


Avatar

Welcome to the new Autumnal edition of Avatar!

We have articles covering a whole range of topics written by our staff and members for your reading enjoyment.

If you wish to write articles for Avatar then you can now use our brand spangly new submissions form! (Due to be released by Rob soon.)

~ The Avatar Editors



The Month in Review

by Vessol

What a month, October. Between the elections in the United States and Canada and the economic situation filling our tubes, there was hardly a lack of anything to report on.

Candidates got harsher in rhetoric and things are heating up for November 4th when the next President of the United States is decided. How it will end? Well we'll all see soon enough. At the same time in Canada, Stephen Harper was reelected as Prime Minister of Canada, his Conservative Party forming a minority government.

However the news between most of us and the stations is the floundering economy. On the coattails of September when the first bricks started collapsing, October opened up with the House and the Senate passing the bailout bill proposed by President Bush. However that seemed to do little as stock markets continued to fluctuate wildly all across the world. With reports of increased unemployment, decreased consumer spending, and soaring inflation. Things do not look good.

In between we had many natural disasters and bombings in between sadly as always. Many stories to tell, but too many to fit here. If you are missing our old Timeline and wish to review the last month in a concise and orderly manner make your way to the Current Events and Debates forum and look for a stickied topic titled 'Daily News' for news postings of what happened throughout the months in a similar timeline fashion as well as sources if you wish to read deeper.





Thanksgiving : Crafts and Myths

by Kathy (*drowningangel*)

The holiday time of year is rolling around again, and we find ourselves facing Thanksgiving. It's such a busy time that we decided to look at several aspects of the holiday: crafts for you and the family, the food (of course), and some myths concerning Thanksgiving.

Crafts

Yes, I know we're not all those little kids anymore, but what stops us from having a blast, ourselves and with all of our family members?! I'm going to share one of my favorite activities, that allow you and any family members (young and old) to get a bit messy and have some fun: turkey placemats.

What you'll need:

- Non-toxic ink or finger paints
- Blank place cards
- Markers
- Hot glue gun (possibly)
- Additional accessories

Have the individual (child or adult) press their thumb into the inkpad and then onto the place card to create the turkey's head, body and feathers. Use markers to add a beak, legs, and feet. Be creative with colors and details. You can even buy fake feathers for the tail and beads for decorative detail, if you wish. (Note: if you choose to use heavier material, a hot glue gun may be best.) Address each card according to whom will be sitting where, then crease the card at the base by an inch or so, causing the card to stand up on its own – attracting attention of the guests.

Myths

There is one common myth we have all heard about Thanksgiving dinner, and this needs to be cleared up. Does turkey really make you sleepy?

- Turkey does contain tryptophan, which has been shown to help aid a patient in sleeping, multiple sclerosis, and depression, but tryptophan has to be in a purified form to achieve this effect. When combined with or within foods, it doesn't combine with the brain and its chemical enough to cause sedation. So chances are that when you get sleepy after Thanksgiving meal, it's because you ate a warm meal and then sat quietly, causing you to become tired.

For more information on the above, visit the following links:

http://familyfun.go.com/arts-and-crafts/creating_crafts_ms/

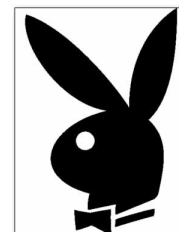
<http://www.healthcastle.com/holiday-...ksgiving.shtml>

<http://www.physorg.com/news8453.html>



What does the Playboy Bunny really stand for?

by stars-sparkle



Playboy was founded in 1953 by Hugh Hefner as a men's magazine. Such a publication was previously unheard of and its appearance on the shelves was quite a shock to many. Playboy featured Marilyn Monroe on its first issue in December 1953 and has gone on to feature many famous names such as Cindy Crawford and Nancy Sinatra. In 2005 Playboy had a magazine circulation of 3,005, 73. That's a LOT of partly-covered ladies!

Playboy has its fingers in many pies and the logo can be found on a variety of different pieces of merchandise now available from most high street shops. Browsing through the Argos catalogue (a UK home store for those in the US) leads me to discover I can purchase bedding, lamp shades, pencil cases, roller skates, curtains and many more items all featuring the Playboy logo. Walking around town I see young girls with Playboy t-shirts and cars with Playboy stickers on the back. The logo itself is a pretty harmless bunny in a tuxedo, but what does it really stand for?

Playboy's founder Hugh Hefner says of the rabbit logo:

"We chose the bunny because they are cute, small and playful. Our models are girl next door types. Soft, cute and timid."

The women who are photographed and displayed in Playboy are daughters, wives, sisters and mothers. These are women who are individuals in their own right and they are reduced down to "small, cute, timid" creatures through being portrayed by this logo. The rabbit logo is synonymous with the objectification of women and the sexualisation of pre-teens.

Girls as young as 10 or 11 are being sold Playboy stationery, Playboy clothing, Playboy stickers and so on by the mainstream shops. These are girls who are too young to truly understand what "sex" or "pornography" really are and yet we are letting them brandish the logo that represents one of the largest empires of such depravity.

The pressure group Object says: "Playboy's logo clearly represents pornography. The magazine routinely features sexualised and full-frontal images of naked young women. It also promotes pornographic videos and strip shows. Playboy is about men buying women and presents this as natural and normal male behaviour, together with fast cars, football and male role models (not shown naked). WHSmith is therefore endorsing pornography to young, impressionable and possibly underage girls."

The mainstreaming of sex in our culture is becoming a large problem as fewer and fewer images are being considered taboo. Content in television programs that would have previously only been shown past the 9pm watershed can now be found at any time of the day, especially if you have a digital box. Looking around a newsagents I find "men's magazines" such as Nuts, Zoo and FHM have made their way from the top shelf to the middle shelves. These are the images we are introducing the next generation of children to. Can this really be going anywhere positive?

We form the majority of our ideas, opinions and judgements about the World before we have even turned 14. As a society we are bombarding young girls with images of size zero models and re-inforcing narrow gender roles. We are teaching young boys through the mainstreaming of Playboy that it is OK to use female sexuality for their pleasure and commodification.

So the next time you think it might be cool to own a pencil case with the Playboy bunny on, consider what it really represents.

Note: this is an opinion article by your resident pro-woman feminist.

The Basics of the Global Economic Depression

by Vessol

Most of you, if not all, have noticed in the past few weeks that there have been economic troubles all around the world. Many people in fact saw it coming before, years before. This recent bout of economic troubles is not sudden nor is it simple. There are many deep and complex reasons behind it that go back years of policies and bills. Many people might have trouble understanding it, which is understandable as economics is a very intricate and detailed study. With this article I hope to at least somewhat give a better understanding of what is wrong and what you can do yourself right now to try to fair it better. However please don't take my words fully, I am only an armchair economist and have no professional training nor academic background, I have simply read sources and have talked to people whom know much more about economics. I highly encourage you to read up on it yourself and learn more about it, I am only hoping to show the basics.

As you probably have heard, this little story starts with the housing and mortgage market. This is for the most part true. The easiest visual I can use is that of a bubble bursting. It was built up from the mid 90's and all through the early 2000's. A confident and growing housing bubble emerged. People saw that housing prices were continuously rising and they thought about jumping on the train to the American Dream(tm). Normally this isn't a problem, however banks that gave out loans decided that since the market was so good they'd try and make even more off it by lowering their standards(thanks to policies enacted by both Clinton and Bush). They would offer sub-prime mortgages to home buyers that had bad credit and normally couldn't get a home, sometimes they didn't even check if the person had a job. Now you might go saying that "It's those greedy bankers fault!". Not completely. It is also the fault of those people who got those mortgages, as they were certainly aware that their interest rates on their loans could suddenly be increased.

Many banks or mortgage companies that originally provide the loans do not keep the loans themselves. They bundle them up into massive quantities of mortgages and then sell them off, the buyer gaining the total of the interest paid by the loan takers. The problem is that the mortgage companies would bundle together with the normal loans the sub-prime loans. Both usually knew about it, but they didn't worry about it. Prices kept on going up and the market looked like green hills forever for some. One reason that prices kept on going up was artificial inflation. Many mortgage companies are now being investigated for bribing Appraising companies whom would ask what the mortgage company wanted it to be priced at, not considering what it was even worth.

However it could not last long and with numerous other things, it all came tumbling down. Interest rates were raised for many of these sub-prime borrowers and many of them could not pay and simply stopped, their homes being foreclosed. This lasted more then a year, with the banking institutions and the government continuously saying that "Everything is all right!". It kept on going downhill until banking companies and title companies started feeling the pain. This all came into fruition around September.

Where will we head now? I don't think we can be sure, although it can be reasonably assumed that we are indeed in a deep recession economic wise around the global market. Whether or not throwing more money onto the issue and bailing out banking institutions that got themselves in this mess will do any good, people should first concentrate on themselves.

A few tips I've compiled for these harsh economic times(keep in mind these mostly apply in America):

- Do not panic. The world is not going to end. Economies recover with time.
- Do not run to the bank to withdraw your savings, the FCIA insures your bank account up to 250,000\$.
- Develop a budget, even if you are minor you can still talk to your parents about spending less and putting more money into savings. Debating buying that new pair of shoes? Don't. Put that money into savings instead. One of the reasons we are in this mess is that people continue to spend and spend and put little into savings.
- Do not depend on your credit card.
- Hold off on getting that new home or perhaps more applicable for our reader-base, that new car. Don't get a large mortgage on a new car, perhaps buy a cheap used car if you need one.
- Slash your spending. I can not stress this enough. People spend way over their means and need to cut down and put more into savings.

The Influenza Virus

by Kathy (drowningangel)

Each year, a very infamous bug makes its rounds: the influenza virus, or as we know it, the flu. The flu is a very contagious viral infection of the respiratory system (lungs, esophagus, bronchial tubes). Many brush it off as just another bug and nothing to worry about, but the truth is that there are 36,000 cases of deaths caused by the flu in America every year. Approximately 200,000 patients are admitted to the hospital for the flu and its complications. It's not something to be taken lightly, especially in children, older adults, or those with weakened immune systems.

How can you prevent from getting the flu? The best option is to be vaccinated by one of two methods: the flu shot or a nasal-spray flu vaccine. When this vaccination takes place, it contains a "live" virus, that, although weakened considerably, causes the body to build up a resistance to the virus. Many find this to be controversial, because unlike most think, there are hundreds of types of the flu virus. When scientists form the vaccination, they simply look at the year before and at which strain was the most active, and they use that strain in their vaccine. If you happen to get a different type of flu that they used, your body has no antibodies for that, and you get sick. So most simply weigh the pros and cons, as with any vaccination or medicine taken. It does seem to prevent flu in 70%-90% of those who receive the vaccination.

Another common question is: how do you know it's the flu and not a cold? By symptoms alone, you can't. The flu is known to be "more intense" with the chills, fever, and body aches, but to be sure that it is flu and not a common cold, special tests must be run by the family doctor so that the patient can be treated properly.

If you do happen to catch the flu or think you have it, here are some symptoms you need to look for:

- Fever (unusually high or 100+ F)
- Headache/Muscle ache
- Tiredness
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Sore throat
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea (more common in children or young teens)

If you have these symptoms, do not go to school or work. Anytime a fever is present, it normally indicates some sort of contagious issue, and all you or the patient would be doing is spreading the problem. Most can infect others one day before contracting symptoms and five days after the symptoms stop, so you have a few options to treat the symptoms.

- Try over-the-counter products, such as Tylenol Flu, which can help relieve the discomfort of congestion, nausea, body aches, etc.
- Drink lots of water, especially if the patient is vomiting or has diarrhea. They can quickly become dehydrated and could lead to hospitalization for complications.
- Get plenty of rest. The body needs time to heal itself from the ordeal it is going through to fight off the virus.
- Contact your physician if symptoms continue and the above suggestions do not help. You may need a prescription that is stronger to deal with the virus and the symptoms present. They will also want to monitor for any complications (bronchitis or pneumonia, for instance).

Mount&Blade Review + Free/Shareware Corner

by Vessol

Sometimes a person can get so overwhelmed by all the new high budget and top selling games out there that they forget to look past them and find the true hidden gems. Mount&Blade is one of these gems, a large and glittering gem. Started by a husband and wife from Turkey, Mount&Blade has been going through open development for many years, allowing players to buy and try it out as well as test it before it was finally released by Paradox Interactive in September 2008.

What makes this game worth it? The amount of freedom and originality in it is what makes it worth the price tag.

The Good

*Tons of customization. You can morph your characters face to make hundreds of thousands of combinations. There are tons of ways as well to create your characters background which affects you when you play the game in many ways. Is your character a bastard son of a disposed noble, fighting to get his honor back? Or is he born from the steppe tribes, nothing more then a simple bandit? Or perhaps he grew up training to be a knight. You get to decide all this.

*The combat is what makes this game great. Realistic and fast-paced. You control your character either mounted or on foot, with ranged weapons as well. On the field or during a siege, combat is full of action.

*You can control an army whom will fight with you in battle. You can serve a nation and gain a castle and a village to rule. You can do missions to gain money and reputation. You can help a disposed heir regain their throne. Or you could burn down a village and slaughter the peasants for their goods. The game is very open-ended.

The Bad

*The graphics are not top of the line and look somewhat aged to newer games. However it still includes rag-doll physics(fun in battle) and particle effects.

*The difficulty can be high sometimes, it takes time to learn how to play.

I would highly recommend anyone who enjoyed Oblivion or Morrowind to pick this up, and anyone in general as well who likes freeform RPGs or just something different that you don't see in popular games these days. If you want to try out a demo, check out Taleworlds website.

<http://www.taleworlds.com/>

FREE/SHAREWARE CORNER

NETHACK - The first game for a new part of my corner that I hopefully continue is Nethack. Nethack was originally released in 1987, but has been continuously openly developed since then. Nethack is a Rogue-like. For comparison, Diablo 1+2 is a roguelike as well. It has a randomly created dungeon full of monsters and treasure to find. Your goal is reach the bottom and find the Amulet of Yendor. However many funny and morbid deaths await you, as whenever you die you lose your character. Fun, full of awesome ASCII graphics, and completely free. Nethack is not to be missed.

<http://www.nethack.org/>



A Poem for Him...

By *LilDiamond057*

I've tried to avoid it,
told myself I wouldn't fall.
Yet me feet keep on slipping,
this isn't right at all.

You say no one loves you,
I can tell you that's not true.
Despite how broken you are,
I'm falling hard for you.

I know you can't love me,
'cause you don't love who you are.
I'll teach you to love yourself,
and I'll wish on every shooting star....

*This poem is dedicated to all of the victims of human trafficking across the world.
May all of them be remembered, loved, and honored for the suffering that they have stuck through in the
hopes of finally going home. May that wish be fulfilled.*

Moments

by *careyjonz95*

She sits in a dark crowded room,
Missing her Mother and clouded with thoughts,
Thoughts of those Moments.

The Moments when she was silenced,
The Moments she cried,

And Moments she tried to call out and got beaten.

When he told her not to speak,
Or it would be harder for her,
And the Moments he tied her up.

She was bound and helpless,
Sprawled across his bed,
And sedated.

As she nodded off,
He undresses her body,
And commences with the horrible act.

She wakes up in pain,
Knowing,
That in a few weeks,
It would happen again,
With someone else she doesn't know.

