

# The Parrot

Your ARC newsletter by and for ESL, multicultural, international students, new Californians, and, well, anybody really...

Issue # 121

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## Indoors and Outdoors with Professor Rick Topinka

**The Parrot:**

Good morning, Professor, I am Betul Yousif from The Parrot and we would like to ask you few questions.

**Prof. Topinka:**

Good morning, yes, sure.

**The Parrot:**

A colleague said that you are "an avid outdoor enthusiast and adventurer, which fuels (a)



backpacking, rock climbing, and

love of biology." Could you give us an idea of what he meant?

**Prof. Topinka:**

I have always been somebody who likes doing outdoor activities. I've always been into things like

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### African-Am. History Quiz!

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### Adjunct Woes 😞

pg. 14



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## Ex-ARC French Prof. Not Just Hanging Around

Each year since I began climbing eight years ago, my son, Alex Honnold, has led me up something spectacular for my September birthday. Snake Dike. Cathedral. Matthes. Tenaya. Conness. All classics, each



Deirdre Wolownick enjoying the view high above Yosemite Valley

one unforgettable. Each one has pushed me beyond where I thought my fear limits lay, and far beyond where I thought I could go physically. Last year, after we touched

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## Student Chirpings

### Why I Decided to Learn English

Two years ago, I went to Poland. When I arrived in Poland, I wanted to get to my hotel. I found a bus stop, but I did not know how to pay for the bus. I went to the place where they sold tickets and asked if they spoke Russian. Then the elderly woman who sold the tickets told me that she spoke Polish and English. I was very surprised that many people in Poland spoke English. At the time, I did not speak or understand English at all. Not surprisingly, I decided to learn English after this situation, and here are three main reasons why!

The first reason why I decided to learn English is to communicate with people. When I came to America, I understood that I needed to communicate with people. But not only in America can you communicate with people in English. For example, I travel a lot to other countries. When I was in Italy, I also thought that people spoke only Italian. There I met a lot of interesting people who spoke English as a second language. I realized that if I knew English, it would have been much easier to communicate with my new friends. In short, in our time, many people know English as a second language, and it is much easier to communicate with people if you also know English.

The second reason why I decided to learn English is to complete my studies. You must get an education if you want to have a good or interesting job. For example, when I lived in my native country, I was studying to be a doctor. While I was studying, I met my future husband, who lived in America. So, I

realized that I would need to live and work in America. When we got married and left for America, I said that I wanted to continue studying to be a doctor. But for this, I needed to know English. I think that it is very important to learn English because I know many people in other countries who need to know English in order to finish their studies.



The third reason why I decided to learn English is to find a good and interesting job. Would you like to have a good or interesting job? When I came to America, I told my husband that I wanted to go to work. When we started looking, I saw that you need to know English if you want to have a good job. But it is also not just in America. For example, when my sister was looking for work in my native country, everywhere people asked her if she spoke or knew English. English is very important in many professions in our time. For example, if you work with tourists or with

some computer programs, you need to know English. In short, I think it is much easier to find a good job if you know English.

In conclusion, many people want to know English but don't know why they need it. To communicate with people, to complete my studies, and to find a good job are three main reasons why I decided to learn English. In my opinion, everyone should know English because it is the world language. We never know where and what we will do in the future. Think about it and try to find your reasons to start learning English.

*Ekaterina Malyy*  
ESLW310

## Alien to Your Own Child

Many immigrants are worried that their children won't adapt to a new country. However, after a couple of months, they understand that children accept changes faster than adults. They absorb new information like a sponge, and in one day you understand that you and your child literally and figuratively speak different languages. It is the biggest fear for me. I'm afraid that I will not readily understand my son and he will not understand me. I like the US very much, but Ukraine will always be a part of me. My background makes me who I am. All Ukrainian history, all victories, and all defeats are part of me. I want my son to understand that he is part of that context too. Even if he is growing up in the United States, he is Ukrainian. He has to respect and understand American culture and be part of this culture, but he must never forget that he is Ukrainian. That is why I do all I can to give him a chance to know and love Ukrainian culture and language. In my opinion, there are three main solutions to the problem of children's rejection of parents' culture: learn the parents' language, know the parents' culture and traditions, and visit the home country.

The first solution to the problem of children's rejection of parents' culture is learning the family language. The language problem is very painful for Ukrainians. Because Ukrainians live close to a big, aggressive Russian neighbor, we had to fight for our right to speak our language throughout all our his-



tory. When Ukraine was part of the Russian Empire in the 19th century, there was a law that prohibited publishing Ukrainian books. Then, in the Soviet Union, they gave people a right to speak Ukrainian

de jure, but, de facto, all higher education, all main positions in the government (even local), and all mass-media was in the Russian language. That is why when Ukraine became independent, the language was one of the first priorities. For this reason, the young generation of Ukrainians insist on and value their right to speak their native language, and most of our children don't know Russian; they learn it as a second or even third language. Obviously, here, in the US, our children should learn English, but not forget Ukrainian. In my family, we speak Ukrainian at home. I also encourage my son to watch Ukrainian cartoons. I read him Ukrainian books and sing Ukrainian songs when he goes to sleep. I clearly understand that he will speak English as his first language very soon, and this is right and good, but I will do everything to push him to know and love Ukrainian. Accordingly, in the future, he will attend Ukrainian language lessons at least twice a week.

The second solution to the problem of children's rejection of their parents' culture is to tell children about their native culture. A person's cultural background is a thing that has an influence on her entire life. First of all, a child should know her traditions even if she doesn't understand these traditions completely. You often do something unconsciously because you



are a part of this culture. I remember that in my childhood, my grandmother always told me, “You should never throw bread away! Not even a piece, not even a crumb! Never!” Consequently, I never did that. Then, after a long time, I asked her why we shouldn’t do that, and she said that bread is sacred for us. In the past, if there had been a bad harvest and there wasn’t flour to bake bread, people died. Now, we don’t remember that, but most Ukrainians never throw bread away. We kiss bread at our weddings. We bring bread to a new home as a gift even if we know for sure that ten other people will bring bread too. Now, we do all this stuff not because bread is important for survival, but because it is a part of our

culture. That is why I will tell this to my son. I know that we can buy everything here. We are no longer dependent on the harvest, but he should know – we never throw bread away. Secondly, we should tell children that

our native country has people and achievements to be proud of. Ukraine, for example, has great writers, artists and scientists. Ukraine has thousands of years of history. It is an ancient culture and we should be proud of it. We need to tell our children about that, and, maybe, they will want to be part of it. Here, in the US, the Ukrainian diaspora has many events which popularize Ukrainian culture among immigrants. There are fairs, concerts, meetings, and so on. We just need to attend these events and bring our children with us.

The third solution to the problem of children’s rejection of parents’ culture is visits to the native country. The best way to learn something is real

experience. Parents can speak about their country hours and days, but children won’t understand that until they see that. They have to see this country, talk with people, feel this culture. In that case, they won’t reject this culture because they will be part of it. For example, my son will go to Ukraine this summer. We have already bought tickets. He is very excited about it. In the future, we plan to give him a chance to visit Ukraine very often, so he will learn the language and culture there. I am sure that it will be useful and interesting for him.

In conclusion, the best ways to teach your children to love their native culture and language are for them to learn the language, to know the culture,

and to visit their native country. Clearly, children in immigrant families should learn the new culture and adapt to new circumstances, too. However, if they know both

cultures, it will help them in their lives. It can also help parents and children understand each other better.



*Viktoria Gunenko*  
ESL W50



## What's FNU?

In most parts of Afghanistan we call men or women by their first name. We don't call someone by his last name even if we know his last name. It's become our habit, and we are accustomed to it. Also, computerized passports were issued in our country only about two years ago. Unlike computerized passports, old handwritten passports didn't have a column for the last name. While we were traveling to the USA, we had the old handwritten passport which didn't have our last name. Although I had FNU (first name unknown) on my visa, I didn't care because I didn't know the meaning. I noticed a little when I received my Green Card and driver's license with FNU on it.



I scheduled a doctor's appointment for myself, my wife, and my son. It was hard for me to understand when I received a call from the doctor's office for an appointment reminder. The call stated that "FNU" had an appointment tomorrow. Because of three FNUs in our household, it was confusing

to figure out which FNU had the appointment. We weren't the only FNUs either! Some other FNUs also lived there. One day I took my wife to the doctor for her regular appointment. There were two windows, and lots of people were waiting in the lobby for their name to be called. The door opened, and a nurse called, "FNU"! Suddenly, my wife stood up and moved toward the door. At the same time another couple moved to the door, too. The nurse exclaimed, "Oh, my God!" She asked for the last name, and told my wife to wait for her turn.

From that day, I started thinking to do something about it. I was new, so I asked my friend for help. He guided me how to change the names, so I waited for the whole name change process to finish. Finally, I received an official name change letter from court, and our names were changed.

*Rahim Karimy  
ESL R310*

## Limit The Number Of Students

How and where to get knowledge? School, college, and university are places where everyone can learn. There we expect to be well-trained in some skill because the future depends on the quality of our education. I am sure that a quality education depends on our wish to learn, on the skill of the teacher, and on the situation in the classroom. Now I especially want to pay attention to the crowded classes. Why do teachers allow classes to be crowded? Of course, they permit it because they feel sorry for the students who are placed on a waiting list. I agree it is a pity. I was also on a waiting list and I know it is very stressful. On the other hand, who will pity other enrolled students? They want to have maximum attention and help from the teacher. However, it is impossible if the class is crowded with students! I strongly believe that classes at ARC

should be limited to twenty five students per class! There are three compelling reasons why classes at ARC should be limited to twenty five students per class.

The first reason why classes at ARC should be limited to twenty five students per class is because it affects the teacher's attention. We students are all different. We have different characters, levels of knowledge, and ability. However, we hope that the teacher will find the right approach for each of us. I believe that every student who is interested in learning agrees with me. How will they do this if they can not even remember our names? At school I had such a teacher who finally remembered our names but only at the end of the semester. In crowded classes, teachers have to check a lot of homework. It takes a lot of time and energy. These



teachers are tired and sleepy. They don't have the energy to make the lesson more interesting or answer students' additional questions. They just want to finish class faster. I'm sure that many teachers recognize themselves in these words. My friend had a similar teacher at American River College. She came into class and started to write some things on the board. My friend said that it looked as if the teacher were talking to herself. Some students slept in her class; others fell asleep. She also never answered students' additional questions. After class, she immediately went home. I believe that this kind of teacher wastes students' time! I certainly believe that the teachers should teach smaller classes to give their knowledge and wisdom to their students.

The next reason why classes at ARC should be limited to twenty five students per class is the class atmosphere will be better. I believe that the atmosphere in the class influences the progress of students. For example, when my class is too crowded, I don't want to participate in class. It is difficult for me to speak loud or interrupt someone. I think that many shy students will agree with me, especially if the class has chatterboxes. I very well remember one of my ESLR classes at ARC. My class was very big, noisy, and terrible. Only a few students were able to participate in class: they were loud and chatty. Other students just sat and got angry. Chatty students gave the teacher many stupid questions and while the teacher answered, the lesson ended. Finally, we left the class and had learned nothing. It is not right! If our class were smaller, it would have been easier to control such students. In addition, if class isn't crowded, it is much easier to make friends with everyone in class. Students can influence and help each other. For example, when I was studying to be a hairdresser, I had a class of twenty people. I loved that class. We helped each



other. We helped classmates who got bad grades to improve their grades. We were like family. I think no one would argue with me that a small class or group creates a good atmosphere for studying.

The last reason why classes at ARC should be limited to twenty five students per class is the size affects the quality of learning. Many students learn better if the class is small. When the class is small, every student is visible. You can not hide in the crowd of students. You have to participate in class discussion. Students are better prepared with

their homework because in a small class there is more probability that the teacher will ask students some questions. I remember that in my high school everyone did homework because my mathematics teacher asked everyone. We could not think that if she asked us yesterday she would not ask us today. She re-

quired us to participate in every class. Our class was small and she could devote time to each student. We were afraid to come into the classroom without homework. I believe that it gave us good results in mathematics.

In conclusion, I want to repeat that classes at ARC should be limited to twenty-five students per class! Crowded classes are a big problem for students who want to learn something. They don't want to waste time sitting in a big class. They want the teacher to be attentive to them and well prepared for the lesson. Of course, the atmosphere in class should be friendly, respectful, and quiet. Finally, in a small class, students are better prepared and focused on the lesson. The teachers' attention, class atmosphere, and quality of learning are three reasons why classes at ARC should be limited to twenty- five students per class!

*Anaida Aleksanyan*  
ESL W50

## My Alaskan Salmon Factory

Silver Bay Seafood is a small processing plant in Valdez. This is a small part of beautiful and fantastic Alaska. My memory of this place is the warmest and most romantic in my life.

I fell in love with my future husband there. I also fell in love with Alaska and its unique and untouched nature. I fell in love with the delicious salmon. The plant was located near the bay on the Pacific Coast.

I first visited the USA as a student in the Work and Travel program in June, 2004. I had been there all summer. My husband and I met while we were working together.

All employees had to always wear blue-yellow suits to protect themselves

from blood in the factory and wear boots to keep their legs dry. There was the smell of fresh fish, bleach, and a little bit the smell of freon. A lot of refrigerators stood side by side to maintain the freshness of fish and caviar. The blood and pieces of fish were spread everywhere - on all lines, on dishes, on floors, and walls. The blood spread over the ringers and even onto our faces.

We worked hard there, twelve to fourteen hours a day. The employees worked in two shifts, and the line operated without stopping. The sound of the automatic knife in a line was heard every three seconds. This knife cut off the head of the fish. A strong signal rang every three hours. This signal told us about the break for rest or for food. We went outside during lunch. A lot of seagulls flew around. They were attracted by the smell of fish.

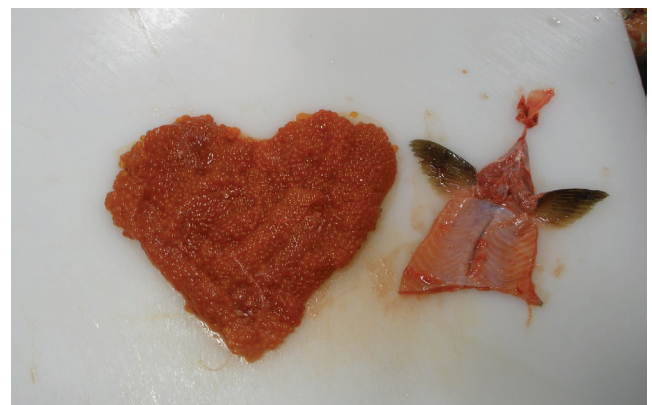
Most of the workers worked on the line. The work on the line was very difficult and very monotonous. While I worked there, I always wanted to sleep. I asked the supervisor for another job, any, even harder. He taught me how to sort and cut the heads of other kinds of salmon. This kind of fish is very expensive (chum, sockeye, coho, and chinook). They have to be cleaned by hand with a sharp knife,

without using the machine. He also taught me to sort fish by tail or eyeball or by spots. I felt at that position a knowledge of fish. I really knew fish.

We worked, ate, and slept there all that summer. No one felt they were better than others. Everyone was himself or herself. I still call up my friends from Valdez. We will always remember that time with joy and smiles.

Silver Bay Seafood

gave me many good friends, my husband, and many wonderful impressions.



**Fish Eggs and Fish Jewelry**

*Aygul Akhmadeeva*  
ESL W50



## A Life Lesson

One week before summer, I had already felt the smell of the Caspian Sea. When I was closing my eyes, the sound of waves helped me to clean my mind and be relaxed. The bus was approaching my bus station. When I got off the bus, the very bright light of the sun dazzled me and in a few seconds I saw a building where I was going to do that day's swimming competition. I knew that my friends were already waiting for me there. I entered the building and immediately recognized a group of people who were dancing and screaming. But my mood changed in a second, when I saw my opponent. I realized that it was going to be a different kind of race and I was not prepared for it.

My opponent was a guy who I did not really like at that time because of his big ego and his bad relationship with folks who were younger than him. The moment I saw him, I lost my mind, forgot about my plan, and already was thinking about the moment when I would beat him. I felt



adrenaline in my blood when I was approaching the swimming pool. I lost my ability to think and did not even remember my plan and tactic for this "race of my life". I heard a shot and jumped into the water. I wasn't thinking at all during the race. I just followed my emotions. After 100 meters of swim-

ming at this intense speed, I totally lost all my energy. The final 100 meters of swimming were the hardest I ever had at that moment. When I finished the race, I was fourth and that guy was in first place. While I was in the pool, I looked at the time and saw that the first place time was worse than my regular time at this distance.

It was not a significant competition for me, but on that day I lost to myself. My own emotions and desire to win distracted me and I made a mistake. It was a good experience. Even in an unpredictable situation, we should not lose our minds and follow our emotions.

*Inar Nasraddinov*  
ESL R310

## Rich Disadvantage

Imagine. Yesterday you got an email. It says that you are the heir to a very successful and rich company. You can not work there, but you will always have enough money for any of your wishes. On the next day, a limousine and three other cars stop in front of your house. One man gets out of the car and calls himself your future financial consultant. He asks you to go with him to see your new house near the ocean. (You can decline his offer.) Unbelievable, you are very rich now! You can have whatever you want! How does that sound? Do you want it? Everyone dreams of having that chance! However, if you do not have that, it is not bad because wealth is not happiness. Moreover, there are several disadvantages to being rich.

The first disadvantage to being rich is the loneliness. My friend is very rich. He does not have a need to earn money. Maybe you think that it is better to not go to work every day? However, he says that he always feels that he is alone. He wants to meet his friends, talk with them, or just spend a few hours together. Unfortunately, his friends can not because they must work all day long. Another friend told me his story. He had saved his money in his bank account. Therefore, he already had four million dollars. However, none of his friends have this. Once, he inadvertently spilled the beans about his savings. People whom he knew for a long time and whom he thought were his friends suddenly



changed. They started to envy and even mock him. They stopped being friendly with him. Therefore, he felt that he was alone. A little later, he changed his job. He did not tell anyone about his money there, and he is glad of his decision. At his new job, everyone respects and communicates with him, so he does not feel the loneliness. Another of my friends said that when he became rich, his life changed a lot. First of all, he stopped having any close relationships with others. Why? He could not tell anyone about his problem because they would never believe him. They thought that if he had such money, he did not have any problems. In addition, he noticed that no one wanted to talk with him. If someone did, it meant that this someone just needed his help. My friend is already tired of it. He wants normal relationships!

The second disadvantage to being rich is the need to acquire more and more money than you have. A millionaire was asked by journalists, "You have so much money! What else do you want to have?" The millionaire answered them, "I want to be a billionaire!" Money is a trap. If you have some, you will want more and more. You would not say stop. I remember another story about a very rich man. He was trying to become rich all his life. Money was his passion, his dream, and his goal. Yes, he achieved his purpose. He became a rich man. However, one warm evening, he went inside of his big house, went into his office, closed a door, and killed himself. After his death there was a letter with these words: "I wanted to be rich all my life, and I reached my goal. However, I did not find happiness in money." It is true. Money is not happiness. What about you? Do you think that money is happiness? If yes, please change your mind before it is too late.

The last disadvantage to being rich is not having peace of mind. I remember that when I was a nine-year-old girl, I earned some money. I thought of myself as very rich. That money was like a treasure to me. I hid it under my pillow because I

was afraid that someone could steal it. Every day I checked if my money was there. I did not let anyone be in my room without me. It was terrible. The president, for example, is a very famous and rich person. Notice how many people try to protect him. When he goes somewhere, hundreds of people stand up for him. My friend worked for the United States Secret Service (USSS). She said that almost every city has a group of people who must protect the president when he is arriving. People who



protect the president should have very strong protection. They always must be strong. They should always be ready to meet the president. When he arrives in the city, they set many snipers up on every roof. Why? The answer is that some people can have a wish to kill him because he is rich and famous. Another man who was very rich always tried to protect himself. He always thought that someone was pursuing him. His life became like a nightmare. He could not be at his

home alone. He could not sleep all night long. However, when he got some sleep, he usually woke up at night because he had a nightmare. Therefore, he decided to hire security. When he went somewhere, those people were always with him. However, he did not have peace. He did not trust his security because maybe they also wanted to kill him. He was tired of his life. That's why he committed suicide.

In conclusion, there are several disadvantages to being rich: loneliness, anxiety, and need to acquire more and more money than you have. Do you remember that I spoke about a chance to be rich? Do you want it yet? Honestly, I want to have that chance to be an heir of a company. I think it is not bad to want such things. Money is not happiness, but you can be happy to have it in order to donate some money to charity, to help someone, etc. You can be happy doing good things for others, but not just for yourself.

Abby  
ESL W50



## Nestscape -- Articles from The Web

Continued from page 1



down from Royal Arches, I knew I wouldn't be content with that tiny taste of a big wall. A month later, I asked if he thought he'd ever be able to lead me up El Cap. I didn't expect his answer.

"Sure," he said. "But you'll have to learn how to jug."

I didn't know what that meant. So I approached it like any other of the many challenges in my life—I found out what was required, got the necessary gear, and set up a practice schedule. It had worked for marathons, back in my fifties. For each of my four marathons, I'd trained for eighteen weeks; for this, I had several months. How hard could it be?

After my first session jugging in the climbing gym, I couldn't move my arms for days. As I eased my aching, bruised body into my friend's hot tub that

night, questions about my sanity bubbled in my mind.

Nonetheless, a solid goal always motivates me to think in small, achievable increments.

First step: find a climbing gym close to home that would let me set up a rope to jug, and a friend to go with me each time (they insisted I be on a toprope as well). A couple of friends let me set up ropes in trees on their property. But all of that was only about 25 or 30 feet high. My goal was 2,000 feet of jugging in one day. Most route beta says four days is the average for Lurking Fear; but my son, the speed king, doesn't haul. We'd go up and down in a day.

So, next logical step: each week starting in May, I went to Yosemite, stayed with friends, and worked hard to accrue ascender skills. I also needed to gain experience going up a big wall, and lots of endurance. With friends, or alone, I hiked for hours on steep terrain. On the Four-Mile Trail (actually 4.6 miles, up to Glacier Point), my speed got a bit faster each time.

Alex led me up the six East Ledges descent ropes to see if I'd learned to use the ascenders. I had. So on my way out of the Valley that trip, he suggested I stop and jug the Heart lines.

His directions to the lines were a bit vague, I realized as I hiked through the oak forest toward El Cap that morning. This is his backyard—but I'd never been closer to El Cap than the road. Everyone I stopped for directions was twenty-something, male, toned, and fit. I was old enough to be their grandmother.

I did find the lines, and as the two young men before me set up, I watched carefully, filled with trepidation. But the second climber didn't seem to know as much as I did about how to attach the ascenders and get launched. A smidgen of encouragement there.

I only made it up one of the six ropes that day. Pow-

erful arguments in my brain almost kept me from even that much.

You're too old for this. You don't belong out here with all these young guys. You're alone—what if something happens?

My senior brain was insistent. Thankfully, my focus on the adventure drowned it out, at least for one rope's length.

A few years ago, when I retired from 44 years of teaching, many different scenarios opened up before me. I could get back to conducting, or at least playing in an orchestra again. Teach abroad in a country I'd wanted to explore further. Write. Play with my (future) grandchildren.

I'd never heard of juggling, back then.

Now I knew a bit more, but as I clamped my ascenders onto that first rope at the base of El Cap—is there a rock wall more intimidating?—I was overcome with the one aspect of this endeavor that I hadn't counted on: fear. Informed, rational fear. I'd lived long enough to learn to be wary. I knew enough, at my age, to know better.

Once I left the ground, here, alone, I'd be completely on my own in unfamiliar territory. That held me fast to the ground for a long time while I checked everything yet again, not totally convinced I had learned enough to do this without help, or at least the comfort of company.

About 20-feet up, the argument started again. I stopped and checked my ascenders one more time. Tested my back-up Micro Traxion. Locked. Daisies attached properly. Then I turned and gazed out over Yosemite Valley, seen from (slightly) above. From El Cap.

I was juggling on El Cap!

Over the next few months, I showed many friends how to use ascenders as we quested up to the base of the Heart formation and eventually to the Mammoth ledges above it, about 1,200 feet. The old maxim that you really know something if you can teach it to others played out over and over. I knew this stuff. It was time.



***Halloween. October 31, 2017. The perfect day for Lurking Fear.***

The rigorous approach that I'd practice-hiked several times seemed less intense in the dark. And there's something intimate about harnessing up when you can't see your objective, the monster wall looming over you—only your own heart, and how much you want this.

As Alex disappeared upward on the broad, flat expanse of granite until he was just a distant speck, it occurred to me that I had never actually seen big-wall climbing up close. He often talked about it, but that left most of it to my imagination—which had been hard at work these past few months. Now, I watched as closely as I had when I'd seen him break the El Cap speed record. That was through a telescopic lens. Now, I could hear him breathing, see him try one grip, then another. Heard him shout, "Watch me!" This was the real deal. Hard, even for

him. The possibility of seeing him take a lead fall made my heart race. But he didn't. I relaxed into it, and began to feel many of the emotions I feel when I watch a slow, graceful ballet. Appreciation of the skill. Awe, at the grace and control. Disbelief, that a human is capable of such beauty. Then he shouted



down, and I started up. It was clear what to do and when. So we did. Over and over. And over.

I counted pitches each time I arrived at bolts, but when I had counted nine, Alex announced that we were at pitch 12. It didn't seem possible, but it was the kind of news I needed. From the weariness I could feel building in my arms, I knew this was going to be a talker.

During most of the climbs I've done with Alex, I've needed to talk to myself constantly to get through the fear, or the fatigue, or the emotions. I could feel it happening today, around pitch 12 or 13. My shin was throbbing, probably purple where the strap and buckle rubbed with each step. My two toes that don't bend screamed each time I jammed them against the wall. Both thumbs had cracked open and were bleeding. Thumbs. Of course. You can't operate ascenders without thumbs.

The big surprise, the one thing that I'd been concerned about, turned out to be a non-issue. Several pitches up, I turned and looked down. Nothing. No queasies, no fear. Just amazement at how beautiful it was. All that practice on the Heart lines and descent ropes had made that incredible, mind-numbing exposure comfortable. Practice does make... not perfect, but less terrifying.

The statistics about Lurking Fear are all online; numbers are easy to come by. The hard part, the inef-fable part, began last spring and culminated this Halloween. Lurking Fear was a crucible, an incredible classroom. Living in that classroom as a senior climber exhausted me, thrilled me, and left me with many life lessons that can only be learned the hard way, the rock way.

As a teacher, a musician, a mom, I've always known that little steps can make anything feasible. My son has said that about his own climbing goals, in many articles. The biggest, most outrageous goal becomes approachable if broken into tiny pieces. Lurking Fear was ridiculously out of my range until I started practicing tiny parts of it, many months ago. For me, a senior, those parts had to be small and easy. And accompanied by willing, helpful friends.

The last surprise, the biggest, was fear. Terror. Worry. The main job of parents is to anticipate the bad things that can happen to our precious little ones and protect against them.

Now, instead, I was about to do one of those very bad, dangerous things, as I convinced myself to leave my fear behind and step out onto a big wall, thousands of feet above anything safe, and hang on a skinny rope. One rope. One piece of gear. Young people, people who haven't had children, won't get that. You oldsters and parents out there will.

Unlike my son, I haven't spent my lifetime training my amygdala to ignore extreme exposure, or any of the other dangers up on the wall. The world has seen what he can do. That alone strikes fear into the hearts of most parents, and understandably so. But like Alex, and his equally extraordinary sister, once I set a goal, I always get there. When I asked Alex that wild question last year, I knew that one way or another, with him, I would get to the top. And back down.

It was more work than I'd prepared for, though. The last pitch or two demanded far more of my arms than was left in me. I resorted to pushing the ascender up with both hands, then pulling myself up



to stand up to it. Bad form, as Alex reminded me again and again; but it was the only way I was going to make it to the top.

The “top” turned out to be an elusive concept. I thought we’d topped out, as it was getting too dark to continue with a headlamp—and then Alex shouted down, “One more rope to jug, Mom.” I was crushed! Was this short, lumpy pile of rocks part of the route? Or were we on the top?

I didn’t have time to dwell on it. I couldn’t see where I was putting my feet, but had no time to stop and find my headlamp...and then there was another rope. And another. He called them hand-ropes, so I guessed we had topped out. I had no puff left to ask him anything. I tied in and climbed one of them, then switched back to jugging. Again.

The “top” was more like a grueling, rolling series of torments than a blissful, high five. I felt cheated.

And yet—these were hand-ropes. We were on the top. I’d done it! Waves of something powerful bubbled up, threatened to pour out of my eyes. But I knew the huge task in front of us. We didn’t have time for me to come apart, or stop to rest. I shook out my poor arms, slowly bent my arthritic knee to see if it would actually make it down. I took control. We had a long, long walk ahead of us. Funny, what climbers call a “walk.” None of it felt like walking, to me.

Alex and I chatted over slabs, and rocks, through thickets, past trees, over more slabs, more rocks, more thickets.... He said he had never before seen lights on Half Dome, so we stopped to gaze across

the dark valley. I talked to keep my mind in check. There would be time tomorrow to exult. Now, I needed to keep going.

We finished the 19 pitch route in 13 hours, bottom to top. Twenty hours, car to car.

Over the years, I’ve often heard about ‘the season’ in Yosemite. Alex and his friends and colleagues train there spring and fall each year. They make history.

I’ve had many “seasons” during my decades as a teacher, writer, conductor, mother. Seasons for exams. For traveling. For concerts. But my Yosemite season has been like no other.

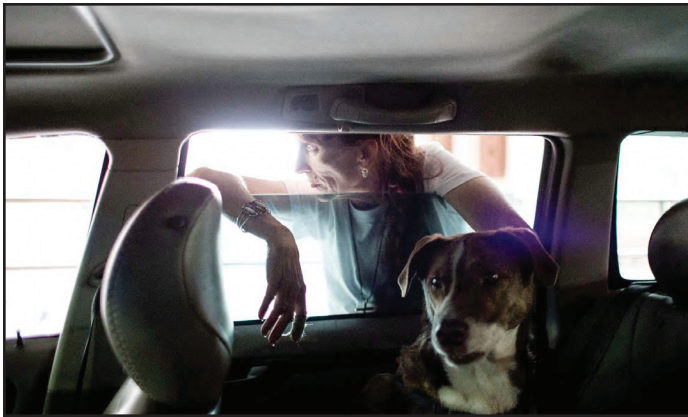
Each year, when Alex and I climb together, I think, “I’ll never top that!” And each year, I do.

I can’t imagine what could possibly surpass El Cap in a day. But I can’t wait to find out.



<https://www.climbing.com/people/el-cap-in-a-golden-day-alex-honnold-leads-his-mother-up-lurking-fear/>

## Facing Poverty, Academics Turn to Sex Work and Sleeping in Cars



Adjunct professors in America face low pay and long hours without the security of full-time faculty. Some, on the brink of homelessness, take desperate measures

There is nothing she would rather do than teach. But after supplementing her career with tutoring and proofreading, the university lecturer decided to go to remarkable lengths to make her career financially viable.

She first opted for her side gig during a particularly rough patch, several years ago, when her course load was suddenly cut in half and her income plunged, putting her on the brink of eviction. “In my mind I was like, I’ve had one-night stands, how bad can it be?” she said. “And it wasn’t that bad.”

The wry but weary-sounding middle-aged woman, who lives in a large US city and asked to remain anonymous to protect her reputation, is an adjunct instructor, meaning she is not a full-time faculty member at any one institution and strings together a living by teaching individual courses, in her case at multiple colleges.

“I feel committed to being the person who’s there to help millennials, the next generation, go on to become critical thinkers,” she said. “And I’m really good at it, and I really like it. And it’s heartbreaking to me it doesn’t pay what I feel it should.”

Sex work is one of the more unusual ways that adjuncts have avoided living in poverty, and perhaps even homelessness. A quarter of part-time college academics (many of whom are adjuncts, though it’s not uncommon for adjuncts to work 40 hours a week or more) are said to be enrolled in public assistance programs such as Medicaid.

They resort to food banks and Goodwill, and there is even an adjuncts’ cookbook that shows how to turn items like beef scraps, chicken bones and orange peel into meals. And then there are those who are either on the streets or teetering on the edge of losing stable housing. The Guardian has spoken to several such academics, including an adjunct living in a “shack” north of Miami, and another sleeping in her car in Silicon Valley.

The adjunct who turned to sex work makes several thousand dollars per course, and teaches about six per semester. She estimates that she puts in 60 hours a week. But she struggles to make ends meet after paying \$1,500 in monthly rent and with student loans that, including interest, amount to a few hundred thousand dollars. Her income from teaching comes to \$40,000 a year. That’s significantly more than most adjuncts: a 2014 survey found that the median income for adjuncts is only \$22,041 a year, whereas for full-time faculty it is \$47,500.

### ‘We take a kind of vow of poverty’

Recent reports have revealed the extent of poverty among professors, but the issue is longstanding. Several years ago, it was thrust into the headlines in dramatic fashion when Mary-Faith Cerasoli, an adjunct professor of Romance languages in her 50s, revealed she was homeless and protested outside the New York state education department.

“We take a kind of vow of poverty to continue practicing our profession,” Debra Leigh Scott, who is working on a documentary about adjuncts, said in an email. “We do it because we are dedicated to scholarship, to learning, to our students and to our disciplines.”

A quarter of part-time college academics are said to be enrolled in public assistance programs

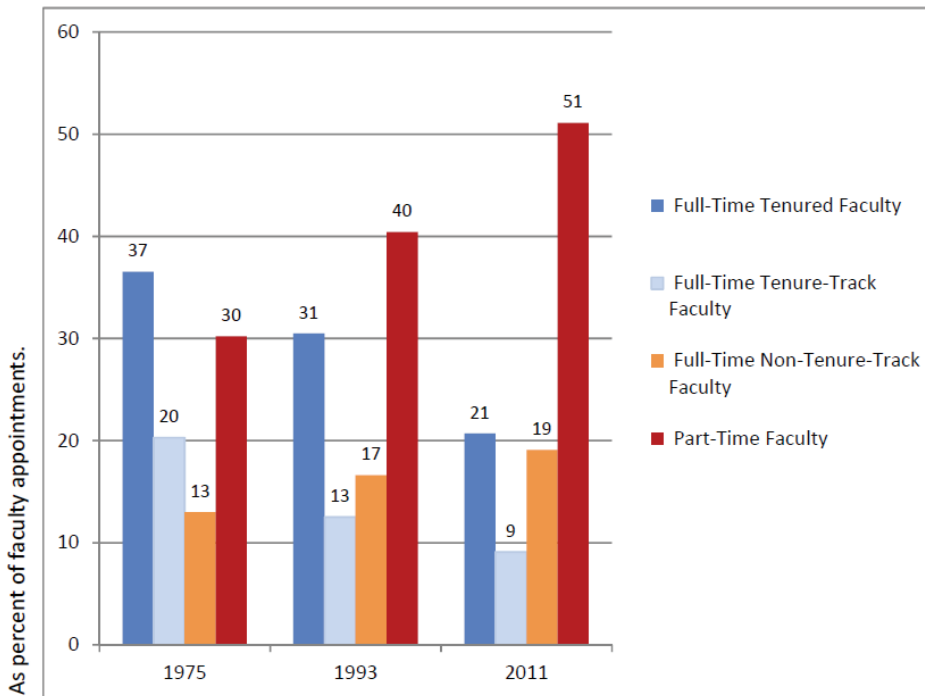
Adjuncting has grown as funding for public universities has fallen by more than a quarter between 1990 and 2009. Private institutions also recognize the allure of part-time professors: generally they are cheaper than full-time staff, don’t receive benefits or support for their personal research, and their hours can be carefully limited so they do not teach enough

to qualify for health insurance.

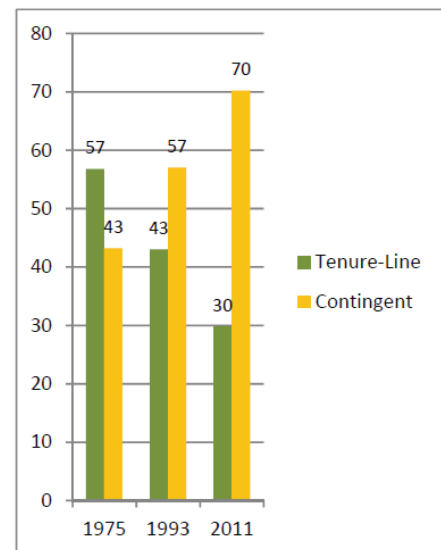
This is why adjuncts have been called “the fast-food workers of the academic world”: among labor experts adjuncting is defined as “precarious employment”, a growing category that includes temping and sharing-economy gigs such as driving for Uber. An American Sociological Association taskforce focusing on precarious academic jobs, meanwhile, has suggested that “faculty employment is no longer a stable middle-class career”.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/sep/28/adjunct-professors-homeless-sex-work-academia-poverty>

### Trends in Faculty Employment Status, 1975-2011



A different way of looking at the same numbers--all tenure-line faculty grouped together and all contingent faculty grouped together.



**Notes:** All institutions, national totals. Figures for 2011 are estimated. Figures are for degree-granting institutions only, but the precise category of institutions included has changed over time. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

**Source:** US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS Fall Staff Survey; published tabulations only.

**Compiled by:** AAUP Research Office, Washington, DC; John W. Curtis, Director of Research and Public Policy (3/20/13)

## What You Need for Your First Day of Community College Classes

Are you unsure of what you need for your first day of community college classes? In today's post, we'll take a look at some essentials that community college students should have on that exciting first day.

### Community College Essentials

Community college can often be very stressful, but being properly prepared may help to keep your stress and anxiety levels down. One way to be prepared is to have the following essentials with you on your first day (and all days, for that matter).

### Sturdy Backpack

You'll definitely need a large, sturdy backpack (or other type of strong bag) to carry all of your belongings in. Even though you might not do a whole lot on the first day, you should still take everything we're discussing in this post with you. It would be a major bummer to show up for your first day of classes without something just because you thought you wouldn't need it yet. If you haven't already purchased a backpack, you can find a large selection of them online. Just be sure to read the details and reviews on any backpacks you check out; that way, you'll know you're getting a good one.

### Campus Map

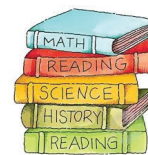
Are you attending a large community college, such as Portland Community College? If so, it might be a good idea to carry a map of the campus if you aren't totally familiar with your college's layout. You don't want to be late for any of your classes on the first day simply because you couldn't find the right building or classroom (a little embarrassing, but it happens!). If you'd rather not carry a map, perhaps you should consider visiting the campus and acquainting yourself with everything ahead of time so you know exactly where to go.



### Class Schedule

You might think you have your schedule memorized, but keeping a copy with you is probably a wise choice because it can prevent you from showing up at the wrong class at the wrong time (also a bit embarrassing, but it happens!). Whether you

take a screenshot of your schedule on your phone or carry the original paper copy, you'll feel better having it with you on the first day of community college.



### Textbooks

Textbooks are the main reason you'll need that sturdy backpack we already discussed, and hopefully you won't wait until the first day of class to buy them! Although you may not need your textbooks on the very first day, you should take them in case your professor wants to go over anything in them or assigns homework. This will also let your professor know that you're prepared and ready to learn!

### Notebook & Writing Instruments

It might seem pretty obvious, but you should have a notebook and some writing utensils (pens, pencils, highlighters) in your backpack on the first day. Chances are you'll need to jot down some notes or other important information. You can always enter notes into your phone, of course, but for most people, it's just not the same as traditional pen and paper.

### Folders

If you want to be well organized on your first day of community college, it's good to have a separate folder for each of your classes--in different colors so it's easy to tell them apart. This allows you to keep everything for each class (syllabus, handouts, worksheets, etc.) in one place rather than all of your papers for every class thrown together in the same folder (that's just asking for trouble).

### Planner

A planner can be very helpful when you're in community college. It lets you keep track of all assignments, due dates, other important dates, etc. There are also several planner apps available for your phone, but the problem with those is that they aren't in plain sight. When things aren't right there in front of us, we tend not to use them as we should. By having a tangible planner with you at all times, you're probably more likely to use it.

<https://study.com/blog/what-you-need-for-your-first-day-of-community-college-classes.html>



## Eat the World!

*The Parrot represents students of many hues and sounds --- no news there. Indeed, birds of a feather flock together, right? They also eat together. The Parrot is proud to present Parrot fodder from around the world in this and subsequent issues. Squawk!*

### 18th Century Recipe for Creamed Celery with Pecans

Serves 6

#### Ingredients:

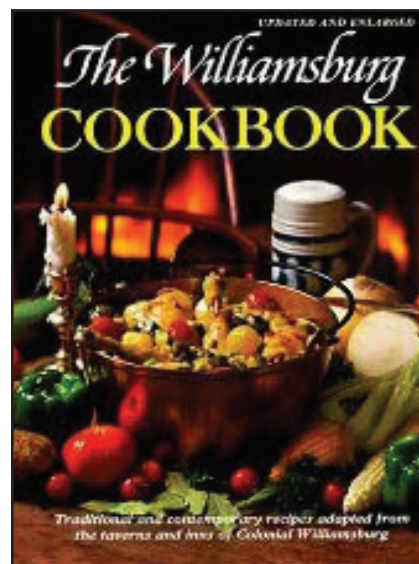
- 4 cups celery, cut diagonally in ½-inch pieces
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 cups milk
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¾ cup pecan halves
- buttered bread crumbs



7. Bake at 400° F. for 15 minutes.

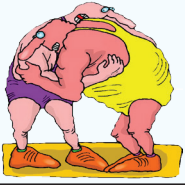
#### Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 400° F.
2. Grease a 1 ½-quart casserole.
3. Boil the celery in enough water to cover until tender; drain.
4. Melt the butter over medium heat; stir in the flour and slowly add the milk to make a cream sauce, stirring until thick and smooth.
5. Add the salt and well-drained celery.
6. Spoon into the prepared casserole, top with pecans, and cover with buttered bread crumbs.



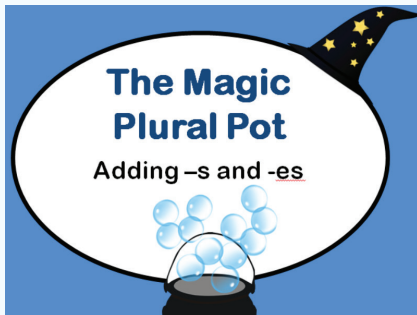
<http://www.history.org/Almanack/life/food/fdcelery.cfm>

# Parrot Warbling



## Grappling with Grammar

### Grammar Plural Suffixes



When do you add **-s** and when do you add **-es** to make a plural? It's not quite as arbitrary as it may seem.

1- The rule is this: if a word ends in **-s, -sh, -ch, -x, or -z, you add -es.**

**Example:** I only had to take one bus; you had to take two buses. I only get one wish; you get two wishes. I have a splotch on my shirt; you have two splotches. I'm carrying one box; you're carrying two boxes. Would you like a spritz of perfume? Two spritzes, please.

2- For all other endings, add **-s.**

**Example:** I have one cat; you have two cats. I have one cup; you have two cups. I have one shoe; you have two shoes. Where is my other shoe? I have one ski; you have two skis. How am I supposed to ski? I have one toque; you have two toques.

<https://www.grammarly.com/blog/spelling/>

### Idiom--Attic

## See eye to eye



This idiom is used to say that two (or more people) agree on something

Example: Its good that you finally have a new team member who **sees eye to eye** with you on most things.

<http://www.smart-words.org/quotes-sayings/idioms-meaning.html>

### Beak Speak

## Soft 'c' and hard 'c' and soft 'g' and hard 'g'

1- When the letter **c** is followed by the vowels **e, i or y**, it usually makes its soft sound.

**Examples** of that are **cent, circus and cytoplasm.**

The letter **c** also makes a hard sound, as in **cat and cocoa.**



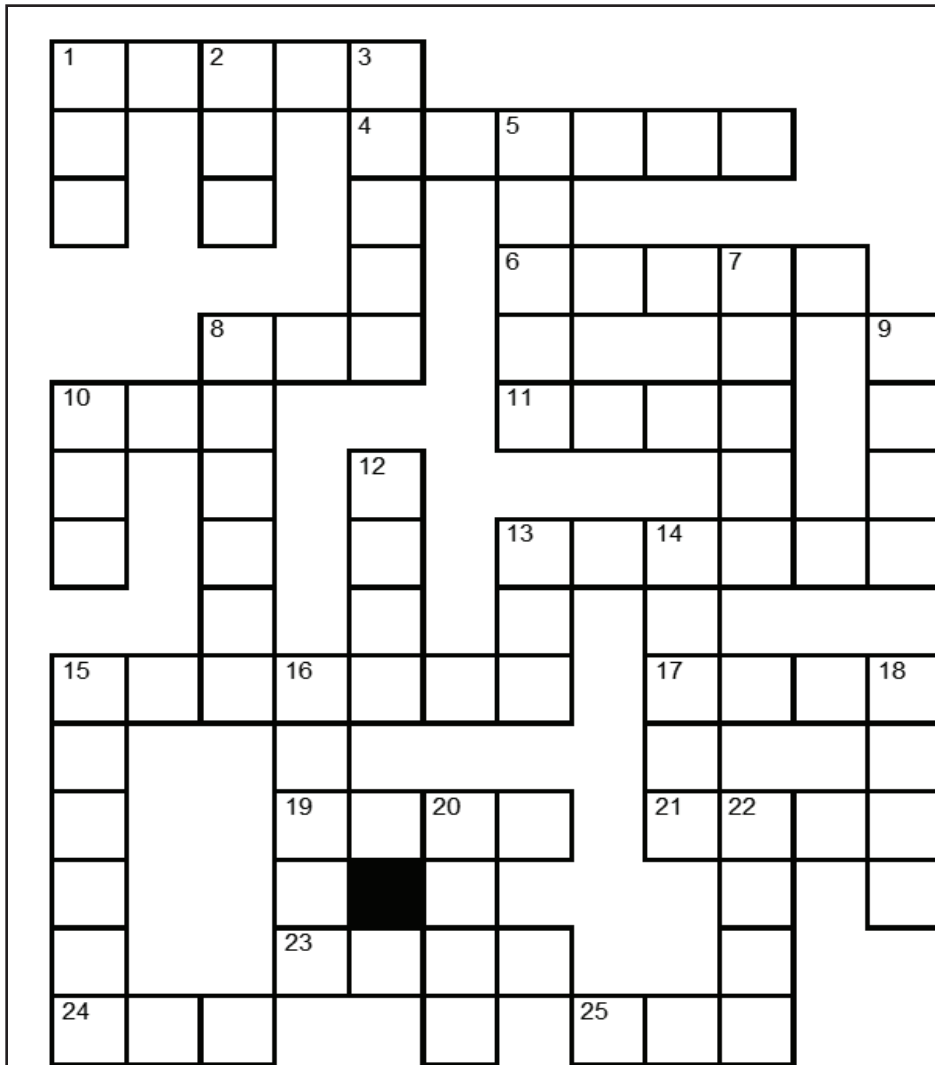
2- When the letter **g** is followed by the vowels **e, i or y**, it usually makes its soft sound.

**Examples** of that are **gel, giant and gym.**

The letter **g** also makes a hard sound, as in **gas, gorilla and yogurt.**

<https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/reading-issues/14-phonics-rules-for-reading-and-spelling#slide-8>

## Some More Parrot Fun Stuff



### Across

- 1- The antonym of back.  
 4- A type of lizard that begins with I.  
 6- A kind of flower that begins with D.  
 8- The antonym of good.  
 10- A drink that rhymes with sea.  
 11- A food that rhymes with dice.  
 13- A synonym for rug.  
 15- The opposite of deep.  
 17- A farm animal that rhymes with boat.  
 19- A drink that rhymes with silk.  
 21- The antonym of thick.  
 23- The opposite of far.  
 24- The opposite of high.  
 25- Another word for angry.

### Down

- 1- A forest animal that rhymes with socks.  
 2- The opposite of young.  
 3- A synonym of sleepy.  
 5- The opposite of over.  
 7- A farm animal that rhymes with sleep.  
 8- A kind of fruit that begins with B.  
 9- The opposite of east.  
 10- Another word for pull.  
 12- A toy that rhymes with tall.  
 13- A farm animal that rhymes with wow.

- 14- The opposite of wrong.  
 15- A place that rhymes with pool.  
 16- A kind of fruit that begins with L.  
 18- Another way to say 'very small'.  
 20- Another word for jump.  
 22- The opposite of soft.





# Hawaii

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid.

M	T	H	S	E	E	W	A	L	O	O	H	A	K	R	E	S	A	U	T
U	R	R	E	E	O	N	M	A	M	N	G	T	L	Y	T	S	L	K	R
H	T	A	P	H	O	O	A	A	L	N	I	P	O	U	R	U	A	E	O
A	T	P	W	A	L	N	N	I	I	O	E	E	N	U	E	R	N	L	P
O	O	N	I	O	C	T	A	L	I	A	H	A	S	S	R	F	A	E	I
E	T	G	K	N	A	I	E	C	R	A	I	A	E	C	A	I	I	L	C
N	R	A	A	R	E	K	F	L	L	M	W	Y	L	U	G	N	S	E	A
A	I	U	A	L	R	A	H	I	A	O	A	A	A	B	N	G	D	T	L
C	K	Y	L	O	E	A	P	D	C	B	V	L	H	A	I	K	E	I	S
R	S	N	N	U	R	P	A	P	A	O	I	T	W	D	K	O	E	S	T
A	S	S	I	B	L	C	I	E	L	K	C	T	K	I	A	N	E	L	R
G	S	E	O	I	A	O	M	H	I	E	V	E	C	V	Y	A	F	A	O
U	A	R	R	M	H	I	N	K	C	A	S	S	A	I	A	C	F	N	S
S	R	I	N	S	A	A	I	O	C	R	T	H	B	N	K	O	O	D	E
E	G	H	T	W	A	A	U	A	H	W	A	A	P	G	I	A	C	S	R
W	H	A	L	E	W	A	T	C	H	I	N	G	M	I	A	S	U	N	A
L	T	S	A	O	C	I	L	A	P	A	N	L	U	A	U	T	P	A	H
E	A	C	A	N	O	E	I	N	G	B	S	E	H	C	A	E	B	E	I
H	U	L	A	N	T	N	O	R	T	H	S	H	O	R	E	I	U	A	M

ALOHA  
 ARCHIPELAGO  
 BEACHES  
 CANOEING  
 COFFEE  
 GRASS SKIRT  
 HAWAIIAN  
 HONOLULU  
 HULA  
 HUMPBACK  
 WHALES  
 ISLANDS spacer  
 KAHO'OLAWA

KAUAI  
 KAYAKING  
 KONA COAST  
 LANAI  
 LUAU  
 MACADAMIA  
 NUTS  
 MANTA RAYS  
 MAUI  
 MOLOKA'I  
 NAPALI COAST  
 spacer NI'HAU  
 NORTH SHORE

O'AHU  
 PACIFIC OCEAN  
 PEARL HARBOR  
 PINEAPPLES  
 RESORTS  
 SAND  
 SCUBA DIVING  
 SNORKELING  
 STATE spacer  
 SUGARCANE  
 SURFING  
 TOURISTS  
 TROPICAL

UKELELE  
 VACATION  
 VOLCANOES  
 WAIKIKI  
 WAIMEA BAY  
 WARM  
 WHALE WATCH-  
 ING



*Parrot Poetry*



### To A Brown Boy

That brown girl's swagger gives a twitch  
 To beauty like a Queen,  
 Lad, never damn your body's itch  
 When loveliness is seen.

For there is ample room for bliss  
 In pride in clean brown limbs,  
 And lips know better how to kiss  
 Than how to raise white hymns.

And when your body's death gives birth  
 To soil for spring to crown,  
 Men will not ask if that rare earth  
 Was white flesh once, or brown.

Countee Cullen

### Rigoberto's Riddles

Most people need it, some ask for it, some give it, but almost nobody takes it. What is it?



Advice

### Silly Vasily's Chuckle Chamber

Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson go on a camping trip. After a good dinner and a bottle of wine, they retire for the night, and go to sleep.



Some hours later, Holmes wakes up and asks his faithful friend. "Watson, look up at the sky and tell me what you see."

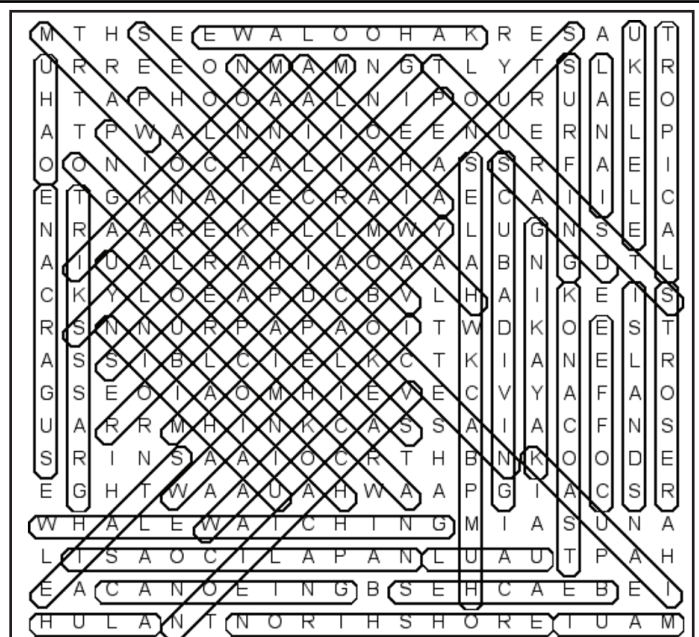
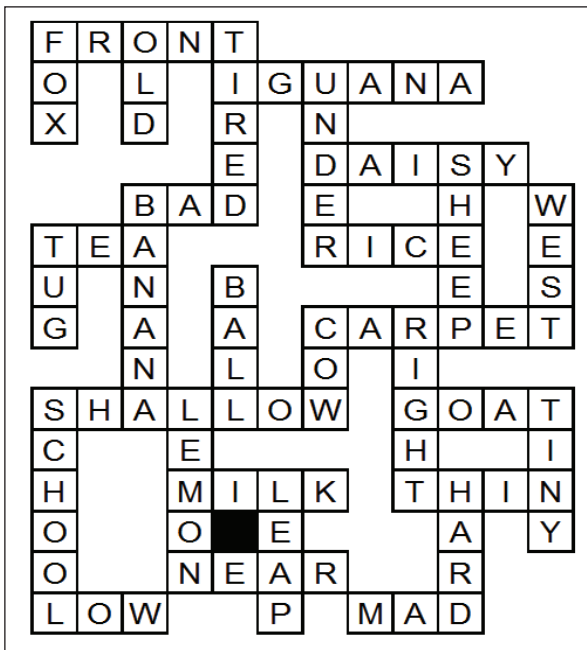
"I see millions and millions of stars, Holmes," replies Watson.

"And what do you deduce from that?"

Watson thinks for a minute.

"Well, astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, I observe that Saturn is in Leo. Horologically, I deduce that the time is approximately a quarter past three. Meteorologically, I suspect that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. Theologically, I can see that God is all powerful, and that we are a small and insignificant part of the universe. What does it tell you, Holmes?"

Holmes is silent for a moment. "Watson, you idiot!" he says. "Someone has stolen our tent!"



## Granny Noetal

**Dear Granny Noetal,**

Before coming to the US, I lived in Italy for six months. My native language is Russian. I learned a little bit of Italian in the six months and I love Italian. Now I'm taking ESL classes because I didn't know any English before coming here. (My cousin is helping me write this email to The Parrot) Can I take an Italian class and also take ESL classes? Is it legal? Will I mix everything up taking ESL and Italian at the same time?

Thank you,

**Ivana**

**Dear Ivana,**

First of all, it is "legal". I think you are asking if it is allowed at ARC to take more than one language at a time. It is. The second question is if you will mix everything up. That depends, probably on several factors. First of



all, you love Italian. That's a good thing. You'll learn! Another factor may be at what level you are in two languages, in your case, English and Italian. Yet another factor may be your reason for learning. Living in the US makes learning English very important for you. It's not just a labor of love, as is Italian. How much time can you spare for studying each language? I would make a study plan for each language and decide on a study schedule. I'd also speak to an Italian professor at ARC because classes are taught in a different way than ESL is. ESL is divided into strands of listening and speaking, reading, grammar, and writing. Italian is all these strands combined. ESL has many levels while Italian has fewer. A word of caution is simply this: Don't be impatient with yourself. Work hard but recognize that "Rome wasn't built in a day." Learning one foreign language is hard and taking on another language at the same time is not for everybody. I wish you luck!

Sincerely, sinceramente, **Granny**

## Interview with Professor Topinka

*Continued from page 1*

bike riding, so when I was thinking about a career, I loved science but I also loved the outdoors. I ended up going a field called ecology, where you study elements of the natural world, and so I thought it would be a nice way to combine my enjoyment of the outdoors with my passion for doing science. So when I did graduate school, I studied plants that required me to go out and do collecting trips outside, which is nice to sort of combine things that you are passionate about, things work-related and things not work-related.

**The Parrot:** How did it start? Your passion for outdoor activities?

**Prof. Topinka:** I think I always liked the outdoors, but in my first year of college, I joined an outdoor enthusiast club at the college I went to. They had a spring break trip to Utah, and it was a backpacking trip to Utah. I went on that trip and I just fell in love with being outside doing physical activities.

**The Parrot:** How do you think your outdoor interests affect your experience in teaching and the students' experience taking your class?

**Prof. Topinka:** One of the classes I teach is marine biology. I teach the honors marine biology and the non-honors version of marine biology and, as part of that class, the lab portion is actually field trips so we go out and do two all-day trips, often to Bodega Bay, sometimes to museums. Then we do another three-day camping trip, where we go out and camp in Marin County, and spend three days and two nights exploring the area. It's a great opportunity to combine together my passion for science and marine biology with actually getting outside with students and letting them see what it's like in the actual environment. It is a fun way to combine those two things.

**The Parrot:** It does sound like fun. Can you give advice to all ESL students who want to take a science class?

**Prof. Topinka:** I think science classes, in particular

biology classes, can be very challenging, because there is a ton of new vocabulary that you have to learn in addition to the vocabulary the people who are not ESL learners already have mastered. There are multiple layers at which you know you have to learn new vocabulary. I think it is probably different for each person, but definitely when you read the textbook, and all technical and non-technical words are not totally familiar, highlight them, look them up, and make sure you start to get familiar with them. I do think it is incredibly challenging for everybody because it is new vocabulary, but especially if you are learning new technical vocabulary as well as a bunch of other new vocabulary. I think probably recording lectures is a good idea, so that when the professor uses some terms you are not familiar with, you can go back, listen to the lecture, look up some of the words, and maybe get a better sense of what they are trying to say. What strategies do you use in your biology class?

**The Parrot:** Well, I look up things that I just do not get and sometimes I watch YouTube videos. There are really good ones which help, especially for science classes. I try to use all the resources that the professor provides like websites, additional books that come with the textbook, and sometimes I find a tutor.

**Prof. Topinka:** That's a great idea. I cannot imagine learning a science class in another language. It would be incredibly challenging.

**The Parrot:** Yeah, it is really hard. These days we see a lot of students drop out of college. Why do you think that happens? What would you like to say to those students who cannot get through college?

**Prof. Topinka:** People would drop out of college for a number of different reasons. Sometimes it's because of life circumstances and other times it is because they start to fall behind in classes and feel like maybe they cannot do it. If somebody is feeling they are unable to achieve the level needed in the classes, I would recommend that they look into and take advantage of all the support services that we have here at ARC. In the science classes we have the science success center, there is RAD, WAC, group tutoring and individual tutoring at

the LRC. I think a lot of the students do not realize how many types of support there are available to them, to help them to get through these challenging classes. So they get discouraged and also if they just go to class and do not connect with all these other services, they feel isolated; they do not feel as connected in the community. It is totally understandable that you step away from college and start feeling like that, but I think learning about and taking advantage of all those other opportunities is really the best way to avoid dropping out of college. Sometimes people drop because of personal reasons and financial reasons, but there are resources on campus to help people in those circumstances as well. Obviously not everybody; people have personal circumstances that prevent them from being in college at certain times, but I think a lot of students, if they knew about all the resources, would probably be able to persist in their classes.

**The Parrot:** What is one thing that you have learned from teaching students that is valuable for you?

**Prof. Topinka:** I feel like I learn an incredible amount every time I teach. I learn as I teach things. You learn about things you take for granted, about how to both understand material and to grasp complicated concepts. You learn that the way you might do it is not the way that works for everybody. One of the fun things about teaching is thinking about how to restructure an approach to cover complicated concepts in a way which lets more students get the concept. Then I also learn often times that students ask questions during class that are things that I never thought about the topic and so sometimes I might be able to figure out an answer even though I had not thought about that idea. Other times it's a completely brand new idea and so I tell the student I really do not know. Let's look that up and figure it out because that's a really fascinating question. You know I learn a lot from students in term of their thinking about the material. I learn a lot from students in terms of thinking how to get them to understand the material.

**The Parrot:** If you had the opportunity to teach wherever you wanted, where would you choose (city and college or university)?

**Prof. Topinka:** It would be in community college.

**The Parrot:** Which community college?

**Prof. Topinka:** American River College. I love American River College. I love the community college system in California. I think it's an incredible resource for the state and it allows so many people to achieve the level of success they want in their lives. It feels good to teach with teaching materials that I love and also teach in an institution that helps so many people to achieve the goals that they have. Personally, community college and ARC in particular, is my absolute top choice that I would be teaching in.

**The Parrot:** Have you taught in a different college before?

**Prof. Topinka:** I did, when I was in grad school at UC Davis, TA classes. You are not the official instructor of record, but you teach laboratory sections, and I also taught at San Jose State and Sonoma State, and I just love the community college system.

**The Parrot:** What about it makes it different or what about it is it that you love?

**Prof. Topinka:** I think that the community college system has such a diversity of students, more than in any other place that I have taught and so you have students in the same class who come from incredibly different background whether it's socioeconomic background, different parts of the world, different languages as their first language and different ages. Being in a classroom with such a diversity of students who are all striving to achieve a goal is a very inspiring place to be. It's fun to come to work because students are so incredible to work with.

**The Parrot:** It is really nice to see someone love their job and look at it this way. Can you tell us about your experience as a student and obstacles you faced and how you overcame them?

**Prof. Topinka:** I came to college directly out of high school. When I entered college, I did not know what I wanted to study. I was pretty sure I wanted to do something is science but I did not really know in what science. My first semester in college I took an

introductory biology class, then realized that it was something I was passionate about and also good at. Finding that combination, that something that you are good at and you can achieve at and also something you enjoy and are passionate about was sort of exciting to me. I was lucky enough in the first semester of my first year in college to decide on my path. I know for a lot of students they try a lot of classes and think about a lot of different careers but they have to take many classes until they find their way. I think I was lucky in that sense. In terms of obstacles, I think everyone has taken a class that they do not do as well in as they hope to. Like everyone else, I had classes that I took that after the first exam I became very nervous about my prospects in the class. Thinking back, I remember my first semester of college in an English class that I took. This professor said, "Every essay that we turn in is good" and he took it at a base line that we were going to produce something good and readable. I remember when I got back my first essay, on the top, it said "Good not so good". I was like, wait, I somehow did not even measure up to being good. I was really worried because it was the first graded assignment I got back in my first semester of college. At the college I went to, (I went to a small liberal arts college) and they had incredible resources. They had a writing center where they have people who can help you improve your essays. I took advantage of that and went there to figure out what I could do because I thought I was a decent writer until I got that first essay back. The other thing is when you go the science path in college, like for instance I was in biology, you also have to take classes in a bunch of other fields so you have to take chemistry courses, you have to take physics courses, you have to take math all the way to several semesters in calculus and I remember when I was in calculus in my first semester, they had this math "torturing" center. There was a person there who was faculty age, maybe in his forties, and he did not teach math but he was there to help you with any math problem. He was incredibly smart. He knew math incredibly well. I remember with each homework task, I would always go there. If I had a question, either he or one of the TAs would walk me through to the answer to the question. I remember learning when



I did not understand something like these calculus questions. Just seeing the answer was not helpful to me but having somebody actually explain the logical progression to solving the question made it so I could actually understand similar questions in the future. I think when I first got to college, I took some challenging classes and had some setbacks but I did take advantage of these resources that were available to help me do better in the classes. Every semester there is an obstacle, there is a class harder than you think it is, there is a grade you get lower than you thought you should have gotten, and it's all about just persisting despite that.

**The Parrot:** That's true and I think as long as we are in college we will always face things like that. How come you are a biology professor and not something else? If you had to stop teaching, what would you do?

**Prof. Topinka:** I think the natural world is very interesting to me and the most apparent or visible part of the natural world is biology. For me, when I walk outside, hike, bike ride, climb a rock and whatever you are doing, you see interesting biology around you and there are always interesting questions to ask. I think biology is my choice as a field because it is right in front of you all the time. Even to understand your own self there is biology, so you learn things just by observing yourself. What would I do if I were not teaching? I would probably ride my bike more, spend more time backpacking and climbing, but in terms of career, I would probably be interested in working in a field that develops educational materials, so if I were not directly teaching because I love the process of making situations, materials, activities that help students to learn, I think I would probably try to find work with a company that develops materials like that.

**The Parrot:** What are you planning for your next adventure outside or inside ARC?

**Prof. Topinka:** Outside of ARC, very soon, hopefully, either this weekend or next weekend, I am going to do a bike ride. Backpacking is when you walk and you have a backpack on. "Bike packing" is when you ride and bring all your gear to sleep in and cook with you and so some friends and I are

going to do a bike packing trip from Lake Tahoe to Auburn or all the way back to Davis, which is where I live. This is my closest trip.

**The Parrot:** How long does that take?

**Prof. Topinka:** Hopefully two or three days. In terms of adventures at ARC, I am working with a professor of biotechnology and microbiology. We are working on genetic experiments with fruit flies that we can use in the classroom. Fruit flies are very famous experimental organisms in biology because they are an animal whose genetics are very well worked out. You can illustrate a lot of concepts in genetics by doing crosses between different types of fruit flies. We are in the process of trying to develop the infrastructure to have students do crosses with fruit flies in the laboratory to learn some of these genetic concepts. That's my ARC adventure.

**The Parrot:** That sounds cool and fun to do.

**Prof. Topinka:** It's a lot of fun. Fruit flies are amazing. All these different fruit flies that have been discovered have brown eyes, red eyes, and white eyes, triples wings, no wings, and dark bodies. I mean it is an incredible diversity of different types of fruit flies and you can learn about how genetics work by doing particular crosses between them.

**The Parrot:** Are you going to do it this semester?

**Prof. Topinka:** We are doing it now. One of the classes that I teach is Bio 400 and in that class we will be doing some of these crosses in the next few weeks. We are starting dissections on genetics and how inheritance works. We have acquired a whole set up because when you work with fruit flies, they will fly away unless you use anesthesia or put them to sleep and you either put them to sleep by chilling them down, a chemical that would put them to sleep for an hour or so, or by using carbon dioxide and we have these plates in which we control the amount of carbon dioxide that comes into them. The fruit flies will basically fall asleep long enough so that you can sort them out and put them in the jars you want for the process you want. I am also planning for next semester's field trip for the honors marine biology which is Biology 482. I am scheduling trips and setting up opportunities for

us to meet with researchers and that is the other project that I am working on next semester.

**The Parrot:** That sounds really interesting, and the idea that you are not killing the flies is really smart. New question: Any advice you would give to your 15-year-old self?

**Prof. Topinka:** I guess it would be: be fearless, pursue what you want to pursue; do not let self-doubt or insecurity prevent you from trying things.

**The Parrot:** Cool. Can you tell us about one of your most interesting adventures?

**Prof. Topinka:** After college some friends and I hiked the Pacific Crest Trail, which is a trail which goes from Mexico to Canada through California, Oregon, and Washington. It is about 2600 miles. We walked the whole thing. We took about five months just with backpacks and hiking shoes. We spent almost all the entire five months walking, averaging 16 or 17 miles a day, sleeping in tents in the middle of the woods, and that was a really fun adventure.

**The Parrot:** Wow. It sounds like work!



**Prof. Topinka:** Yeah, it is a lot of walking, but the neat thing about it is that now I live in California because the trail goes all the way up and down the length of California. Whenever you do anything, it takes you back and forth across California going west to east. You are always crossing the trail. Whenever I go anywhere, I am always going somewhere that is familiar. It is like, oh, I remember being here 25 years ago. This is one of the most impact-

ful and meaningful adventure that I had. Probably another adventure that was very meaningful to me was after college before I went to graduate school. I really got into rock climbing. A couple of my friends really taught me to rock climb, really doing these big wall climbs. In the same way you backpack and carry all your gear and camp at night, in big wall climbs you carry all your gear and water and actually camp on the cliff at night and they were really into this and so they were teaching me how to climb. I got into it as well and when we did climb El Capitan that was a very exciting experience. If you ever go to Yosemite and drive in, the first thing you see is this 3000 foot cliff. With their help, we actually climbed it. We spent three nights on the wall and camped. Now when I go to Yosemite, I think of all the adventures that I had.

**The Parrot:** Wow, that is really amazing.

**Prof. Topinka:** It was a lot of fun.

**The Parrot:** Have you tried skydiving?

**Prof. Topinka:** Yes, I did once, when I was in college. It was fun but it felt out of my control. I had never been in a small plane before. They move a lot. It is like you are in the plane and you are bouncing back and forth, up and down. They open the door of the plane, which is terrifying. I went second or third. I remember the first person went out, they opened the door, and he goes out and then you watched him disappear. It was this feeling of hopelessness. I learned it was not for me.

**The Parrot:** I want to try it, but I am just having second thoughts about it.

**Prof. Topinka:** It is fun.

**The Parrot:** Yeah, well, thank you for your time, and for this interesting experience that you shared with us.

**Prof. Topinka:** No problem.

**Parroteer:** Betul Yousif

## Quiz: Celebrating African-American History Month

**1. Who was the first African-American to appear on a U.S. postage stamp?**

1. Martin Luther King Jr.
2. Jackie Robinson
3. Harriet Tubman
4. Booker T. Washington



**2. What state was the first to elect a black governor, doing so in 1989?**

1. Delaware
2. Mississippi
3. Virginia
4. Washington

**3. Which of these honors was Martin Luther King Jr. not awarded?**

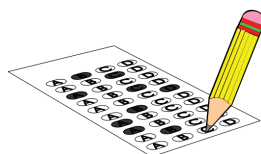
1. Nobel Peace Prize
2. Congressional Gold Medal
3. Presidential Medal of Freedom
4. Freedom Award

**4. Who was the first African-American head coach in the NFL?**

1. Tony Dungy
2. Fritz Pollard
3. Ray Rhodes
4. Art Shell

**5. True or false: The first president of the National Association for Advancement of Colored People was white.**

1. True
2. False



**6. Who was the plaintiff in the Supreme Court decision that upheld the legal doctrine of “separate but equal?”**

1. Oliver Brown
2. Homer Plessy
3. Dred Scott
4. Theodore S. Wright



**7. Who was the first African-American to win a gold medal at the Olympics?**

1. William DeHart Hubbard
2. Jesse Owens
3. George Poage
4. John Taylor

**8. In what city did the National Guard try to prevent nine black students from attending a segregated school in 1957?**

1. Oxford, Miss.
2. Columbia, S.C.
3. Little Rock, Ark.
4. Tuscaloosa, Ala.



**9. How many African-Americans have served in the United States Senate since it first convened in 1789?**

1. 6
2. 27
3. 81
4. 112

<https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2011/02/07/quiz-celebrating-african-american-history-month>

1-4	2-2	3-4	4-2	5-1
2-7	7-4	8-3	9-1	
6-2				

## Out of the Cage

### College Hour- Reception for Award Winn

**Date: Thursday Jan 25, 2018**  
**Time: 12:15pm – 1:15pm**

Celebrate excellence on campus with us at a reception in honor of several ARC award winners. This year's event honorees may include the recipient of the ARC Patrons Chair Faculty Award and Honorarium; the recipient of the ARC Classified Senate Employee of the Year Award; the recipient of the Ken Deibert Adjunct Faculty Award; the recipient of the ARC Diversity & Equity Award; and the recipient of the ITAP Teaching Award.

**Location:** CTL Conference Room, Library 3rd Floor

### College Hour- Let's GO! Study Abroad through ARC

**Date: Thursday Feb 1, 2018**  
**Time: 12:15pm – 1:15pm**

Come hear about how you can complete your college classes while sipping a coffee in Florence or experiencing Shakespeare in London! The Los Rios district offers two programs in Summer 2018 (Florence and London), as well as a semester-long study abroad program during Fall 2018 in London. Information and details about the programs, including costs, options for financial aid and housing, dates, and offered courses, will be covered. Come and begin to prepare for an exciting educational adventure!

**Location:** Raef Hall 160, College Oak Drive, Sacramento, CA, United States



### Questions/Comments?

Student Editors: **Elaf Khafaja**

Please let us know what we can do to improve "The Parrot." We appreciate any and all feedback you are willing to give us. Send us an e-mail, call, or just drop by Professor Bracco's office D337 (Davies Hall), call (916) 484-8988, or e-mail [Braccop@arc.losrios.edu](mailto:Braccop@arc.losrios.edu). To see The Parrot in color go to [http://www.arc.losrios.edu/ARC\\_Majors/Humanities/ESL/The\\_Parrot.htm](http://www.arc.losrios.edu/ARC_Majors/Humanities/ESL/The_Parrot.htm)