



newsLetter

A compilation of newsTicker 2 articles
with Exercises

APRIL 2006

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2006-04-04

PEACE CAMPAIGNERS FREED

Captors showed hostages Christian DVD

Peace campaigner Norman Kember, held hostage in Iraq for four months, said his captors had shown him a Christian DVD during his captivity.



Special Forces unit

Kember was rescued by Special Forces from an unguarded house west of Baghdad along with two Canadian colleagues from Christian Peacemaker Teams. A fourth hostage, however, American Tom Fox, was found shot dead two weeks earlier.

In an interview with the Baptist Times, Kember said four months had been „stolen“ from him. „The experience of being confined is desperate. Not going outside for four months -- it's having that time stolen,“ the 74-year-old retired professor of medical ethics said.

Kember said the hostage-takers had been unpredictable but had tried to keep the captives happy to stop them from trying to escape. He said the captors put a DVD of the life of Jesus in Arabic and added, „But these people are the people who shot Tom Fox in the head. People are very complex.“

After his release Kember was accused of being ungrateful to the soldiers who freed him. But in an interview, Kember paid tribute to the Special Air Service (SAS) troops who found him.

Activity

Read the article and complete the activities below.

1. What do you think happened during the four months Kember was held captive? Describe what you think his daily life was like.
2. If you could ask Kember three questions about his experience, what would they be?
3. What three questions would you ask the captors?
4. What do you think Kember meant when he said "People are very complex."? Explain.

2006-04-05

US ARMY NEEDS RECRUITS

Relaxes tattoo rules

The US Army, which missed its recruiting goal last year, has relaxed its policy banning certain types of tattoos in a bid to attract new soldiers who otherwise would have been barred from serving.

The Army will now allow new recruits and all its current soldiers to have tattoos on their hands and the back of their necks as long as they are not „extremist, indecent, sexist or racist,“ Army officials said.

The Army said it continues to prohibit tattoos anywhere on the head, face or throat area. But it will allow women recruits and soldiers to sport „permanent makeup“ in the form of indelible eye-liner, eyebrows and lip makeup. The Army said this permanent makeup „should be conservative and not be trendy.“

The tattoo policy marks the latest move by the Army to try to boost its ability to attract recruits. The Army has raised the maximum age for enlistment, offered a series of financial incentives for signing up, increased the number of recruiters and hired a new advertising agency.

The Army missed by about 7,000 its goal of recruiting 80,000 in fiscal year 2005, which ended on October 1. It was one of the toughest recruiting years since the all-volunteer military was created in 1973.

The Army cited a 2003 survey of 1,010 people conducted at the Scripps Survey Research Centre at Ohio University that found that roughly 30 percent of US adults under age 30 have tattoos.



U.S. soldiers hold flags during a change-of-command ceremony

Activity

Read the article and complete the following activities.

1. What do you think is the reason for the Army missing its recruiting goals?
2. Should there be rules regarding tattoos for soldiers? How does having a tattoo affect a soldier's performance? Why should the government be concerned about a soldier's appearance?
3. You are in charge of getting more volunteer soldiers. Create three new rules that make the Army more accessible for new recruits. Discuss your ideas with the class.

2006-04-06

PEARL JAM

Plays London club

Pearl Jam will play its first UK show in six years on April 20, when it will drop by the 1,600-capacity Astoria.

Tickets went on sale recently in the United Kingdom; a limited amount of tickets will be available to UK-based members of Pearl Jam's Ten Club fan organization.



Eddie Vedder

An extensive European tour is in the works for later this year in support of Pearl Jam's self-titled album, which is due May 2 via J Records. First single „World Wide Suicide“ is in its second week at No. 1 on Billboard's airplay-based Modern Rock chart. The track is also No. 2 on the Mainstream Rock tally.

„World Wide Suicide“ is available as a call tone and ringer exclusively through Sprint. The cell phone carrier is also hosting an online contest to send a fan to see Pearl Jam play a hometown show in Seattle on a date to be announced. Five runners-up will win a Sprint Music Phone filled with Pearl Jam content.

Pearl Jam will begin its North American tour May 9 in Toronto and finish July 9 in Los Angeles.

Activity

Read the article and complete the activities.

1. What kind of music does Pearl Jam play? What is it classified as?
2. What are the titles of the band's most popular songs? When did they start up? Where are they from?
3. Choose a song by Pearl Jam and listen to it. What are the lyrics about? Is it easy to understand? Share some of your favorite lines in the song with the class and say why they appeal to you.

2006-04-10

PIRACY DOESN'T PAY

Music industry launches lawsuits

The music industry launched a new wave of lawsuits and criminal proceedings against file-sharers across Europe, part of its drive to curb online piracy and encourage the use of legal music services.



Music

About 2,000 cases were launched in 10 countries, the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry said, bringing the total to 5,500 people in 18 countries.

That figure does not include the United States, covered by its sister group the Recording Industry Association of America, which has filed about 18,000 lawsuits.

Among the countries targeted was Portugal, where sales of physical formats like CDs have slumped by 40 percent in the past four years amid heavy file-sharing usage, especially by college students. Other countries include Italy, England, Germany and Czechoslovakia.

The IFPI's legal proceedings were aimed not at people who illicitly downloaded music but „uploaders“ who put copyrighted music onto file-sharing networks.

The IFPI said last week that digital music sales soared in 2005, but not enough to make up for a continuing decline in physical formats like CDs, sending total sales down 3 percent.

Activity

Read the article and complete the activities.

1. Discuss as a class whether file-sharing should be outlawed.
2. Does downloading music and movies hurt the entertainment industry? If so, how?
3. How should people be penalized for file-sharing?

2006-04-11

WALK AROUND THE WORLD

Briton detained in Far North

A Briton attempting to complete an unbroken walk around the world has been detained by Russian border guards after crossing the frozen Bering Strait, his father said.

Former paratrooper Karl Bushby was stopped with American Dimitri Kieffer on April 1 on the remote Chukotka peninsula after a perilous two-week journey across the sea ice bridge between Russia and Alaska.



Bering Strait

If you walk across the Bering Strait you're very lucky if you make it „to Russia at all. Where you land is in the lap of the gods," said his father, Keith. „Apparently they've got him holed up in a hotel under a sort of house arrest," he told Reuters by telephone from Britain.

Russian news agencies quoted local officials as saying the two men were stopped at the village of Uelen for illegally crossing Russia's border.

Bushby, 37, set off from the tip of South America in 1998 and hopes to return to Britain in 2009, after a journey of some 36,000 miles (60,000 km). He teamed up with Kieffer, an endurance racer, for the crossing in Alaska.

Activity

Find out more about Karl's incredible journey. Visit the website below and answer the following questions.

goliath.mail2web.com

1. What route is Karl taking and what are the stages?
2. What is Karl's background like?
3. What kind of funding does Karl have? How much money did he start out with?
4. How does Karl carry his supplies? What is the "beast"?
5. Why would someone want to walk around the world? Give some possible reasons.

2006-04-12

LITTERBUGS BEWARE

New immediate fines

New powers which allow local authorities to issue stiffer, on-the-spot fines of up to 80 pounds for littering, scrawling graffiti or failing to clear up dog mess come into force on Thursday.



Graffiti

Under the Clean Neighborhoods and Environment Act, councils can now take action against a range of anti-social behavior. People who leave burglar alarms ringing for 20 minutes or more could be fined 100 pounds, and those who create a nuisance by repairing their car on the street will face on-the-spot penalties. Councils will also be able to fine people caught fly-posting.

For too many years councils have had too little power to tackle „people who blight the local area,“ said David Sparks, chairman of the Local Government Association’s Environment Board.

Larger fines and the ability to issue on the spot „penalties will give councils the power to deal effectively with the minority of people and businesses who spoil the local area for the rest of the community.“

Other measures include charging stores for the recovery of abandoned shopping carts, and allowing councils to remove abandoned cars more quickly.

I see no reason why we won’t start seeing a marked difference „in the quality of our neighborhoods within the next two or three years,“ said environment minister Ben Bradshaw.

Activity

Listen to the article and answer the following questions.

1. What is the result of the Clean Neighborhoods and Environment Act?
2. Give some examples of anti-social behavior.
3. Name some of the infractions.
4. What can councils do now that they couldn't before?
5. What do government officials see in the near future?

2006-04-19

'CASABLANCA'

Greatest movie script

Round up the usual suspects: The Writers Guild of America has named „Casablanca“ as No. 1 on its first list of the „101 Greatest Screenplays“.

The screenplay for the wartime tale of courage and cynicism starring Humphrey Bogart was written by Howard Koch and brothers Julius and Philip Epstein.



Humphrey Bogart

It was followed on the list by the screenplay for „The Godfather“, written by Mario Puzo and Francis Ford Coppola; „Chinatown“, written by Robert Towne; „Citizen Kane“, by Herman Mankiewicz and Orson Welles; and „All About Eve“ by Joseph Mankiewicz.

Rounding out the top 10 were „Annie Hall“, by Woody Allen and Marshall Brickman; „Sunset Boulevard“ by the writing team of Charles Brackett, Billy Wilder and D.M. Marshman Jr.; Paddy Chayefsky's „Network“; Wilder and I.A.L. Diamond's „Some Like It Hot“; and Coppola and Puzo's „The Godfather Part II“.

Three writers -- Allen, Coppola and Wilder -- had four films on the list, while three others had three: William Goldman, John Huston and Charlie Kaufman.

The list was chosen by Guild members from more than 1,400 nominated screenplays.

Activity

Read the article and complete the activities.

1. Write a short summary about the film "Casablanca".
2. What makes "Casablanca" such a great film? Why did it beat out the other screenplays?
3. Choose your favorite screenplay from the list below and explain why you think it should be number one. Discuss your choice with the class.
4. What other films did Humphrey Bogart star in? Has he won any awards during his acting career? Which ones?

2006-04-20

FOX USES THE INTERNET

TV reruns now online

News Corp.'s Fox network has signed a six-year agreement with its 187 affiliated stations that will let it show reruns of its television programs on the Internet, the Wall Street Journal reported on its Web site.

The revenue-sharing agreement allows Fox to make 60 percent of its prime-time schedule available online the morning after the shows air, the Journal reported. The formula is complex, but stations essentially will get a 12.5 percent cut after costs, the paper also reported.

Fox is the home of hit programs such as „American Idol“ and „The Simpsons“, and is the latest television network to take a shot at making its programming available online as more people turn to the Internet for entertainment.

Walt Disney Co.'s ABC television network announced earlier this week that it will offer some of its most popular shows, including „Desperate Housewives“ and „Lost“, for free on an advertising-supported Web service.

It also comes after CBS Corp. made the „March Madness“ NCAA college basketball playoff games available online. General Electric Co.'s NBC started offering programs for sale on Apple Computer Inc.'s iTunes downloading service last December.



Guests mingle at party for 12 finalists of "American Idol" in Los Angeles

Activity

Read the article and answer the following questions.

1. Why is it such an important deal, putting reruns on the internet?
2. The internet offers all kinds of services and entertainment. What would you like to see added?
3. Get into small groups or work with a partner. Create something completely new in the entertainment field to offer on the internet. Share your ideas with the class and take a vote to see which is the most popular.

2006-04-21

BEIJING GAMES CEREMONIES

Zhang Yimou in charge

Internationally acclaimed Chinese film maker Zhang Yimou will direct the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, organizers announced.

A member of China's „Fifth generation“ of directors, Zhang is best known in the west for his 1991 film „Raise the Red Lantern“ and his 2004 title „House of Flying Daggers“, both of which were nominated for Oscars.

I thank (the Beijing Organizing Committee „for the Olympic Games) for trusting me with this huge task. To complete it will require the efforts of the whole team and the advisers from home and abroad,“ Zhang said.

Multi-Oscar winning Hollywood director Steven Spielberg will be part of Zhang's team as an artistic adviser. Australian Ric Birch, who directed the highly successful opening and closing ceremonies at the 2000 Sydney Olympics, will also help.

Our one goal is to give the world a taste of peace, friendship „and understanding,“ Spielberg said. „Through the visual arts ... the art of celebration of life, we are dedicated to making this the most emotional opening ceremony ever.“

The opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics will take place on August 8, 2008.



Zhang Yimou

Activity

Read the article and complete the following activities.

1. Describe the best Olympics opening ceremony you have ever seen. What made it so great?
2. What would you do if you were in charge of the ceremonies? How would you “wow” the crowds? What would make your ceremony special?
3. What do you think the movie directors will be able to add to the ceremonies?

2006-04-24

'PSEUDO-HISTORIC' ART

Blasted by Papal preacher

A Vatican official railed against „The Da Vinci Code“, branding the book and its upcoming film version as just more examples of Jesus being sold out by a wave of what he called „pseudo-historic“ art.



*Copy of book
The Da Vinci
Code*

The official, preaching in the presence of Pope Benedict, also condemned the so-called „Gospel of Judas“, an alternative view to traditional Christian teaching which has received wide media attention recently.

Father Raniero Cantalamessa, whose official title is „Preacher of the Papal Household“, made his comments in a sermon during a „Passion of the Lord“ service in St Peter’s Basilica commemorating Christ’s death.

In his sermon, Cantalamessa made several scathing references to The Da Vinci Code, without specifically mentioning the name of the worldwide bestseller. He said that people today were fascinated by „every new theory according to which he (Christ) was not crucified and did not die ... but ran off with Mary Magdalene.“

Cantalamessa then turned his ire to the film version of „The Da Vinci Code“ starring Tom Hanks, which is due to be released next month. „No one will be able to stop this wave of speculation, which will see a sharp increase with the imminent release of a certain film,“ he said.

Cantalamessa several times dismissed „The Gospel of Judas“, which claims that it was Christ himself who asked Judas to betray him. The Gospel of Judas received wide attention recently in media stories about the discovery of a 1,700-year-old copy.

Activity

Read the article and complete the following activities.

1. Why is "The Da Vinci Code" so controversial? Explain.
2. Find out more about "The Gospel of Judas". Who found it, where was it found, and what does it say?
3. Write a response to the statement: "The Gospel of Judas' will forever change religion as we know it."

2006-04-25

FLOYD'S WATERS SINGS

Concert in Israeli-Arab town

Pink Floyd veteran Roger Waters has moved the venue of an upcoming rock concert in Israel to a mixed Jewish-Arab village seen as a symbol of peace following Palestinian protests, a newspaper reported.

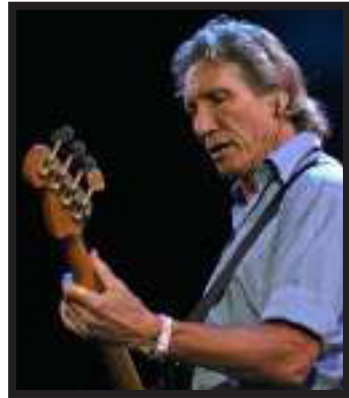
Haaretz daily said Waters chose to hold his June 22 show in Neveh Shalom, a small community near Israel's boundary with the West Bank, instead of the coastal metropolis of Tel Aviv, to encourage co-existence.

Famed for the 1970s hit „Another Brick in the Wall“, Waters has been an outspoken critic of Israel's West Bank „wall“ -- a vast network of razor-wire fences and concrete barricades that puts large swathes of occupied territory under Israeli control.

The barrier is condemned by Palestinians as a land-grab that could prevent them founding a state. Israel calls it a bulwark against suicide bombers spearheading a more than 5-year-old Palestinian revolt.

Waters has said that he remains firm in his opposition to the barrier but will not penalize Israeli fans with a boycott.

According to Haaretz, 35,000 tickets have so far been sold for the Waters concert.



Roger Waters

Activity

Read the article and complete the activities below.

1. Find out about the group Pink Floyd:

-When was the highlight of their career?

-What kind of music did they play?

-Name three of their albums.

-What was the name of their famous movie?

-Who were the other members of the band?

2. Listen to a couple of songs from Pink Floyd. Describe the music. Would you recommend this group to your friends?

2006-04-26

PASSENGERS STUCK IN NY TRAM

Police to the rescue

New York City police conducted an all-night rescue operation for scores of passengers stranded for hours on two commuter tramcars stalled high above the city.

The gondolas, one suspended over Manhattan with 22 riders and another hovering over the East River with 47 people, unexpectedly came to a stop, police said, due to a mechanical problem or electrical outage.

Then a backup generator malfunctioned as well, which required the police department to begin rescue efforts," said police spokesman Martin Speechley. No injuries were reported.



Roosevelt Island Tram

By early morning the next day, police had removed most of the passengers from the gondola above the East River, using a metal cage hoisted alongside the tramcar, according to news reports.

It could take a number of more hours to get everyone else to safety because we're not rushing things," Speechley said. "In the meantime, there have been no injuries, passengers are in good spirits, and we're supplying them with food and drinks."

The tram makes regular 4-1/2 minute commuter runs between Manhattan and nearby Roosevelt Island, and is noted for its spectacular views 250 feet (75 meters) above the East River.

Activity

Read the article and complete the following activities.

1. Imagine you are a TV reporter and you are covering the dramatic rescue. What would you say? How would you describe the situation?

2. Work in pairs. One person is the reporter and the other has just been rescued. Ask and answer questions according to your roles.

3. Would you like to be a police officer in New York? Explain why or why not?

2006-04-27

AMERICANS' WORK COMMUTE

Longer and farther than ever

Dave Givens drives 370 miles to work and back every day, and considers his seven-hour commute the best answer to balancing his work with his personal life.

The winner of a nationwide contest to find the commuter with the longest trek, Givens is one of millions of people who are commuting longer and farther than ever before.

Studies show Americans spend more time than ever commuting, and for a growing number, getting to work takes more than an hour. In the most recent U.S. Census Bureau study, 2.8 million people have so-called extreme commutes, topping 90 minutes.

Givens, a 46-year-old electrical engineer, has an extreme commute between home in Mariposa, California, and his job in San Jose. He leaves home before dawn and returns after dark. But as harrowing or tedious as Givens' trip may sound, he says it's the way to keep the home and job he loves.

His trip landed him first place among almost 3,000 entries in the search for America's longest commute, sponsored by automotive services provider Midas Inc.



Traffic sits at a stand still on Lexington Avenue during the morning commute in New York

Activity

Read the article and answer the following questions.

1. How many miles or hours would you be willing to drive to get to work? Explain.
2. As a class, discuss Dave Givens' situation. Would you spend 7 hours a day commuting if you loved your job? How do you think that commute affects his quality of life? Explain.
3. What is your ideal job and work situation? What do you see yourself doing in the future? What are the steps you need to take to achieve it?

2006-04-28

ERIC CLAPTON

Gets new slide guitarist

In 1970, Eric Clapton joined Duane Allman and three other musicians and formed Derek and the Dominos to record one of rock-and-roll's masterwork albums, „Layla and other Assorted Love Songs.“

Now, Clapton has a new Derek. Derek Trucks, a 26-year-old slide guitarist for the Allman Brothers Band and leader of his own critically praised group, is to join Clapton's band on a European tour starting on May 5 that many fans hope will rekindle some of the Derek and the Dominos magic. The tour also marks another step in Trucks' evolution from an upstart blues player who shared stages with the Allman Brothers and Bob Dylan at age 11, to a musician critics call one of the best guitarists of his generation. His music includes influences ranging from Indian classical music to jazz visionary Sun Ra.

Clapton, who reunited with his blues-rock band Cream last year, is giving few clues about this tour, and Trucks says he doesn't expect a Derek and the Dominos revival. But Trucks, who was named after the group and whose slide style has been likened to Allman's, has dusted off tunes from „Layla“, for his own band just in case.

Intent on developing his own style, he said he stopped listening to blues guitarists for long periods and instead paid attention to singers, horn players and Indian classical music. Trucks does not use a pick and his slide notes slice through vintage amplifiers, unmodified by the effects pedals favored by many electric guitarists.



Guitarist Trucks speaks before his sold-out concert in Washington

Activity

Find out more about Clapton by answering the following questions:

- How did he get started playing the guitar?
- Who bought him his first guitar?
- What major traumas has he suffered in his life?
- What awards has he won during his music career?
- What single hit did he receive six grammies for and what was the song about?
- What is his latest album?