



WEST STREET JOURNAL

GIFTS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

by Tam Marien

Not everyone is excited for the holiday break, and not everyone celebrates the holidays with their families. But for most of us, it's a much-needed break from our busy school lives. We could get longer hours of sleep, or do the things we've been wanting to do. It's also a perfect time to hang out with our family and friends. But unlike adults, we really can't afford to splurge on gifts for anyone.

So what can we give as holiday gifts?

Even though we are teens and young adults, we can still give precious and meaningful holiday gifts.

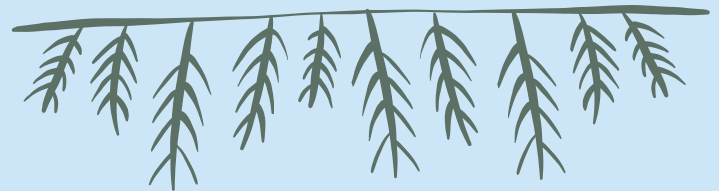
We can send a handwritten letter of love and appreciation to our parents and grandparents, make a booklet of IOU coupons, or put together a digital or printed photo album for our family to enjoy. Depending on the level of talents we have, we can create personalized gifts, bake some homemade goodies, or present a live performance at home. Sharing our precious time with others is a gift and that includes sharing meals and sharing stories.

Volunteering our time for the community, however, is the most classic and ideal. Although a lot of places may have an age limit for volunteers, we can always seek guidance from our parents and teachers ahead of time. We can donate our gently used clothes, raise funds for a cause, or visit nursing homes. It's always a good idea to put ourselves out in society. Such experiences will also count as a valuable addition to our future college and job resumes.



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December 2022





THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE

by Rana McCloat

Christmas Eve, 1914. World War 1.

There's laughing, soldiers are playing soccer, and singing.

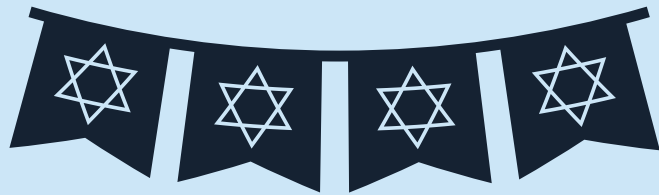
On a battlefield riddled with bodies.

In 1914, December 24th, along the Western front of the first World War, a truce was made. It was unofficial and impromptu, but it was to just stop the fighting and to have fun for Christmas. It lasted until December 26th, also known as Boxing Day.

The Germans had begun singing Christmas carols from their trenches, and shortly after the British sang back. A German voice called to the British to meet each other halfway, in the No Man's Land, which was the area between each of the trenches and normally being there meant immediate death. But instead, on this miracle of a day, they traded tobacco and wine and sang carols. In the No Man's Land, they also played football, mentioned in a letter posted in the The Times newspaper.

One American soldier, 19-year-old Henry Williamson, wrote home to his mother, *"Dear Mother, I am writing from the trenches. It is 11 o'clock in the morning. Beside me is a coke fire, opposite me a 'dug-out' with straw in it. The ground is sloppy in the actual trench, but frozen elsewhere. In my mouth is a pipe presented by Princess Mary. In the pipe is tobacco. Of course, you say. But wait. In the pipe is German tobacco. Haha, you say, from a prisoner or found in a captured trench. Oh dear, no! From a German soldier. Yes, a live German soldier from his own trench. Yesterday the British & Germans met & shook hands in the Ground between the trenches, & exchanged souvenirs, & shook hands. Yes, all day Xmas day, & as I write. Marvelous, isn't it?"*

The Christmas Truce of 1914 really shows how different communities and cultures still have those small things that really pull people together. It was a strange Christmas day, but it was a miracle.



WHAT IS HANUKKAH?

by Jason Lewicki



As we enter the holiday season, many families around the world are preparing for their respective celebrations. While Christmas is obviously the most popular winter holiday here in the States, many more are celebrated by numerous different cultures, with different customs and traditions. In this article, I'd like to talk about a holiday that my family, being half-Jewish, celebrates: Hanukkah, otherwise known as 'Chanukah' or 'The Festival of Lights'. Hanukkah begins on the 25th day of Kislev on the Hebrew calendar, translating to this year's Gregorian calendar as sundown on Sunday, December 18. Lasting eight days, the holiday ends this year at sundown on Monday, December 26. Hanukkah celebrates the liberation of Jerusalem and the rededication of the Second Temple during the 2nd century B.C.E. According to legend, the Jewish rebels successfully drove the Seleucid Empire, who reigned over Jerusalem during the time of the Maccabean Revolt, from the city. The revolt was originally headed by the Jewish priest, Mattathias, and his five sons. After his untimely death, Mattathias' son, Judah Maccabee - translated from Hebrew as 'Judah the Hammer' - took the lead. Following the event, Judah and the rest of the Jews who participated in the Revolt sought to restore the Second Temple, which had been desecrated and destroyed by the Seleucids. Though Judah and his followers thought they only had a day's worth of oil with which to light the temple's menorah (a golden candelabra that represented knowledge and creation in the Jewish faith) during the rededication process, a

miracle seemingly occurred when said oil lasted a full eight days, giving the priests time to find enough to keep the menorah lit. From then on, the priests, who deemed the auspicious event a reward from God for their faith, established the eight-day festival we know today as 'Hanukkah'. During Hanukkah, a menorah bearing nine candles (the flame of the middle candle, the 'shamash', is used to light the others) is lit on each of the eight nights to honor the miracle that occurred in Jerusalem. Alongside the lighting of the menorah, there is also the eating of traditional foods like latkes (pancake-like fried potatoes) and sufganiyot (donuts stuffed with jam), playing of traditional games and toys such as dreidels (Jewish toys resembling four-sided tops), and giving gifts to others, not unlike Christmas. Overall, Hanukkah is a celebration of the bravery, dedication, and faith of the Jewish people during a time of crisis, as well as the honoring of the God-given miracles that have allowed our culture to persevere both then and now. I may not be a particularly religious individual myself, but I can definitely appreciate the history and religious meaning behind this holiday that is so important to my family and Jews throughout the world. I hope that no matter what holiday you happen to celebrate, you also experience joy and prosperity during this winter season. This has been Jason Lewicki (a.k.a. Hebrew first name: Moishe), wishing you all a 'Happy Holidays!'

Sources:

History.com Editors. "Hanukkah." HISTORY, A&E Television Networks, 27 Oct. 2009, www.history.com/topics/holidays/hanukkah. Accessed 28 Nov. 2022.

My mother, Michele (Hebrew first name: Hinda) Lewicki

<https://scarletviolet.pokemon.com/>



Review: Pokemon Scarlet & Violet

by Payton Burke

The world of Pokemon has just expanded for the first time in three years, as we enter the all new region of Paldea with *Pokemon Scarlet and Violet*. These titles are the first open world Pokemon games with three separate storylines for the player to follow. This game came out on November 18 of this year, and since it is such a new game, this review will attempt to be as spoiler free as possible. For reference, as of writing this I've all but completed the main story line with the final missions left in two of the main storylines and the third already completed.

Overall, I really enjoyed the game; although, I do believe it could have used a little longer to smooth out the rough edges. Both visual and game glitches have been rampant across the internet from game breaking to just odd. In my experience, I did have to reset a story point when the game froze but other than that nothing game breaking.

Where the game truly shines, however, is its music and characters. I typically play games with the sound off. It's an old habit, but this game was different where I found myself going out of my

way to play with the sound on because the music was just really good. Especially certain character themes. Speaking of the characters, they had amazing dialogue with some really relatable and some just straight up funny lines, and unlike more recent titles in the series, the characters in Scarlet and Violet felt a lot more fleshed out and at some points make you really feel something. This was not something I was expecting from a Pokemon game especially when the last mainline game saved most of the characterization and personality of the characters in league cards or in the post game.

Visually, the game had a nice style. It was very much Pokemon and while I'm not going too far into it to avoid spoilers there were some Pokemon with just amazing designs. The colors in this game seemed very bright as well, making the world seem so vibrant as well as open.

All in all *Pokemon Scarlet and Violet* definitely took some of the steps Pokemon needed to take, and I'm looking forward to what it could mean for the future of the franchise.



Photo is from <https://www.lifehacker.com.au/>

What is D&December?

by Jason Lewicki

D&December, for all those who wanted to know and/or didn't know already, is a month-long drawing challenge presented by the Dungeons and Dragons community that lasts through the month of December, starting this year on Thursday, December 1st and ending on Saturday, December 31st. During the month of D&December, each day comes with a new prompt that relates to the month's theme, which then inspires a new drawing based on that prompt, similar to many other drawing challenges like Mermay (mermaids), Kaijune (giant monsters), Smaugust (dragons) and Inktober (inking drawings). Many variations of D&December exist: some include each day being a different D&D race with a die being rolled to determine the new character's class; some have each day be a different winter, fantasy or D&D-related theme to base a character off of; and some even forgo the daily prompts altogether and just have a die roll decide both the class and race of the character each day. However, if you choose to partake in this challenge, it is a great creative exercise for those who enjoy both art and D&D, or just fantasy in general. You can find

numerous different D&December prompt lists online free for public use, or you can make your own and decide your own prompts. If you come across a race, class, or even a theme you aren't quite familiar with, all it usually takes is a quick Google search to find a good visual reference, or even just ask someone you know who might be familiar with D&D. All in all, D&December is a great experience for those interested, as it helps encourage creativity, uniqueness, and appealing character design. I myself participated in D&December last year and intend to this year as well, and I can definitively say that partaking in this challenge helped to improve my own art style and design principles by quite a fair margin. Finally, if you would like, I have even provided my own D&December prompt list that I used last year. Simply follow along with the days and roll a dice to determine which class on the chart that day's character is. Feel free to reroll when you deem it appropriate. Have fun, everybody, and have a merry D&December!



What is D&December

(Continued from previous page)

d20:

1. Artificer
2. Barbarian
3. Bard
4. Cleric
5. Druid
6. Fighter
7. Monk
8. Paladin
9. Ranger
10. Rogue
11. Sorcerer
12. Warlock
13. Wizard
- 14-18: Reroll
- 19: Multiclass (*Roll twice then combine the two. If they are the same, reroll one*)
- 20: Pick whichever class you want

Thursday, December 1st: Aarakocra (Birdfolk)

Friday, December 2nd: Aasimar

Saturday, December 3rd: Bugbear

Sunday, December 4th: Changeling

Monday, December 5th: Dragonborn
Tuesday, December 6th: Dwarf

Wednesday, December 7th: Elf or Half-Elf

Thursday, December 8th: Firbolg

Friday, December 9th: Genasi (Half-Genie/Half-Elemental)

Saturday, December 10th: Gith

Sunday, December 11th: Gnome

Monday, December 12th: Goblin

Tuesday, December 13th: Goliath

Wednesday, December 14th: Grung (Frogfolk)

Thursday, December 15th: Halfling

Friday, December 16th: Hobgoblin

Saturday, December 17th: Human

Sunday, December 18th: Kalashtar

Monday, December 19th: Kenku (Crowfolk/Ravenfolk)

Tuesday, December 20th: Kobold

Wednesday, December 21st: Leonin (Lionfolk)

Thursday, December 22nd: Lizardfolk

Friday, December 23rd: Orc or Half-Orc

Saturday, December 24th: Satyr (Faun)

Sunday, December 25th: Shifter

Monday, December 26th: Tabaxi (Catfolk)

Tuesday, December 27th: Tiefling

Wednesday, December 28th: Turtle (Turtlefolk)

Thursday, December 29th: Triton

Friday, December 30th: Warforged

Saturday, December 31st: Yuan-Ti Pureblood (Snakefolk)



Photo: <https://uk.gamesplanet.com/>



Face Your Fears in Sonic Frontiers

by Anonymous Newsie

Sonic the Hedgehog has been a popular face among the gaming community for years. Taking the world by storm in 1991, new games have continued releasing, including one later in November.

The latest game, titled Sonic Frontiers, has been teased for a few months and has both new and old Sonic fans split. With old characters returning, and a brand new enemy, and even having a full open world to explore, trailers released by the Sonic Team and Sega have shown what games are capable of.

The only story information that has been released explains that Sonic and his friends Tails, Knuckles, and Amy Rose have been warped to a new cyberspace world with robotic inhabitants, but not like the badniks that players are familiar with. Sonic's goal is to collect the Chaos Emeralds and rescue his friends from the new enemy, Sage. While much isn't known about Sage, we do know that she is not happy with Sonic's presence, and is willing to try everything in her power to make him leave. Fans have theorized that she may have similar powers to Infinite the Jackal, an enemy from one of the previous games, Sonic Forces.

With the combat, Sonic Frontiers provides players with a new "skill tree". Most people who play RPGs

are familiar with this idea, but for those who aren't sure; a skill tree is a large web where you can use points/experience/etc. to unlock new moves for a character. The Sonic games have only ever provided a homing attack, where Sonic (or any other character) spins and launches themselves at an enemy. These new attacks force players to strategize and time their movements perfectly.

While these all seem like great ideas, fans have been split about whether or not the game is worth it. Older trailers showed unfinished combat animations and messy graphics. While it was stated that it was an early trailer, fans were still worried about the game. Recent trailers have shown huge improvements, providing voice lines, polished gameplay, and a display of the new combat mechanics, old and new fans have their hopes heightened again. With a recent history of having unsuccessful games such as Sonic Forces, and Sonic Colors within the community, everyone is curious as to how Sonic Frontiers will turn out.

Not much time is left to wait, as the release date for the game is November 8th, 2022. The countdowns have started, and the anticipation begins.

Will you play Sonic Frontiers, or do you think it's not worth it?



How to Stop Writer's Block

BY SOPHIA LOSS

Writer's block is a fickle feeling. One moment you might be ecstatic to put words on a page, but then you could pull out the paper and draw a blank on what exactly to write down. The other possibility could be that you know what to write but you can't put your imagination into words. "Now how do I fix this?" you might ask yourself, well I have some techniques that may or may not help.

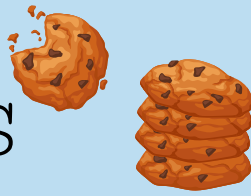
Starting off, you could try putting yourself under pressure by starting a timer for 25+ minutes. During that time you should work non-stop and continuously put words on the page. Of course, if you're writing a research paper or an essay then the goal is to make the information accurate. Use this time to jot down every beneficial fact you find, find your resources and plan out the structure. Once the baseline structure has been solidified, take a break. Relax for around ten minutes, grab a snack or two and relax a bit before jumping back into your work. When the ten minutes are up, restart the timer and work your way through the paragraphs. Don't worry about grammar or spelling right away, just focus on writing as much as you can. Continue to write until the timer runs out and then repeat the process until the paper/project is complete. Start the editorial process when the paper is fully written out.

The second way you might be able to fix a writer's block is by warming up with a writing prompt. Writing prompts are a good way to warm up to storytelling, they allow you to explore new character archetypes that you may have not explored before, or, writing prompts could make you learn a bit more about yourself and how you interact with others. Writing prompts could also help you improve your writing skills, doing consistent practice has nearly always shown improvement. The better someone is at doing something, the easier it is to do the task.

The final way you can conquer writer's block is by reading. Getting into the right headspace is not always needed but it is incredibly helpful, and why wouldn't reading accomplish that goal? Reading is an effective way to calmly gather yourself before writing a complex or stressful essay. If you're writing a story then reading could help you find personalities or traits you would want to add to your characters to make them better and more realistic. Plus, it's also just fun to read and explore a world from another person's view.

In the end, there are many solutions to a writer's block. While the journey to get to writing is different, they all have an outcome of communicating through words. Writer's block is difficult, but it can be overcome if you find the right strategy.

8 Step Cookies



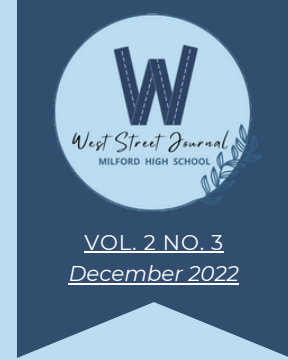
BY JACQUELENE MELEEDY

2 1/4 cups of all-purpose flour
1 tsp of baking soda
1/2 tsp of Salt
1 cup of butter, softened
3/4 granulated sugar
3/4 cup packed brown sugar
One egg
1 tsp of vanilla
2 cups of semisweet chocolate chips

1. Heat oven to 375°F
2. In a bowl mix flour, baking soda and salt
3. In another bowl mix softened butter and sugar with an electric mixer on a medium speed until fluffy.
4. Mix in an egg and vanilla until smooth. Stir in flour mixture just until blended, Stir in the chocolate chips.
5. Drop dough on a cookie sheet each 2 inches apart.
6. Bake 8 to 10 minutes until light brown.
7. Cool for 2 minutes.
8. Remove from cookie sheet to cooling rack if you have one.



They're done!



VOL. 2 NO. 3
December 2022

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*Happy Holidays,
everybody!*