

20 + C + B + M + 21

The St Michael Steiner School

Newsletter



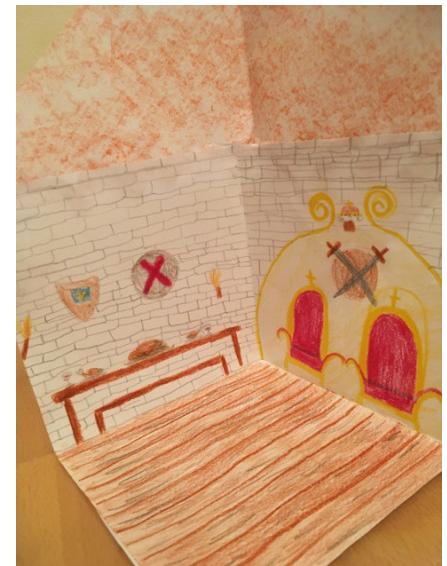
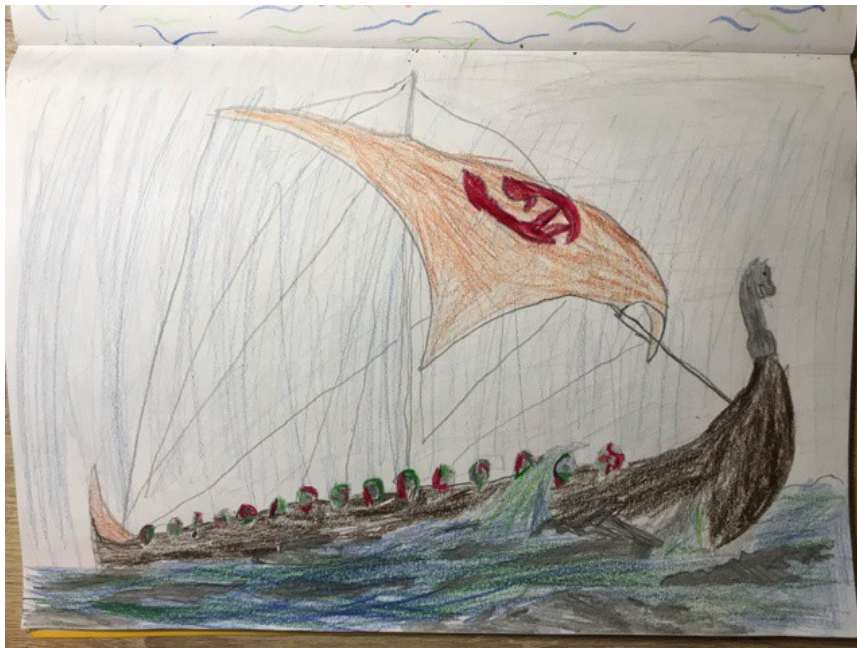
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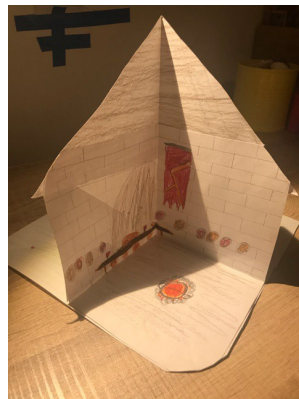
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In and out of school this month...







Wenn der Igel Lichtmess seinen Schatten sieht,
so Kriecht er wieder auf sechs Wochen ins Loch.

*If the hedgehog sees his shadow at Candlemas,
He will crawl back into his hole for another six weeks...*

The festival of Candlemas, on February 2nd, lies between the winter solstice and the spring equinox and marks a turning point in the season as the daylight hours begin to noticeably lengthen. We see the first snowdrops poking out of the ground, looking for the Sun. Folk wisdom says that a bright clear day on Candlemas tells us that we're not yet out of the cold's clutches, but that an overcast day might signal a shorter winter. At school the children know the song well:

*When Candlemas day is bright with sun
Then the Winter's but half begun,
But if Candlemas day is dark with rain
Then Winter's power is on the wane.*

The Celts celebrated Imbolc on this day, a feast honouring Brigid, a goddess of the dawn, healing and fertility. It was the beginning of the lambing season and a sign of the earth coming back to life after the fallow time of winter. In the Christian calendar, the day marks 40 days after Christ's birth and the end of the Christmas season. People used to take their candles into the churches to be blessed for the year.

At school, the younger classes have celebrated Candlemas over the years in different ways, from candle dipping to making candle gardens in the grounds to constructing earth-candles.

I for one am hoping for a rainy day on Tuesday so that we can look forward to some brighter days ahead!

Peter Brewin



Instructions for making walnut shell candles:

Step 1: How to melt beeswax

Place your seamless melting pot inside of a larger pot. Place a metal cookie cutter under your melting pot so that the melting pot does not sit directly on the bottom of the larger pot. Fill the larger pot half way with water, then place the beeswax inside of your melting pot along with the thermometer. Heat the water and simmer over medium-low heat. You want your beeswax to liquify and reach a temperature between 150 and 170 degrees F. This is the same method from the hand-dipped candle tutorial here.

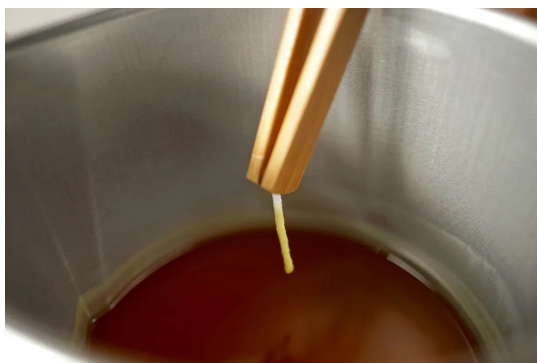
Step 2: How to open walnuts without a nutcracker

This is the method that I use to crack walnut shells open perfectly in half: Hold a walnut in your hand with the narrow end pointing downwards. Place the tip of a knife into the small crack at the walnut's base. Make sure that the serrated edge of the knife is not pointing towards any fingers and that you are holding the walnut securely. Use a twisting motion to crack the walnut open at the seam. I recommend choosing walnuts that are larger in size and aren't as tightly closed at the base so you're likely to have more useable halves. Save the walnuts inside to eat and use a brush to clean out the inside.



Step 3: How to prepare your wick

While your wax is melting, prepare your wick by cutting pieces that are approximately 1" long (you'll trim them at the end, you so cut them at a length that is slightly longer than you'll need)



Step 4: How to attach the wick

Hold the wick using your tongs and lower it into the melted beeswax for about 10-15 seconds, until you no longer see air bubbles. This allows the wax to soak into the wick. Lift your wick out of the wax, immediately transferring to the bottom of your walnut shell letting the excess wax pool at the bottom of the shell (this is what will help the wick attach). Hold the wick in place for 5 seconds, or until you see the wax harden and the wick is held in place. After a few seconds (after the wax is hard, but still warm) you can gently straighten the wick. If the wick accidentally becomes detached, simply add another bead of beeswax to the bottom of the wick and repeat.

Step 5: How to pour your candles

I find that holding the shell and pouring is the most precise method, but if you aren't comfortable doing so you can place the shells into the egg carton first and pour directly into them there. Let dry and store in a cool and dry place.



How to use floating walnut candles:

Fill a decorative bowl with water. Always trim wick before lighting. Float your walnut shell candles in the water and light them! You may want to try to keep the candles towards the center of the bowl depending on the type of material your bowl is made of. These candles will burn anywhere from 10-30 minutes based on how much wax you used. I usually extinguish them before they burn out completely for safety, but you can let them burn all the way down and they will go out on their own.

— DO NOT light these candles if they are not floating in a bowl of water and they must be under supervision when lit— once the beeswax melts down, the shell can burn and potentially catch on fire. If you hand these out as gifts, you can include a little note with instructions on how to use them.



“I can't do it!”

How to support the development of young children's perseverance

by SILVIA LAUZZANA, early years

Have you ever come across young children giving up at the smallest challenge? Or saying: “I can't do it!” even before trying? Or claiming: “It's boring!” even though they have never seen it or done it before? Does this sound familiar?

For years now, I have been teaching in kindergartens in the UK, with children under the age of 7. I have seen several of these children behaving in these ways all too often. As a person, teacher and mother I deeply value the character trait of perseverance, and I began to realise that several of the young children I care for have little of it, so I started to wonder about where this limited capacity to maintain focus and engagement comes from.

Perseverance can be defined as the ability to stay on task despite all the challenges that may arise, with a goal in mind. In other contexts, it can also be defined as a facet of courage, or a manifestation of self-control.

Research on 'grit' has shown, for example, that those who are highly successful in their studies and have general well-being possess a high degree of perseverance. Given the importance of perseverance in positively contributing to individuals' career choices and general well-being, it became evident to me that I needed to support young children to acquire and develop it.

To find out how it is possible to promote perseverance from a very young age, I conducted a research project in my kindergarten, observing a small group of children aged 3 and 4. The research was part of the final dissertation for my Masters of Education at the University of Aberdeen (Scotland).

What I found out was very revealing! Children can indeed stay on task and be persistent, even in front of a small challenge, provided they are interested and motivated to continue. Most importantly, I found that the motivation to continue came from the children themselves, not as a result of a reward promised by adults. Indeed, research on “rewards and consequences (or punishments)” has shown that promising a reward can actually reduce children's internal motivation to persist when the reward ceases to be offered. In other words, while children are likely to comply when a reward awaits them, that is not enough to keep them interested.

Interest alone is, however, not enough. Motivation needs to be there for children to continue. So the question is: How can we support children to maintain the motivation to continue a task or an activity?

The initial interest, often enthusiasm, they may have will soon dissipate at the smallest challenge. Thus, the transition from initial to maintained interest in an activity may require adults' intervention to ensure that children can continue to be engaged. This is particularly so when children are learning a skill (such as using scissors, when the adult may have to hold the paper), or the adult is planning something new (and challenging) for them. For example, in my observation, when the children were learning to make shapes out of bread dough or with clay (nests with small eggs, small animals, etc.), they were more likely to stay with the activity when the present adult had a supportive role. The children were more likely to maintain interest when I was with them, one-to-one or in a small group, and assisting them (but not doing things for them!!).

So far, we have seen that children are more likely to persist when they are interested in, and motivated to continue an activity. Yet, this is still not enough, as persistence will depend on the type of feedback the children receive from participating in an activity. In the example above, I



often used verbal encouragement that focuses on the process of the activity rather than the result. For example, I used to say phrases such as: “I can see you are working really hard”, instead of: “Your nest is really beautiful”. Research on praise has shown that praising for process and effort, rather than the person and what they have done, is more likely to support perseverance and courage. Without adult's support, when needed, children's interest can indeed become dormant or ultimately disappear altogether.

When we observe children's engagement, whether in play or an activity led by an adult, we can see the joy and satisfaction in them. It may not be obvious, but children who enjoy what they are doing are learning and self-regulating (i.e., they can control their own behaviour). We would not say the same when we see their frustration, unhappiness and the resulting dysregulation! Joy and satisfaction feed their positive sense of self, fuelling the perception of themselves as capable beings.

Children who believe of themselves that they can do something are more likely to persevere. When I hear a young child say: “I can't do it!” even before trying I think to myself: “Ok, we have got some work to do here”, as the child has already developed a sense of his or her own limited capabilities. Children's growing up believing to be able to do things is of paramount importance if we want to support the development of their perseverance.

What does this all mean for us, parents, carers and educators of young children? In a nutshell, this implies i) providing and facilitating activities that are developmentally appropriate and feed the children's needs for competence and autonomy; ii) supporting children when transitioning from initial interest to maintained interest; iii) avoiding rewards and consequences, and focus on a “relational approach” that feeds the need for relatedness that the child has; iv) if praise is necessary, using the technique of process praise rather than person praise; v) tuning in with what the child or the group children are interested in, providing for these experiences, thus developing a positive relationship with the child or children. All this can all help us in promoting their perseverance and the development of positive feelings in them about their own capabilities.

One of the most rewarding experiences as a parent and educator is precisely to see how the young children I care for, through small achievable steps, do increase their ability to persist on a task, showing joy and satisfaction along the way. As the children's experiences contribute to their sense of self, we have a huge responsibility in ensuring that the experiences we provide them, and the quality of our relationships with them, positively affect their developing self-concept.

Botany in class eleven

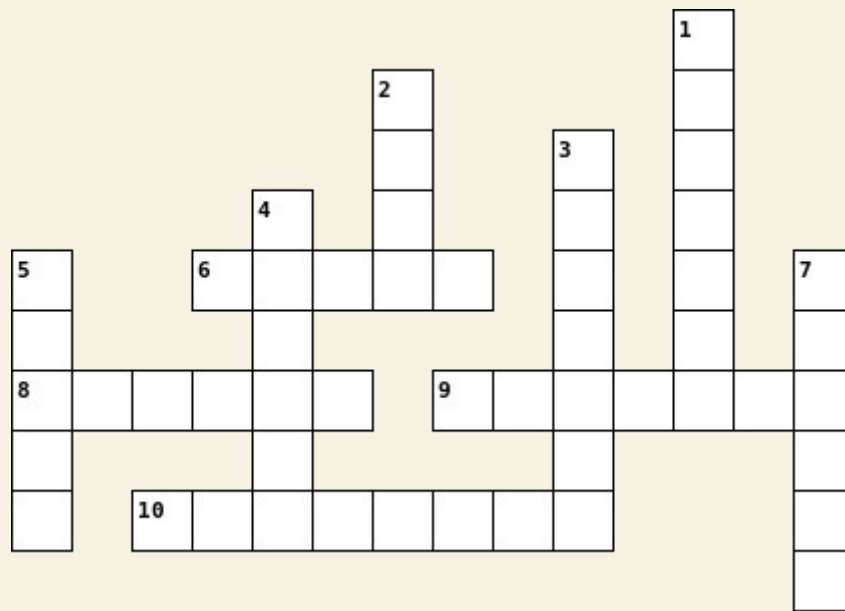


As a starting point for the class 11 block on Botany I asked my students to draw their own 'imaginary plant'. This was a take on Goethe's 'Urpflanze' his idea of an archetypal plant. Here is some of their work.

Sarah Houghton



Puzzles

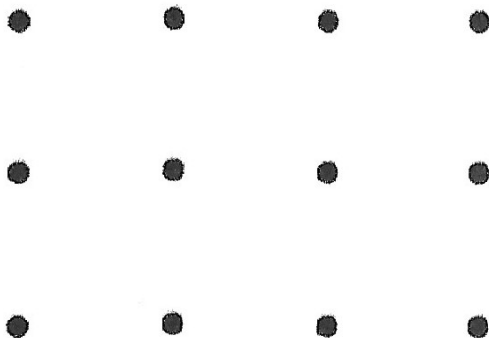


Down

1. Thor's hammer
2. What type of tree is the tall one in the kindergarten?
3. The Enchanter's daughter
4. Gilgamesh's friend
5. The Sun, with loving...
7. ...House - the old name of the school on the iron gates

Across

6. The longest mountain range in the world
8. Francis tamed the Wolf of..
9. The Pole Star
10. Queen of the Iceni



Connecting Twelve Dots

Without lifting your pencil off the page, and ending up back at the place where you started, draw five straight lines that pass through all 12 of the points in the grid.

This is quite a tricky one! If you manage, send a photo to Mr. Brewin at peterbrewin@stmichaelsteiner.com

a school community blanket

Dear School Families,
Thank you to all who have felt
inspired to contribute to this project.
Could we please ask you to hand in
any knitted or crocheted squares that
you still have at home?

We are now beginning to put the
blankets together :)

Best wishes,
Lisa and Maria

*Feel free to contact me directly
lisaclewing@gmail.com*



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The St Michael Steiner School is registered as a charity with Amazon Smile and Amazon will make a 0.5% donation on all purchases made through this scheme.

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0.5% of the net purchase price (excluding VAT, returns and shipping fees) of your eligible purchases will then be donated to the school at no extra cost to you.

Thank you!

Community, notices and adverts

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Looking for a baby-sitter?



My name is Rose. I'm a 17 year old student currently attending The St Michael Steiner School and I have been in Steiner education since kindergarden. I love children, and I am dependable and responsible when it comes to work. I am currently looking for babysitting jobs for Friday evenings and the weekend. Rates are negotiable, I am happy to look after children of any age, and can travel within reach of the Richmond area.

Contacts - you can text me at

+44 07432 582 320

or send me an email at

rose.dowse@outlook.com

Courses with Tessabella Lovemore

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When I discovered that the capacity to love could be developed, I found that the people I practiced my love on began to change in ways that I could not have imagined. They did not change in the way that I had previously wanted them to change; but they blossomed into feeling free to be more themselves (which, I found I loved even more). Each person that I practiced this active loving on changed me too. I felt as if the act of loving gave me deep understanding, and I expanded into someone more able to love.

COURSES RUNNING DECEMBER 2020 TO JULY 2021

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Incidentally, you may find that the cell is an ideal place to learn to know yourself, to search realistically and regularly the processes of your own mind and feelings. In judging our progress as individuals we tend to concentrate on external factors such as one's social position, influence and popularity, wealth and standard of education. These are, of course, important in measuring one's success in material matters and it is perfectly understandable if many people exert themselves mainly to achieve all these. But internal factors may be even more crucial in assessing one's development as a human being: honesty, sincerity, simplicity, humility, purity, generosity, absence of vanity, readiness to serve your fellow men – qualities within the reach of every soul – are the foundation of one's spiritual life.

Nelson Mandela

writing from Kroonstad Prison, 1 February 1975.