

PICTURE OF THE WEEK: Ants New Popular Pet

Most people are happy living with their pet dogs or cats. Sometimes you hear about more unusual pets, such as snakes or ferrets. But would you want to come home to an ant colony every day? Well, children in Germany have found a new passion--pet ants.

German insect dealer Martin Sebesta never thought his ant farms would become so popular with children when he showcased his ants as pets at a German agricultural fair last month. They have become so popular that he plans to open two new stores.

These ant colonies don't come cheap either. Sebesta sells about two each day at an average price of \$126 each. The most expensive ants cost \$1,764 per colony of up to 20 ants.

Sebesta says children love the colonies because they look at the ants at work in their own mini-world. Each ant has a different job; some gather food, some defend the queen, etc. It's a lot like people working in our world!

Also, the colonies are easy to care for. The ants eat household scraps, and they can live up to 30 years. That's a long time!

Sebesta sells a variety of ants ranging from large two-inch ants from Southeast Asia to ants that are so tiny they are barely visible.

--Written by [Amanda Tassin](#)

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WEEKLY NEWS 1: Genetic Engineering Banned

On Tuesday, Northern California voters in Mendocino County passed a measure that bans raising genetically engineered plants and animals. The measure, which is the first of its kind in the nation, won by 56 percent to 44 percent. Legislation restricting biotechnology has been passed in other places, but none are as strong as Measure H in Mendocino County.

Biotech supporters lost Measure H even though they spent five times as much money campaigning as those who didn't support genetic engineering. "They had the money, we had the people," said Els Cooperrider, who led the local ballot measure. Measure H supporters hope to step up efforts across the nation.

Organic farmers and wine makers strongly supported the measure, which does not prevent the sale of processed foods made with genetically modified ingredients. Supporters of the ban claim that genetically modified plants and animals carry health risks. Biotechnology industry supporters argue, however, that no negative side effects have been reported since first genetically engineered crops for human consumption were approved by the Food and Drug

Administration ten years ago. There are no genetically modified crops in Mendocino County but farmers hope to use the ban as a marketing tool, particularly in Europe where opposition to genetically engineered foods is strong.

--Written by [Renee Clara](#)

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Read WEEKLY NEWS 2: Texas Schools Get Healthy 

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WEEKLY NEWS 2: Texas Schools Get Healthy

Kids in Texas public schools can say good-bye to deep-fried foods and whole milk, and say hello to a leaner, healthier lunch.

By August, Texas cafeterias will try to serve healthier foods by adhering to new rules developed by the Texas Agriculture Department. The changes include limiting how often french fries can be served, how much fat and sugar a meal can have, and what kinds of milk can be offered.

The new rules also require that canned fruits contain only natural juices or light syrups, and they also limit the type of potato chips to the reduced fat or baked varieties. Pizza fundraisers that compete with the cafeteria will also be banned.

These changes are an expansion of a policy created last August by Agriculture Commissioner Susan Combs, which banned "foods of minimal nutritional value," including sodas, hard candy, and gum. This policy affects elementary and middle-school children.

Combs developed these new policies in an effort to fight the problem of childhood obesity. According to Combs, 38 percent of Texas fourth-graders are overweight.

In twenty states, students are not allowed to have junk food before lunch, and about two dozen states have either limits or total bans on vending machines.

This new Texas policy goes into effect on August 1st for all Texas schools participating in the national school lunch, breakfast, and after-school snack programs.

--Written by [Amanda Tassin](#)

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Read WEEKLY NEWS 3: Remarkable Hole-In-One 

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WEEKLY NEWS 3: Remarkable Hole-In-One

If you ever thought you couldn't achieve something or that a goal was too difficult to reach, then Bill Hilsheimer has achievements to share with you.

He has only one hand, yet this week he accomplished his third hole-in-one while in Florida. Bill Hilsheimer was golfing in Florida last week when he needed only one swing to hit the golf ball into the hole. This is a remarkable achievement for an amateur golfer who does not compete in the sport. Moreover, Hilsheimer, age 68, hit his third without using his right arm.

He overcame the odds of 12,600 to 1 when he made his first hole-in-one. He also overcame the odds 59 year ago when a train ran over his hand after he fell onto the coupling of the railroad tracks. The wheel of the train separated his thumb, first two fingers, and part of his palm from the rest of his hand.

Amazingly, Bill Hilsheimer still played baseball, basketball, and football while he was in high school and he continues to defy the odds on the golf course. His inspiring determination and belief in himself illustrates a "you can" attitude.

--Written by [Katheryn Troyer](#)

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Read WEEKLY NEWS 4: Health Experts Happy About Size 

WEEKLY NEWS 4: Health Experts Happy About Size

On Thursday, March 4, 2004, authorities from the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) offered their congratulations to McDonald's Corporation. So why is the AICR happy with McDonald's? Because the fast food chain announced it will be eliminating its "Super Sizes."

Since 1999, health experts at AICR have been saying that American's portion sizes in restaurants have grown too large. In fact, they developed a report that attacked the practice of "Supersizing." Extra large sizes are even more troublesome since research has found that most people finish all the food on their plates, no matter how much they're served! Now it looks as if McDonald's Corporation agrees.

Research and health studies have found a direct link between obesity and increased cancer risk, and many experts believe part of America's obesity problems are caused by out-of-control portions. AICR has worked to try and raise awareness among people about this issue. The organization even has an educational campaign, called "New American Plate," designed to help people learn about proper portion sizes. AICR spreads its message through surveys, brochures, press releases, media events and health aids.

McDonald's Corporation has announced that "Super Size" portions will be eliminated by the end of the year. AICR is hoping that other fast food restaurants will follow McDonald's example.

--Written by [Carla Shives](#)

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AROUND THE WORLD 1: German Citizen Gets New Trial

Mounir El Motassadeq, the only man convicted in the September 11 attacks, won the right to a retrial on Thursday, March 4, 2004 in a German appeal court. A retrial is granted by a judge in the case of a mistrial or when attorneys find new evidence that could change the opinion and ruling of the court.

Montassadeq was sentenced to 15 years in jail in February of 2003 for his alleged part in the plans to murder over 3,000 people in the 2001 attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, and for his membership in a terrorist organization. The Moroccan-born German citizen was a member of a German cell of al Qaeda, the international terrorist organization headed by Osama bin Laden. Montassadeq's al Qaeda group included three of the Sept. 11 hijackers.

After he was sentenced, Montassadeq and his lawyers filed an appeal, meaning they would take his case before a higher court and try the case again in hopes that they could get his jail sentence overturned.

In what was seen as a setback by American and German authorities, Judge Klaus Tolksdorf, who was in charge of the trial, said that however horrible the crime, the country could not abandon the principles of law and justice.

"The fight against terrorism cannot be a wild, uncontrolled war," he said.

Montassadeq continues to insist that he had no knowledge of the plans to attack the Pentagon and the World Trade Center on Sept. 11. He insists that he has done no more than to help the other Muslims living in Germany. His lawyers argued that new evidence was available, which made Motassadeq's jail sentence unfair. The new evidence had freed Montassadeq's friend, Abdelghani Mzoudi, from similar charges. They said they would demand Montassadeq, 29, be released from custody in Hamburg, a German city, when he gets his new trial.

--Written by [Hillary Rouse](#)

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Read **AROUND THE WORLD 2: Protesting the President: Venezuela** 

AROUND THE WORLD 2: Protesting the President: Venezuela

Many citizens of the South American country of Venezuela held protests last week in the capital city of Caracas. Demonstrators were banging on pots and pans, throwing stones and lighting objects on fire in an attempt to get the attention of the government. These protesters are opponents of Venezuela's president, Hugo Chavez.

The protesters are insisting that new elections be held sooner than usual, because they want to elect a new president and force President Chavez out of the office. Chavez was elected president in 2000 and he is supposed to serve a six year term that would end in 2007 (because he didn't actually begin the term until 2001). Therefore, he is only about half way through the term. If Chavez's opponents are successful, they will get a new president for the next three years; if they are unsuccessful, Chavez could continue to lead the country until 2007.

There is an orderly way to arrange for early elections, which does not require protesting in the streets. If opponents are able to form a petition saying that they want new elections, and if they are able to get 2.4 million (that's 2,400,000) people to sign it, then new elections can be held. In fact, the opposition did compile a list of signature, and they claim it contained at least 3.4 million (3,400,000) signatures. The problem? The legal council that officially counts the signatures ruled against the opposition, because they said that the signatures were not collected in the proper way. This is why so many people resorted to protests. They must now try to convince the election council that the signatures are legitimate.

The protests have caused most of the daily activities in Caracas to come to a halt. This is because crowds have marched through the streets and prevented cars and buses from taking people to work. In an attempt to keep order, local police, as well as a few units of the Venezuelan military, were spread out in the city. Any time large crowds of people gather to demonstrate, there is a risk of violence. The protestors are not likely to calm down soon, because it is urgent that they get the attention of the government and especially the election council that decides about new elections. If new elections are not arranged before this August--the official mid-way point of Chavez's term--then the only possibility to change the president before 2007 will be to have the Vice President take over. Of course, if this happens, Chavez is likely to continue with his own agenda, by pressuring his Vice president to follow orders.

--Written by [Betsy Mesard](#)

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Read **AROUND THE WORLD 3: Top Prisoner in China Released** 

AROUND THE WORLD 3: Top Prisoner in China Released

On March 4, 2004, the People's Republic of China released a man who was once on the government's "most wanted" list. Wang Youcai, who is 37, was sent to the San Francisco on medical parole after doctors diagnosed him with a heart condition. Although he was an important prisoner, Youcai was released after serving only half his 11-year prison term and will probably never return to China as long as it remains a communist government. Some people are asking: Why did China let him go?

On all sides, people seem to agree that China is trying to change its image. It is one of only four countries the CIA classifies as "communist"; the other three are Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam (and many people consider North Korea a communist state). The U.S. has always had a complex, back-and-forth relationship with China, recognizing the importance of Asian business but also keeping in mind China's history of human rights violations. Most recently, President Bush said he might support a United Nations (UN) resolution later this month that would criticize China for their human rights record. Maybe more importantly, the UN soon decides if it will lift an "arms embargo" (a type of international ban on weapons) that has been in place for almost fifteen years.

The release of Youcai seems to be a response to this possibility. Youcai was a student back in the famous Tiananmen Square demonstrations of 1989. Tiananmen is one of the largest open public squares anywhere, and sits right in the middle of Beijing, which happens to be China's capital. Students gathered there in 1989 to protest for democracy, and hundreds were killed because of the government's violent reaction. Years after Tiananmen, around 1998, Youcai tried to start up the China Democracy Party, and was promptly arrested.

At least 25 more former members of the China Democracy Party remain in prison. However, Youcai's release comes in the same week as many other interesting events. China's government released a well-known Muslim activist and a Tibetan nun who had spent 15 years behind bars. A friend of Youcai's, who was released back in 2002, was glad but skeptical. "This does not mean China's human rights situation is improving," he said. Instead, he is worried China is just using people like bargaining chips, trying to get what they want from the United States and the rest of the world without really changing the way the government operates. (The Washington Post)

--Written by [Kari Ellassal](#)

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Read **AROUND THE WORLD 4: Attacks in Iraq and Pakistan** 

AROUND THE WORLD 4: Attacks in Iraq and Pakistan

Last Tuesday was a very important holiday for many people who practice the religion of Islam (Muslims). The day was observed by a particular group of Muslims called Shi'ites. In many places around the world, the Shi'ite Muslims celebrated the day known as Ashura by attending services at mosques and participating in rituals that symbolize historical events. In particular, the day of Ashura is meant to honor the death of an important figure named Imam Hussein.

Attacks interrupted the religious services of many of these worshippers in two countries: Iraq and Pakistan. In Iraq, the city of Karbala was attacked by several explosions in the city center. Many Iraqis were killed and many more were injured as they gathered to observe the holy day. A number of people from the neighboring country of Iran were also killed, because they came across the border to participate in the rituals with fellow Shi'ite Muslims in Iraq. Also in Iraq, in the capital city of Baghdad, an explosion went off at a mosque.

Far away, in Pakistan, crowds of Shi'ite Muslims gathered to observe the Ashura. In the Pakistani city of Quetta, someone with a gun opened fire on worshippers, leaving more casualties and injuries. In both places, people of all ages were present.

The day after the attacks, many people were mourning the loss of loved ones, but many people were also calling for justice. Many Shi'ites, in both Iraq and Pakistan, believe that they know who is responsible for the attacks. In both places, there are two different traditions of understanding Islam: Shi'ism and Sunnism. There is tension between people in these two traditions, and in the past, there has been violence between them. Sunnis attack Shi'ites and sometimes Shi'ites attack Sunnis. In the case of these recent attacks, the Shi'ites are blaming the Sunnis, and in both Pakistan and Iraq, the victims and the families of victims are demanding that the attackers be found and charged with crimes.

In both Pakistan and Iraq, authorities believe that they will be able to find the people responsible for the attacks. It is clear, however, that preventing future attacks by either group will require great efforts. Such efforts, however, will be worth it for the future of both countries--especially Iraq.

--Written by [Betsy Mesard](#)

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SPORTS ZONE 1: NHL Trades Heat Up

The NHL trading deadline is not until March 9, but already there have been a few trades that have dramatically altered the makeup of many teams' lineups.

The New York Rangers have made a complete turn around. On January 23, 2004, they traded forward Anson Carter to Washington for high scoring forward Jaromir Jagr in hopes that he could provide the spark that would propel the Rangers towards a playoff run.

Just four weeks after the Jagr deal, the Rangers are headed in the opposite direction. On Wednesday night the Rangers traded their best defenseman in franchise history, Brian Leetch, to the Toronto Maple Leafs in exchange for two young defensemen, a first round pick in this year's draft and a second round pick in next year's draft. The Rangers are currently 15 points back of the eighth place New York Islanders.

The departure of Leetch signals the end of an era in New York. The Rangers have been long known for bolstering a lineup with high priced veterans. The team has finally figured out that having all veterans and no young prospects does not gain you a playoff spot.

Leetch was rumored to be headed to the Boston Bruins, but those rumors were squashed earlier that day when Boston acquired Sergei Gonchar from the Washington Capitals. In the deal the Capitals received defensemen Shaone Morrisonn and a first and second round draft choice in this year's draft.

Both Leetch, 36 years old, and Gonchar, 29 years old, will make a positive difference on their new teams. Both players are offensive minded defensemen. Gonchar has played in 56 games this season scoring 7 goals to go with 42 assists. Leetch, in 57 games played has 13 goals and 23 assists.

The Bruins and Maple Leafs each have 15 games remaining in their regular seasons. Toronto is currently in third place overall in the Eastern Conference, just two points back of the first place Tampa Bay Lightning. The Bruins are in fifth place overall in the conference, just two points back of the Maple Leafs.

--Written by [Cris Sigovitch](#)

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Read **SPORTS ZONE 2: Lady Huskies Upset** 

SPORTS ZONE 2: Lady Huskies Upset

It looked like the University of Connecticut's Lady Huskies would be finishing the regular season ranked number one in the women's college basketball. Then along came the Wildcats from Villanova to wipe away the Huskies' hope.

With 56 seconds remaining in the game, Liad Suez of Villanova hit a turnaround jumper giving the women of Villanova an upset victory over the top ranked Huskies. It was the second straight year that Villanova has beat Uconn. Last year, the Wildcats ended Uconn's 70-game home win streak in last season's Big East Tournament. It was also only the Huskies' second loss in their last 58 Big East games.

Uconn took a 29-23 lead into the halftime break. After the break, Villanova caught fire, shooting 14 for 20 from the floor in the second half. Suez, who hit the winning shot for the Wildcats, was especially impressive. She played 37 minutes hitting on 9 of 16 from the floor, good for 23 points.

In a losing effort, All-American senior Diana Taurasi of the Huskies had a disappointing game. Taurasi has been averaging 16.5 points per game but could only manage to score 8 points. At the buzzer Taurasi took a desperation shot that clanked off the back rim.

With the win the Wildcats climbed to 23rd in the women's national poll.

Both Villanova and Uconn will conclude their regular season's schedules this week and then will turn their attention to the Big East postseason tournament.

--Written by [Cris Sigovitch](#)

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SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY 1: Koala Quandary on Kangaroo Island

There are too many koalas on Kangaroo Island, an island off the coast of Australia, and some of them might have to be killed, say local conservation experts--but apparently nobody wants to do the job.

Wildlife conservationists work to help animal populations, and their environments, thrive. Unfortunately, the koala population on Kangaroo Island has done so well that the environment is beginning to suffer. Koalas only eat eucalyptus leaves. Lately, the number of koalas has gotten to be so big--about 30,000 on the island--that they are eating almost all the leaves off the trees. Since leaves are crucial to photosynthesis, the process that plants use to convert sunlight into food, the trees are beginning to die off. Even if the trees don't die off, however, they can't produce enough food for all the animals. Other methods of controlling the population, like moving some of the animals to the mainland, have failed.

That leaves the conservationists and government officials in a quandary. Government officials admit that there are too many koalas, but fear tourists and animal rights activists will be angered if the koalas are culled. But environmental conservation experts say that, if things go on as they are, many of the animals will eventually starve to death anyway, after ruining the environment, so culling some of them now makes more sense.

For now, there are no plans to thin out the koala population. The government feels that culling the creatures will cause tourism to drop, which would damage the country's economy.

--Written by [Nia Williams](#)

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SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY 2: Opportunity Finds Water on Mars

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY 2: Opportunity Finds Water on Mars

NASA has reported that the Mars rover Opportunity has found more proof that liquid water was once on Mars.

The evidence of water was found in the bedrock of Meridiani Planum, the depression in which the rover landed weeks ago. Opportunity detected high levels of sulfate and bromide ions, common in salt water, in the rock, which scientists say usually occurs when rock has been submerged in water over a long period of time.

The findings do not tell scientists exactly what kind of body of water was there (it could have been anything from a sea to groundwater), when it was there, or whether life was present on the planet, but some scientists believe it is possible that life existed on the planet.

Opportunity and Spirit, the other Mars rover, will continue their exploration of the planet until their solar-powered batteries die out, which is expected to occur sometime in the coming spring. Opportunity will search other rock outcroppings, which NASA scientists hope will provide further information about the water on Mars. Scientists have had evidence of water on Mars for some time. The recent Opportunity discovery just adds to the information.

--Written by [Nia Williams](#)

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SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY 1: Koala Quandary on Kangaroo Island 

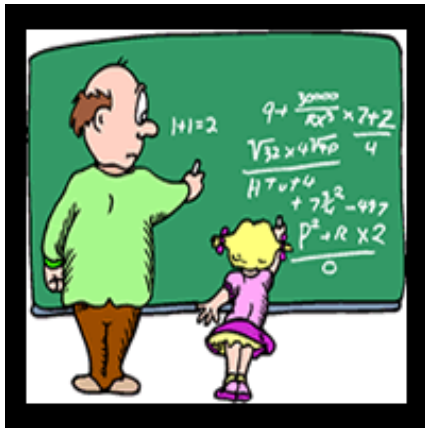
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THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

On March 12, 1888 the "Blizzard of 1888" took place. This was the most severe winter storm to ever hit the New York City region. The treacherous conditions caused hundreds of deaths and millions of dollars in property damage. The storm lasted thirty-six hours and dumped forty inches of snow over the city. Snowdrifts kept New Yorkers within the city limits for weeks.



On March 14, 1979, the famous physicist Albert Einstein was born. He was the one who created the famous formula, "E = mc squared". This formula means that the energy (e) in a mass (m) is equal to the mass (m) multiplied by the velocity of light squared.

On March 13, 1960, Adam Clayton, band member of the popular band U2 was born. Clayton plays bass guitar for the pop group who scooped up three awards at this year's Grammys. Their song "Beautiful Day" has gained popularity worldwide.



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MUSIC AND ENTERTAINMENT 1: Tony Hawk Promotes Reading

On Thursday, March 4, 2004, the American Library Association announced that kids between the ages of 12-18 have a chance to meet Tony Hawk. How? By submitting an entry to the national "Get on Board and Read @ your library" program.

The program is being sponsored by the American Library Association (ALA) and Dean Foods, the company that distributes HERSHEY®'S Milks and MilkShakes. To enter, kids between the ages of 12-18 must read a book and create an entry on the message of the book. Entries can be creative, like essays, paintings, poems, collages or videos. The entry should explain why the book is meaningful.

The grand prize winner will get a trip to meet Tony Hawk somewhere on his 2004 Boom Boom Huck Jam Tour. There will also be six runner up prizes of things like Tony Hawk skateboards, copies of Hawk's books, and a one-month's supply of HERSHEY®'S Milk and MilkShakes.

The ALA is hoping that this contest will encourage teens to read more books. They hope it will expose kids to all the great things--like book and fun programs--available through the library.

So where do you find a book to read for the contest? Go to your local school or public library to find recommended books. You can get all the official rules for the contest at www.hersheysmilk.com/getonboard.

--Written by [Carla Shives](#)

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Read MUSIC AND ENTERTAINMENT 2: Harry Potter Grows 

MUSIC AND ENTERTAINMENT 2: Harry Potter Grows

One young wizard's wild adventures may continue past his days at Hogworth's Academy for Wizards. J.K. Rowling, the British author of the Harry Potter books, has hinted that she may not stop writing about the boy wizard in the seventh edition of the series as previously stated.

During a live webchat in celebration of World Book Day on Thursday, March 4, Rowling was asked by a fan if she had considered writing about Harry after his graduation from Hogworth's. More than 16,000 fans submitted questions during the hour-long discussion, but her response to this question is making headlines worldwide. Although she has continually insisted that she will only write seven books in the series, Rowling replied "I'll never say never, because every time I do, I immediately break the vow."

The most recent installment of the books, "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix," was released in 2003. Rowling is currently working on the sixth plan. Her five novels and three films have delighted children and adults alike, and the Harry Potter franchise is now estimated to be worth over \$1 billion, and so last year, Rowling was named the world's highest paid author by Forbes Magazine. She has sold more than 250 million books around the world.

The 39-year old single mother is excited about her large fan base and hopes that readers will be pleased when the sixth book is published, probably sometime next year. She promised the latest book will offer more romantic encounters for the boy wizard, but will not tell which female character Harry will have a crush on. She also promises that he will face a huge ordeal, but of course Rowling will not give any secrets away.

--Written by [Hillary Rouse](#)

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Read MUSIC AND ENTERTAINMENT 3: More from Viggo Mortensen 

MUSIC AND ENTERTAINMENT 3: More from Viggo Mortensen

It's been less than a week since "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King" won a record 11 Oscars, including Best Director and Best Picture, but Viggo Mortensen, the "King" of the title, already has a new movie opening Friday.

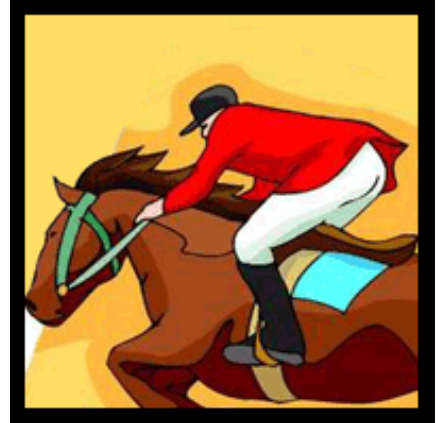
"Hidalgo" is based on the true story of the first American to enter the Ocean of Fire. This 3,000-mile race across the Arabian Desert is even more grueling because the story is set in the 1890s, long before air-conditioned cars and high-tech accessories. You might be surprised to know that before he became famous as Aragorn in The Lord of the Rings, Viggo worked in movies for nearly 20 years, and played important, but not starring, roles in more than 30 films.

In interviews promoting "Hidalgo," Viggo has been very humble and is excited about his chance to be in such famous movies, while also wondering if the interest in him is just a passing fad. His fans would surely disagree, though.

So if The Lord of the Rings trilogy didn't provide enough Viggo for your tastes, check out his new movie and what are sure to be other adventures in the future.

--Written by [Lorie Witkop](#)

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COMICS & POEMS 1: Aford Turtle, Comic Strip



--Written by [Aaron Riddle](#)

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COMICS & POEMS 2: Yesterday, Poetry Feature

Yesterday

Yesterday ended last night
So, whatever you did not get done
Will have to wait for another day
Another rising of the sun.

We spend so much time worrying
About opportunities and things we might
Have done so very differently
But, yesterday ended last night!

So go for the challenge today
Make the most of each thing you pursue.
Then you won't feel the same tomorrow
Because yesterday ended last night!

--Written by [Marion E. Powers](#)

This poem is featured in Hearts of Glass, an Anthology of Poetry released by the International Library of Poetry in November 1998.

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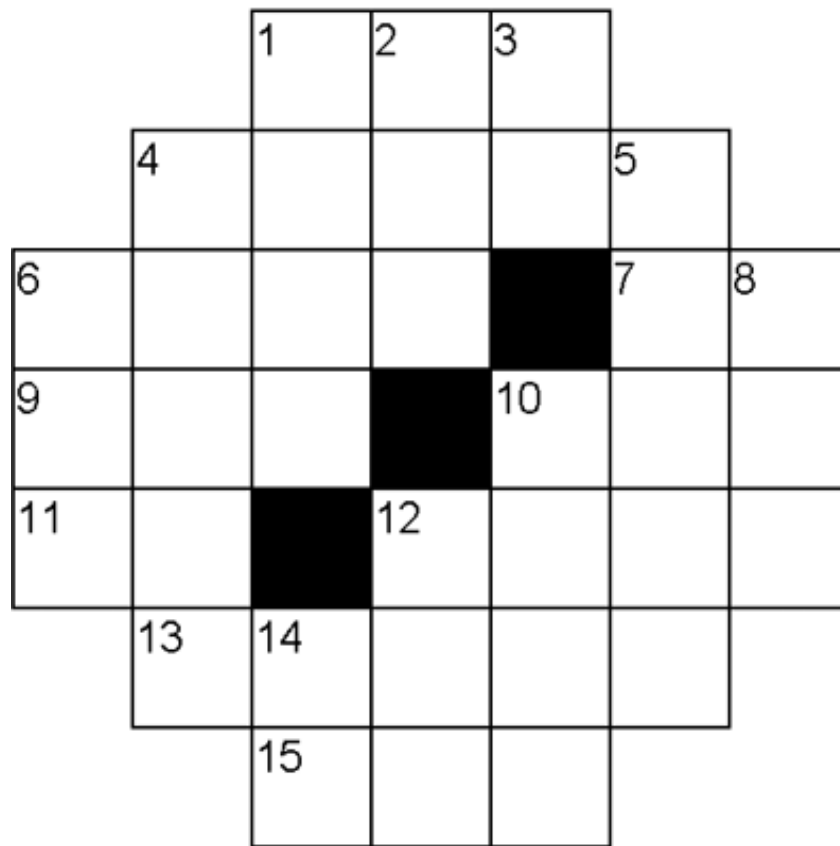


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COMICS & POEMS 3: Ranchers Oh!, Crossword



ACROSS

- 1 Thai
- 4 Lone-Star State
- 6 Biblical "you"
- 7 Post office (abbr.)
- 9 Lick
- 10 Harden
- 11 Ready
- 12 Dial
- 13 Plants
- 15 Noah's boat

DOWN

- 1 Adolescent
- 2 Cutting tool
- 3 Des Monies locale
- 4 Being
- 5 Eyeglasses
- 6 Deuce
- 8 Bullfight cheer
- 10 Ogle
- 12 Pro
- 14 Sun god

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 [Read COMICS & POEMS 1: Aford Turtle, Comic Strip](#)

U.S. GOVERNMENT 1: U.S. Approves of Iraq's Constitution

On Friday, leading Iraqi politicians and U.S. administration officials will sign an interim constitution on Friday, according to President Mohammed Bahr al-Ulloum of the Iraqi Governing Council.

After two months of debate concerning the final draft of the interim constitution, Iraqis agreed upon the draft on Monday. U.S. officials believe this document is a breakthrough for the country. They hope that this constitution will help prepare Iraq for governing their own country, so that U.S. forces will be able to eventually leave. However, even after the Iraqi government takes over power, many U.S. troops will continue to remain in the country for a while.

This interim constitution will become law for at least one year, until a replacement draft is written by an elected national assembly. The draft contains a 13-article bill of rights including protections for free speech and religious expression. Although it embraces Islam as the state religion, the law is not solely based upon it. Kurdish, in addition to Arabic, is deemed as an official language. "For the next 100 years this day will be mentioned as one of the most important in Iraq's history," said council member Samir Shaker Mahmoud.

Iraq's constitution gives considerable authority to individual regions but no specific entity has absolute power. The country will be governed by a national assembly, which is directly elected by citizens. The national assembly members must then choose a president, a prime minister, and a pair of deputy presidents. The president will share power with the prime minister and Cabinet, and will make decisions in accordance with the advice of the two vice presidents. In addition, the prime minister holds executive power while the president commands the armed forces and veto power over national assembly decision.

--Written by [Renee Clara](#)

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U.S. GOVERNMENT 2: New Laws for Education Considered



U.S. GOVERNMENT 2: New Laws for Education Considered

Think about your classmates. Are they taller or shorter than you? What color hair and eyes do they have? Do you have both boys and girls in your class? If you attend public school, then your classes are probably co-ed, or made up of boys and girls. What would you think about being in a school that separated boys and girls? If you're a boy, you'd only have other boys in your class. If you're a girl, you'd be in a class full of girls only.

The Department of Education is proposing a change to its rules about schools. Since 1975, the laws have only allowed for the separation of boys and girls during gym class. Now they are contemplating allowing local districts to create a Boy's High School and a Girl's High School depending on their needs. Or, the school could offer a subject for only girls and not offer it to boys, or vice versa. For example, Earth Science could be a class only for girls or offered as a co-ed class for boy and girls, depending on which one the school thinks is best. This creates more flexibility. The school district could decide which classes (or schools) could separate the boys and girls and also decide which would remain co-ed.

Supporters of these new rules require that boys and girls still be treated equally when planning classes. Also, the students could choose if they wanted to be in a class with only their gender. Many private schools across America already separate boys and girls, and supporters feel that the Department of Education will be giving public schools the same benefits that private schools already enjoy.

--Written by [Katheryn Troyer](#)

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U.S. GOVERNMENT 3: U.S. Urged to Sign Tobacco Treaty



U.S. GOVERNMENT 3: U.S. Urged to Sign Tobacco Treaty

On Tuesday, March 2, 2004, the American Cancer Society warned the U.S. government that time is becoming short if it hopes to sign an international treaty against tobacco.

The treaty is called the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. It requires nations to severely restrict tobacco advertising, as well as increase protections against secondhand smoke. The treaty also requires cigarette makers to put bigger health warnings on their displays. Moreover, any cigarette smuggling across borders would have stricter penalties.

The treaty was adopted in May 2003. For it to take effect, forty nations must sign and ratify it. So far, 95 nations have signed, but only 9 have ratified. The United States government supported the treaty when it was written last May, but so far the U.S. has not signed. The government has until June 29, 2004, to sign the treaty.

The American Cancer Society hopes that the treaty will cut back on the number of cigarette smokers in both the United States and across the world. If the number of cigarettes smoked in the world was cut in half, 200 million lives would be saved over the next 50 years. That's a lot of people! Smoking is one of the leading causes of death in the U.S.

--Written by [Carla Shives](#)

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U.S. GOVERNMENT 1: U.S. Approves of Iraq's Constitution

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Answer all of the questions on the quiz, then select the Score button to grade the quiz.

There are 15 Questions total.

1. What is the name of the county that passed a measure banning the raising of genetically engineered plants and animals?

- Mendocino County
- Washington County
- Franklin County
- Harold County

2. Kangaroo Island has too many of what animal?

- Kangaroos
- Koalas
- Emus
- Gnus

3. J.K. Rowling, the author of the "Harry Potter" series, has joined the ranks of what?

- The British Military
- A quidditch team
- Forbes millionaire list
- Forbes billionaire list

4. The Mars rover Opportunity recently found evidence of what on Mars?

- life
- oxygen
- fire
- water

5. Who was traded to the Boston Bruins this week?

- Brian Leetch
- Shaone Marrison
- Sergei Gonchar
- Jaromir Jagr

6. How many articles are included in Iraq's Bill of Rights?

- 13
- 10
- 8

7. How many points did Liad Suez score for Villanova?

- 21
- 22
- 23
- 32

8. Montassadeq gets retrial because:

- He is German
- He says he's innocent
- His attorneys have found new evidence
- The German judge does not like Americans.

9. What kind of schools can already separate students based on gender?

- public schools
- private schools
- all elementary schools
- all junior high schools

10. Tiananmen Square is:

- One of the largest public squares in the world
- Located in the capital of China
- The site of a huge student demonstration in 1989
- All of the above

11. The policy reducing the amount of fat in school lunches affects students in which state?

- Louisiana
- California
- Texas
- Rhode Island

12. Who hit his third hole-in-one last week?

- George W Bush
- Tiger Woods
- Bill Hilshemier
- Jack Nicholas

13. What new pet are children in Germany going crazy for?

- ants
- owls
- sharks

warthogs

14. How many nations need to ratify the tobacco treaty before it can take effect?

20

30

40

50

15. What fast food chain is getting rid of "super size" portions?

McDonald's

Burger King

Wendy's

KFC

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