

Celebrating Laughter Through Books

Every April 1st, Reading Is Funny Day encourages children and adults to embrace the joy of reading through humour. Laughter makes learning fun, and funny books help develop a lifelong love for reading. From silly rhymes to hilarious stories, humorous literature enhances vocabulary, boosts creativity, and improves comprehension skills. Parents and teachers can celebrate by sharing joke books, comics, or funny read-alouds. Whether it's Dr. Seuss's playful rhymes or a witty graphic novel, laughter-filled reading fosters imagination and connection. So, grab a funny book today and enjoy the magic of reading with a smile!



#SPRING



The Festivals That Unite Us

Nowruz: The Persian New Year
In my home, Nowruz has always been sacred. On March 21st, the air is filled with the aroma of sabzi polo-fragrant herbed rice, while the Haft-Sin table stands as a tribute to renewal and hope. Each item on the table tells a story: wheatgrass for rebirth, garlic for health, vinegar for patience, a mirror for self-reflection, coloured eggs for fertility, and goldfish for life and movement. Candles glow with the promise of enlightenment, while the pages of *Hafez's Divan*, the *Quran*, or the *Shahnameh* whisper ancient wisdom. Among them, the pomegranate, the fruit of paradise, reminds us of abundance and love. Apples shine with beauty, and hyacinths fill the air with the scent of spring. Red tulips stand bold for love and strength, while daffodils, roses, and jasmine weave in the joy of renewal. We jump over fire, marked by *Chaharshanbe Suri*, the festival of fire. People leap over flames, chanting, "Give me your redness, take my paleness!" which is a plea to the fire to burn away sickness and misfortune. It reminds me of the Hindu ritual of *Holika Dahan*, where bonfires are lit the night before Holi to cleanse away negativity. Across cultures, fire serves as a purifier, a symbol of transformation. But when I first celebrated Nowruz outside of Iran, I realized something when Persians leap over fire, we are not alone. The Hindus do it for Holi. The Celts do it for Beltane. The Jews light the Paschal fire for Easter. The fire is the same. The message is the same.

Songkran: A Thai Holi?

Did you think Holi is the only festival where water is splashed on you? Think again. In Thailand, *Songkran*, the Thai New Year, celebrated from April 13th to 15th, turns entire cities into a water-soaked playground. Buckets, water guns, and even elephants join in, drenching people in a cleansing ritual meant to wash away the past year's misfortunes. Just like Holi's vibrant colours symbolize renewal, *Songkran's* water fights are not just for fun, they are deeply rooted in Buddhist traditions of purification and respect. Families gather to pour scented water over Buddha statues and the hands of elders, seeking blessings for the new year. But outside, in the streets, it's a free-for-all, where strangers become friends, and the worries of yesterday are washed away. Different origins, different customs, but the same spirit. Whether it's Holi's water balloons, *Songkran's* soaking streets, or even Cambodia's *Chaul Chnam Thmey* and Myanmar's *Thingyan* water festivals, the message is universal: let go, cleanse, rejoice, and step into the new year with laughter and light. And let's not forget the gathering of loved ones and dressing up in brand new clothes! Because in the end, no matter where we are, we all celebrate survival, renewal, and the joy of our past!

Holi: India's Festival of Colours

Holi has spread far beyond India, made famous by Bollywood songs, the intoxicating thrill of *bhaang*, and the riot of colours that paint the streets. Holi has travelled far beyond India, its riot of colours, the intoxication of *bhaang*, and the infectious joy of Bollywood songs make it a global spectacle. But somewhere along the way, we have let its true meaning fade. More and more, I hear Muslims say that participating in Holi is a violation of their faith. And I can't help but wonder, how, then, can they expect our Hindu neighbours to accept their festivals? Can we set aside religion for a bit? Can we? I have thought of the fires of Nowruz, the Persian New Year, when people leap over flames chanting, "*Zardi-ye man az toh, sorghi-ye toh az man*", "Take my sickness, give me your warmth. Like Holi, Nowruz welcomes renewal, the shedding of misfortune, and the courage to step into the light. I have thought of *Siyavash*, the just prince of Turan (present-day Central Asia), who was falsely accused of betrayal and subjected to an ordeal by fire. If he was innocent, the flames would not harm him. *Siyavash* walked through a blazing wall of fire, and emerged unscathed, a symbol of truth prevailing against deceit. I have thought of the story of Passover, when the enslaved Israelites fled Egypt, escaping tyranny and crossing into freedom. The fires of Passover, like Holi's bonfire, are not just flames but beacons, guiding people away from oppression and into renewal. Holi is not just a festival of laughter and mischief, it is a festival of justice, defiance, and survival of good over evil. Across continents and centuries, we have lit fires to burn away fear and injustice, to welcome new beginnings, to honour those who stood against power and cruelty. We may call it Holi, Nowruz, Passover, Easter, but the message is the same: No tyrant lasts forever. No winter is endless. And no force, no matter how dark, can withstand the fire of truth. *Different names. Same story.*

A Season Without Borders

I grew up between two worlds, one rooted in the poetry of Persia, the other bursting with the colours of India. I have welcomed the Persian New Year with fire-jumping and the Indian spring with clouds of *gula*. I have feasted for *Nowruz*, danced for Holi, and broken bread at a Passover seder. I have laughed with strangers over a pint on St. Patrick's Day in Ireland and stood in awe beneath Japan's cherry blossoms, watching petals fall like blessings from the sky. I have had my past year's bad luck washed away during Thailand's *Songkran* water festival.

The Eternal Story of Spring

Before we talk about our festivals, let's talk about our story. Because at the heart of every spring festival is the same tale, the battle between darkness and light, winter and warmth, despair and hope. The Greeks tell it through Persephone, who was taken to the underworld by Hades, leaving the earth barren. But when she returns, the world bursts into bloom. The Hindus tell it through Holi, where the evil *Holika* is burned, and *Prahlad*, the true devotee, survives the flames, proving that light always wins. The Persians have *Nowruz*, which brings the return of *Siyavash*, the prince who was burned in a trial of fire but later returns in the spring blossoms, reminding us that no matter how cruel the world may be, goodness will always come back. The Christians tell of Easter, where Christ is crucified and rises again, death and rebirth, darkness and light, just like *Persephone*, just like Holi, just like *Nowruz*. And then, there is Passover, where the Jews celebrate their escape from slavery in Egypt, a journey from suffering to freedom, from night to day. Even in Ireland, St. Patrick's Day, which seems like an excuse for a pint of Guinness today, is rooted in a story of survival. St. Patrick himself was once a slave, taken from his home. And then, there is *Passover*, where the Jews celebrate their escape from slavery in Egypt, a journey from suffering to freedom, from night to day. Even in Ireland, St. Patrick's Day, which seems like an excuse for

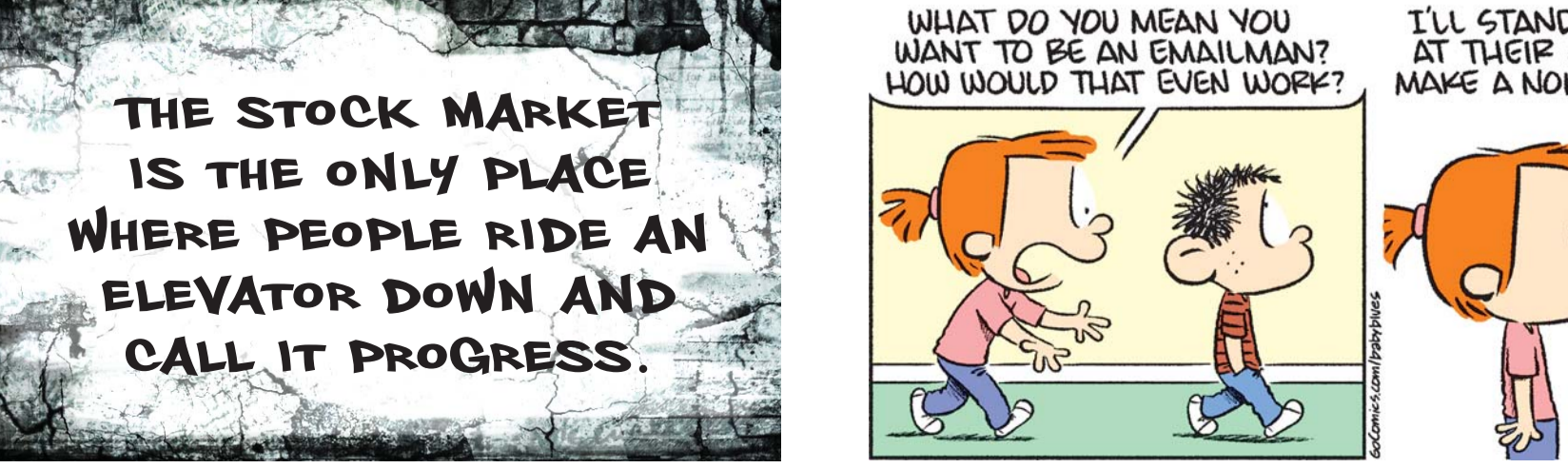
From Spirited Gains to Castle Crashes

With names like \$TOTORO, \$NOFACE, and \$TURNIPHEAD, these Ghibli-themed tokens have entered the wild west of memecoins, where hype dictates value more than utility. The irony? None of these projects have any official backing from Studio Ghibli, but that hasn't stopped Twitter (sorry, X) from erupting with fans shouting, "To the moon, Chihiro!" Like a Miyazaki film, the journey has been magical, unpredictable, and, in some cases, mildly terrifying. Traders who aped into \$NOFACE early on claim their wallets are "spirited away" with unexpected gains, while those who hesitated are watching castles in the sky crash back to reality.

Tokenomics or Totoro-nomics?

Despite their questionable longevity, these tokens follow classic meme-coin economics: low liquidity, high volatility, and an aggressive reliance on internet memes. The appeal is simple: nostalgia-driven hype. Who wouldn't want to tell their grandchildren they got rich trading a token based on a radish spirit? One ambitious developer behind \$CATBUS has even promised a "decentralized" "Ghibli Metaverse," which sounds like a lawyer's nightmare but a weeb's dream. Meanwhile, skeptics argue that these tokens are as fleeting as *Calcifer's* patience in *Howl's Moving Castle*. Spring, in every culture, is a rebirth, the victory of warmth over cold, light over darkness, life over death. The Greeks told it through *Persephone*, the goddess

THE WALL



BABY BLUES



#TRENDING

Memecoin Mania: Totoro, Turnips, and Tokenomics

If there's anything the world of blockchain needed, it was a coin inspired by loot sprites and cat buses.



Will the Magic Last?

Like all memecoins, the Ghibli wave will eventually hit its Totoro-sized ceiling. The real question is whether the trend will fade into obscurity or if we'll see a genuine Miyazaki-inspired blockchain revolution (unlikely, given that Hayao Miyazaki himself doesn't even like technology). But

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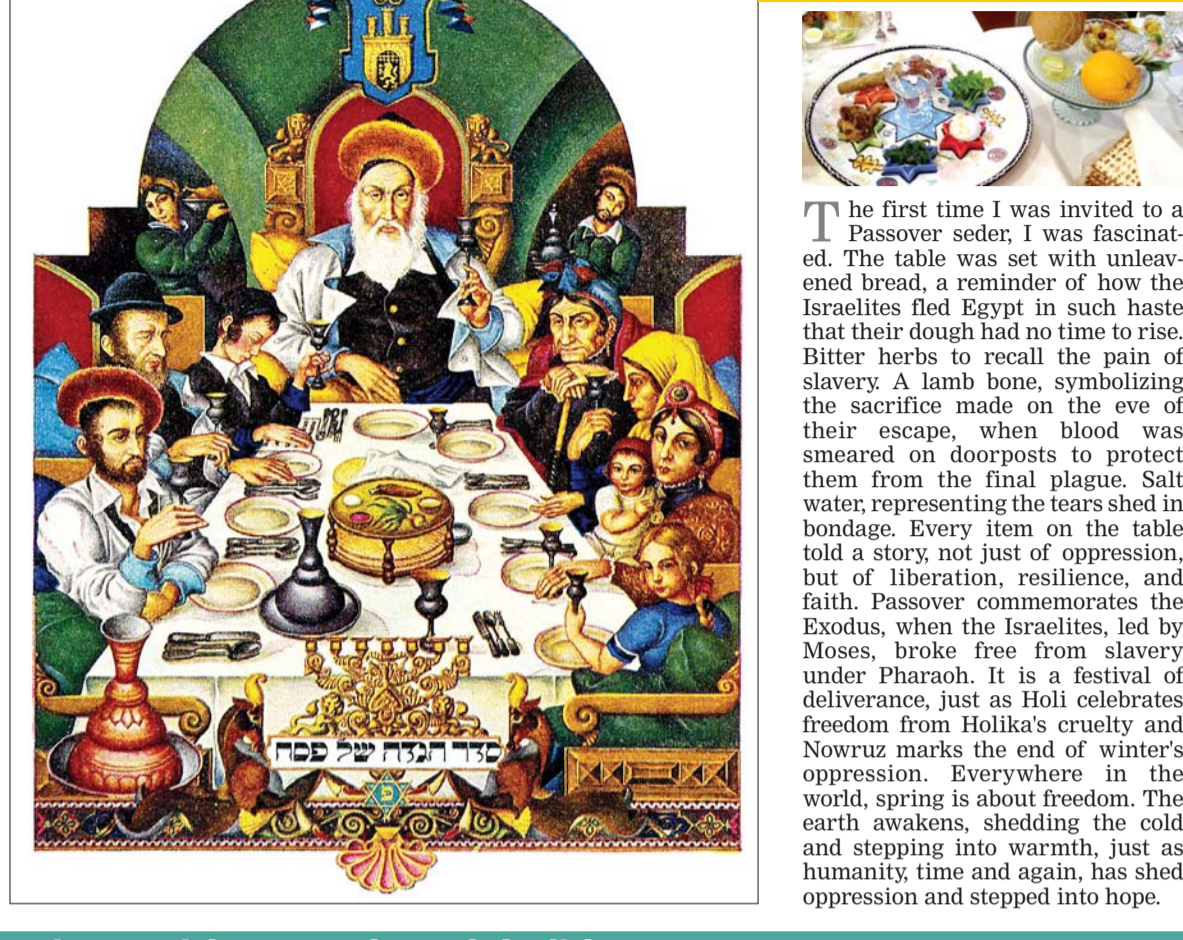
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Passover: A Festival of Freedom



Saint Patrick's Day: The pub-holiday

At first glance, St. Patrick's Day seems out of place in this list. But if you've ever been in Dublin on March 17th, you'd know it is a festival of survival, defiance, and joy. Saint Patrick, the man behind the celebration, wasn't Irish. He was a Roman-British boy kidnapped by Irish raiders and enslaved for years. When he escaped, he could have left Ireland behind, but instead, he returned, not for revenge, but to spread light. He became the patron saint of Ireland, converting people to Christianity and, according to legend, driving out the 'snakes,' a metaphor for the old pagan ways. But how did a religious feast day turn into a global celebration of pubs, parades, and people dressed in green? The answer lies in Irish history and resilience. Ireland suffered centuries of colonization, famine, and forced migration, particularly during the Great Famine (1845-1852), when millions of Irish fled to America. In the U.S., Irish immigrants, often marginalized, used St. Patrick's Day as a way to celebrate their identity and unity. The parades began in America, not Ireland, as a statement. We are here, we are strong, and we will celebrate despite everything. The association with pubs and drinking? In Ireland, St. Patrick's Day was once a solemn religious holiday; pubs were actually closed by law until the 1970s! It was the Irish in America who embraced the party atmosphere, and over time, it spread back to Ireland and beyond. And the green? Ireland is the Emerald Isle, and green has long been a symbol of Irish nationalism and resistance against British rule. The shamrock, which St. Patrick supposedly used to explain the Holy Trinity, became an emblem of pride.

Hanami: The Cherry Blossom Festival, Japan's Celebration of Life

In Japan, when the *sakura* (cherry blossoms) bloom, an entire nation pauses to celebrate. *Hanami* (literally 'flower viewing') is an age-old tradition where families, friends, and even strangers gather under the pink and white canopies of cherry blossoms to welcome spring. The festival dates back over a thousand years to the Heian period when aristocrats would compose poetry inspired by the fragile beauty of the blossoms. Today, it is a nationwide celebration, marked by picnics in parks, music, food, and night-time illuminations known as *yozakura*. The cherry blossom is more than just a seasonal spectacle, it is deeply symbolic. The fleeting bloom, lasting only about one to two weeks, is a metaphor for the impermanence of life, a key concept in Japanese culture influenced by Buddhism and Shintoism. It reminds people to cherish the present, much like Holi reminds us that joy is temporary but worth embracing, or like Nowruz which marks the triumph of light over darkness. As the blossoms fall, carried by the wind like pink snowflakes, the Japanese bid farewell to another winter. Much like the other festivals I introduced you to above, *Hanami* is a way of cleansing the past and stepping into the future with hope.

A World Without Borders

Maybe, if we remembered that, we wouldn't hate so much. Maybe, if we remembered that, we would see each other not as foreigners, but as cousins in the same human family. Spring is the world's reminder that we have survived, that we can start again, and that no matter how much darkness there is, the light always returns. And maybe, just maybe, if we understood our festivals better, we would understand each other too. Holi, Nowruz, Easter, Passover, St. Patrick's Day, *Songkran*, *Hanami*, different names, different lands, but all whispering the same message: We made it. We are one. And that is worth celebrating. *rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com*

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

