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The Earth is a Pancake! A Shocking Revelation

Cory Salveson, grade 11, Eastview High School, Eagan

The earth is flat. There, I said it. Every pair of eyes that crosses this line of text is attached to a mouth that will laugh at it, but it also is connected to a tiny mind that does not know any better. Repent! For it is in concluding that the world is a sphere that man made his greatest mistake since the decision to eat that confounded apple. In actuality, our dear planet is no planet at all. This fact, which tiny minds have turned into an argument, is defendable by two basic principles: There is no evidence that the world is a sphere, and, through observation and experience, it is logical to assume that the earth is planar.

Let us first establish that there is no conclusive evidence of the earth's non-flatness. We are first presented with the collective works of the archaic "scientists" that some call geniuses; names like Copernicus, Galileo and Hawking come immediately to mind, as do words like "small minded" and "presumptuous." The backbone to these dreamers' arguments is theoretical science, an unstable ground for the construction of anything designed to last. They argue that because stars move in certain calculable patterns across the night sky, the earth must be a ball-shaped object floating in a large vacuum. Perhaps they sleep easily at night thinking that, because the gradual movement of shadows over time is a clear sign of a wandering light source, the earth must be some kind of roundish blob being orbited by the sun. But have any of them ever seen a star? Have any of them ever watched the earth float around in space? No. No, they most certainly have not, and even if they claim to have done so, there are still the questions of mental stability, eyeball reliability and memory consistency.

A pitiful soul still attempting to cling to the idea of a round earth would probably read to this point and say something to the effect of, "What about the moon landings and orbits?" I ask you—what good is a photo of the earth if it is fake? Yes, I am indeed implying that man has never made it into space. At least five people, possibly more, witnessed the moon landing of 1969, but they were all of them deceived. There is no way that a bucket

of circuits and duct tape such as what was supposedly used could have survived the speed necessary to make it to the moon in so short a time. The technology simply did not exist in the 1960s; of course, cinematographic special effects did exist on a caliber necessary to pull off such a large-scale prank. Take a gander at the James Bond movies *Goldfinger* or *You Only Live Twice*—1964 and 1967, respectively—for proof. Also take into consideration that the television show *Monty Python's Flying Circus* debuted the same year as the moon landing. At any rate, I find it difficult to rule out the possibility of a grand-scale hoax committed by a generation that popularized sea monkeys and polyester pants suits.

With the mind newly cleared of all sphere-biased assumptions, we may now move on to proving that the earth is flat. First, we shall look at our incandescent friend in the sky. I have personally proven that the sun physically moves from one side of the sky to another in an easily repeatable experiment. Materials used included: large blanket, video camera, 12 two hour video tapes, and 2 pitchers of pink lemonade. I set out the large blanket on an open spot on the ground outdoors and proceeded to record the movement of the sun across the sky over a 24-hour period. My results were not astonishing, as I had noticed the sun's wandering activity before. The following excerpt from my lab journal details my findings:

Good old Sol poked up from behind the paint factory to the east of me, streaking the sky in a multitude of nontoxic designer colors. Compelled to move by the advancing ticks of the clock, he perched himself up an immeasurable distance above my head and melted all the ice cubes in my pink lemonade. The path followed thus far was a straight one, I observed. The sun then swam through blueness into the increasingly mud-red western horizon, and all trace of his fiery, mobile goodness was drowned by smothering darkness and overpowered by my fiercely growling stomach.

If you listen to the voice of logic in your mind, you will hear it tell you that the sun is doing all the moving about, and not our comfortably

stationary and obviously horizontal earth. With this in mind, it is easy to understand that the earth does not move. As a planar object, it must remain stationary; stars and other, more curvaceous planets do all the running around. If the earth did start moving, everything on it would fly off. Spin a Lazy Susan too fast and you will end up with salt and napkins all over the place, and this concept is no different when applied to the earth. Someone with a small mental capacity might point out that gravity would save our souls in the unlikely event that our planet is or someday will be spinning. Such a person is easily shamed into silence when a balloon is brought into the room, an object that defies the law of gravity by floating above the ground. Airplanes, bumblebees and trapeze artists are other fine examples of this loophole in nature's law. It is by this established truth that we now arrive at the most definitive argument for the earth's flatness: Gravity has already been proven bunk, or at least unreliable, and thus if earth were anything other than flat, everything would fall off into space, excepting only that which sat on the very top. Water bodies would drain, birds would not be able to fly straight, trees would bend toward the bottom hemisphere. Call me crazy, but I am glad that our earth is not sphere-, cube- or popcorn-shaped.

I am content in the knowledge that the earth is a pancake, and I am comfortable with being one of the enlightened few that know it for truth.

Upside-down

I was told when I was five that because of gravity, at any point in time I could be upside-down and I wouldn't know it. For six years, I didn't worry about a thing; why worry, when you could be upside-down instead?

I was told when I was twelve that the Earth rotates around one axis, set at an angle from the North Pole to Antarctica. The Northern Hemisphere stays on the top, and the Southern Hemisphere stays on the bottom. Scientifically, I could never be upside-down.

I was told when I was seventeen that European cartographers designated England as the top of the world, as it held more power than any other country at the time. It's stayed that way. Why change the globe when you can be upside-down instead?

Marta Schaffer, grade 12
Edina High School

My Mind is Made for Math

1.4 decades ago when I was born
My mathematical mind began to form
When I was 4.119
My dad showed me a negative number line

When I entered fourth grade I knew simple calculus
I tried to show it to my friends on the bus
They didn't get it
When I learned about Pythagorean Theorem
I tested it out on my finger and thumb

Everywhere I go, I think of math
Is the time divisible by 9?
What's the volume of my bath?
Fractional exponents are really cool
They should be taught earlier in school.

I love angles, cubes, degrees, and squares
Maybe you think, who really cares?
I get excited by trig and pi
That's the way I was made, only God knows why.

Eric Peterson, grade 8
Becker Middle School

City In My Head

Got a city in my head.
Lights flash and sirens sound.
It all keeps movin' round and round.
This city, you see, it never sleeps.
It's always changing.
Rearranging.
All inside my head.

Got a city in my head.
With little people, too!
All are different, yet the same.
All filled with innocence and blame.
Some are walking.
Others talking.
All inside my head.

Got a city in my head.
A million things run through my mind!
Sorry if I don't know what you said.
See, I got skyscrapers in my head.
Lots are growing.
People knowing.
All inside my head.

Cara Benson, grade 8
Wayzata Central Middle School

Sir Isaac's Twin Sons

David Moran, grade 11, Benilde-St. Margaret's High School, St. Louis Park

Some may say that comparing a nutritious cookie-fruit snack with a Las Vegas night club singer is pointless. These, of course, are the same people who have never understood the striking similarities between Jimmy Buffet and Old Country Buffet, and more importantly, the cosmic importance of such a relation. These people deny any notion of a universal nexus. They are wrong. In actuality, everything is interconnected, and thus Fig Newtons and Wayne Newton share more than a name.

This is not to say that there aren't differences. There are the obvious: one is a delicious fruit cookie, and the other one is a singer at his own Las Vegas casino. Fig Newtons are somewhat older than Mr. Newton, they being one of the oldest baked goods on the national market, he being a youthful sixty years old. Likewise, the snacks have enjoyed commercial success far longer than the singer. True, Fig Newtons are manufactured by the millions and Mr. Newton is one of a kind, and they are inanimate and lifeless while he is a jovial performer. Nonetheless, they are like brothers in a snack food and aging performer family, bonded inherently by the very essence of their being.

Both Newtons are defined in part by their economic success and fame. To say the least, both have become wealthy in their old age. To date, Fig Newtons net an approximated \$1 billion per year; Mr. Newton, although not quite as monied, has at times in his forty-year career asked for \$1 million per month as a top-billed performer at Las Vegas casinos. Both have enjoyed a continued reign of success as well. Since the time they hit their stride in the early 1960's (Fig with the growing baby boom, Wayne with the top 20 hit "Danke Shoen"), they have managed to prolong their respective fame. Mr. Newton expanded on his feat by producing hits in "Red Roses for a Blue Lady" and "Daddy Don't You Walk So Fast." Fig Newtons expanded

by presenting different flavored varieties in strawberry, kiwi, and apple. Even though neither has returned to the peak once reached, they have somehow stayed prevalent in the American mindset. Certainly, the roles of fame and money tied them inseparably; the bond, however, extends even deeper.

The American people have always been in need of consolation, especially during hard times. It is at these times when the Newtons are most important. Fig Newtons are easily one of the world's greatest comfort foods, perfect for the college care package and the money-starved factory worker. Likewise, Wayne Newton could mollify any recently bankrupt Las Vegas gambler with a rendition of "Danke Shoen." Essentially, both Newtons, go down smoothly. Neither are overly saccharine or artificial, nor are they so bland as to be uninteresting. They both are just sweet enough to let one forget about the troubles and trials of everyday life without being lifted from reality all together. They provide relief-La-z-Boys in a world of park benches. And in this way, their importance is incalculable. One can imagine a downtrodden mailman sitting in front of his stereo with a collection of Wayne Newton records and a king-sized package of Fig Newtons to alleviate his problems for a while. The power of the Newtons is ever present.

The connection between two such disparate entities may mean nothing to some, but to the enlightened, it provides hope in the vast enormity of the ever-changing universe. Some are apathetic about the Newtons, but they are heartless, have no soul, and thus will not be discussed. Nevertheless, simply to recognize the inherent affinities between the two is an acknowledgment of the similarities between us all. We ought all strive to see this more often.

Valedictory

Roxy Berg, grade 12, Lincoln High School, Thief River Falls

Until I stood in line for my cap and gown, my epiphany-less lifestyle was just fine and dandy. I was content to find fulfillment in meaningless emotional outbursts and abstract finger paintings. However, after three quarters of AP English I found myself ashamed of my lack of depth and discernment. Analyzing classic literature made me realize that revelations are absolutely necessary for daily function. It seemed that short story authors have Big Light Bulb Moments with their morning coffee and novelists ooze epiphanies with every syllable. To my horror, I realized that for years I've been breathing the stale, ignorant air of the general populace. I feared that unless I found an epiphany fast, I would fall into a pit of intellectual bewilderment and creative failure. Well, I wasn't going to let that happen. At once I decided to take time out of my busy schedule to find one for myself. If Virginia Woolfe could find the meaning of death by watching a moth die, then I could certainly find the meaning of life in Lincoln High. Surely a valedictorian could manage to hunt down an epiphany after school on a Wednesday afternoon.

I thought it best to start in the library. I wandered up and down the aisles, running my fingers along the Dewey decimal numbered spines hoping some detail would set off my Epiphany-Day. I had it all planned out. Bells would ring and birds would sing as a Newtonesque apple of enlightenment clunked down on my head and opened my eyes to the innate truths of man, god, and society. Unfortunately, I only got harassed by overworked library ladies and wasted several precious minutes engrossed in a useless book on handwriting analysis.

Undaunted, I pressed on to the hallway. As I turned a corner, I nearly tripped over a crying girl. I thought it odd that she'd be crying in the open, then nearly cheered when I realized what an excellent potential epiphany she was. In books, tears and suffering nearly always lead to something important. The suffering is preferably your own, but I could cut corners. This didn't need to be an impressive revelation. Using a friendly and, I hoped, sufficiently sympathetic tone, I asked, "Little girl, why

are you crying?" It reminded me of an intro to a bad joke. The girl looked up and sniffled a little.

"I don't know," she said, and then started bawling all over again. This was going nowhere. I told her that I knew what she meant, which I did, or maybe I didn't, or maybe I wasn't quite sure. Disappointed, I moved on minus two Kleenex and about forty-five seconds.

I then opted for the chemically induced epiphany. Since drugs and alcohol were both illegal and unavailable, I marched to the vending machines and shoved my quarters into the slots. A few moments later I devoured a Hershey bar and slammed a bottle of Mountain Dew, not diet, I'm no sissy. Adequately cranked on caffeine, I sat down and waited for my imminent vision. Nada. The cheerleading squad arrived on the scene to practice and after awhile I went on my way, positive that school spirit is a natural epiphany repellent.

I pondered potential epiphany catalysts: Inspiration by perspiration, insulation, aspiration, transpiration, incubation, perturbation, masturbation, refrigeration—No! I think not.

I was getting a little antsy and frustrated—most likely the sugar kicking in. I found myself distracted by thoughts of love, war, and politics all at once. It was frightening yet sadly cliché. I do have some standards for myself. It was getting late, and I was running out of patience. With a lazy perseverance I decided to follow precedence and watch a moth die. After all, if it worked for Virginia Woolfe, why not for me?

I searched high and low and in the middle for a moth, but most of the classrooms were locked and the windows were all full of announcements and inspirational posters. Eventually I found a spider under a sink in the upstairs bathroom. It rested on a sweating pipe, unaware as I cautiously approached. Absorbing every detail of its form and manner, one could not help watching its frail and diminutive body. The spider's belly was gray and smooth—swollen by gelatinous entrails. One was, indeed, conscious of a queer feeling of pity for his eight scrawny legs and ten compound eyes. One could

only imagine what he saw of the world from behind such distorted lenses. I waited in breathless anticipation for it to move. It didn't.

I waited.

One would assume that after dramatic pause, the twitching, scuttling, creeping, wriggling, leaping, or darting would surely follow. No such luck. Hoping to hurry the observation along, I extended my car keys and nudged at at one of the legs. It twitched a few times, but the spider remained otherwise unresponsive. I poked another leg. This one slid over a bit then back to its original position. I shoved my key back into my pocket. Woolfe's moth was far more enthusiastic.

AHA! A sudden realization turned my frustration to joy. Surely the spider meant to save me time by skipping the frantic, reeling, desperate phase and getting right to the dying part. Entranced once more, I continued my vigil.

A loud knock interrupted my concentration. Curses! The janitors had come to clean the bathroom. My time for romantic contemplation and meticulous description would be tragically cut short. I looked back under the sink. The damn spider wasn't even dead yet.

"Is anyone in there?" asked Dusty the Janitor. Maybe I could salvage a few precious seconds. "Just a minute!" I screeched.

"No problem."

I examined the spider. Unfortunately its vital signs seemed normal—as if anyone could tell. But perhaps I could hurry death along a little. I flicked some water on it, hoping for a drowning or at least anaphylactic shock, but the spider seemed disinterested and lethargic. I blew on it; the spider merely yawned and twiddled its eight thumbs. There was another knock on the door. Dusty was getting impatient. Desperate, I yanked off my shoe and said a silent prayer to the gods of British literature: Milton, Chaucer, and Shakespeare. Smack! Thwack! Smoosh! My epiphany oozed sticky yellow goo between my Sketchers' purple treads. I blinked a few times. Nope. Just as stupid as ever.

Dejectedly I wandered the empty halls of Lincoln High. I had failed. Perhaps I just wasn't cut out for enlightenment. Perhaps my destiny lay in an earthworm farm or a post-it note assembly line.

As I passed the library, I was certain that I could hear Virginia Woolfe snickering at me from the beyond the grave. My thoughts turned

bitter, brooding, and bloody. Hamlet would be proud.

"That's it, Virginia, you sententious British bitch. I'm not afraid of you." With the determination of a five-year-old, I dropped to the floor, crossed my arms and legs, and pouted. "No! You can't stop me! I want an epiphany, and I want it right now! I'm not moving till I get one!" That would show those snobby epiphanies who's boss. I waited and waited. And waited. La de da. I whistled and drummed my hands on the floor. The epiphanies were wearing down—I could feel it. They hate whistling. Alas, the sun was setting and I had a lot of homework to do. Nonchalantly, I opened my Spanish book and memorized some kitchen utensils. I checked my watch.

Yep. Any minute now. Hmmmm. Maybe I'll have enough time to finish *Hamlet* while I wait.

Diploma

a mountain
the foot of or the
could be top of
The stage a molehill

The handshake with the principal
is fair warning of
as the young graduate reaches for
the ticket.

He could be
wishing the graduate well
at Harvard
or McDonald's.

The formal scrap of parchment
clutched in nervous fingers
symbolizes twelve grades
of school
but doesn't say
where to go next.

Kerry Koestner, grade 12
Lincoln High School, Thief River Falls