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It's good to be back!

Welcome to the June edition...

Sorry not to have been around for the last two months but it seemed the best course of action to put the magazines on hold for a short period.

So it's been a strange old time but life is starting to return to normal, albeit slowly and cautiously. Everyone is aware of COVID-19 and its impact, and many local businesses are keen to return to work, in a safe manner, to keep both themselves and the economy going.

I hope you've all stayed safe and are looking forward to a continued gradual re-introduction of freedom!

Until next month,



Zoe Reece

Tel: 07557 220585

Email: zoe@dorridgedirectory.com

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contents

- 22 Recipe
- 23 Puzzles
- 28 Useful numbers
- 29 Ad index

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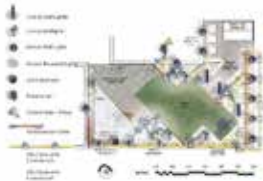
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The Art of Home-School

Most children love to draw or paint. While so many of us are stuck at home it's a great way to keep them occupied too. A few friends wondered if they should be encouraging more 'mind-improving' activities such as maths and English worksheets. Art tends to be viewed as a 'bolt-on' extra in school. But art is so much more, and along with music should be given a much more prominent role within education.

Drawing, painting and sculpting help mental, social, and emotional development. Creating art boosts our ability to analyse and problem-solve.

As a conscript teacher in the 'school of mum and dad' it's easy to fall into the trap of 'right and wrong' when we would be better to remember that art should be about the process rather than the product.

As children manipulate a paintbrush or pencil, their fine motor skills improve. As they mix colours they learn about proportions, and when they experiment with different media they dabble in science. Most importantly if a child feels good about being able to experiment while creating art, it boosts their self-confidence. Children who feel able to try things and make mistakes develop more creative ways to think which extend beyond their artwork.

Lots of parents don't feel comfortable with art, because unlike maths there isn't a 'correct' way to do it, or they feel they have to intervene to make things look 'right'. So, I've put together a list of art websites that offer tutorials aimed at the children themselves rather than at their parents. They all use real world art equipment,

not digital platforms and have all been tested by my own 10-year-old artist-in-residence.

www.artforkidshub.com - This is a lovely art website for kids. It has hundreds of tutorials, mostly for drawing, but some painting and origami too. Mr Hub does the drawings in a slightly speeded up time scale, but the instructions are clear and easy to follow.

artprojectsforkids.org - This site is run by an art teacher who has put together lots of fun art projects for kids. There are drawing lessons and craft projects.

stepbysteppainting.net - A great site packed with online step-by-step canvas painting tutorials, suitable for all the family, with a

complete section dedicated to kids. Older kids who are keen artists will love the more grown-up painting tutorials too.

thepaintrepublic.com

Facebook - This is our favourite site by a country mile. Lindsay teaches live sessions on

Facebook a couple of times

per week. The tutorials then stay on the page so that children can access them at any time. She's an encouraging, enthusiastic teacher and paints along with her sons, who are funny, lively and very normal, and this is the big bonus for my own son, who is missing his friends and the banter of the classroom. We probably underestimate how much of the important stuff in a school day doesn't seem important at all. The silly incidents and funny anecdotes our children bring home are woven into the tapestry of their day-to-day existence, and at the moment that part of their lives is on hold. Lindsay and her boys are a breath of fresh air in our house. The art is great, and she also leads adult classes for when the kids are in bed. Cannot recommend this one highly enough.



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Create a Time Capsule

Over supper one night my husband said thoughtfully, "You know what we should do? We should create a family time capsule and lock it away, then re-open it a decade from now."

For once all three of us instantly agreed with him, which never happens so kind of

took him by surprise! Once he'd recovered, he went off to research and design one.

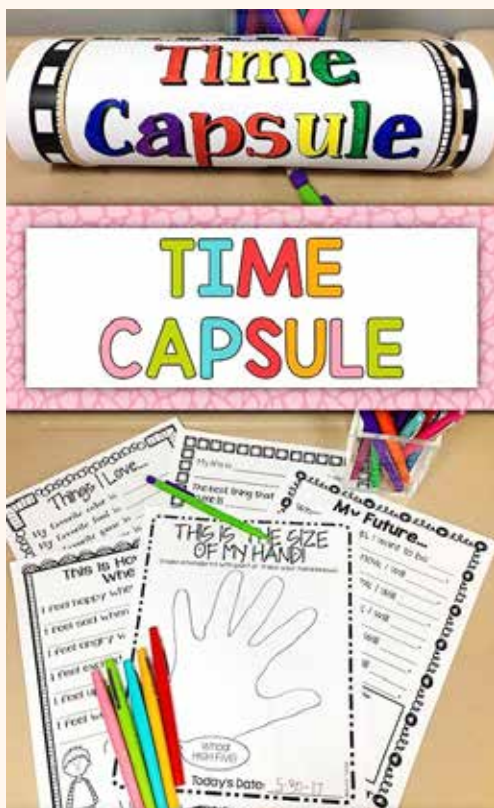
A time capsule is simply a container which stores a selection of objects chosen as being typical of the present time, then put away or buried for discovery in the future.

We are in the middle of the most significant planet-wide event since The Second World War. Our children are living through a period which will be taught in schools in years to come. And when their own children have 'show and tell' it's kind of both cool and humbling to think of their classmates looking back in time through items, photos and notes deliberately selected by us, right now, as being representative of our hopes and fears and everyday life in lock-down.

It's relatively simple to design your own time capsule and if you're creative and have the time then go for it. But while looking on the internet for ideas my husband came across a Canadian company who had done it so well and so completely that he felt anything he did would be reinventing the wheel. The company is called Long Creations and they've kindly provided free digital downloads for both kids and adults, so the whole family can take part.

You can find the downloads here. Perhaps you could send photos of your creations in so we can feature them in future editions.

<https://letsembark.ca/time-capsule>



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You wouldn't hide your physical business away and not tell anyone about it would you? If someone wandered into your shop by accident you wouldn't ignore them, cross your fingers and hope they buy. Your website should work in the same way as your physical business. Information is the most powerful way to draw customers in and help them decide to click the buy button.

Search engine algorithms love information. It tells them what your website is about, which means that they know how relevant you are when someone searches for a certain word or phrase.

Other websites love information too. Advice, tutorials and

case studies provide them with great content for their own visitors. Other websites that quote you and link to you are basically voting for you and your website as experts in your field, and experts go to the top of the search results.

Customers love information. Why should a customer buy from you and not from your competitor a click away? Sometimes it's down to price, but more often it boils down to trust and confidence. The more you help and inform your customers, guide them through the possible choices and point them towards the best solution, the more likely they will choose you. If you then provide great service and support, they'll become a loyal customer.

Fear of writing.

First you need some great content and almost everyone stalls at this point. But you don't need to write a dissertation and you don't need to be 'a writer'. You need short, targeted, punchy articles. Think of your usual customers. What sorts of questions do they ask you? What confuses them? Who has used your products in the past and had a great experience? Why would you recommend one product over another? The answers are all short articles that people want to read, and that search engines love to see. 450- 600 words (a similar length to this article) are all you need.

Add a couple of photos, maybe a short video and you've nailed it.

Second you need to get the information on to your website, which should be under your control. You'll need your login details and a little bit of training so ask your website designer for these. If you can't

currently edit your own website, check with your designer to see if this important feature can be added. If not, you'll need to discuss with them about how to update the site.

Finally, you need to repeat this process at least once a fortnight, more if you can manage it.

You may hear about keyword research and 'optimisation', but don't worry about this right now. 90% of the benefit comes from the content itself. If you write good articles, you'll naturally use the right keywords. And honestly... a better use of your time is creating new content rather than chasing the last 10% on the existing stuff!

So 'get' writing! Watch for more hints and tips in the following issues.





Kids' Page



Pirate Word Search

Find all the Words in the grid and rearrange the Shaded Letters to Find Something Pirates Like to bury.



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Pirates like to bury their

It sits on a pirate's shoulder
And doesn't ever fly away
The funniest thing about it
Is that it repeats what you

Pirate Riddles

If you are a pirate
And you get in a fight
You might need to wear this
If you lose half your sight



Pirate Word Grid
Solution

Pirates like to bury
their treasure

Pirate Riddle Answers
Eye Patch
Parrot

Travel after lockdown - the facts!

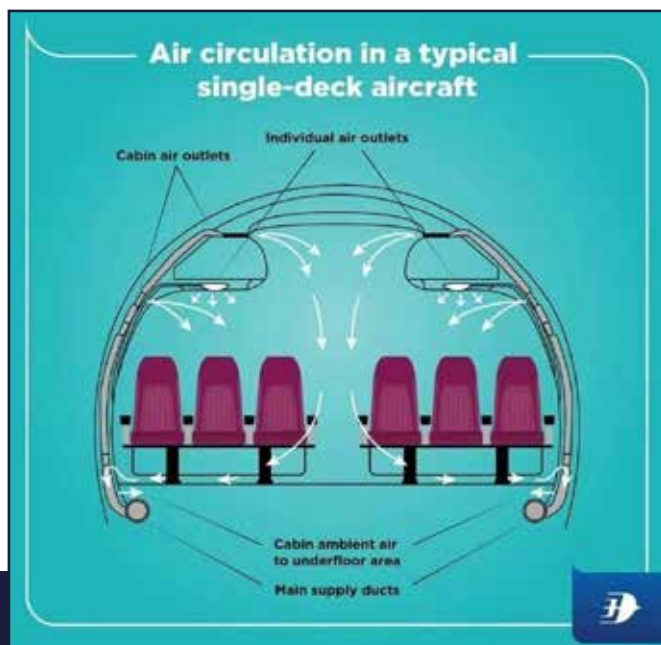
We're all concerned about how we'll get away on holiday this year and next. So here is some reassuring information for you.

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shown HEPA filters to have an efficiency level of better than 99.99% and they provide air that meets the standards set for hospital operating theatres. In normal operation, less than half of the air is filtered and recirculated, the rest is fresh air drawn in from outside the aircraft. Air supplied to the cabin enters at the level of the overhead compartments and is extracted at floor level. This means that the air is drawn down and, importantly, there is no flow forward or aft along the cabin. The cabin air in a typical aircraft such as an Airbus A320 is completely changed, every three minutes, which compares to every 10-12 minutes in a typical air-conditioned building.



ALGARVE in Portugal opened it's beaches on 6th of June! There will be beach assistants to help visitors and implement safety measures. Colour coded signage indicating occupancy levels will be updated in real-time on the app 'Info Praia' and APA website. There are currently no quarantine requirements on entry to mainland Portugal. Also check out the following for Covid travelling restrictions www.tripsguard.com The Algarve Portugal, one of my all time favourites for family holidays. Beautiful safe beaches, calm waters, gorgeous weather and food. There are lots more details about travelling on my website <https://sabinaclay.notjusttravel.com/travel-after-lockdown>



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Cracks 'n' crevices

By Rachael Leverton

I love a crevice. A little gap between the lawn and the path; a cracked paving slab, or a little hole in a wall. These are tiny pockets where magic can happen.

Does the crack or crevice sit mainly in the sun or the shade? If it's sunny, you have a choice of plants with silvery or aromatic foliage. If it's shady, choices will be more limited but there are still plants to suit.

When planting, buy the smallest plants you can and gently strip off most of the compost. Squeeze them carefully into the crack or hole, water them and top dress with grit unless the crevice is in a vertical surface (because the grit will fall out!). Accept that some plants won't survive, but if you monitor them and nurture them a little in the first year, watering and pushing a little more compost in if the rain washes any way, then most plants will establish themselves. The most successful time of year to plant cracks and crevices is March and April but don't restrict yourself, any of these are worth trying.

Dianthus squarrosus - Russian dianthus produces mats of blue-grey leaves and single white flowers with a pretty scent.

Androsace sarmentosa 'Sherriffii' - This little plant is my go-to because it's sturdy, establishes easily and is topped with pretty pink rosettes in the spring.

Aubrieta deltoidei - I was always a bit snobby about this plant but when I saw it smothering an ugly cracked concrete wall at my son's school, I fell in love with it. The purple against the pale grey concrete looked amazing. It can be sheared back after flowering to keep it in check but basically its bomb-proof.

Arenaria alvacariensis - My ten-year-old calls these 'alien blobs' which doesn't do them any justice. They are really



easy to establish and form an attractive green dome of tight foliage, smothered with small white flowers in late spring.

Thymus serpyllum - Tiny-leaved thymes are great crevice plants, and useful in the kitchen!

Erigeron karvinskianus - sprinkle seeds into crevices and this tiny daisy will grow and then self-seed happily. It's particularly good for dry, sunny areas.

Sempervivum - I have had a love affair with houseleeks since my student days. I wedge them into every crack and crevice in my garden. They will settle in and create little colonies almost anywhere you shove them, adding texture and colour. They're evergreen too. What's not to love?

Vinca - Periwinkles have the prettiest little flowers, available in white, purples and blues, that actually thrive in shade, so they are perfect for brightening that neglected corner of the patio...the bit with the loose paving stone that rarely gets any sun and always looks a bit drab.

My dad referred to cracks 'n' crevices plants as horticultural haberdashery! The tassels, beads and bows of the plant world, that cover the ugly seams and embellish the plain areas. I think that's a brilliant description of these hardworking little plants.

Happy gardening.

The Power of the Micro-Lift

The importance of those little hits of happiness

At the time of writing most of us are still in quarantine. This makes us unwilling participants in a huge psychological experiment, unprecedented in history.

Quarantine itself is not the problem for most of us. With online shopping, online seminars, online meetings, there are a myriad of ways we remain connected to the outside world via technology. But the recent rise in mental health issues suggests that something about self-isolation is a huge problem. Psychologists studying the effects of lockdown on our mental health have discovered is that being in isolation means we miss regular doses of 'micro-lifts'.

Micro-lifts are those pleasurable little incidents scattered throughout our day, which we usually consider so insignificant we barely remember them. It's someone smiling a cheery hello as you buy a morning

paper, or the little accidental dance you end up doing with a colleague as you both tried to get through door at the same time and which made you giggle. These seemingly banal events lift our mood without us even realising.

If you're in isolation on your own these little micro-lifts don't happen naturally. We begin to go into micro-lift deficit after about two weeks and this can cause our mood to nosedive. Even if you are isolated with your family it seems that micro-lifts are in much shorter supply, as they seem to be more dependent on those little interactions and connections we make with a wider circle of people going about our daily business.

This means that while we're in quarantine

we can improve our sense of well-being by generating our own artificial micro-lifts. To do this we need to create opportunities for small, real connections with others throughout our day. It might be smiling and waving at the postman each morning or exchanging a few words from a safe social distance with a neighbour. I mentioned micro-lifts to my 17-year-old son after he'd looked a bit down and complained that, '...every day is the same right now. I have nothing to talk about with my mates anymore.' After thinking about it for a while he came up with the idea of doing an online painting tutorial with a couple of friends. They all completed the

same tutorial while chatting to each other on video call. It wasn't about the end result; it was about the process of creating a time and space to connect with each other over a shared experience. They laughed a lot and teased each other and sounded like normal carefree teens for

a short while. He felt much better afterwards, and it boosted his mood for a couple of days. They are planning to do something similar at regular intervals, which also gives them things to look forward to in the short term.

Remember micro-lifts are not about the big stuff...this isn't about setting out to lose twenty pounds, or learn Italian, or the cello, though these things might present opportunities for micro-lifts if you're doing them with other people. They are about working brief meaningful connections with others into your day, and the beauty of micro-lifts, is that every time you connect and generate one for yourself, you are doing the same for someone else.



Confessions of a Yoghurt-Knitter!

Lockdown has turned me into a home-schooling multi-tasker

Our family live on yoghurt. We eat it with fruit for breakfast, swirl it in soups, use it as a replacement for cream, and as a side order with chilli and curry. Under lockdown, with shopping trips severely restricted I suddenly realised I was down to the last couple of tablespoons in the very last pot. Aaargh! But as much as my children feel yoghurt is the stuff of life, it didn't really count as an essential reason for a trip to the shops. What was I to do? I vaguely recalled from my distant past, a Blue Peter episode, or possibly an episode of Why Don't You? which contained a section on how to make your own yoghurt using milk and a thermos flask. Had I imagined that? I googled and discovered that there were a dozen or more tutorials about yoghurt-making in a thermos. Brilliant. So, if you would like to do a little edible science experiment and some hands-on science and



history home-learning in lockdown, hang on to your home-stitched face masks. Let's start with the science. All yogurt starts life as milk. With the addition of certain bacteria, under the right conditions, the milk transforms into a tangy, delicious yoghurt loveliness. The bacteria involved are *Lactobacillus delbrueckii* subsp. *bulgaricus* and *Streptococcus salivarius* subsp. *thermophilus*. They are both thermophilic, which means they activate at warm temperatures around 46C, and begin to feed on the milk's sugars (lactose). The process is called fermentation. Within 6-12 hours this creates delicious creamy yoghurt. The by-product of this fermentation process is lactic acid, which gives

the yoghurt its signature sour flavour. It forces the milk's protein, called casein molecules, to break down and recombine, transforming the milk from a liquid into a delicate, semisolid gel. Now for the history lesson. The word yoghurt is Turkish in origin and comes from the verb "yogurmak" (to thicken). There are records of yoghurt-making in Turkey going back to the 6th century BC. It's though that Central Asian herdsman were the first yoghurt-makers. They stored their extra goat's milk in containers made out of animal stomachs to preserve it while travelling. Some of the milk stored in these skins became thick and tart, yet remained edible, presumably to their delighted relief. The reason was the aforementioned bacteria which are termed good bacteria, in contrast with the bad bacteria responsible for stomach bugs. The good bacteria made the curdled

milk a hostile environment for bad bacteria, so they couldn't colonise it, while also creating a hardier and more substantial foodstuff. For centuries, yogurt was only made at home, not for mass production. That changed in the early 20th Century with the research of Bulgarian microbiologist Stamen Grigorov who first discovered the *Lactobacillus* bacterial strain which ferments milk, and Russian biologist Ilya Metchnikoff, who as head of the Pasteur Institute in Paris developed the starter culture used to begin most batches of commercial yogurt from that time on. And so...if I've inspired you to have a go at making your own yoghurt read on...

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Make Your Own Yoghurt

What you need...

- A Thermos flask that holds 1 pint.
- 450-500ml of milk. Whole milk gives the creamiest results and is the one we prefer, but semi-skimmed also works well.
- 4-5 tbsp live yoghurt at room temperature. (If the blurb on the pot says 'made with live cultures' you're good to go).
- Optional - 25g milk powder. Some methods said this made the yoghurt thicker and creamier. I found that it gave the yoghurt a slightly grainy texture, but it might have been my ancient milk powder!
- A kitchen thermometer is helpful but not necessary.
- Sterilise the flask by filling it with boiling water. I empty it and pop the lid on to keep it warm.

Thermometer method - Heat the milk to 82-86C in a pan (to sterilise). Stay with the milk, it boils quickly! Remove the pan

from the heat and allow to cool to 46C. Then whisk the room-temperature yoghurt through and add the milk powder if using.

No thermometer method - Heat the milk until a ring of bubbles forms around the edge of the pan. This means the milk has reached scalding point. I checked and it is between 82 and 86C. Allow to cool for at least fifteen minutes. Then (make sure you have super-clean hands) dip your little finger into the centre of the milk up to the first knuckle. When you can comfortably hold it there for five seconds the good bacteria will be comfortable too (I checked and it's somewhere around 46C). Whichever method you use, pour the resulting mixture into the warmed, sterilised thermos flask. Seal and leave for 12 hours. I usually leave overnight. In the morning you should have yoghurt! Decant into clean glass jars and enjoy. You can use a few tablespoons of this yoghurt to make your next batch. It's the food that keeps on giving.





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'Gin & Tonic with a slice of Lemon' Drizzle Cake

Ingredients

3 large eggs, beaten
240g butter at room temperature
240g caster sugar
240g self-raising flour
2 large lemons
200ml gin
25ml tonic water (optional –
elderflower is particularly nice)
130g granulated sugar

Method

Line a 1kg loaf tin
Preheat oven to 180C / Gas Mark 4.

Cream the softened butter and caster sugar together until light. Add the eggs a little at a time and beat until combined. Carefully fold in the flour and

the finely grated zest of both lemons.

Add the juice of 1 lemon and 100ml of gin, then pour into the lined tin. Bake in the centre of the oven for 45 minutes, or until a knife inserted into the centre of the cake comes out clean.

Remove from the oven and leave to cool slightly in the tin while you make the drizzle.

Combine the rest of the gin, the granulated sugar, tonic water (if using) and juice of 1 lemon in a bowl. Puncture the surface of the cake all over with a skewer, then pour the drizzle over

Don't remove the cake from the tin until it's cold and the sugary topping has crystallised.

Serve with crème fraiche and a G&T...of course.

Prep time: 15 minutes

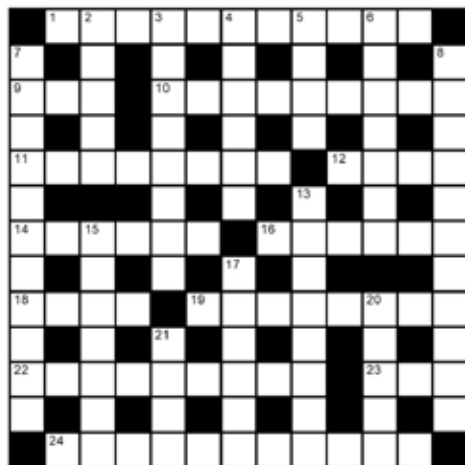
Cooking Time: 45 minutes

Serves: 8-10



crossword

clues

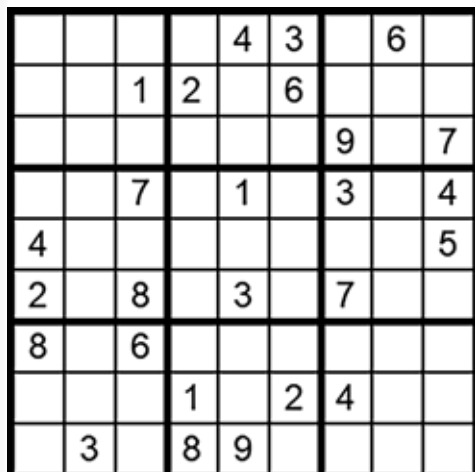


Across

- 1 Covered furniture with fabric and padding (11)
- 9 To make a choice (3)
- 10 Express the same phrase in another language (9)
- 11 Seers, forecasters (8)
- 12 Part of a cowboy boot (4)
- 14 Track for storing spare trains (6)
- 16 Capital city of Greece (6)
- 18 Massive (4)
- 19 Leave in a will (8)
- 22 Visiting, being present at. (9)
- 23 Stain, tint (3)
- 24 Vigorous polishing or cleaning (5,6)

Down

- 2 Paved outdoor seating area (5)
- 3 Transcend, perform better than (8)
- 4 Disorganised, forgetful (6)
- 5 Requires little effort (4)
- 6 Typical specimen (7)
- 7 Pile of rotting plant matter (7,4)
- 8 Large revolving fairground ride (6,5)
- 13 Skirmish, grapple (8)
- 15 Computerised numerical display (7)
- 17 Observing, watching (6)
- 20 Assistants, attendants (5)
- 21 Remove the outer wrapping (4)



how to play sudoku

It's simple!

Fill in the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box, contains the numbers 1 through to 9 with no repetition. You don't need to be a genius. These puzzles use logic alone. Watch out! Sudoku is highly addictive.

answers on page 37

a good read

reviews By Katherine Gillespie

Call the Midwife

by Jennifer Worth

If in lockdown you've been re-watching the entire wonderful BBC series *Call the Midwife*, you might want to take the time to read the books on which it's based.



Jennifer Worth's bestselling memoirs recall stories of life, birth and death in London's East End during the 1950's. It opens as Jennifer – then fresh-faced young Jenny Lee – arrives at Nonnatus House, a community of nuns who provide midwifery and district nursing for the close-knit families of the dockers of Poplar, and follows her as she lives and learns amongst them. Jenny is an honest and sympathetic narrator, quick to point out her own failings. The nuns, from calm, steady Sister Julianne to mischievous Sister Monica Joan are characterised beautifully, and Jenny's fellow midwives are a memorable bunch. But it is the people of the East End who burst from the pages – from terrified runaways to hardy mothers of four (and even twenty four!), from seedy pimps to rough and ready dockers, all are described so vividly that they practically step out to meet you. The backdrop is almost a character in itself. As the book progresses, the reader begins to understand something of the history of the area – bombed heavily during the war, it has not recovered by the time Jenny arrives, and many families are caught in limbo, unable to do anything about their appalling living conditions. This element is explored in further detail in the subsequent volumes of the trilogy, particularly in 'Shadows of the Workhouse'. And, of course, there are the birth stories. Every birth is different, and the book contains comic, tragic and poignant experiences. Worth balances human interest and medical detail deftly, never talking down to the reader but never baffling

them with complex terminology, as she guides us through the emotions as well as the technicalities. For anyone with an interest in birth, midwifery, social history or just a good story, this is a must read.

The Hunger Games

Suzanne Collins



We've watched all the *Hunger Games* films again while in lockdown. They are a great lead-in to the books which if possible, paint an even more vivid picture. Collins' dystopian vision of Panem is even more sinister on the page. This land, which was once America, is now divided into twelve districts, controlled by the Capitol and subjugated both by hunger and by the yearly tradition of 'reaping' one boy and one girl from each area to fight to the death in a televised theatre of cruelty. In order to save her sister from this fate, Katniss Everdeen steps forward to take her place. Instantly her life changes as she is taken first to the Capitol for a series of rituals, and then thrust into the Games themselves. To complicate matters further, she must decide whether her fellow 'tribute' from District 12, Peeta, can be trusted or whether he must be sacrificed in order for Katniss to save herself. This was the novel that turned my reluctant teenage reader into one who stayed up well into the small hours to finish it. And like all the best fantasy writing, it allows us to reflect on our own world, and how we treat others. No bad thing right now.

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3	9	1	2	7	6	5	4	8
6	4	2	5	8	1	9	3	7
9	5	7	6	1	8	3	2	4
4	6	3	7	2	9	8	1	5
2	1	8	4	3	5	7	9	6
8	2	6	3	5	4	1	7	9
5	7	9	1	6	2	4	8	3
1	3	4	8	9	7	6	5	2

Sudoku Solution

from page 29

	U	P	H	O	L	S	T	E	R	E	D	
C	A		U	C	A	X		F				
O	P	T		T	R	A	N	S	L	A	T	E
M	I	S	T	Y		M		R				
P	R	O	P	H	E	T	S		S	P	U	R
O			I	Y	S	L		I				
S	I	D	I	N	G		A	T	H	E	N	S
T	I	E	S		R					W		
H	U	G	E		B	E	Q	U	E	A	T	H
E	I		U	E	G		I	E				
A	T	T	E	N	D	I	N	G		D	Y	E
P	A		D		N		L	E		E		L
	E	L	B	O	W		G	R	E	A	S	E

crossword Solution

from page 29

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