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In this issue

A, B, C, D, E, F, G ... and H
Gaza Strip ceasefire
Natural selection in action?
Invasion of army worms
Miracle on the Hudson
Fighting in Somalia
Blood vessel "submarine"
University's 800th birthday
France and Spain hit by violent storm
Meeting in Davos
Job losses increase
Restoring Italian canals
Measuring greenhouse gasses
Amphibians under threat
Australia Day
SADC's special meeting
Trade and tariff wars
Manx Shearwaters
Year of the Ox
Book review
Glossary and Sudoku prize competitions



President Barack Obama makes his inauguration speech

NEW AMERICAN PRESIDENT STARTS WORK

Barack Obama officially became president of the U.S. on January 20. In America, presidential elections are held several weeks before the winner takes the [oath](#) to become president. Mr. Obama won the election in November, but until January 20, the outgoing president, George W. Bush, was still in charge of the country.

Presidential [inauguration](#) ceremonies are held in Washington D.C., the capital of the U.S. Over two million people traveled from all over America – and from other countries – to witness the event. Many began taking their places in the early hours of the morning. The large crowds had to stand in the freezing temperatures of a harsh Washington winter.

Just after midday Mr. Obama recited the oath of office. He officially became the 44th president of the U.S. Mr. Obama is the first African-American person to be elected leader of his country. At 47

years of age he is one of the youngest-ever presidents.

The new president then made an 18-minute speech. Even though he was speaking to Americans, many believe his speech was directed at the whole world. He described his country as a mixture of "Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus and non-believers". He went on to say Americans "are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth".

The president made special mentions of other parts of the world. He said he wanted to work with the Muslim world and to help poorer countries. It is estimated 1.5 billion people around the world watched and listened to his speech on live television broadcasts.

Traditionally, the outgoing president listens to the new president's speech and leaves shortly afterwards. President and

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Mrs. Obama waved goodbye to Mr. and Mrs. Bush as they left by helicopter. The helicopter took the former president and his wife to a nearby airfield. From there they traveled by plane to their home in Texas.

The day after his inauguration President Obama began work. He announced his plan to close America's **detention** camp at Guantánamo Bay, in Cuba. The camp was set up in 2002, for prisoners captured by American forces during the war in Afghanistan. Later those captured in Iraq were also sent there. At one time the camp held about 700 people. Many have been released, but 240 remain there.



President Obama and his wife escort Mr. and Mrs. Bush to a waiting helicopter

The Guantánamo Bay detention camp has angered many Americans because of reports that some prisoners were tortured. Many believe holding prisoners at the camp is illegal. Other world leaders have also suggested the camp should be closed.

About 50 prisoners will probably now be put on trial in the U.S., and the remainder released. Yet not all will be able to go back to the countries from which they came, because they could face further imprisonment and torture. Governments such as those of France, Ireland, Sweden and Germany have said they would be willing to allow some of the prisoners to live in their countries.

President Obama also began making telephone calls to other world leaders. The day after he became

president he called several people who are trying to arrange a peace deal between Israel and Hamas, a Palestinian group. Their 22-day war ended when a ceasefire was called a few days before President Obama took over from President Bush.

On January 22, President Obama announced he had appointed George Mitchell as a special **envoy** to the Middle East. Mr. Mitchell is a former American politician. He helped the British and Irish governments negotiate a peace deal between different militant groups in Northern Ireland in the late 1990s. Many hope he will be able to do a similar thing in the Middle East.

Soon after his appointment, Mr. Mitchell traveled to Cairo, the capital of Egypt, where Israel and Hamas are taking part in peace talks. Mr. Mitchell will also visit other countries in the Middle East.

Recently, many people have worried that a war could break out between Iran and the U.S. Iran is suspected of developing nuclear weapons, although Iranian leaders deny this. Iran says it is only planning to generate electricity from nuclear power and has no intention of making weapons. President Bush insisted if Iran did develop nuclear weapons it would cause many problems in the Middle East and the rest of the world.

President Obama's first television interview was on an Arab television channel based in Dubai on January 26. During the interview he repeated what he had said in his inauguration speech – that America would extend the hand of friendship to Iran if it agreed to "unclench its fist". He also admitted America sometimes makes mistakes. He says it is important for American officials to spend more time listening to what other governments and groups have to say. ■

WOMAN GIVES BIRTH TO OCTUPLETS

On January 26, a woman in the U.S. gave birth to six boys and two girls. A few hours after the birth doctors said the octuplets were all doing well. At first, three of them had suffered minor breathing difficulties.

Doctors at the Kaiser Permanente Medical Center in California were expecting seven babies, and were very surprised when an eighth appeared. A team of 46 medical staff helped with the birth. As the babies were born, one by one, within five minutes of each other, members of the medical team used letters of the alphabet to name them. The first was A, the second B and so on until they reached G. All of them were then amazed by the arrival of an H.



Three of the doctors at the medical center who helped with the birth of the octuplets

The eight babies, who were nine weeks **premature**, were all born by caesarean section. They weighed between 1.5 pounds (820 grams) and 3.25 pounds (1.47 kilograms). The babies' mother is thought to have used a fertility drug to help her become pregnant.

It is very unusual for all the babies in a multiple birth such as this to survive. The earliest record of the birth of octuplets was to a Mexican woman in 1967. Sadly all the babies died within 14 hours of being born. In 1996, a British mother who had been having fertility treatment

became pregnant with eight babies. All were lost prematurely.

The American octuplets were the second set that have been born alive in the U.S. In 1998, a Nigerian-born mother gave birth to eight babies. The smallest one died soon after, but the other seven survived. Recently they all celebrated their tenth birthday. The children's parents said they were praying for both the newly-born octuplets and their parents. They said having so many children at the same time was a blessing.

Another set of eight babies was born in Italy in 2000, but only six of them survived.

Doctors said the new mother should be able to go home within one week. Yet it will be at least two months before the eight babies are allowed to leave. They are expected to be kept in **incubators** for several weeks and to be fed milk through special tubes.

The doctors said that although all the babies appeared well, they were not out of danger. It is possible they could develop problems with breathing or feeding, and even brain damage. The doctors will therefore monitor their health closely. ■

CEASEFIRE IN THE GAZA STRIP

War broke out between Israel and the Palestinian group Hamas at the end of December. On January 17, Israeli officials announced a unilateral ceasefire. This means Israel decided to call a ceasefire without insisting Hamas did the same. The following day Hamas announced it too would call a ceasefire as long as all Israeli troops left the Gaza Strip within seven days.

The war began on December 27, when Israel launched air strikes on

NewsCAST

RING FOUND — A woman in the U.S. had to pay a large sum of money to get her engagement ring back. She was using the bathroom in a restaurant when the ring slipped off her finger and fell down the toilet. City plumbers were called, but they couldn't find the ring in the pipes outside the restaurant. The woman therefore telephoned a company that was able to put a tiny camera down into the pipes. After several hours the camera spotted the ring and it was recovered. The bill for the company and city plumbers was \$6,000. The ring is worth \$7,000.

Hamas' bases in Gaza. Israel said this was because for over two years Hamas has been firing rockets from bases in the Gaza Strip into Israel. Many people criticized Israel for the air attacks on Gaza, saying they were **disproportionate**. Nearly 1,300 Palestinians were killed during the war. Many of them were innocent civilians. 13 Israelis died, including ten soldiers.

Israel has also been criticized for using white phosphorus weapons during the conflict. These weapons are not illegal but are meant for use in open countryside and not crowded city areas. They can cause very bad skin burns. Palestinian doctors say many people were killed or injured by white phosphorus shells fired by Israeli tanks.

The state of Israel was set up in 1948, in what was then known as Palestine. Since then, a number of wars have broken out between Israel and Palestinian groups. Many Palestinians were forced to leave their lands and homes in 1948. Most went to live in either the West Bank or the

Gaza Strip. These two areas are now known as the Palestinian Authority (PA). Over 1.3 million people live in the Gaza Strip.

On January 21, Ehud Olmert, the prime minister of Israel, announced all Israeli troops had withdrawn from the Gaza Strip. Yet he said the crossing points on the Gaza-Israel border would not be fully re-opened yet. This, Mr. Olmert said, would depend on the result of peace talks taking place in Cairo, the capital of Egypt.

United Nations (U.N.) officials in the Gaza Strip estimate the war has made 50,000 Palestinians homeless. There are also as many as 400,000 people without water.

Israel claims weapons are smuggled into Gaza through tunnels. These run under the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. These tunnels, says Israel, must be blocked.



Early on the morning of January 27, both sides broke the ceasefire agreement. A Palestinian bomb explosion and an Israeli helicopter attack were reported within two hours of one another. Israel immediately announced it would close all border crossing points again.

Officials organizing the peace talks in Egypt say they hope they will be able to arrange a lasting truce between Israel and Hamas by early February. Then, they say, they can begin to have discussions about the future of Israel and the PA. ■

EVOLUTION IN ACTION?

by Dr. Carol Ballard

Dung beetles are **scavengers** that feed on other animals' waste. Yet scientists have recently filmed some dung beetles attacking and eating millipedes. This is a dramatic change in their behavior. It shows how animals can evolve in response to changes in their surroundings.

Dung beetles are found nearly everywhere in the world except Antarctica. They live in many different places, and feed on dung from grass-eating animals. There are three types of dung beetle. Each behaves in a different way. Rollers dig a burrow and roll balls of dung to it. Tunnellers dig a tunnel under the dung and pull dung down into it. Dwellers do not make burrows or tunnels, they simply live in the dung itself.

However, scientists working in Peru, in South America, managed to film some dung beetles behaving in a very different way. They used special cameras to film the beetles, which are **nocturnal**. The scientists were amazed to see that, instead of rolling and eating dung, one type of dung beetle, called *Deltochilum valgum*, was killing and eating millipedes many times larger than itself.

The scientists, from a university in the U.S., decided to find out more. They set traps, made from plastic cups, for the beetles. Some traps contained dung, some fruit and fungus, and others millipedes. Healthy, injured and dead millipedes were all used. They found the beetles ignored the dung and just ate the millipedes. They also noticed the beetles preferred injured millipedes to healthy or dead ones.

The scientists collected some of the beetles to study them. They discovered the beetles grabbed and dragged away the millipedes using their mid- and hind-legs. This was surprising as dung beetles usually use their forelegs to push balls of dung. The beetles bit into the millipedes' bodies just behind their heads. The beetles then pushed the heads upwards to chop at the millipedes with their teeth.

Most dung beetles have flat, wide heads that they use to push balls of dung. However, the heads

of these *Deltochilum valgum* beetles are narrower and more pointed. This means they were better suited to getting right inside the millipede's body. Their species' teeth are extra sharp, helping them to chop up their prey.

This is the first time scientists have recorded a species changing from being a scavenger to a **predator**. Previously, dung beetles have been seen pushing and chasing each other in fights over dung balls. Scientists think the change from scavenger to predator has occurred because competition for food has increased. It is particularly interesting because it shows the process of natural selection actually happening.

Natural selection is the name given to a process that, along with several others, brings about evolution. It was first suggested by a British scientist, Charles Darwin, in his book *On the Origin of Species*. The book was published in 1859. Darwin's theory says that in any habitat there is competition. Only individuals best suited to the conditions will survive long enough to reproduce. Their offspring will inherit the characteristics that helped their parents survive. This continues from one generation to the next, until eventually the majority of individuals all have these characteristics. The individuals that best fit their environment have been "naturally selected".

Scientists think this is what has happened with the dung beetles. They believe that beetles with narrow heads could get inside a millipede's body while wide-headed beetles could not. As there is fierce competition for food, narrow-headed beetles have a different food source, while wide-headed beetles have to continue competing for dung.

The narrow-headed beetles produced narrow-headed offspring, which also hunt millipedes. This continued through the generations so there is now a whole population of narrow-headed *Deltochilum valgum* beetles that hunt and attack millipedes. The scientists suggest this change from scavenger to predator shows the process of evolution.



Dung beetle dragging away part of a millipede

ARMY WORMS INVADE LIBERIA

A type of caterpillar is causing problems for farmers in Liberia.

The caterpillars feed on crops and vegetation. A large number of them have invaded many parts of the country and destroyed farmers' crops. The Liberian government has asked the United Nations (U.N.) for help. This is because the caterpillar invasion is likely to cause a severe food shortage.

This type of caterpillar is known as an army worm. It is the caterpillar of a species of African moth. The caterpillar can grow up to two inches (five centimeters) long. The name "army worm" comes from the way in which the worms invade an area in huge numbers, eating all the vegetation and then moving on.



Army worms

The army worms can be found across a very wide area. This is because adult moths migrate over long distances. The female moths lay between 500 and 1,000 eggs at one time.

The problem was first noticed on January 15. Reports said tens of millions of the caterpillars had begun to invade much of Liberia's farmland. Many people are worried because some of these areas are close to Liberia's borders with Sierra Leone, Cote D'Ivoire and Guinea. A Liberian government minister said the caterpillars had already been

seen in Guinea. There is now a danger the worms could spread to the other countries too.

The destruction of crops is not the only problem the army worms cause. The waste they produce has contaminated water systems. Water in many areas in Liberia is now unsafe to drink. A U.N. official said in some parts of the country the insects have even gotten into buildings and people's homes.

The Liberian government says this is the worst plague of army worms for over 30 years. No-one is sure why their numbers have suddenly increased. The affected area is one of the country's most important food-producing regions. It has many large rice farms as well as farms that grow potatoes, beans, cassava, bananas and plantains.

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is the president of Liberia. She said her government had set up a special group of people to control the insects, spraying the worms with a pesticide to kill them. Yet some say the group is too small, and that help from other countries will be needed to stop the spread of the army worms. ■

RESCUE ON THE HUDSON

On January 15, an American airliner made an emergency landing on the River Hudson in New York City, in the U.S. The 155 passengers and crew all survived the crash.

The plane was traveling from New York to Charlotte, in the state of North Carolina. A few minutes after takeoff the plane hit a flock of birds. This is called "bird strike". Bird strikes are quite common. If a bird damages one of a plane's engines, the pilot will make an emergency landing at the nearest airport. However, this

bird strike was unusual as it damaged both the aircraft's engines.

The pilot, Captain Chesley Sullenberger, radioed airport control operators and said he had a problem. They suggested he fly to a nearby airport to make an emergency landing. Captain Sullenberger quickly realized he would not be able to do this as neither of his plane's engines was working. He therefore decided to try to land on the Hudson River.



Passengers on the wings of the ditched aircraft

After telling the passengers to prepare for a crash landing, Captain Sullenberger skillfully brought the plane down on the surface of the water. He also managed to miss a bridge and several boats on the river.

Once the plane came to a halt, the cabin immediately began to fill with icy cold river water. The temperature in New York City on the day of the crash was 20°F (– 7°C). The plane's emergency doors were opened and the passengers and crew climbed out onto the wings. After checking that everyone had left the passenger cabin, Captain Sullenberger was the last person to leave the plane.

Passenger ferries on the river quickly approached and picked up all the passengers. They were taken to landing places where emergency workers were waiting with blankets. Shortly after all the passengers were rescued the plane sank into the shallow water.

It is very rare for a pilot to have to make an emergency landing on

water – called “ditching” – like this. Experts were surprised that the captain managed to land the aircraft safely on the river without the plane breaking up. If it had, many passengers could have lost their lives. Some thought this was the first time a passenger plane has ditched without any loss of life. Many described it as “the miracle on the Hudson”.

The next day, accident investigators raised the plane from the river. It will be taken apart and fully inspected. It took five days to find one of the engines, which had broken off when the plane hit the water. The investigation into exactly what caused both engines to fail is expected to take 12 months.

Captain Sullenberger, aged 57, is an experienced pilot. He has been flying planes for many years and is a former member of the American Air Force. On January 24, Captain Sullenberger returned to his hometown of Danville, in California. Thousands of local people cheered as he was awarded a special medal by town officials. ■

NEWSCAST

ROBOT GUARD — Many offices and factories have alarms that go off if there is a break-in. Yet sometimes the alarm can be set off if a window has been left open or a door isn't shut properly. Two Japanese companies have designed a security robot that can check what has caused an alarm to go off. The robot can be controlled by a mobile phone. A person can tell it to “look around” the building without having to be there. If the robot finds someone it can even fire a net and hold the intruder until security guards or the police arrive.

FIGHTING CONTINUES IN SOMALIA

On January 25, the leaders of Ethiopia announced that, after two years, they had withdrawn all their troops from Somalia. The leaders claim their invasion of Somalia had been a success, but many people disagree.

At the end of 2006, Ethiopian troops invaded Somalia. The Ethiopian leaders said Somalia's government, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), had asked Ethiopia to send tanks, planes and soldiers. They said the TFG asked for help in its fight against an organization called the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC). Ethiopia insisted the UIC was a dangerous militant organization. The UIC was quickly defeated. Yet this did not bring peace to Somalia.

For two years, other militant groups have been fighting both TFG and Ethiopian soldiers. The TFG, with its Ethiopian support, only controlled the two biggest cities, Baidoa and Mogadishu. Hundreds of thousands of people have had to leave their homes to avoid the fighting.

At the end of last year, Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, the president of Somalia and leader of the TFG, resigned. He said he was disappointed he had been unable to bring peace to the country.

The United Nations (U.N.) arranged talks among members of the TFG and the leaders of other militant groups involved in the fighting. The meetings took place in Djibouti.

On January 26, those attending the talks announced they will increase the size of Somalia's parliament by 275 seats. This will allow 200 members of the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS) to join. The ARS is the largest opposition party. The other 75 new seats will go to other

groups that oppose the TFG and its Ethiopian supporters.

The talks included discussions on how the new parliament should elect a president. The leader of ARS, Sheikh Sharif Ahmed – a former member of the UIC – has said he intends to stand for president when the election is held.



On the day of the announcement another militant group, called al-Shabab, attacked Baidoa. This was only a day after Ethiopian soldiers had left the city. Later it was reported that al-Shabab had taken control of Baidoa, including the parliament building and presidential palace in the city.

Many fear the withdrawal of the Ethiopian troops from Somalia will lead to many more months of fighting. Most think it's unlikely a newly-elected president will be able to bring peace to Somalia. ■

TINY LIFESAVER?

A team of Australian scientists has designed a very special “submarine”. Yet it's not meant to go under the sea. The device measures

less than the width of two human hairs. It has been designed to swim around the human blood stream and, the scientists hope, save lives.

Blood travels, or circulates, around the human body in vessels. These are called veins and arteries. One function of blood is to carry oxygen to our muscles and organs. Blood also carries substances the body needs for nourishment, such as fat and minerals.



Artist's impression of the inside of an artery

The body needs a small amount of a substance called cholesterol. Yet if too much cholesterol is in the blood, it can build up and get stuck to the inside walls of the blood vessels. This build up of cholesterol is called plaque. Too much plaque means there is less space inside the blood vessel for blood to flow through.

If a piece of plaque breaks off the wall of the blood vessel, it can block the flow of blood altogether. This stops the blood from carrying oxygen to where it's needed. A heart attack can happen if the flow of blood to the heart is blocked. If the blood flow to the brain is blocked, this is called a stroke.

The tiny device built by the scientists is designed to travel along the inside of blood vessels after it has been injected into the blood stream. The device has a microscopic motor inside. The motor powers a "tail" that is less than 0.04 inches (one millimeter) long. The tail pushes the machine through the blood stream. The scientists

designed the tail by copying the way in which a bacterium called *e.coli* moves.

The scientists now want to test the tiny device to make sure it can travel safely through veins and arteries. They then hope to attach to it a very tiny instrument that can scrape away plaque from the inside of blood vessels. If a person has plaque built up in some of their vessels, this machine could lower his or her risk of a stroke or heart attack.

The scientists also hope to be able to make a camera that could be attached to the tiny submarine. This means they would be able see inside blood vessels as the device swims along them. ■

UNIVERSITY CELEBRATES

One of the world's leading universities has just begun to celebrate its 800th anniversary.

Cambridge University, in Britain, was founded in 1209. On January 17, it held a special outdoor celebration to launch a year of events marking its 800th birthday.

The University was founded by scholars from another English university, Oxford. Nobody is exactly sure why they moved to Cambridge. One record shows it happened when two Oxford scholars were arrested and then convicted of murdering a local woman. Other students protested their arrest by leaving the university and going to other towns. It was a group of these scholars that set up a university in Cambridge.

Originally, only men were allowed to study at Cambridge. From 1869, women were permitted to study there, but they were not awarded degrees – the qualification earned for studying at a university. Women

at Cambridge were first awarded degrees in 1947.

Some of the most important discoveries in history have been made by people studying at Cambridge University. The jet engine was invented there. Scientists at Cambridge discovered the structure of human DNA. More than 80 winners of the Nobel Prize, and 15 of Britain's prime ministers, have been graduates of Cambridge University.

Many students from Cambridge University have become famous for becoming among the best in their fields of work. Quentin Blake, well-known for his illustrations of Roald Dahl's books, was a student at Cambridge. Authors C. S. Lewis, who wrote the Narnia books, and A. A. Milne, who wrote *Winnie-the-Pooh*, also studied at the university.



Senate House, Cambridge University

On January 17, about 7,000 people gathered in the center of Cambridge to watch a light show celebrating the anniversary. Images and illustrations were projected onto one of the famous university buildings, the Senate House. A piece of music containing exactly 800 notes was played from the nearby Great St. Mary's Church.

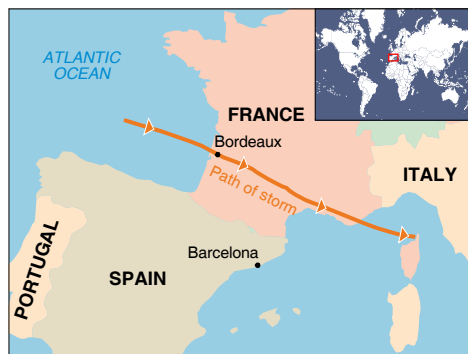
Cambridge is usually ranked among the top five universities in the world for its standard of research and teaching. Today, around 18,000 students study at Cambridge University. The university is planning to

hold many anniversary events during 2009. These include music concerts, sports matches, academic conferences and special exhibitions. ■

STORM HITS FRANCE AND SPAIN

Thousands of people in southwest France and northern Spain were forced to take shelter from a fierce storm that blew in from the Atlantic Ocean on January 24. Experts say it was the worst storm to hit the area in ten years.

In some places, wind speeds reached 110 miles (180 kilometers) per hour. The high winds ripped off roofs, damaged office buildings and factories, blew down hundreds of thousands of trees and knocked down power lines. Many roads and railways were blocked by fallen trees. The storm also caused many rivers to flood.



Nicolas Sarkozy, the president of France, visited the city of Bordeaux, which had been badly affected by the storm. He met people whose homes had been damaged, and spoke with emergency workers.

Both countries sent hundreds of soldiers to help emergency workers mend telephone lines and unblock roads and railways. Officials in France said the electricity network had been badly damaged. Over 650,000 people in France and 50,000

in Spain lost their electricity. In Spain, cables that had blown down started a large forest fire. Specially-trained electricity workers from Germany, Britain and Portugal were called in to help restore power.

When the power was cut off, some people used emergency electricity generators. These machines use gas or diesel to generate power. When running, they produce a gas called carbon monoxide. A person who breathes in the gas can become unconscious and die from carbon monoxide poisoning. If the generators are used in an enclosed area with no **ventilation**, they can be very dangerous. Over ten people died from carbon monoxide poisoning during the storm. French government officials broadcast warnings about the dangers of using electricity generators inside buildings.

In Spain, the storm caused the deaths of four children. They had been playing baseball outside a sports center in a small town near the city of Barcelona. When the storm struck they took shelter in a stand for spectators, but the strong winds damaged the roof and caused one of the concrete walls to collapse.

The mayor of the town announced there would be three days of mourning. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, the prime minister of Spain, sent his **condolences** to the families of the four children.

The damage caused by the storm will be very expensive to repair. Most of the rebuilding work will be paid for by insurance companies. ■

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

Each year, around the end of January, a meeting called the World Economic Forum (WEF) is held in Davos,

a small town in the mountains of Switzerland. This year's WEF meeting began on January 28.

Traditionally the meeting is attended by important people from all over the world. Only those invited can attend. These usually include the bosses of the world's biggest banks and companies, religious leaders and trade unionists, as well as leading musicians, actors, artists and journalists. Some specially-selected politicians are also invited. About 2,500 people attend the WEF each year.



Davos, Switzerland

The first WEF was held in 1971. The Forum's slogan is "committed to improving the state of the world". Many people are pleased to be invited to attend the WEF. Most want to go to the meeting as it's a place where people with different skills can meet, hold informal talks and discuss new ideas. During the Forum there are conferences and presentations. Many of those attending also enjoy the chance to have unofficial discussions with others who have been invited.

This year more politicians attended than usual and there were fewer leading bankers and businessmen. Vladimir Putin, the prime minister of Russia, made the opening speech. Other world leaders that were there included the Chinese premier Wen Jiabao, Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, and British prime minister Gordon Brown. Although Barack Obama, the new

president of the U.S., did not go, several senior American government officials attended.

In the past, the talks have often been about trying to solve world problems such as poverty, pollution, nuclear weapons and climate



change. This year was very different. Nearly all the discussions were about the financial problems currently affecting many of the world's largest banks. These problems are now also having an effect on large and small companies.

Some people blame businesspeople and politicians for many of the world's financial problems. They therefore say it is **ironic** that a group of leading businesspeople and politicians were meeting to try to find solutions to those problems.

The founder of the WEF, Klaus Schwab, said this year's meeting was especially important. He be-

lieves the only way the world's present financial problems can be solved is for all the leaders of wealthier countries to work together. ■

GLOBAL DOWNTURN

Banking problems that first started in the U.S. in 2007, have now spread around the world. Many banks in the U.S., Europe and Asia have had to ask their governments for financial help. This is because they became involved in many complex financial deals that ended up losing most of their value. Without governments providing money to the banks, many would have gone out of business.

These problems have been nicknamed the "credit crunch". One effect of the credit crunch is that many banks are now either unwilling or unable to lend money, or give credit, to companies and businesses. Most companies need credit from banks to help them invest in new equipment, increase the number of products they make and pay the wages of their workers. Some companies have already been forced to close down because they can no longer borrow money from banks.

Ordinary people are also being affected by the banking problems. Many are now being more careful how they spend their money. In many cases this is because they are worried they may lose their jobs and not be able to find new ones.

As people and businesses are spending less money, companies are not selling the same number of items as they normally do. Financial experts say this is causing a "global downturn" that affects companies everywhere. For instance, the number of cars sold by the world's lead-

ing car makers has fallen – for some, by as much as 40%.

When company bosses have to reduce the amount they produce, they often decide to employ fewer people to save money. Therefore, companies make some of their workers redundant. This is now happening in many different countries.



Caterpillar earth-moving vehicle

On January 26, experts calculated a total of 90,000 people lost their jobs with large companies around the world. For example, Caterpillar, a large American company that makes earth-moving equipment, said 20,000 employees would lose their jobs. The Dutch electronics company Phillips fired 6,000 workers. Corus, a steel company based in Britain and The Netherlands and owned by an Indian company, made 3,200 people redundant.

Recently, other large international companies such as Sony and Microsoft have also announced large cuts in their workforces. Many workers in China have also been losing their jobs. This is because people in the U.S. and Europe are no longer buying as many items made in Chinese factories as they once did.

Many governments are now trying to find ways of halting the global downturn. Some have agreed to provide special loans to companies in danger of going out of business or having to fire most of their workers. Some experts believe about 51

NewsCAST

LLAMA ON THE LOOSE — A couple in Canada is asking people to look out for a missing pet. The animal – an almost fully-grown llama – jumped over a high gate and escaped. The llama's owner said he was working outside when he heard a lot of noise coming from a field. He saw a stray dog growling and barking at his horses in the field. He opened the barn door so the animals could run inside – but the llama ran in a different direction and jumped over the gate. The owners hope their llama will find its way home and not be hit by a car or attacked by wild animals.



million jobs will be lost around the world by the end of 2009. They also predict the global downturn is unlikely to come to an end before the middle of 2010. ■

PLAN TO RE-OPEN WATERWAY

Italian engineers have recently announced they plan to begin restoring old canals and waterways in Northern Italy. The project will begin this summer.

Many of these canals were first dug in the 14th century. They linked up with the waterways of the Po and Ticino rivers. When they were finished it was possible to travel by boat from Lake Maggiore, on the border between Italy and Switzerland, to Milan, one of the largest cities in Italy – and then on to Venice on the Adriatic Sea.



The first part of the restoration project will clear five miles (eight kilometers) of an old canal at the southern end of Lake Maggiore. Later the rest of the 87.5 mile (140 kilometer) system of canals going all the way to Milan will be restored. The new system will eventually be linked up with the River Po as it was in the past.

Originally, the canals and waterways were used for irrigation. They were then expanded so huge blocks of stone and marble could be transported from the moun-

tains to build the Duomo – Milan's Gothic cathedral.

Building work on the cathedral began in 1386. The stone and marble blocks were loaded onto flat floating barges. These were pulled by horses that walked along the side of the canal. Each trip took about two weeks. The barges also carried other things such as wood, livestock, hay and cheese to Milan. On the return trip the barges were loaded with salt, grain and wine as well as handmade goods such as fabrics and tableware.

The designs for the canals that would link Milan to the sea were created by Leonardo Da Vinci (1452 –1519). He was a mathematician, engineer, and inventor, although he is probably best known as an artist. Da Vinci painted the *Mona Lisa*, one of the world's most famous paintings.

William Shakespeare (1564 –1616), a famous English playwright, set some of his plays in the city of Milan. In two plays – *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *The Tempest* – there are lines that say Milan was a port city. Many people think Shakespeare must have made a mistake as Milan is nowhere near the sea. The restoration of the canals shows he was right – Milan was a port city in the time at which the plays were written.

The canals and waterways were last used in the 1930s. By that time most goods were being transported by road and rail. Many of the canals were blocked or used for irrigation.

The project to restore the canals and waterways is expected to cost one billion euros (\$1,240 million). Officials hope when the work is finished tourists will pay to travel the 300 miles (500 kilometers) by canal boat from Venice to Switzerland. ■

GREENHOUSE GAS SATELLITE LAUNCHED

Japan has launched a satellite that will be able to check how much carbon dioxide and methane are in the Earth's atmosphere.

Most scientists believe these two gasses are causing the Earth's climate to change. Both are produced by human activity. Carbon dioxide comes from buildings, vehicles, ships and aircraft that use fossil fuels – oil, gas and coal. Some types of farming create methane. It is produced by animals and by the farming of some crops, such as rice.



Launch of the Ibuki satellite

Carbon dioxide and methane are known as greenhouse gasses. This is because many scientists believe the increase of these gasses in the atmosphere is causing world temperatures to rise. Most scientists agree that reducing the amounts of carbon dioxide and methane produced by human activity should help slow the rise in world temperatures.

The satellite, which was launched on January 23, has been named Ibuki. This means "breath" or "vi-tality" in Japanese. The satellite will orbit the Earth every one hour and 40 minutes at a height of 415 miles (666 kilometers).

At present, the amount of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere is measured by stations on land. There are almost 300 land stations. The gasses can also be recorded

by instruments in aircraft. Yet both of these methods can only measure gasses at quite low levels in the atmosphere.

The new satellite will be able to record the levels of methane and carbon dioxide much higher up. The scientists who designed the satellite say it will be able to take measurements at 56,000 places. This means it will give a far more accurate overall measurement of the amount of these two gasses in the atmosphere.

Scientists know about 50% of the carbon dioxide produced stays in the atmosphere. The remainder is absorbed by plants and the oceans. The areas that absorb carbon dioxide are known as carbon “sinks”. Scientists have calculated that the amount of carbon dioxide humans produce adds up to more than what’s in the atmosphere and absorbed by the carbon sinks. They don’t know where

the extra carbon dioxide is going. Some think there must be another carbon sink somewhere that hasn’t been discovered yet. Scientists hope the Japanese satellite will be able to find this “missing sink”.

The U.S. plans to launch a similar satellite in February. This will observe carbon dioxide and methane levels in the atmosphere too. The American scientists say their satellite will also be able to map exactly where the gasses are coming from. This means it will show which countries are producing the largest amounts of carbon dioxide and methane. ▣

PLAN TO PROTECT FROGS

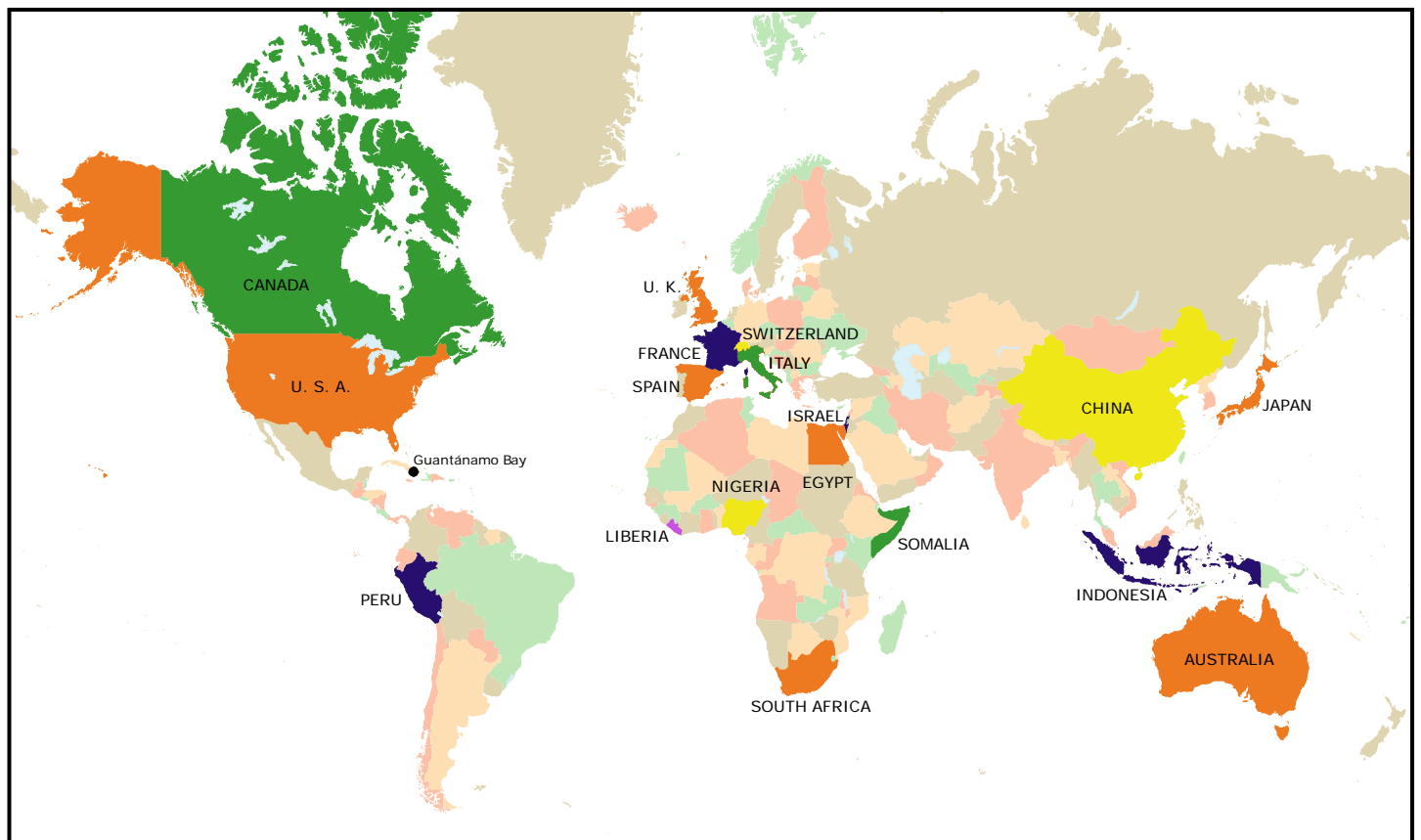
Ecologists say some frog species could be under threat because so many of them are eaten by humans.

There are more than 4,700 species of frog in the world. Some types of these amphibians are caught or bred for humans to eat. Traditionally, cooked frogs’ legs are a delicacy in France. They are also eaten in the Caribbean and in other countries, including China and the U.S. The world’s largest exporter of frogs’ legs for people to eat is Indonesia. It exports more than 5,000 tons of frog meat each year.



Uncooked frogs legs

A recent study says eating frogs’ legs has become more popular. The



This map shows countries to which news stories refer in this issue. Visit www.newsademic.com for more detailed world maps.

NewsCAST

UNUSUAL ARREST — Police in Nigeria are holding an unusual suspect for a robbery. A group of men took the suspect to the police, saying they saw him and another man trying to steal a car. The other man ran away, but the witnesses say they caught the suspect – after he used magic to turn himself into a black-and-white goat. They therefore decided to take the goat to the police. The police have agreed to hold the goat for a while but say there is no evidence that it is actually a man.

study looked at the international trade in frogs' legs over the last 20 years. It has increased steadily. Now the ecologists who wrote the study say a plan must be made to check how many frogs are captured from the wild for human food.

Ecologists estimate between 200 million and one billion frogs are sold for humans to eat each year. One of the study's authors says amphibians are already among the world's most threatened animal groups. This is because of the loss of their habitat, climate change, and disease. Now, say ecologists, the rising sales of frogs' legs for food could threaten frog species even more.

Frogs play an important part in keeping ecosystems stable. A large part of many frogs' diets is insects. If there are fewer frogs, the populations of insects can grow. Some insects can ruin farm crops. Others, such as mosquitoes, can spread illnesses to humans.

The ecologists say this problem doesn't mean people have to stop eating frogs' legs. Instead it suggested that catching frogs for humans to eat should be controlled in a similar

way to fishing. Fishing companies are only allowed to catch a certain number of fish. This is to prevent "overfishing" where not enough fish are left in the ocean to breed. If this happens, fish numbers drop dramatically. It can then be many years before their population increases so it is safe to catch them again. ■

AUSTRALIA DAY

In Australia, the country's national day is known as "Australia Day". It is held every year on January 26. Australia Day was first celebrated in 1818. Since 1994, it has also been a public holiday.

Australia Day celebrates the day on which the first British ships arrived in Australia in 1788. The ships had been sent by the British government to start a new colony.



Professor Mick Dodson

On each Australia Day since 1960 the prime minister has announced the winner of the Australian of the Year award. This award is given to Australians who have inspired others through their hard work or actions. In the past it has been awarded to a leading scientist, a doctor who specializes in children's illnesses, and an Olympic athlete.

2009's Australian of the Year is Professor Mick Dodson. He is a lawyer and was one of the authors of a report called "Bringing Them Home". This report, written in 1997, was about a long period in Australian history during which the government forced Indigenous Australian children to leave their parents and homes and live in residential schools.



Prime Minister Rudd (center) awards a Citizen-ship Certificate on Australia Day

The children were not allowed to speak their own languages. Many never saw their parents again. These children became known as the "Stolen Generations". The Bringing Them Home report suggested the Australian government should make an official apology to the Stolen Generations and pay compensation to those still alive. The Australian prime minister at the time decided not to apologize.

Kevin Rudd was elected as Australia's prime minister in 2007. On February 13, 2008, he made an official government apology to Indigenous people for what had happened in the past. Yet he did not talk about compensation.

Many people protest that Australia Day celebrates the arrival of the British. This, they say, was really an invasion of Indigenous Australians' land. It was also the start of European people taking over the best farm land and the beginning of many great cruelties inflicted on the local people.

Professor Dodson said he wasn't sure if he should accept the Australian of the Year award. He agrees Australia Day should be held on a different date. Some have suggested February 13 – the anniversary of the day Prime Minister Rudd made his official apology.

Australia Day is celebrated with music concerts, fireworks, and an international cricket match. A more recent event is Australia Day Dawn. The first was held in 2005, at Uluru, a sacred site formally called Ayers Rock. Groups of Australians gather to think about what it means to be Australian. This year at the Dawn event, officials encouraged Australians to learn more about the country's different cultures.

In Canberra, Australia's capital, a citizenship ceremony took place. People who have emigrated to Australia and want to become citizens make a citizenship pledge and receive a certificate. Around 13,000 people became new Australian citizens on Australia Day this year. Those who attended the ceremony in Canberra were given their Citizenship Certificate by the prime minister. ■

SADC SPECIAL MEETING ON ZIMBABWE

The South African Development Community (SADC) is a group of 15 countries in southern Africa. On January 27, a special meeting of SADC members was held in Pretoria, the capital of South Africa. The meeting was called to try to find a political solution to the problems of one of its member countries, Zimbabwe. The SADC meeting lasted all night.

Zimbabwe has many problems. Most of its people have no job and many do not have enough to eat.

There are few medical supplies and the country's economy has collapsed. Its currency – the Zimbabwe dollar – has become worthless.



Robert Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai

Two months ago cholera broke out in the country. Cholera is a disease caused by a type of bacteria. People who get the disease suffer from very bad diarrhoea. This means they become **dehydrated** very quickly. The illness can be cured by special medicines. However, if people are not treated quickly they can die of cholera. United Nations (U.N.) officials believe nearly 3,000 people have died from cholera in Zimbabwe, and another 56,000 have been infected.

Most people think the problems in Zimbabwe are the fault of its president, Robert Mugabe. Mr. Mugabe is the leader of the political party called ZANU-PF. He has run the country for 29 years. Mr. Mugabe was re-elected as president last year, but many people suspected he cheated in the election. They claim the real winner was Morgan Tsvangirai, the leader of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The MDC is the main opposition party in Zimbabwe.

The election result caused even more problems. Eventually, the former president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, persuaded President Mugabe and Mr. Tsvangirai to agree to share out important government positions between ZANU-PF and the MDC. Mr. Mugabe would

stay on as president and Mr. Tsvangirai would become prime minister. Yet this agreement has never worked. Now many think the only way to help Zimbabwe's people is if President Mugabe and his senior ZANU-PF supporters are made to leave.

Galema Motlanthe is the president of South Africa, and current leader of SADC. After the SADC meeting ended he said officials from ZANU-PF and the MDC had agreed to form a unity government. Yet confusingly, soon after this MDC officials announced they had to speak with their supporters before any agreement could be made.

Many people were disappointed with the result of the meeting. They have started to blame SADC leaders for many problems in Zimbabwe. This, they say, is because the leaders did not force Mr. Mugabe to stand down a long time ago.

MEMBERS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC)

Angola	Mozambique
Botswana	Namibia
Democratic Republic of Congo	Seychelles
Lesotho	South Africa
Madagascar	Swaziland
Malawi	Tanzania
Mauritius	Zambia
	Zimbabwe

TRADE WARS

One way for governments to make money is to charge other countries a tax, or tariff, to import their goods. This charge is sometimes called an import tax. The import tax amount is added to the price of goods. This

NewsCAST

FIRE SHIP FESTIVAL — A festival was held on one of the Shetland Islands, part of Britain, on January 27. Known as Up Helly Aa, it celebrates the island's Viking history. People dress in Viking clothes and helmets and carry reproductions of Viking weapons. The highlight of the festival is a procession in which people carry flaming torches. They pull a replica, or copy, of a wooden Viking ship through the streets. At the end of the procession, the flaming torches are thrown into the ship and it is burned. This year there was a fireworks display while people sang a song as the ship blazed.

makes imported things more expensive for people to buy.

Sometimes, tariffs are designed to encourage people to buy products made in their own countries. Local products will be cheaper if there is a large tariff on similar imported ones.

Some products are only made in certain countries. If people in other countries want to buy them, they have to be imported. This is true of a French cheese called Roquefort.



Roquefort cheese

Roquefort cheese is made from sheep's milk. It takes about 8 pints (4.5 liters) of milk to produce 2.2

pounds (one kilogram) of Roquefort cheese. Once made, a mold is added to the cheese. This is called "aging". The mold is produced in a laboratory, but at one time it was only found in natural caves in Roquefort, an area in the south of France.

There are many other similar types of cheese, but only cheese aged using the special local mold can be called Roquefort. This type of cheese is very popular, so many countries import it from France, which is a member of the European Union (EU).

In 1989, the EU banned the import of beef from the U.S. This was because beef cows in the U.S. are treated with a special hormone. EU health officials think the hormone might make the American beef unsafe to eat. Therefore, for 20 years American beef has not been sold in EU member countries. The U.S. has always said the ban is unfair. It claims the beef is safe to eat and the ban is really meant to make people buy beef produced in the EU.

In 1999, the U.S. put 100% tariffs on many foods imported from EU member countries. These included fruit juices, jam, and certain types of meat. Many people think this was in retaliation against the EU's beef ban.

On January 15, the American government announced it would further increase the tax on some European foods. The biggest rise will be on Roquefort cheese. Its price will increase by 300%.

The French minister in charge of agriculture described the 300% tariff as a "supertax". He says he hopes the new American president, Barack Obama, will cancel it. However, another French politician has suggested the EU should put a similar supertax on the American-imported product Coca-Cola. This, he says,

would show the U.S. that France is very angry about the increased import tax on Roquefort cheese.

When countries tax each others' goods in this way it's often called a "trade war". If a group of countries cancel all tariffs on goods bought and sold among them, it is known as "free trade". ■

SHEARWATER MIGRATION

A group of 12 seabirds has been successfully tracked on its winter vacation. The trip covered over 12,500 miles (20,000 kilometers).

The Manx Shearwater is a seabird that lives mostly in large groups or colonies around the coasts of Britain and Ireland. It is a black-and-white bird with a wingspan of up to 3 feet (90 centimeters). In the warmer summer months, it nests and lays eggs in underground burrows. Yet when winter arrives in the northern hemisphere, the Manx Shearwater migrates to the southern hemisphere where the weather is warmer.



Migration route of the Manx Shearwater

Now, scientists from Britain have tracked the Shearwater's journey from the North Atlantic Ocean to Argentina in South America.

A small electronic device called a geolocator was attached to the leg of each of the 12 birds. This could tell the scientists where the birds were and when they landed on salt

water. The scientists already knew the area to which the birds travel. Yet the geolocators showed the birds also made stops on their journey south – sometimes for up to two weeks.



Manx Shearwater

The scientists say the birds must be stopping to feed and get strong enough to continue the whole journey. If the birds were to make the trip without stopping, they would have to build up very large fat reserves before they began.

This extra fat would provide enough food for their bodies. Yet it would also mean the birds were setting off on the long journey weighing much more than normal – which would slow them down and make it harder to fly the long distance. The two-week feeding stops on the way mean the birds don't have to build up so much fat at the start of their long journey.

The Manx Shearwater's annual journey isn't the longest migration ever measured. The Sooty Shearwater, a relative of the Manx Shearwater, lives in New Zealand. It has been tracked on a round-trip migration of over 25,000 miles (40,000 kilometers). Most scientists believe another seabird, the Arctic Tern, travels even further. However, the Arctic Tern is too small to fit with an electronic device, so its migration cannot be accurately measured. ■

CHINESE NEW YEAR

Millions of people around the world celebrated the start of Chinese New Year on January 26. The Chinese calendar runs in 12-year cycles. Each year is associated with an animal. Last year was the "Year of the Rat". The New Year is the "Year of the Ox".

In China, New Year is known as Lunar New Year because it is based on the lunar calendar – the cycle of the Moon. The full Lunar New Year festival lasts 15 days. Different ceremonies are held on each day, ending with the Lantern Festival on the 15th day.



Migrant workers line-up outside railway station

Over the last 25 years, thousands of factories and office buildings have been built around China's larger cities. Millions of people have left the countryside to find work in the factories where they can earn much more money than they can at home.

These people are known as migrant workers. Many factory owners in China have built large blocks, or dormitories, in which most of the migrant workers can live. For many migrant workers, the Lunar New Year is the one time they leave the cities and visit their families in the country.

Most migrant workers travel home by train or bus. It's estimated around 232 million migrant workers plan to leave the cities at Chinese New Year to visit their families.

However, although rail officials stop all **freight** trains so more passenger trains can travel, there are not enough spaces for everyone.

It can be difficult for people to buy tickets to get home. They complain the tickets are often all sold out before the New Year holiday starts. Long queues form at railway stations before New Year. It is not unusual to have to line-up for two days to get tickets.

Many people complain the problems are caused because some railway workers and local officials are dishonest. These people, they say, buy many tickets in advance, and then use others to sell them at higher prices to factory workers that need them. This year the police have arrested over 2,000 people for illegally selling train tickets.

The annual Lunar New Year holiday in China is the largest movement of people all at one time in the world. During the New Year holiday, senior Chinese leaders travel around the country. Hu Jintao, the president of China, visited several small towns. Wen Jiabao, the prime minister, made a trip to Sichuan province – the area hit by a powerful earthquake eight months ago.

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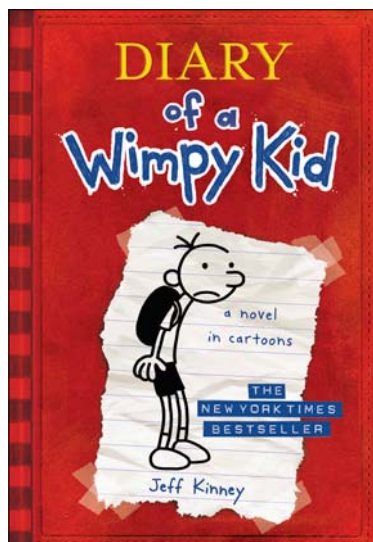
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B O O K R E V I E W

HAVE YOU READ ...?



This is a journal, not a diary – as its angst-filled author points out. Greg Heffley just started middle school...and is miserable. His journal covers one school year, from September to June.

Middle school is harder than primary school – you get picked on by teenagers and girls only talk to the most popular boys. Greg has to sit between two annoying “dorks”, and the girls don’t notice him.

Greg has many clever schemes: singing in auditions for a school play, trying out for school cartoonist, and trying to join the Safety Patrol (because nobody’s supposed to pick on them – instant protection from bullies). Not all of these work out, but Greg still wants to show up others as fools, and himself as a genius! Greg’s a great artist, writer, inventor – and he doesn’t smoke. He gives himself credit for being superior to others at school. This is the heart of the fun here. Many of his plans don’t work out, but he thinks he’s cleverer than just about everyone else, including some of his teachers!

Some of my favorite parts of the book deal with Greg’s unusual behavior and wild schemes. We find out why Greg wanted a Barbie Dream House for Christmas, and what his parents thought of that request. We also read what happens when Greg must build a robot for his Independent Study assignment, and when he makes a haunted house to make money from other kids.

Greg also describes his many letdowns in life. How about having to take your little brother with you and your friends when you go trick-or-treating on Halloween? What if you wanted a new game system for Christmas, but your mother accidentally gave it to someone else and gave you a giant red wool sweater instead? What about failing a geography quiz – all 50 states of the U.S. and their capital cities – because you didn’t study and the teacher covered up the map on the wall at the last moment?

Much of the book deals with the on-and-off friendship between Greg and his best friend Rowley. Rowley is popular and clever, but not as clever or as skilled as Greg. My favorite bit is when Rowley rides his Big Wheel vehicle down a snowy street, and Greg throws a football at him to try to knock him off. It shows just how reckless and goofy these two friends in the story can get.

Author Jeff Kinney is also an online game developer and designer. In some ways, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* is a cross between a storybook and a graphic novel. It’s all “handwritten” in Greg’s writing – and Greg got a “D” in handwriting! There are many simple illustrations. The grammar isn’t totally correct, but this is supposed to be the writing of a 12-year-old quickly recording all the ups and downs – and there are many “downs” – in his day-to-day school life. It’s easy to have fun reading the book – because it feels as if Jeff Kinney had fun creating the character of Greg and designing his journal.

I think you’d especially like this book if you’re aged – 11 to 15. Two sequels follow: *Rodrick Rules*, and *The Last Straw*. There’s also a *Diary of a Wimpy Kid Do-It-Yourself Book*, which has cartoons and notes from Greg as well as blank spaces for you to write your own journal.

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: a novel in cartoons by Jeff Kinney. Abrams Books

Reviewed by **Craig Purdon**

WANT US TO REVIEW A BOOK THAT YOU HAVE READ AND ENJOYED?

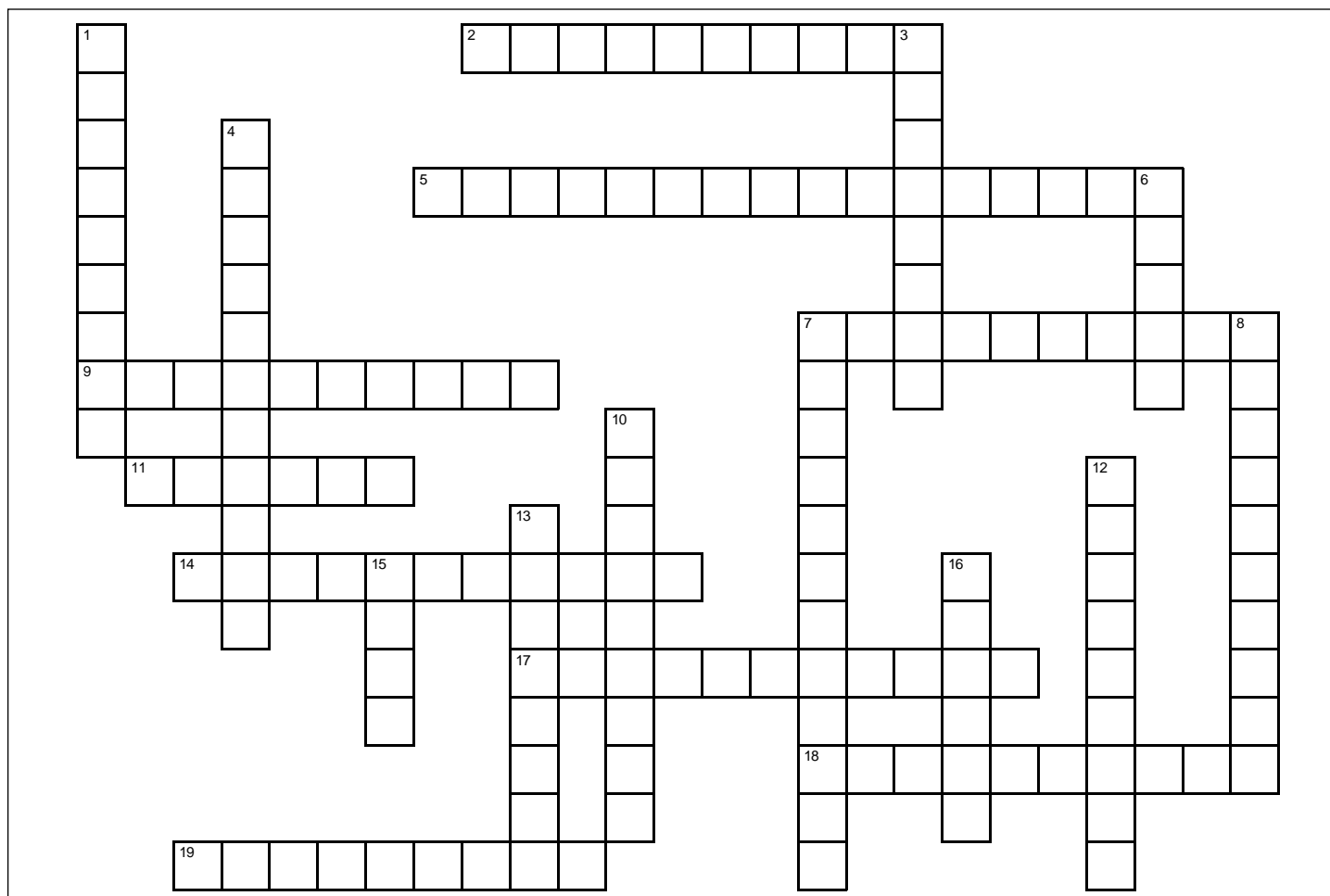
If you do, look for the “recommended book” link in your subscriber menu when you log in to our website.

Complete the form and tell us why you enjoyed the book. If we review your choice, we’ll mention your name and include some of your comments.

GLOSSARY

PRIZE COMPETITION

INSTRUCTIONS: ① Complete the crossword. The answers are highlighted in orange in the news stories. There are 25 words highlighted and you need 20 of them to complete the crossword. ② Once you have solved the crossword find the 20 words in the word search on the next page ➡



Across

- 2 Adjective** Describes suffering from excessive loss of water from the body (10)
- 5 Adjective** Too large or too small when compared with something else (16)
- 7 Noun (Plural)** Cribs for weak or premature babies, in which the temperature and air can be controlled to keep the babies healthy (10)
- 9 Noun (Plural)** People who study the relationships between living organisms and their environments (10)
- 11 Adjective** Describes a building style common in Europe between the 12th and the 16th centuries (6)
- 14 Noun (Plural)** Expressions of sympathy and sadness for the family or close friends of a person who has recently died (11)
- 17 Noun** Revenge or reprisal (11)
- 18 Adjective** Originating in a particular country (10)
- 19 Adjective** Happening too soon, especially before the natural or wanted time (9)

Down

- 1 Verb** Forced someone to experience something very unpleasant (9)
- 3 Noun** Something delicious to eat (8)
- 4 Noun** Method of supplying fresh air (11)
- 6 Noun** An official representative, especially one sent by a government to another (5)
- 7 Noun** An official ceremony to mark the beginning of a new period (12)
- 8 Noun (Plural)** Animals or insects that eat decaying organic matter, including dead animals that have already been killed (10)
- 10 Noun** A state of being held or confined as a punishment (9)
- 12 Adjective** Describes something related to or happening at night (9)
- 13 Noun** A person who enters a place without permission in order to commit a crime (8)
- 15 Noun** A promise, especially that you will tell the truth in a law court (4)
- 16 Adjective** Describes something that happens in the opposite way from that which is expected or suggested (6)

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