

ISSUE 3 – 1ST JUNE 2025

OSA INSIGHT

Student Newspaper



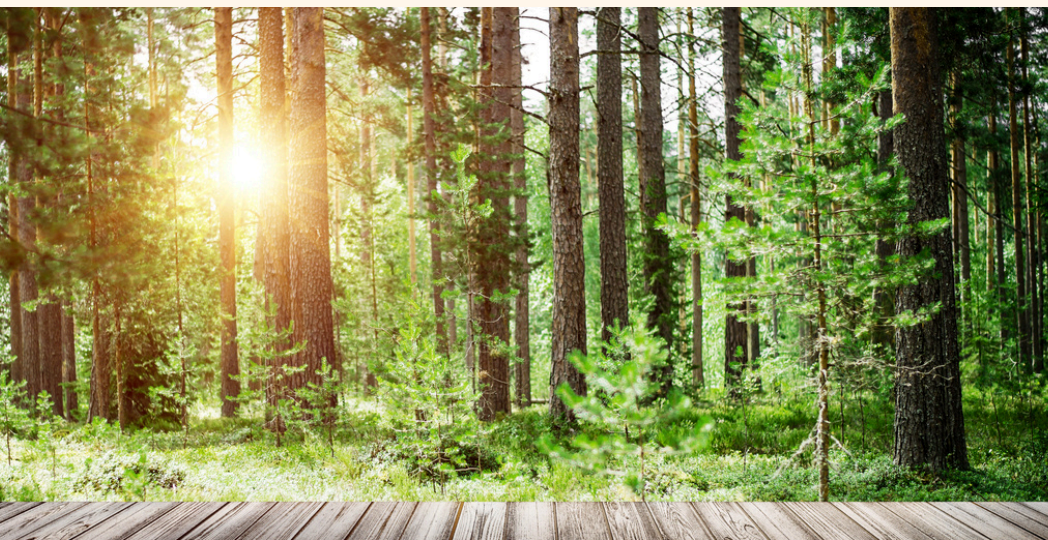
The Benefits of the Great Outdoors

BY HENRY GOWER

Spending time outdoors isn't just good for your physical health, it's great for your mental wellbeing too. Whether it's a walk in the park, playing sports, or just sitting in the sun, being outside can help you feel more relaxed and refreshed.

Fresh air and natural light boost your mood, reduce stress, and improve focus, perfect when you're balancing schoolwork, revision, and everyday pressures. Even a short break outside can clear your head and help you return to tasks with more energy and motivation.

Outdoor time also encourages physical activity, which is proven to improve sleep, concentration, and overall health. It's a chance to take a break from screens, stretch your legs, and enjoy a change of scenery. Try to make time each day to get outside, even if it's just for a few minutes. It's a simple habit that can make a big difference to how you feel and how well you work. So step out, breathe deeply, and give your brain a break. Nature's free, and it works.



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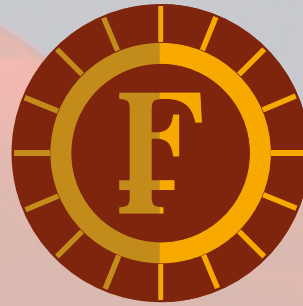
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Francoist Spain Summary (1939-75)

BY SOPHIA Y12



During the 1930s, the Spanish government was dominated by the democratic party that present this era as “The Second Spanish republic”. The provisional government of this Second Spanish republic -that held political power following the fall of Alfonso XIII of Spain- implemented a new constitution granting freedom of speech, association, voting rights to women, and allowed divorce. However, stirs of rebellions and uprisings from the right side of the political spectrum became more prominent and eventually amalgamated in the coup d of July d'état 1936. While it failed to seize control over any major cities (apart from Seville) it still saw Spanish military and territory being captured, claimed, which had drastic impact on the control and power of the Second Spanish Republic and precipitated the Spanish civil war. The Civil War was variously viewed as a conflict emerging due to religious or class struggles, or a struggle between fascism and communism. The idea of it being a dispute between two extremist political ideologies can be evidenced by the Republicans support from the Soviet Union or the Nationalists assistance from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy who supplied soldiers and weaponry. As the war progressed, Franco rejected various peace overtures and continued to claim territory while Republican factions began to deteriorate in Madrid. Following these events, Franco entered the Captial on April 1st, 1939, and proclaimed his victory and dictatorship over the Republic governmen

Franco then assumed the official title of “Su Excelencia el Jefe de Estado” and his period of dictatorship is commonly referred to as “Francoist Spain”. During this era, Franco led military campaigns that were characterized by brutal methods, such as violent suppression of opposition, executions that lacked trial, and mass imprisonments. Following the war, he established an authoritarian government that emphasized nationalism, Catholic conservatism, and rigid societal control, while aggressively silencing political opposition.

Due to him commencing his leadership a mere few months before the beginning of WW2, the stability of political power was low while the fragmentation of political ideologies was high. However, he managed to maintain a firm rule over the country by not immersing it within the depths of the war. On account of his radical nationalist standing, Franco favoured the Axis and offered Hitler assistance in return for their donation of extensive military supplies and economic aid to which Hitler declined. After this rejection, Franco simply stated Spain's neutrality which ensured they avoided being destroyed along with the axis powers come the end of the war. He then maintained his chosen political regime until his death in 1975 marking the end of the Francoist era.

What happens when we injure our brains?

BY MILA Y12



The human brain is incredible in its ability to learn, adapt and retain information, but what happens when the brain gets damaged? Localisation of brain function is a theory in psychology describing how specific functions are localised to specific areas of the brain. This theory has been extremely useful in neuroscience when investigating different areas of the brain through processes such as fMRI scans or electroencephalograms (EEGs) as it distinguishes areas as responsible for different things, for example the somatosensory cortex, which is responsible for touch sensations or Broca's area which is responsible for speech production, however what if these areas get damaged? Back in 1884 a railroad worker named Phineas Gage experienced extreme damage to his left frontal lobe, when an iron rod was driven through his skull. After his miraculous recovery Phineas demonstrated extreme changes in his behaviour and personality- some friends even describing him as 'No longer Gage' after the accident- however this was foundational in neuropsychology as this suggested the left frontal lobe was responsible for elements of personality and emotional behaviour. This also established the idea that the human brain is a collection of functional parts, so now what happens when brain injuries occur? A more modern example of how our brains react to damage is when people have strokes. Frequently after a stroke, areas of the brain called Broca's area (responsible for speech) and Wernicke's area (responsible for language comprehension) can be damaged, leaving patients with difficulties in making sense when speaking or even articulating words at all.

We now have specialised technology and research to investigate how damage affects the brain, we know that strokes can have these effects, but we are still unfamiliar with some mysteries in the brain. Although we are still discovering, some of the technology now is helping neuroscientists advance on exploration. MRI and fMRI scans are medical scans that both analyse brain structures non-invasively. FMRI scans also measure blood flow and detect changes in blood flow and oxygenation when completing different activities. Additionally, post-mortem examinations, which involves researching the tissue of deceased peoples' brains, give insight into the brain in real life and can be compared to neurotypical brains to detect any damages. Finally, an amazing discovery about the brain is the concept of neuroplasticity, meaning sometimes when an area of the brain is damaged other parts of the brain can take over the function. In conclusion, brain damage can teach us a lot about how the brain works and advancing research techniques are helping to proceed in understanding and fixing brain injuries. Thanks to the growth of biopsychology and neuropsychology we are uncovering more of the obscurities in the brain.

Zoroastrianism: The World's first monotheistic religion

BY TILLY Y12

The religion of Zoroastrianism is often a mystery to the average person; upon hearing the word 'Zoroastrian', many people will instantly think of astrology, as this would seem like a sensible approach, right? Well, not quite. Zoroastrianism as a whole has almost no relation to astrology whatsoever. The word itself derives from the name 'Zoroaster', which is a Hellenized (Greek) form of the name 'Zarathustra', an ancient Iranian name: 'Zarat' possibly meaning gold (or old, depending on the translation), and 'Ushtra' meaning Camel.

However, within Zoroastrianism, the name Zarathustra holds far more significance. The religion itself was founded c.1000 BCE, spreading throughout ancient Persia, making it arguably the World's first Monotheistic religion. It revolves solely around one singular God, whom the Persians called Ahura Mazda (meaning Wise Lord in Avestan, an ancient form of Farsi). This was a seemingly radical shift from prevailing Polytheism, becoming the state religion of multiple Ancient Persian empires, such as the Achaemenid, Parthian and Sasanian Empires. It has many different concepts, but the core principles within the religion for Zoroastrians to follow are 'Good thoughts, good words, good deeds', which encourage outwardly kind actions, highlighting the importance of living a harmonious and peaceful life. Being a Monotheistic religion, Zoroastrianism thus holds numerous parallels with religion such as Judaism,



Christianity and Islam. There are recurring ideas of Heaven and Hell, Angels and Demons, and even final judgement. However, there is also a common misconception that Zoroastrians worship fire, which would make it seem apparently against the concept of Monotheism, but this is not True. Zoroastrianism, like other religions, has key symbols which people learn to associate with their faith, fire being one of the main symbols linked to Zoroastrianism. In Ferdowsi's Shahnameh (Book of Kings), it is said fire was given as a gift from God (Ahura Mazda) for the King Hushang to leave as his legacy to Persia, and in the book Hushang is seen thanking God for the gift of fire not only with words, but with a festival, known as Sadeh, which is celebrated 50 days before Nowruz (Persian new year) and is a more discreet celebration towards the event, which is why the misconception of fires worship is often made.

In the modern World, Zoroastrianism is a small but very dedicated religion, with an extremely tight knit community. Infact, to most Iranians and members of the Parsi community, it is viewed as more of cultural symbol, and some will choose to wear a Faravahar, a winged symbol representing the Fravashi (the soul or guardian spirit of a person). Even if it holds no religious significance to them, some may argue its cultural roots are so meaningful that it is easy to separate its symbolism from the religion itself without any disrespect, and many will wear the Faravahar despite being members of a different Religion. In Iran, Zoroastrianism is still practiced amongst communities, but it is limited due to the Islamic Laws. However, Iran's government chooses to accept the existence of its festivals like Nowruz, Sadeh and Yalda, which are celebrated in the country much like Christmas and Eid are celebrated here.

So, it can be concluded that though Zoroastrianism has declined over the years, it is still a very much alive and practiced religion, holding deep cultural significance to many, even if its existence is mostly forgotten or ignored by the World today. Yet, it is important to remember that these early religions like Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Sikhism etc, have all contributed to many of the concepts, philosophies, ideologies and inventions still used to this day.



Is populism on the rise? – ReformUK win local elections

BY RAYYA Y12

ReformUK has emerged as the victor in this year's local elections, winning 677 councillors, far more than any other party. Now, this win may seem insignificant as local elections usually do not have a huge impact on national politics, as local elections don't really have an effect on the government unlike general elections. But this year seems to be different. Whether Reform's win is due to a shift towards the right wing in the country or simply a push back against the Labour government, we are yet to see, but unlike before, this election result has already changed the Prime Minister's views on immigration. On Monday the 12th of May, following the local elections on the 1st of May, PM Kier Starmer made a speech on the white paper on immigration being published that day where he announced cracking down on immigration, delivering a message very similar to Reform's anti immigrant rhetoric they've been shoving down people's throats for the last ten years. Perhaps most worrying of all, Starmer's speech seemed to echo Enoch Powell's Rivers of Blood speech in 1968, a controversial, racist, anti-immigration speech that led to Powell being removed from the cabinet.



It seems Starmer wants to return to 1968 as he says, “we are at risk of becoming an island of strangers”, eerily similar to Powell’s “they found themselves made strangers in their own country”. This is coming from a man who used to support immigration but has decided that the only way to beat Reform is to be more like them, a sacrifice of values and morals for votes, which begs the question, is this the beginning of politics’ dissent into populism? Kier Starmer is replicating the same tactics used by Nigel Farage and Donald Trump (classic populists), they choose whichever angle will get the most votes whether it’s pro-immigration or anti-immigration and if that view becomes unpopular, they just switch back and pretend nothing happened. It sounds like a stupid idea, but it looks like it’s working because if you look at the election results, populism seems to be winning.

Receipt for Smallpox.

$\frac{3}{4}$ OZ of Cream of Tartar.

12 Grains of Rhubarb.

1 Pint of Water, To take a wine glass, Night and Morning.

The Eradication of Smallpox: A Landmark in Medical History

BY ALEC Y12

It came like an invading army—silent, relentless, and without mercy. There were no soldiers marching in the streets or banners flying in the wind, but its presence was impossible to ignore. At first, it moved subtly: an unexplainable fever, a sudden chill, a slight cough. But soon its signs were unmistakable. Pockmarked lesions appeared, marching across the skin like the aftermath of a battle, leaving devastation in their wake. The army did not discriminate, striking both young and old, sweeping through entire villages and towns. No home was safe; no door could keep it out. Families were torn apart in mere days, and the streets grew eerily quiet as fear gripped every household. Survivors were left with scars, reminders of a ruthless invasion that had claimed both lives and peace of mind. This invisible enemy was smallpox—a force that ravaged bodies and communities, leaving an indelible mark on history.

For over 3,000 years, the merciless and incurable viral disease known as smallpox claimed hundreds of millions of lives due to its highly contagious nature and even higher mortality rate. Initial symptoms were rather mild; high fever and fatigue were very common. However, this was only the start of the perilous infection that was to follow.

Smallpox dates back as early as 1350 BC, with evidence of skin lesions found during the study of Egyptian mummies. As you might guess, these pus-filled abscesses were the most notable symptom of smallpox, alongside severe rashes and the initial flu-like symptoms. Those lucky enough to recover from the disease were left with permanent scarring, especially across their faces, a lifelong reminder of the pain they were forced to endure.

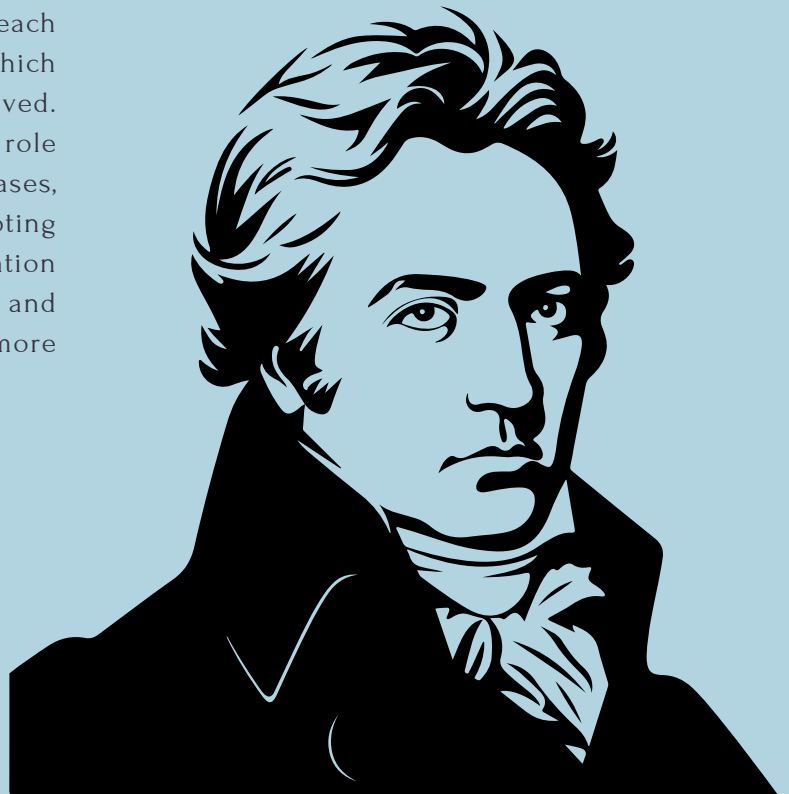
The ancient practice of variolation, which involved transferring small amounts of material from smallpox sores to healthy people, resulting in milder forms of illness and much lower mortality than natural infection, was a rather rudimentary approach to dealing with the virus. It wasn't until 1796, when British physician Edward Jenner used the same principle as variolation to develop the world's first vaccine.

Jenner used matter taken from pustules of cowpox, a less dangerous viral source which still caused similar symptoms to that of smallpox, to inoculate an eight-year-old boy, James Phipps. Phipps reacted to the cowpox matter and felt unwell for several days but made a full recovery, and two months later, Jenner took matter from a human smallpox sore and inoculated Phipps with it to test his resistance. Remarkably, Phipps was unaffected and showed no reaction to the smallpox virus, becoming the first person to be vaccinated against smallpox.

There was much resistance to Jenner and his vaccine at the time. This vaccine hesitancy was fuelled by rumours that the treatment would turn people into cows over time. But by 1801, through extensive testing, it was shown to effectively protect against smallpox. The vaccine soon became used globally, saving millions of lives and

preventing the spread of smallpox. Compulsory vaccination was introduced in Britain and parts of the United States during the 1840s and 1850s, which led to the creation of vaccination certificates required for travel. The World Health Organisation launched the Smallpox Eradication Programme in 1959, which improved vaccine production and developed containment strategies. In 1980, smallpox had been successfully eradicated.

Vaccines continue to prevent millions of deaths each year. Jenner's work serves as a foundation from which the principles of modern medicine have been derived. His pioneering efforts highlight the critical role vaccines play in controlling infectious diseases, protecting vulnerable populations, and promoting global public health. In an era where misinformation can spread as quickly as disease, understanding and valuing the science behind vaccination is more important than ever.



Composer of the Month: Mac Demarco

BY CARA Y12

DeMarco is a Canadian singer, composer and instrumentalist. Having released his first album, 2', in 2012, Mac DeMarco has released 5 studio albums, 2 mini albums and 2 compilation albums since. He began learning the guitar in secondary school, unusually taking lessons from his grandma, who lived with them as a result of DeMarco's dad abandoning him when he was 4, and refusing to pay for child support. DeMarco also began smoking at around that time, which became a large part of his musical persona. Struggling to find the money to live as a musician at the start of his career, DeMarco simultaneously participated in medical experiments and worked as a road paver. Due to his manic depression, DeMarco's music draws largely upon emotional loss and sadness, and describes his debut album as "every angle of how somebody might feel if they're having strange feelings in their chest." Alongside music, Mac Demarco is fascinated by art and created his own psychedelic music videos, which add to the atmosphere created by his music.

Recommended song: No Other Heart



This Month in History - June

BY CORDELIA AND RUTH Y12

Welcome to This Month in History, where we cover historical events that happened each month. From famous births to groundbreaking discoveries, we'll explore what made June unforgettable!



Deaths

8th June 1913 - Suffragette Emily Davison lost her life 4 days after throwing herself in front of a horse at the Epsom Derby. This was a huge event, with King George V himself there! She did it to raise awareness to the importance of women being able to vote, which was finally achieved 5 years later.

7th June 1954 - Alan Turing, mathematician and computer scientist, committed suicide by consuming cyanide - although there is debate over whether this was accidental or not. He aided Britain's victory in WWII greatly through cracking German coded messages, and is also considered the father of the computer, laying important groundwork for future technology such as AI.

3rd June 2016 - Muhammad Ali, the world's most famous boxer, died of health issues at the age of 74. He was also known for his social activism, for example he supported the civil rights movement of the 1960s and was a conscientious objector to being drafted for the Vietnam War.

Births

28th June 1491 - King Henry VIII was born, and would grow up to be famous for having six wives and beheading two of them. He also created the Church of England in order to divorce his first wife, which some of you will know if you've seen the musical Six!

25th June 1903 - Famous author of 'Animal Farm' and '1984', George Orwell, was born in India. Yet what many don't know is that he wasn't just an author, he was also a police officer, teacher, BBC propagandist, and fought in the Spanish Civil War voluntarily.

12th June 1924 - American president George H. W. Bush was born into a very rich Massachusetts family. He has gone down unfavourably in the history books, as he famously promised "No new taxes!", then immediately raised them...



Events

15th June 1215 - King John signed the Magna Carta, a document that removed total power from the monarchy - for example, he could no longer imprison or kill anyone he liked for no reason!

6th June 1944 - The largest sea-based invasion in history, D-Day, took place, and marked the start of the Allies liberating Western Europe from Nazi control. It's also the birthday of one of our authors, Ruth!

4th June 1989 - Students in China had been protesting for more freedom and less political corruption for a few weeks, but on this day the government sent in the military with tanks and guns, with hundreds or maybe even thousands of people being killed. Famously known as the 'Tiananmen Square Massacre', this tragedy is censored by the current Chinese government, so no one in China is allowed to even mention it.



Firsts

5th June 1783 - The first unsustained flight occurred, it being a hot air balloon in France. It rose 6000 ft in the air, marking the start of developments in flight that would eventually lead us to planes today. It was then repeated a few months later, with a sheep, rooster and duck being the passengers!

16th June 1963 - Soviet Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman in space, completing 48 orbits in 71 hours and then returning safely to Earth. 20 years later but also in June, the first American woman went into space, Sally Ride!

13th June 1971 - The first of the Pentagon Papers were published in the New York Times. These were secret government documents about how badly the Vietnam War was going, and were important because they proved that the White House had been lying about the war, pretending it was going better for America than it was.

And that's it! Stay tuned for next month, when we'll be exploring exciting Julys across history. However, it's impossible for us to summarise every event, so if you discover something interesting, why not send it in? You might just see your contribution in next month's article!

To do so, email either 19rconmy@oxfordspires.anthemtrust.uk or 19cscottermainprize@oxfordspires.anthemtrust.uk.

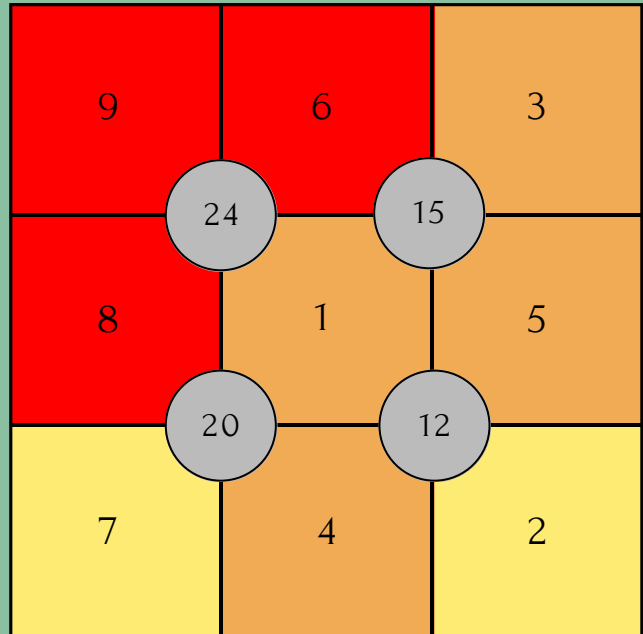
Puzzles - Answers

BY KATRINA Y12

Chess

Knight-> e4
King-> g8
Rook-> g1
King-> g7
Knight-> f6
King-> h8
Pawn-> g7

Suko



Magic Square

2	7	6
9	5	1
4	3	1

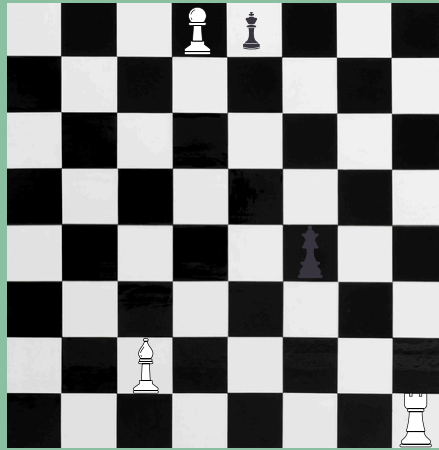
Word Wheel

Due, hue, pun, pus, sue, sun, ups, use, dues, dune, dupe, hued, hues, puns, push, shun, spud, spun, sued, used, dunes, dupes, pause, upend, paused, pushed, unshed, upends, upsend, unshaped

Chess

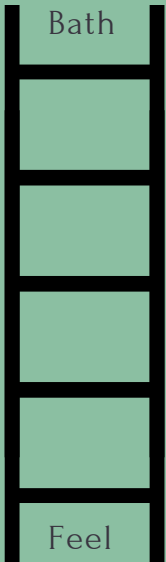
Puzzles

BY KATRINA Y12



It is White's turn. What sequence of moves made by both sides of the game would result in White checkmating Black? How short is your solution?

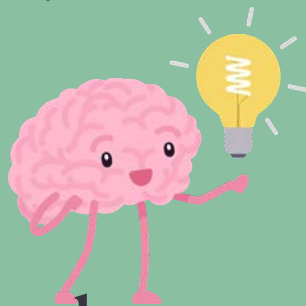
We found a 3-move solution (2 moves white, 1 move black)



Word Ladder



Change one letter to make a new word each time. Try to make the final word by the time you reach it



Sudoku

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

Tree Sum

Below is a tree of numbers. Each number has 2 others below it until you get to the bottom layer.

What is the largest sum that can be made by adding one number from each layer, where the numbers connect to make a path from the bottom layer to the top? Is there an efficient, consistent way to do this?

