

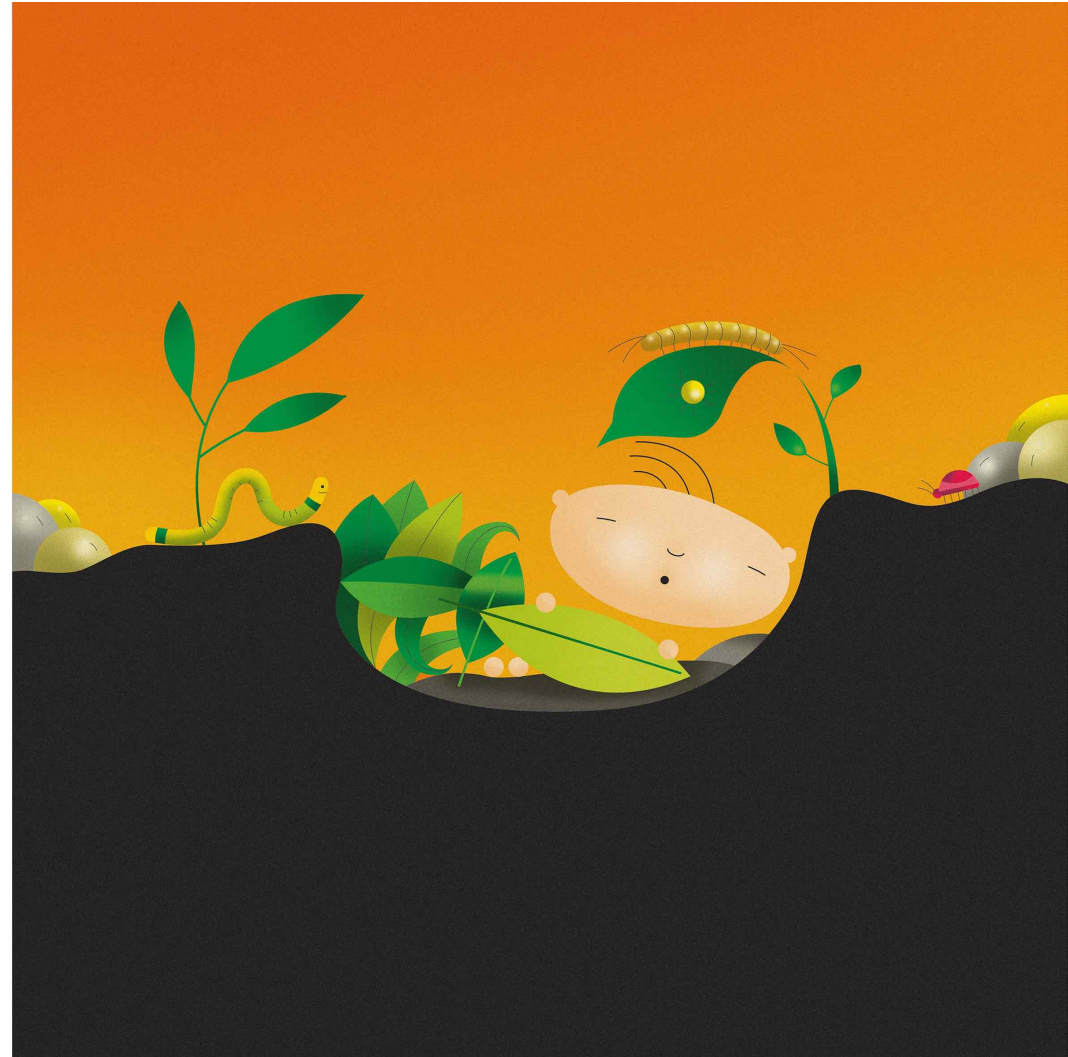
ALPHABET

Writing was invented about 6000 years ago in a place called Mesopotamia, where Iraq is located now. It started from drawings -- by having images that represented what the people wanted to write about. As with language, writing has changed and many different writing styles developed in different places. Some places use a script that is close to this idea of having a symbol for each thing that we write about, like Chinese, but the script we use now in English is called the Roman script, and it comes to us from Egypt, through Greece and then Latin. Just like you, thousands of years ago, little children would learn their ABCs in their own language, where it was called something different. In ancient Greece, A was alpha, and B was beta, so little Greek children in the ancient world would learn alpha-beta-s, or the alphabet.



BED

The word bed comes from a very old word bhedh that meant to dig. This is because many thousands of years ago, before people made and used furniture, they would sleep in a shallow hole dug in the ground. Sometimes they put leaves, furs, straws or something else in this hole to make it more comfortable. In time people realized that if they could lift this place where they slept higher it would not get so dirty, it would be warmer, and it would be farther away from various creepy crawlies. And they could also move it around, and maybe put it next to the window, so they can see the stars at night.

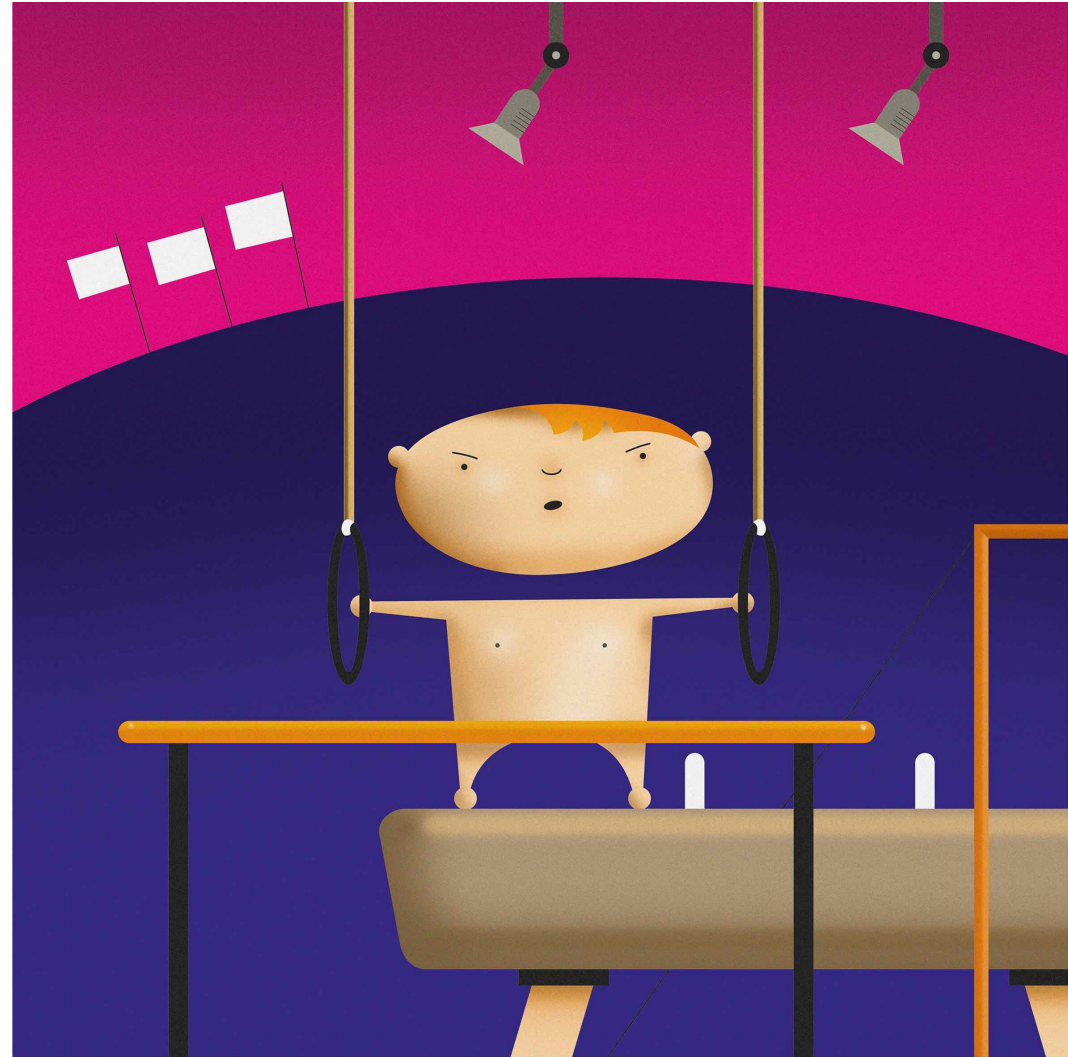


GYMNASTICS

After eating biscuits it's good to do some exercise.

Actually, physical exercise is very good for you anytime, and thousands of years ago Greeks already knew that and encouraged gymnastics and other physical activities.

In those days people were less shy about their bodies, and thought that clothes interfered with the movement, so they trained naked. Gymnastics comes from the Greek word *gymnos*, which means naked, and *gymnazein* meant literally to train naked. But now we almost always wear clothes, and often pants.



MUSCLE

Whether we like mice or not, they've been around for many many years. They were not always called mice though: in the old Latin language that the Romans spoke, a little mouse was called musculus. Around that time, somebody noticed that our own muscles are rather similar to those tiny mice. The movement of the biceps in particular - the muscles we have on our upper arms - was thought to resemble mice moving under the skin, and this is how we got a new meaning for musculus. Believe it or not, muscles and mice are drawn from the same old Latin word!



PANTS

Several hundred years ago puppet theater was very much loved in Europe, maybe they were like animation movies are for us nowadays. In many plays there was a character representing a Venetian -- someone who lived in Venice. His name was Pantalone, after the protector saint of Venice -- Saint Pantaleone. This puppet was wearing some clothing that was very popular in Venice, but other people found it strange -- it covered his lower body only, and his legs separately. Because this item of clothing was very much associated with this puppet, it was called after the puppet's name Pantalone, which in English became pantaloons. Since it is quite a long word and it is used quite frequently, it was shortened to pants.



SCHOOL

Some two thousands of years ago, during the Roman Empire, when people were taking a break from work, in Latin they would call that time off schola. It really meant a time of leisure and idleness, and also a time for conversation and debates. After a while, around year 1300, the meaning of the old word schola evolved from a time for discussions to a time for learning and interaction between students and teachers. And eventually we got the school that we know today, meaning a place of instruction. Next time you go to school, you should think of that old meaning: you are really going for some leisure time! Especially if you like math and playing with digits.

