

Science Court

Back to middle school, thankfully. Not many would actually say middle school is an improvement over younger grades, but it is over yesterday's special needs preschool classroom. In any event, I mostly enjoy middle school though there are **those days** of course. Science was the subject, and will be tomorrow as well since this is a two-day assignment. Today's repeated middle school lesson, only four times at least instead of six, was a video (surprise, surprise). This video was one of several [Squigglevision/Science Court](#) episodes. This series uses the really bad (in my opinion) [Squigglevision](#) method of animation and is about two lawyers who battle against each other over some science fact, one science-challenged and one who basically does the teaching and (you guessed it) always wins the case. There were some funny moments, and it was entertaining. However for education it seems like they could have put more content in there. For a half-hour show (commercials were included, yikes!) it really could have said much more about the topic at hand, which by the way was work. Not that one episode necessarily defines the series, mind you- I haven't seen any other episodes. The students just started a unit on simple machines and this video taught the [scientific definition of work](#). In it they also talked about a few simple machines that would make the work seem easier by increasing the distance moved (work = force \times distance, so increasing distance will decrease force if the work the same). We wrapped up after the video with a short discussion and a few minutes of silent ball.

If Squigglevision sounds familiar, it may be because of one of the other shows produced using this patented method. I specifically remember a show called [Home Movies](#) back in 1999. I'll tell you, I watched one episode of this show and that was enough for me. One of the drawbacks of Squigglevision animation is the lack of fluid, well, animation. Squiggly

outlines are in abundance but the animation of the characters and whatnot is just lacking. Case in point is the entrance of a character. Rather than appearing a little at a time to show fluid motion, the character will just all of a sudden just be there. One frame not there at all, next frame, **bam** there he is. This is part of the reason I really disliked the show. The other was I just didn't care for the premise. All in all I found the show to be quite a snooze. So, when the show creators switched to [Flash animation](#) for the second season I still did not switch back.

Anyway, back to school. You may have noticed I wrote that I only had to do this lesson four times. The reason for this is: 1) this is the school that has tutorial for one of the periods (some students do a foreign language instead of tutorial), and 2) at this school each core teacher does one social studies class. Why they don't have a dedicated social studies teacher is a mystery, probably budgeting. So for social studies they just colored pictures of African masks. All period. Well, you wanted to know, right? ☐

Here He Is!!!

My new nephew looks totally adorable, so I had to share his picture:

Ryan Timothy



The Queen In Philadelphia

Tonight's Final Jeopardy category: The Academy Awards in the 21st Century

The Final Jeopardy answer: The only actress to win the Best Supporting Actress Oscar for portraying a former Best Actress recipient.

I have to admit that I was stymied (not to mention I have never seen the movie for which the actress won the award). The more recent actress has appeared with such well known performers as [Glenn Close](#), [Frances McDormand](#), and [Jude Law](#).

The former Best Actress winner is no longer with us. She holds the most Best Actress awards with four. Some of her co-stars

were [John Wayne](#), [Cary Grant](#), and [James Stewart](#). Her sister was also a former Best Actress winner as well as a UNICEF ambassador.

Be the first to give the correct question and you will have done better than I. Name the film for which she won the award and you are brilliant. Name the actress she played and you are a genius. Of course, you win absolutely nothing except the honor of having your answer posted on Morat's Blog which is (in a word) priceless. Once again, we are on the honor system which means: NO CHEATING!!!! No wikipedia, no imdb, no any other web site or outside source to aid you in your response. AND....

I am make a the rules. So a you a follow the rules. And if a you a cheat I will a hunt a you down. And dems de berries.

Family and the calendar

I used to have a very good head for dates and numbers. I can remember all sorts of birthdays, anniversaries, phone numbers and other such stuff. Somewhere along the line my head got full. I can't seem to remember a lot of dates that I should.

Let's see. I can remember all the birthdays of my brother and sisters. I can remember birthdays of my children, parents and even get close on most of the in-laws. I definitely remember all the important dates that occurred in and around my marriage. I remember my oldest sister's phone number, even though she hasn't had that one in years. I even remember the birthdays of my best friend in grade school, and the first girl I had a crush on.

Things I can't remember... Birthdays of my daughter's husbands

and children. Anniversaries of said children and their spouses. Dates that specific bills are due. Dates for Drs. appointments. Dates of the next show one of my girls is in. Dates of the next show that I'm in... Dates set up longer than 1 week away. My cell phone number. My desk extension at work. Hmm a pattern is forming....

These dates are all more recent than the dates /numbers that I can remember. Maybe my mind is filled up with dates and numbers that I don't need anymore. If there was only a way to replace the numbers I remember with the new numbers I should remember. If I could bottle that, I'd make a mint.

There's a guy in the preschool classroom!

People who know me know that my preference for teaching is about 3rd-7th grades. Stretch a year in either direction, and those are pretty much the jobs I gravitate toward when I have a choice. Of course specials are an exception; I do take those no problem though they may include kindergarten or 1st grade. Since you are an observant reader, you will have noticed the words *when I have a choice*. Well, I was unable to procure an assignment yesterday leaving me at the mercy of what's available in the morning. First call came in at about 5:40 and was for kindergarten. I thought about it and foolishly chose not to do it. I figured I would take a chance and check the web since I was awake. I did find a couple of half-day jobs which I also skipped. Then came the full-day preschool assignment. I didn't think I would see anything younger than the one I rejected, but here it was. Being about 5:50 I decided to gamble again and keep hoping for a better

assignment to show up. Nope. Oddly enough though, no one was picking up this full-day assignment for some reason. Finally, the system called me for the assignment so I gave in and took it. At least it was a lot closer to me than the kindergarten job. Then I went back to sleep for an hour.

As it turns out, this district as far as I know does not offer normal preschool. It does however offer special education preschool for the “developmentally delayed.” The morning had eight of ten students there, and was actually kind of a breeze. This kind of classroom has teaching assistants (three!), and today the speech teacher actually came in to take over the class! I had absolutely no problem with this as this age is really out of my comfort zone anyway. I just acted as another T.A. The most I did teachingwise was running a center where they matched patterns and did a connect-the-dots worksheet. Other than that it was keeping kids focused and helping as needed.

The afternoon was a little different. There were slightly fewer students (seven), but this was a more challenging group. One was very autistic and needed special attention, and as a whole the group was lower than the morning group and like the one autistic boy, required more attention. The title of this post refers to me, but in actuality one of the part-time T.A.s in the afternoon was a guy! I would guess he really likes kids to do this, because he is a retired principal from the school I was at and retirement packages for top school administrators tend to be very generous. Either that or some bad investments, but his actions during the afternoon clearly showed the former. He was very good with the kids- unlike a T.A. from another school I worked with recently. That T.A. really yelled at the kids, sometimes for very minor things. To be fair, that school was a middle school, but I really felt for those kids. Aside from that she did a pretty good job, doing things for the students she didn't have to. If not for this I would have thought she was in the wrong profession entirely.

I was somewhat relieved to go home a little early- preschool ends 15 minutes before the regular grades- partly due to the afternoon class and partly due to the relative inactivity of my job. This is one reason, aside from the very low pay, that I would not want to be a teaching assistant full time. The absolute worst times I have had subbing were as teaching assistants, particularly one-one-one assignments. Never again on those, though I would sub (at regular pay) for other types of teaching assistants, like those with multiple kids or general classroom helpers.

Three Is A Magic Number?

Today, I have had three very strange occurrences involving the same numbers. I was called downstairs at 8 o'clock to be asked if I had to be at work ("No, not until 12"). At 9, I received a phone call informing that our manager goofed and really meant for me to be there at 8 (a good thing I was ready to go). At 9:19 precisely, I clocked in. A few minutes later, I waited on a customer whose purchases totaled \$9.19. The very next customer had a completely different set of items and her total came to \$9.19. Now if something strange happens at 9:19 this evening, I will know that I have stepped into "[The Twilight Zone](#)."

semi high speed

I'm moving up in the world. I now have semi high speed internet. I have a internet connection through my cell phone

company, and it works!!!

For those who don't know, I live out in the middle of nowhere. I have no chance of getting cable, DSL, Fiber Optic, and even our local wireless. I could get satellite, but I would need to cut down a few trees, since I live in the woods and have no clear southern skies. I've been using a dial-up connection for years. Now have speeds at least 4 times as fast, sometimes more. I think if I get a good external antenna for the receiver, I will approach DSL speeds most of the time. I am just impressed by this.

I'm going to be checking some things out over the next few days, and if all works out, I will be getting rid of my dial-up account, or at least going back to the free 10 hour deal with ads. If I get rid of the dial-up completely, I may get rid of my land phone at the same time. That would more than pay for my high speed connection. Cool stuff, no install fee, the hardware was free with rebates, and I didn't have to cut any trees.

Six Little Engines That Tried

Tonight was the episode of "American Idol" that I have been waiting to see since season two. Not because it featured music from the Andrew Lloyd Webber songbook but that a good question was posed to a certain British judge whom everyone admires greatly: "Given the rather negative comments you pose to performers who would be better suited for the Broadway stage how does one approach these songs?" Mr Cowell responded: "Make them memorable yet contemporary." A rather cryptic response if ever there was one.

Six contestants remain. Those who were familiar with the songs

showed it and those who were less familiar showed it (perhaps even more so).

Syesha Mercado started the evening with “One Rock & Roll Too Many” from [Starlight Express](#). Not being extremely familiar with the show, I cannot say too much about it. However, the bluesy rendition was quite nice.

The next contestant, Jason Castro, did not fare as well. Even Lord Andrew commented that he never thought he would see the day when “Memory” would be sung by a young man in dreadlocks. The composer even provided a bit of background into the character from [Cats](#) who performs the song (“a rather old glamour puss”). Jason looked like the proverbial deer in the headlights on stage.

The halftime performer, Brooke White, also had difficulty. The song “You Must Love Me” was composed by Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice for the [movie version](#) of [Evita](#). It is sung by Eva Peron (played by Madonna) on her deathbed. Unfortunately, Brooke lost her lyric in the first line, stopped, apologized, and started over. I’m not sure if this would be allowed in an actual audition but to do so on a television show which is seen by (reportedly) millions of people each week takes some degree of chutzpah.

The “contestant to beat” this year, 17-year-old David Archuleta, chose to take a diva song of nearly operatic proportions and turn it into a boy band pop ballad. Lloyd Webber wrote the role of Christine in [Phantom of the Opera](#) specifically for his wife at the time, Sarah Brightman. For a young man to change such a song with the composer sitting in the audience watching and listening takes a great deal of courage. However, good ol’ Simon did not find the performance especially memorable.

The Irish female rocker, Carly Smithson, decided to change her song from “All I Ask of You” to the title track of [Jesus](#)

[Christ Superstar](#). A wise choice on her part.

However, the final performer did not choose wisely. Male rocker David Cook attempted to sing "Music of the Night." The rendition was as unimpressive as the movie version of [Phantom of the Opera](#). I was hoping he would chose a song better suited to his rock sensibilities, but he decided to go a different route and it just did not work.

I guess I found half of the performances enjoyable. But as Lord Andrew told most of the contestants: you must know not only what you are singing but also what you are singing about. Find the meaning behind the words.

Spring is in the Air = BABIES!!!

CONGRATULATIONS to my sister in Illinois, who gave birth to a healthy 8 lb. 15 oz. baby boy today!!! I can't wait to see pictures of the little darling, and I will post them when I get them (HINT HINT - no, just kidding, I know you have much more important things to do right now then to worry about sending pictures) I just wish I could hold him! And Congratulations to Austin on becoming a big brother - it's an important job buddy; I know you'll be a great one! Welcome, Ryan Timothy!

Other baby news - our kids' babysitter's cat had kittens the other day. Look how unbelievably cute they are:



See if you can count 'em - makes a good picture puzzle, doesn't it? There are 6 - the little orange one kinda blends in with the towel - he's unique!

My daughter's teacher had her baby, and my two cousins also had their babies, which means 3 of my grandmother's 4 expected great-grandchildren for this year are here already! I am the last one standing ☐

Seriously, I feel left out, being the only one left pregnant out of all the women I knew who were expecting. I am ecstatic that all the babies are healthy and thriving though - that is truly something to be thankful for! For the most part, I love being pregnant, though I have to say this one is the most difficult pregnancy yet in some ways. Also the easiest in some ways too, so it's not all bad... But my feet are killing me constantly... I feel like I can't stand for more than 10-15 minutes at a time, and with a toddler and 2 other little kids to care for, that is a tough feeling to have. Plus I'm exhausted much of the time, and have terrible heartburn a lot... all this and 3 months to go, not to mention the fact that the weather is only getting nicer, then it will get really hot and then I'll just be miserable. I hate not having the energy or the desire to go outside to enjoy these

nice days... it makes me feel guilty, especially because it means my toddler can't enjoy them with me. Is it mean for her to be couped up in the house with me on gorgeous days like today? She doesn't seem to mind though, and we do play together lots while I'm sitting down, so it can't be all bad... I just tell myself that in August I will have much more energy and time to enjoy the weather. It's hard to imagine now, but some of the fatigue and aches and pains will lift, I HOPE!

Holy Regrettable Cooking Show, Batman!

For our date night tonight, we decided to attend the much hyped cooking show sponsored by our local newspaper. Maybe that explains why it was so hyped right there – being sponsored by the newspaper = lots of free advertising, and since I read the paper every day, maybe it was drilled into my head that this thing would be fun. Was I ever wrong.

It began when we arrived only 10 minutes before the show started, and every seat was full. It was held in the high school gym, which means we now had to find seats in the bleachers and squeeze past everyone else – pregnancy bump and all. I was so close to turning around and leaving right then and there; the fact that I didn't was my second mistake after buying the tickets to attend the thing in the first place. Apparently our local high school has no air conditioning, because the 1500 or so people who were crammed into the gym were all fanning themselves with their free cookbooks. Which brings me to another reason why I thought this thing would be such great fun. The tickets were \$10 / person, then there were coupons in the paper for \$3 off, which brings each ticket to \$7. They advertised a “bag full of samples, goodies, and free cookbooks” to every attendee, along with a chance to win

lots of pretty cool door prizes. The sample bag was alright – no complaints there. The “choosing which wine with dinner” wheel made a great fan to combat the heat, I must say, and I’m not the only one who thought so – most of the 1500 sardines in attendance were using it as such. But on the way into the show, apparently that’s when they handed out the doorprize entry blank and the free can of chili sauce, and somehow (maybe it was my panic when I saw the crowd we’d have to conquer to find a seat) I missed getting either handout. So, here we were, sitting on the bleachers packed in like sardines in 100°+ heat, and I’ve just found a way to cut our chances of winning a doorprize *in half*. Even though we were a little on the late side, that actually turned out to be a good thing because by the time we bumped and stumbled into our seats (ie, the square foot of space each person was allowed for their person, legs, knees, pregnancy bumps etc.), the “show” was ready to begin, thank goodness. Except it became clear that once the show began, it was not going to pick up pace. It was a woman on a stage making recipes (she was there to do 8 of them she said!) so far away that you couldn’t see anything she was doing. Her “jokes” were lame, and she barely had a personality. So now, this was hot, boring, uncomfortable for my aching body, and my chances of winning a cool grill are like 1 in 1500 instead of 2 in 1500? Forget being polite or wasting money. Our time is so much more important; especially with 3.5 kids. We bumped and stumbled our way out of there, same way we got in, mumbled our apologies for stepping on people, and didn’t look back. We fled the cooking show.

So that brings me to the Batman reference in the title of this post. When we went to pick up the kids at the babysitter’s after the cooking show debacle, we went in her laundry room to check out the 2-day-old kittens... all of a sudden, screams erupted. I’m normally not a screamer, really more of a gasper when I get startled, but the babysitter and her daughter and my daughters were ahead of me in the laundry room and saw a bat. Their screams made me scream – I’m not afraid of a

little Ohio brown bat, I swear, but apparently screaming is contagious. So both of our husbands come running, and hers goes for a broom. Mine respects how sensitive I am about animals, so he asked for a bowl and was going to capture it. So they open the door, only to find the mommy cat had beaten the babysitter's husband to the murder of the bat. She devoured it whole, and there was really nothing left for me to be sad about, so I pretended it didn't happen, took pictures of the really cute kittens, and left. What a night!