferdinando—  
Still form a synonym for Truth—Cease trying!  
You will not read the riddle, though you do the best you can do.

Community Homes & Services  
PO Box 744 Novato CA 94945  
415-897-8676

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**Valentine's Month**  
**Connection Magazine**

