



Honouring Courage and Knowledge: International Students' Day

International Students' Day, observed annually on November 17, honours the courage, resilience, and contributions of students worldwide. It traces its origins to 1939, when students in Czechoslovakia protested against Nazi occupation, many paying the ultimate price for their activism. Today, the day serves as a reminder of the vital role students play in shaping societies, promoting education, and advocating for justice and equality. Universities, organizations, and communities celebrate through discussions, cultural events, and campaigns highlighting student rights, global education challenges, and the importance of academic freedom. It inspires youth to continue striving for knowledge and positive change.

#DYES

Dragon's Blood

The ancient belief that the resin called dragon's blood was the blood of dragons, lending the pigment a mystical, almost magical association



Dragon's Blood is a deep red resin that has fascinated cultures for thousands of years. Used as a pigment, medicinal remedy, and mystical substance, it has earned a legendary status in both art and alchemy. Derived from certain species of trees, Dragon's Blood has played a pivotal role in history, especially in the fields of art and craftsmanship.

Origins and Harvesting

The resin known as Dragon's Blood is primarily harvested from trees like *Draecena cinnabari*, a species native to the island of Socotra, and *Daemonorops*, a type of rattan palm. To extract the resin, workers make incisions in the bark, which causes the tree to 'bleed' a thick, red sap. The resin hardens and is collected to be used as a pigment, dye, or in various cultural practices.

The name 'Dragon's Blood' likely stems from the ancient belief that the resin was the blood of dragons, lending the pigment a mystical, almost magical association. This made the resin highly valued not only as a colourant but also in spiritual and medicinal contexts.

Use in Ancient Art

The earliest recorded use of Dragon's Blood as a pigment dates back to ancient Egypt, where it was employed in the creation of funerary art and tomb paintings. The resin's deep, vibrant red hue made it ideal for religious symbols and rituals. In ancient Greece and Rome, Dragon's Blood was highly prized for painting frescoes and manuscripts, often used to produce rich reds and purples in depictions of gods and heroes. During the Renaissance, Dragon's

Blood was used by European artists for illuminated manuscripts and religious paintings. Its striking colour was not only symbolic of wealth and power but also of vitality, which is why it was often applied to scenes depicting important figures or divine moments.

Medicinal and Mystical Significance

Beyond its artistic applications, Dragon's Blood has been used in traditional medicine for centuries. Ancient cultures believed that the resin had healing properties, and it was used to treat a range of ailments, including wounds, ulcers, and digestive issues. It was also thought to possess antioxidant and antibacterial properties.

In the Middle Ages, Dragon's Blood was also associated with alchemy and spiritual rituals. The pigment was used in various magical concoctions, believed to offer protection, strength, and vitality. It was often burned as incense or mixed into ritual potions to ward off evil or to invoke power and purification.

Decline and Revival

By the 19th century, synthetic pigments began to replace natural materials like Dragon's Blood, leading to its decline in use as an art pigment. Modern synthetic reds, such as cadmium red, became more affordable and stable.

However, with the rise of interest in historical art techniques and natural pigments, Dragon's Blood has seen a modest revival. Artists, conservators, and hobbyists now experiment with it in the creation of traditional artworks and restoration projects, valuing it for its historical authenticity and unique chemical properties.

No, Not Even Britain Will Defend Their BBC!

The entire incident, however, reeks of a culture of submission to US ire at all times. No efforts were made to defend the BBC against sweeping allegations from Trump White House about the veracity of the corporation as a source of reliable and impartial news. The handling and the vehement attack on the corporation showed possibly a tendency to appease the mercurial US president in the White House and his accolades.



Anjan Roy  
A renowned veteran journalist, having worked with Business Standard and the Telegraph.

he BBC, synonyms for generations of Indians with impartial news, is under attack. And no less than the US president is in the eye of the storm.

The organisation's chief operating officer (CEO) and its head of both resigned abruptly

and the corporation has become headless of a sudden when some critical decisions about its future existence are going to be decided.

The point of contention is an editing lapse. Donald Trump speech on January 6, 2021, when the seat of the US government, the Capitol Hill, was under attack from an irate crowd over allegations that the election that year was rigged. The then president had contended that the election in which Joe Biden was given the mantle was defective, denying him a genuinely won mandate.

Donald Trump speech that day was edited for its Panorama programme. Two parts of Donald Trump speeches were so edited as to



Deborah Turness, who resigned as BBC News CEO.

#HEGEMONY



give an impression that Trump was urging 'violence' from the crowds which had gathered in support of his contention.

Instead, Trump later claimed that he had on the contrary acclaimed the brave heroes of the sieged Capitol Hill offices. Ever since, Trump had been attacking the BBC as a purveyor of 'fake news' through none other than the White House spokesperson.

The entire brouhaha was forced upon the public by a memo written on the entire affair by Michael

Prescott, former adviser to BBC. Following the leaked document, published in The Telegraph newspaper of Britain, hell broke loose. The corporation's director general and CEO of BBC news both resigned, owning up responsibility.

There are feelings that the storm would have passed over but for the fact that it emanated from the Trump White House.

The fact of the matter was that the Panorama programme broadcast was prepared by an outside team and not in-house in BBC.

However, it did not absolve the corporation of its responsibility for impartial and true reporting. BBC chairperson, Samir Shah, had admitted an error in judgement of the organisation.

At the same time, being a huge news organisation broadcasting programme day in, day out on diverse matters across the globe, some mistakes in judgment could sometimes occur. But latching on the issue, right wing media in Britain, not to speak of ultra right wing media houses in

America, leaped on BBC and criticised it as a biased news organisation.

In the context of this controversy, other allegations against BBC's news and programmes were also highlighted by the right wing organisations. They complained of BBC's inherent bias against Israel and its handling of the Gaza war. Many had complained of BBC's anti-semitic attitude and tilt.

However, BBC chairman and others have stoutly defended the corporation maintaining that the corporation did not have any institutional bias and it has striven to provide impartial news to its audience. The top level decision makers of the corporation

have, however, conceded that actions should have been taken in the aftermath of the Panorama programme broadcast which have not been done.

The entire incident, however, reeks of a culture of submission to US ire at all times. No efforts were made to defend the BBC against sweeping allegations from Trump White House about the veracity of the corporation as a source of reliable and impartial news. The handling and the vehement attack on the corporation showed possibly a tendency to appease the mercurial US president in the White House and his accolades.

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Tim Davie, director-general of the BBC, in London in 2023.

#WILD

The Animal With A Fifth Leg

Fascinating Facts About Kangaroos



Kangaroos are among the most iconic animals native to Australia, known for their powerful legs, hopping gait, and unique biology. Beyond their striking appearance, kangaroos have several fascinating features that make them truly one of a kind. Here are some incredible facts about these marsupial marvels.

1. Kangaroos Can't Move Backwards

One of the most unusual facts about kangaroos is that they cannot move backwards easily. This is due to the structure of their muscular legs and long tail, which are optimized for forward motion and hopping. Their body design makes reverse movement difficult, if not impossible. This forward-only movement even symbolizes progress in Australian culture, it's one reason the kangaroo is featured on the Australian coat of arms.

2. They're Surprisingly Fast

Kangaroos may not look like typical runners, but they are incredibly



fast. Using their strong hind legs, they can hop at speeds of up to 60 km/h (37 mph) in short bursts and sustain a cruising speed of around 25 km/h (15

mph). Their mode of locomotion, called saltatory movement, allows them to cover large distances efficiently, conserving energy as they go.



3. Kangaroos Can Pause Their Pregnancies

One of the most astonishing biological traits of kangaroos is their ability

to suspend embryo development, a process called embryonic diapause. When environmental conditions are tough or while raising another joey, a female kangaroo can delay the development of a fertilized embryo. Once the current joey is independent or conditions improve, the embryo resumes growth. This remarkable adaptation helps ensure the survival of their offspring in harsh or unpredictable environments.

4. They Use Their Tails Like a Fifth Leg

Kangaroos have powerful tails that serve more than just balance, they act as a third leg during movement on all fours. When grazing or moving slowly, kangaroos use their tail in coordination with their front legs, almost like a crutch or a prop. Recent studies have shown that the tail provides propulsion, making it a critical limb rather than just a counterbalance. From their impressive speed and powerful tails to their ability to pause pregnancy and their unique movement limitations, kangaroos are much more than just hoppers from the outback. Their adaptations showcase the incredible diversity and evolutionary innovation found in Australia's wildlife.

#BREAST POWER

Beauty, Power, and Perception

Small Busts and Status in the Middle Ages



When examining the evolving standards of beauty throughout history, one quickly realizes that what is considered desirable or powerful has rarely remained constant. In the Middle Ages, particularly in medieval Europe, physical beauty was deeply intertwined with cultural values, religious beliefs, and social hierarchies. Contrary to modern ideals that often favour fuller figures, there was a period in medieval society when small breasts and a modest bust were not only admired but considered markers of nobility, refinement, and queenly virtue.

Medieval Aesthetics: Modesty as Magnificence

Medieval beauty ideals were not primarily influenced by sexuality or sensuality, as much as they were by modesty, chastity, and moral virtue, especially for women of high status. In a Christianized Europe where the Virgin Mary was the ultimate ideal of womanhood, women were encouraged to emulate her perceived purity and humility. A smaller bust was associated with:

- Moral restraint
- Youthfulness
- Spiritual purity
- Modest femininity

Women with smaller chests were often seen as purer and more refined, in contrast to fuller-bodied women who were sometimes viewed through a more sensual or earthy lens. It's no coincidence that in religious art, noblewomen and queens are frequently depicted with slender frames and flattened torsos, shrouded in high necklines and flowing robes that deemphasized their sexuality.

Fashion as a Tool of Status and Shape

Clothing in the Middle Ages was not just about utility or style; it was a reflection of class, morality, and beauty ideals. Aristocratic women and queens wore garments that shaped



their bodies to fit societal standards. This included:

- High-waisted gowns (such as the houppelande) that draped over the bust and down the body without accentuating curves.
- Stiffened bodices or layers of linen undergarments that flattened the chest deliberately.
- Veils, wimples, and hennins (cone-shaped headdresses) that elongated the body's vertical line and diverted attention away from the bust altogether.

These fashions reinforced the ideal of a slender, almost boyish upper body, aligning with the notion that femininity was more divine when subdued.

Queens and Courtiers: Icons of the Ideal

Royal women were expected to embody the highest ideals of the time, not just in governance or courtly behaviour, but in appearance. Queens who had

smaller busts were often praised in court poetry and literature for their refinement and virtue. In chivalric romances, noblewomen are typically described as graceful, slender, and youthful, with emphasis on the neck, hands, and face, not the chest.

It's important to understand that this wasn't rooted in body shaming, but rather in the cultural and religious symbolism of the time. A small bust was not considered inadequate; it was exalted as an aesthetic of restraint, elegance, and power.

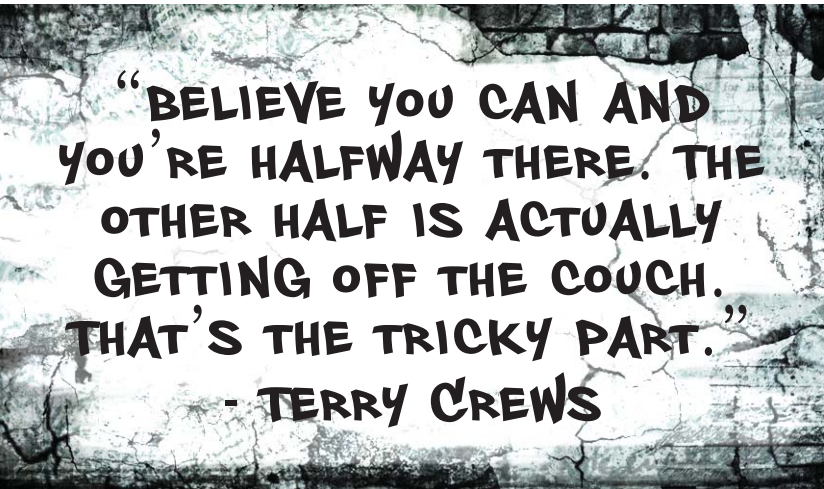
A Contrast to Later Ideals

This medieval ideal stands in contrast to later beauty standards, such as during the Renaissance or Baroque periods, when fuller figures came to symbolize fertility, wealth, and sensuality. The shift illustrates how beauty is not universal, but shaped by the prevailing ideologies of each era.

Conclusion: Redefining Beauty and Power

The Middle Ages remind us that beauty has always been a cultural construct, evolving in response to religion, class, gender norms, and social expectations. In medieval Europe, a small bust was not merely accepted; it was idealized, particularly among the upper classes and royal circles. Women who fit this ideal were more than admired, they were treated as icons of queenly grace, virtue, and nobility.

As we continue to navigate contemporary conversations around body image and inclusivity, history offers an important lesson: what society deems 'beautiful' has always been flexible, and often political.

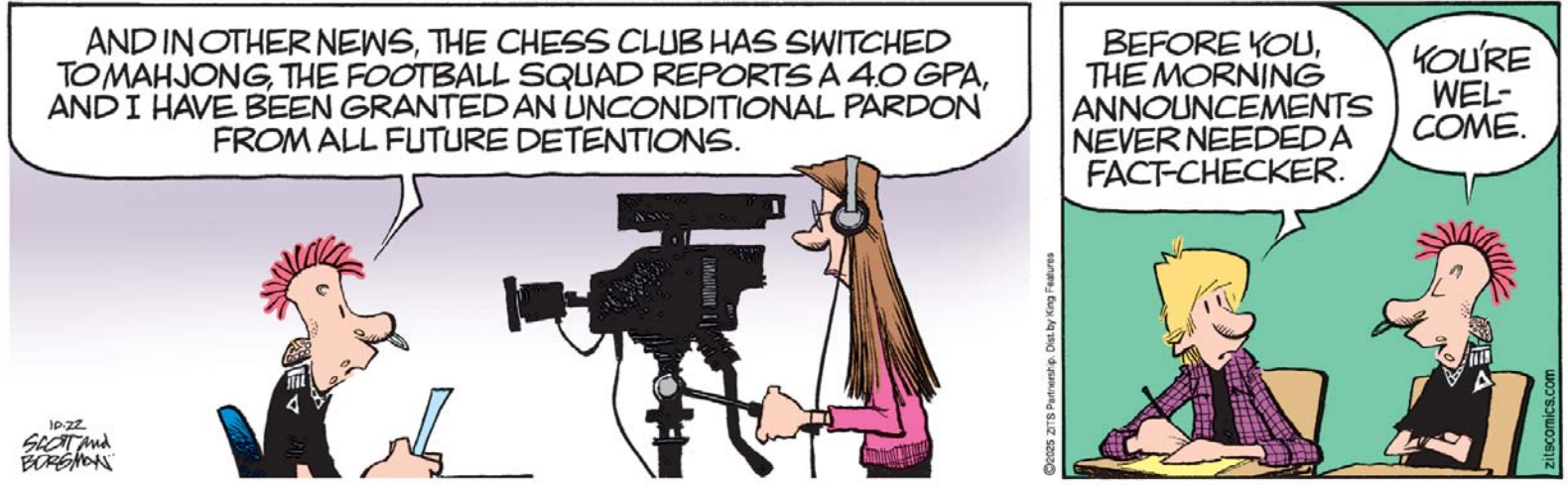


BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman