

The Muckraker's Independent John F. Kennedy School Student

QUARANTINE

Week Three: Boredom



Lena Walker

Watch everything pass you by
What to do, when all the boxes have been checked
every surface has been wiped down twice
the screen in your hand will no longer suffice
to distract you from the dawning sky
mist rolling over fields, blessed by sun's early kiss

the handle on grandfather's clock
has done its journey twice
a.m. to p.m.

candle flames grow weaker
flicker closer to the ground
wax spreading on cedar wood

a robin's call
rings in a brand new day

Johanna Tigges

Dear Reader,
For our third issue of Quarantine, we examined a feeling most of you will have grappled with at some point during these last few weeks: boredom. Feeling numbed out and fresh out of ideas, just sitting in your room and doing nothing, because there's nothing better to do. However, we've discovered that this state of lacking inspiration ironically can become inspiration itself. So, we hope you enjoy you peers' work on boredom, may it make your day a little more exciting.

June Gromis

Next theme: **Family**
What does that mean to you?
Let us know.

A Linguistic Approach to Defining Boredom

When I read, thoroughly enjoyed, and then looked for next week's topic in the second issue of Quarantine, I was not surprised. Boredom—perhaps the only permanent, certain, unyielding companion of time. And the only expectation I had about school closure that actually fulfilled itself. When I saw the question about Boredom the staff had come up with, my interest was sparked. What does Boredom mean to you? I didn't have an answer then, I don't have a definite answer now—because what even is Boredom? Is it a feeling? Is it a state? Is it even something when really, when I'm "bored" all I feel and think is the absence and lack of what I would like or need, nothing? I decided to look Boredom up. Google: "the state of being bored" (Source: Google Dictionary). That sadly did not satisfy my question, so I tried searching in different languages. Langeweile. Ennui. Noia. And what I realized was that while all these words supposedly have the same meaning, all translating back to boredom, they all literally meant different things.

In English, the word boredom stems from the action of "being a bore", which meant to be tiresome or dull (Wikipedia). From that we learn that in English, boredom means to feel tiresome or dull, likely resulting from being exposed to something tiresome or dull that influences us. In German, the word Langeweile is composed of two words: lange and Weile—long while. That's interesting. In itself, the word Langeweile simply means long time. That implies that while Boredom would probably be described as a feeling or a state by most, it results from long, too much time.

The French word ennui actually also exists in English. It developed from the Old French word ennui, which meant annoyance (etymonline.com). This word in turn was likely derived from the Latin mihi in odio est, 'it is hateful to me' (Oxford). From that we learn that in French, Boredom is closely related to annoyance, which might be caused by someone or something showing aversion towards us. The Ital-

ian word for Boredom, noia, is also related to this. Now, these are all European languages, more so, central European. I would have loved to research other languages, but it was difficult to find etymologies. But even just looking at three languages I was surprised at how different the meanings inherent to the literal word were. Boredom in English: feeling tiresome or dull as the cause of having been exposed to something else, also tiresome or dull. Boredom in French, strikingly different: closely related to annoyance as the cause of being exposed to someone or something hateful towards you. And German: a long time.

I have to admit that although once again having had the pleasure to experience the marvel of languages, I can't come up with a universal definition for Boredom. I frankly can't even come up with one for myself. But I wonder: To what extent is the way we perceive boredom connected to the language we grew up with? I grew up with English and German and I definitely find tiresome and dull and a long time more connected to my experience of boredom than annoyance. Would that be different if my mother tongue had been Italian? In the end, Boredom is different for everyone. For some it's necessary for survival, for others its productive, for others it's horrific, Boredom is absolutely ambiguous—and so are, ultimately, its definitions.

Anonymous



Liliana Walker

Boredom

I went to the brain-tenderizing facility the other day.

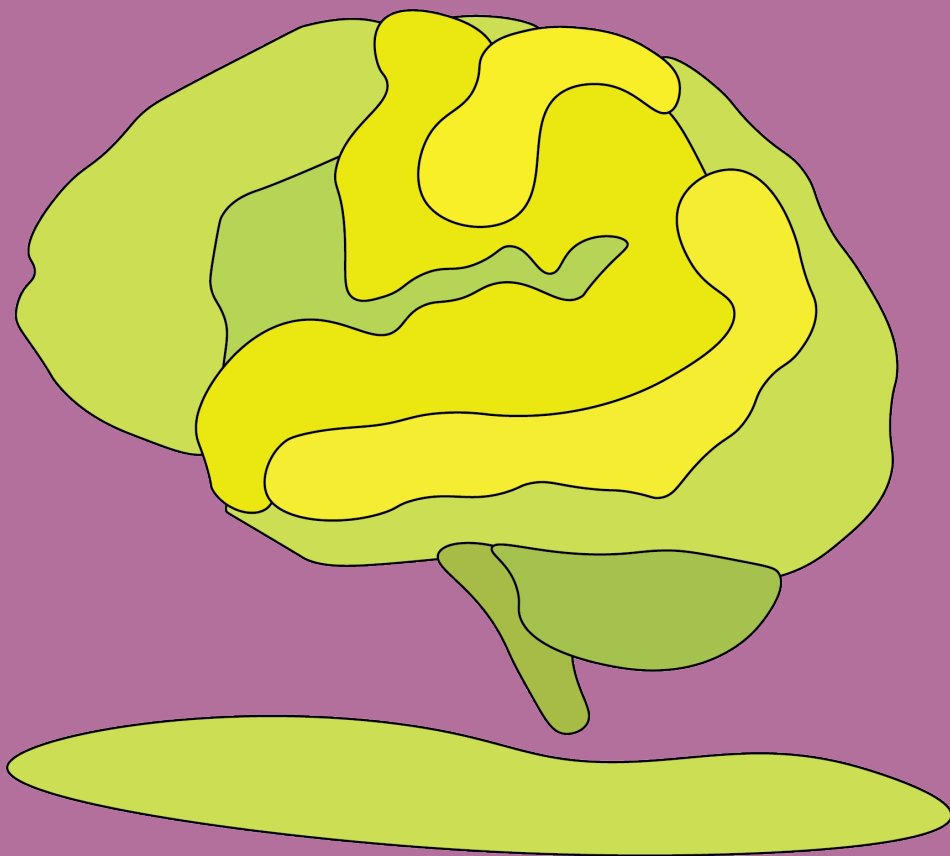
I underwent a simple procedure to get my brain tenderized:

1. They cut it out of my head then
2. pounded it with a meat mallet till it was nice and tender, and all the brain juices were
3. flowing into their big brain box™
4. The big brain box™ has a lock only I can open, so my brain juices are nice and safe
5. Then my brain got popped back into my head, and I woke up a new woman

Having a tenderized brain comes with many advantages:

1. Life is smooth, all the rough parts have been cut out
2. I don't see more than what is there
3. I can sit in place for hours and not be bothered
4. Dirt off the street tastes like a five-course meal
5. I feel the way I feel the way I feel the way I feel the way I feel the way I feel the way I feel
6. I don't feel

June Gromis



Liliana Walker

Boredom: A Dangerous Opponent

When we think of the dangers of the current Corona-crisis, the things that come to mind perhaps include the threat of the virus itself, the collapse of our medical system, the economic recession, or the political instability that may follow the crisis, but there is one consequence that may be more threatening to us than any of the above: boredom. Okay, so obviously, boredom doesn't seem like a very menacing threat, after all, it is something we experience almost every day at some point, but excessive boredom that may be brought upon by social distancing and isolation can actually be a real threat to your mental health. As more and more amenities such as restaurants, clubs, and bars get shut down, people start to attempt to entertain themselves at home. The problem with that is that there is only so much to do, even constant Netflix binges get old after a while. Unfortunately, the upcoming vacation may actually be a turn for the worse regarding this situation. As much as we all like to complain about it, the digital schooling that we have been doing over the past weeks, it not only gave us something fulfilling to do but also ensured that we maintain somewhat of a normal daily schedule. Sure, you may wake up a couple of hours later than usual but for the most part, the homework gave us a structure to our day. With vacation coming up, this support structure will be removed, however. This does not apply to all students, as many students will spend the next weeks practicing for AP tests or Klausuren, but even these students must now work on their own schedule, without due dates or anyone telling them when to do what. Without a structure to our day, many may lose discipline and fall into an empty void of boredom and unfulfilling activities. And this is more than a minor annoyance, many studies have linked excessive boredom to increased rates of anxiety and depression, and many experts believe that there may be a positive feedback loop, in which boredom is both a trigger and a symptom of depression. Obviously, this is an extreme example, but it goes to show the effect that extensive boredom can have on the mind. Online, people are making all sorts of suggestions on what to do with the extra time, such as learning a language, writing a story and such and those things are wonderful except for the fact that most people don't want to do them. The truth of the matter is that there is no universal answer for what to do during self-isolation, you have to find something that works for you. Personally, I try to stay sane by taking long walks through my



Brooke Betten

neighborhood as well as parks, which should be safe as long as you keep your distance to other people and wash your hands afterward. However, the one thing that must be maintained at all costs is discipline. That does not mean that you cannot relax during the break, but studies show that maintaining discipline even in your free time leads to a happier and more fulfilling experience. Please take care of yourself and remain diligent and prudent.

Jakob Reuter

modern boredom

by now we've stopped tugging at our mother's
pant leg
desperate to be entertained by tickles or a game

we've stopped pestering our dads to come outside
for a round of hide-and-seek

we've learned to occupy ourselves
we've been handed the keys to all the gates in the
world
and they swing open by a mere tap of the finger

yet we find ourselves bored
are the colors not vivid
the action not dangerous
the tales not wild enough?
or maybe we've just been flooded
and now we're numb

Johanna Tigges



Brooke Betten



Brooke Betten

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