

SQUARE POO MYSTERY SOLVED!



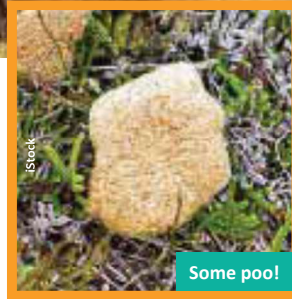
Wombats, part of the marsupial family, are native to Australia

SCIENTISTS have puzzled over why wombats have cube-shaped poo for years.

Now, they seem to have cracked it. A team of researchers in Australia has worked out the square shape forms in the mammal's intestines, not as it pops out of its bum. Previously, some experts thought the poo became a cube as it was squeezed through bones in the wombat's pelvis. Another slightly bonkers theory was that the creatures moulded their poo into square shapes after depositing them. But the new research suggests the dung passes through two sets of muscles in the intestines – one that is stiff, and one that is more flexible. The changes in muscle thickness are what is moulding the poo into cubes.

So that explains how they become cubes, but it still leaves the question 'why'. Dr Scott Carver of the University of Tasmania, who led the new research, thinks it might be because wombats communicate with each other using their poo smells, and that the cube shape helps stop it from rolling away.

The study was published in the journal *Soft Matter*.



Some poo!

CLIMATE IS AN EMERGENCY, SAY MAJORITY



Deforestation of the Amazon in Brazil

THE largest opinion poll about climate change ever carried out has found that two out of three people think it is now a global emergency.

The United Nations Development Programme ran a huge survey with the University of Oxford called the People's Climate Vote. Citizens in 50 countries were surveyed – including over half a million people under the age of 18. They were asked if climate change was a global emergency and whether they supported 18 climate policies across six action areas: economy, energy, transport, food and farms, nature and protecting people. Results show a clear majority of people want their governments to take bold and urgent action. For example, in eight of the ten countries with the highest emissions, majorities supported more renewable energy. More than half of those surveyed want forests and land to be conserved. Under-18s were more likely to say climate change was an emergency, while more women and girls in the US, UK, Australia and Canada were more concerned about global warming than boys and men. A total of 81% of people in the UK thought there was a climate emergency.

DOGS LEARN WORDS

DOGS are able to learn the names of new objects.

That's the conclusion of a new study from Hungary, which found that, through play, man's best friend is able to quickly remember the names of different things. The scientists carried out tests on two dogs: a border collie and a Yorkshire terrier. In the first experiment, the dogs were presented with a new object in the middle of seven toys they already recognised. The owners instructed the dog to fetch one of the items by its name. In the second test, the dogs played with a new toy while the owner repeatedly said the toy's name. Both dogs were able to pick out the toys by name – including the new toy, whose name they hadn't heard before. They seemed to know what the new toy was by a process of elimination, which means they excluded the items they already knew by name and then worked out only the new toy was left.



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CLOWNING AROUND HELPS

A NEW review of several scientific studies has found that clowns help children and young people in hospital feel better.

A total of 24 studies from ten countries, involving children and adolescents aged 2 to 18, were included. Each study looked at the use of hospital clowns and standard care, compared to standard care alone. The findings suggest clowns can ease both anxiety and pain that children feel when they're in hospital for a major procedure or long-term treatment. In some cases, symptoms of illness ended earlier when children played with clowns. But not everyone agrees: a tiny percentage of people have a fear of clowns, called coulrophobia.



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SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP

This report is from the Science Museum in London

DID you know the first home videogame console, the Magnavox Odyssey, was released almost 50 years ago?

While videogames might seem like part of the latest tech, consoles and popular arcade games like *Space Invaders* and *Pac-Man* first appeared in the 1970s and '80s. Before that you would have had to stick to playing board games for fun. The videogames industry is booming and it's predicted that the UK games market could be worth a whopping £10 billion by 2023. Can you see yourself becoming the next big game programmer, developer, or designer? This month, as part of the Yorkshire Games Festival: Bonus Level, discover what it takes to work in the games industry and check out some amazing resources at tinyurl.com/5g1ot60a.



Science Museum Group

First News has teamed up with **sky KIDS** show **FYI** and the **young audiences CONTENT FUND** to make a series of videos for you to watch at home or at school, called *I Don't Get It*. The plan is to explain stuff that can be complicated or difficult to understand. This week, Ruby explores what can be done to tackle the issue of bullying.

HOW TO BEAT THE BULLIES

SKY Kids FYI presenter Ruby spoke to Place2be and YoungMinds mental health ambassador Katie Thistleton, to learn the difference between 'banter' and bullying.

HAVE you ever been bullied? If so, you're not the only one. In fact, three out of five people are thought to have been bullied at some point.

There are lots of different types of bullying. Bullying could be calling someone mean names, spreading rumours, purposely excluding someone from groups, stealing stuff, threatening people – or even hurting someone.

It can happen anywhere, too – even online.

Sometimes it can be tricky to know the difference between banter and bullying, so Ruby asked mental health ambassador Katie Thistleton for advice.

Katie said: "We all like a bit of banter. It's good to have a sense of humour and you don't want to seem like the one in the group that doesn't like a laugh, but I think we use the word banter a lot when some of the things people are saying can be quite hurtful. So if you find that somebody's words are upsetting you and getting you down, that's not banter, it's bullying."

A report from LGBT+ charity Stonewall found that nearly half of LGBT+ pupils are bullied in school because of their gender or sexual orientation.

Katie told Ruby that "banter should never be about somebody's race, someone's appearance, their sexuality or their disability."

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU'RE BULLIED?

One idea from Ruby is "if someone's sending nasty messages over a social media site, just take some screenshots or screen recordings so you've got a record of it, and then just block them."

"If they still find a way to keep on bullying you, then I reckon you should tell an adult you trust. It can be a mum, a dad or even a teacher at school."

Katie also advises that "it is always a good idea to try to talk to a trusted adult like a parent or a teacher, but if you feel like you can't do that, there are helplines as well that you can call." We've put a few in the box below.

After all, as Katie says, we should try to remember that we "should never feel ashamed or embarrassed about the fact that you've been bullied. So many people get bullied – I was bullied – it doesn't matter what you look like, what clothes you wear, how you talk – we're all really different, but that's what makes us really special and amazing. Be proud of who you are."

It's never good to ignore bullying, since it can start to have an impact on your mental health.

Ruby reckons the best thing to do is to talk about it and get it sorted before it turns into an even bigger problem – and we agree here at First News!

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT BULLYING?



NEED SUPPORT?

CHILDLINE

Childline is the UK's free, confidential helpline for children and young people.
Helpline: 0800 11 11
Website: childline.org.uk

EACH

EACH has a freephone helpline for children experiencing homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying or harassment.
Helpline: 0808 1000 143

THE MIX

Offers support to anyone under 25 about anything that's troubling them.
Helpline: 0808 808 4994
Website: www.themix.org.uk/get-support



Ruby talking to mental health ambassador Katie Thistleton

IN 2019, A STUDY BY CHARITY 'DITCH THE LABEL' FOUND THE MOST COMMON TYPE OF BULLYING WAS VERBAL BULLYING. CYBERBULLYING WAS THE LEAST COMMON

Kids – to find out more, watch the full *I Don't Get It* video on how to beat bullying at first.news/IDGI

Teachers – you can watch the film in the classroom alongside our tie-in award-winning educational resources at schools.firstnews.co.uk

13. BIG INTERVIEW

Can you tell us a bit about your new story, *Two Terrible Vikings*?

My new book is about the riotous adventures of Viking twins Hack and Whack, their wolf cub Bitey-Bitey, their friends Dirty Ulf, the girl who hates baths, and Twisty Pants, who is always bragging about how many ogres and sea monsters he has battled. Hack and Whack track trolls, go raiding and steal all the presents at a birthday party. So the stories are a mixture of wild fun and how I imagine life might have been for children in a Viking village.

What made you choose Vikings as the characters for this book?

I love Norse mythology and I love funny books about naughty rebellious children, so I combined both ideas. Vikings are pirates, after all, and because Hack and Whack are young Vikings, their parents want them to be bad. So they can steal boats, run off to sea, and rampage. They have enormous freedom and so do I.

Did it take a lot of planning to create the new characters?

My characters tend to evolve as I write, but I have adored making up the names for the Viking children. I have lists of Norse names for giants and dwarves and I often refer to them to help me come up with characters. My newest one is an evil berserker called Grunt Iron-Skull.

Hack and Whack are quite naughty! Were they inspired by anyone in particular and what is the naughtiest thing they do?

They are entirely imaginary! I think stealing a boat and sailing off to raid Bad Island is pretty naughty by our standards, but not by Viking ones.



Steve May

Horrid Henry is a bit naughty too, so what is it about naughty characters that you like writing so much?

I like their energy and the way they do unexpected things. This gives me a lot of freedom as a writer to open doors marked 'Do Not Enter'.

The book has lots of great illustrations. How closely do you work with the illustrator to make your vision come to life?

Good question. I see my role more as choosing a brilliant illustrator and then standing back and admiring what they do. Steve May is such a funny illustrator, and I knew instantly he was perfect for this



Steve May



Helen Gillies

VIKING ADVENTURES

HORRID Henry creator Francesca Simon is back this week with a brand-new tale about a pair of mischievous Viking twins. We found out why she's so fond of coming up with naughty characters!

book. I think my only suggestion was to have lots of dust around Dirty Ulf, in homage [paying respect] to Pig-Pen, one of my favourite Peanuts characters.

Have you ever had a go at illustrating?

I am a truly terrible artist, so no!

You studied medieval history when you were younger, so is there any other era that you would like to set your books in?

I think I'll stick to Viking era Scandinavia for now. I have, however, always wanted to write a book set in medieval France.

Will we see any more stories about Hack and Whack?

Yes! I'm writing the new book as we speak.

Lots of families are spending more time at home, so do you think this is a great opportunity for kids to practise their writing?

Absolutely. But they should write the stories they want, to live freely in their imaginations, and not worry about their spelling or what they ought to write.



Steve May

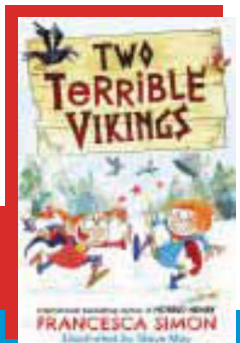
What advice would you give to kids who want to write their own books?

Keep a notebook and write down any ideas that strike you. Then try mixing up those ideas. Think of a story as a journey. How is your character different at the end from the beginning? What's happened to them to make them change? Ask yourself lots of questions. The answers will be your story. What does your character WANT more than anything? And WHO or WHAT is stopping them getting what they want? When you know the answer, you can get writing.

If you could give ten-year-old you a piece of advice, what would it be?

One day, your frizzy curly hair will be admired by everyone and no-one will ever call you 'Fire Hazard' again. So always be yourself and enjoy who you are.

Two Terrible Vikings by Francesca Simon is out now!



CHARITIES SUPPORTED BY FIRST NEWS

HAVE A LAUGH FOR RED NOSE DAY



Comic Relief

COMIC Relief 2021 launched this week, so some of the celebrities taking part have shared their red nose portraits and their reasons for why laughter is so important!

JOE SUGG

"Let's face it, after what has been a very difficult year for many, we could all do with raising our spirits, and Comic Relief is one of those charities that helps do just that while supporting those who need it most. I like to always see the funny side in everything, and I'd say it's my way of coping with things; I'd say it's something we all have in common, that just makes the world a nicer place."

KARIM ZEROUAL

"I'm so excited to be involved in this year's Red Nose Day campaign – I've been a huge supporter of Comic Relief for many years and taking part in last year's The Heat is On challenge in Namibia was by far one of my proudest achievements to date. To me, Red Nose Day is all about having a laugh while raising money for those who need it most, and I can't think of an easier way to help than by picking up some of these amazing goodies if you can spare a little change."



Comic Relief



Comic Relief

DAME JUDI DENCH

"I absolutely believe in laughter being the best medicine. Red Nose Day is something we can all enjoy, and goodness knows during this lockdown everyone has relied so much on television and seeing as many films as they can. I look forward to it enormously. I hope we all have a wonderful laugh and at the same time donate something, as it goes to a very, very good cause."

BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH

"I think laughter is a panacea [cure]; it's always been a national medicine. I think people reached out for it in lockdown; it's a way of getting through life's difficulties and releases the tension to just have a moment's respite from it. And that relief is much needed now."

MO GILLIGAN

"There's just something so special about laughter and its ability to bring people together. Comic Relief has never felt more needed, especially when so many people have had it so tough right across the last year. I'm proud to do whatever I can to help this year's incredible campaign."

SIR LENNY HENRY, COMIC RELIEF CO-FOUNDER

"The last 12 months have been difficult and uncertain for all of us. And the most vulnerable in our communities have been hit hardest. Together, for 35 years, we've seen how having a laugh can make a difference. Laughter has the power to connect people. To bring us together. And can give us a moment of escape. Red Nose Day will be different this year. But we'd love you to join us, even if it's just to share a laugh. If we raise some money along the way, then brilliant. We know that when times are tough, laughter really can make a difference."

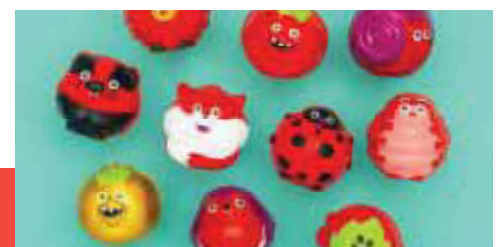


Comic Relief

DID YOU KNOW?

This year, the ten Red Nose Day noses are

100% plastic-free! They're plant-based and made from a by-product of sugarcane called bagasse. The noses are designed to look like cute woodland creatures! Get yours from Sainsbury's or comicrelief.com/shop.



Comic Relief's Red Nose Day is on Friday 19 March. There's a whole night of brilliant and funny TV to entertain the whole family and to raise money for the projects supported by Comic Relief!