



The Unusual Life of Victor Hugo

Alexis Earp, Freshman
Reporter

Over the years, there have been many great authors who have had unconventional cures for writer's block. The German poet Friedrich Schiller would leave apples in a drawer in his writing desk and let them rot because the smell helped him work. Dan Brown, author of *The Da Vinci Code*, hangs upside down from gym equipment when he has difficulty writing. Perhaps the strangest solution to writer's block is that of Victor Hugo. The French author started his novel, *Notre Dame de Paris* (*The Hunchback Of Notre Dame*), in the fall of 1830, and he wanted to finish it by February of 1831. He decided to buy a full bottle of ink and lock himself inside of his house until he was finished. In and of itself, this does not seem too out of the ordinary. However, Hugo did not stop there. He would give his clothes to his valet and force him to hide them, therefore preventing Hugo from leaving the house. While some think that Hugo had a blanket or shawl that he used during this time, others believe he wrote his book fully in the nude. Strange as this may seem, it actually worked. Hugo not only used up his entire bottle of ink, but he also finished *Notre Dame de Paris* before his deadline. This method did not seem to work for one of his other famous works, *Les Misérables*, which historians estimate took him 17 years to write. This timeline can probably be excused by the fact that *Les Misérables*, with a total of 655,478 words, is the 20th longest book in the world. It is longer than Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and over eight times the average length of a novel.

Hugo's unusual life hardly stops at his cure for writer's block. He was incredibly afraid of octopi, and in his novel *Toilers of the Sea*, he wrote: "the tiger can only devour you; the devil-fish, horrible,



sucks your life-blood away. The muscles swell, the fibres of the body are contorted, the skin cracks under the loathsome oppression, the blood spurts out and mingles horribly with the lymph of the monster, which clings to the victim with innumerable hideous mouths." This excerpt was in reference to an octopus attacking people. Despite his fear of the creatures, Hugo produced a drawing of an octopus with its tentacles contorted into the initials V. H. Hugo's inspiration for this novel was the island of Guernsey. He lived there in exile for 15 years of his life after Louis Napoleon Bonaparte declared himself Emperor of France. Hugo's exile was more a matter of pride than anything else, and he only came back to France in 1870 when the Second Empire, and Louis Napoleon Bonaparte's rule, ended.



While he was in exile, Hugo was quite interested in spiritualism, which is the belief that spirits are able to make contact with the living through a medium. Hugo wanted to make contact with his

daughter Léopoldine, who died in a boating accident with her husband in 1843. He believed he had successfully made contact with her, but he did not stop there. Hugo also believed that he made contact with Plato, Galileo, Sir Walter Scott, Shakespeare, aliens from Mercury and Jupiter, Hannibal, and Rousseau, all of whom spoke French and frequently conveyed their thoughts through rhymed Alexandrines. The Spirit of Civilization in human form visited him and said, "Great Man, finish *Les Misérables*!" Hugo also thought that Jesus visited him three times. In his meetings with Hugo, Jesus denounced Druidism, a Celtic religion, pointed out faults in Christianity, and said that a new religion with Hugo as its prophet should be created. While Hugo was never recognized as a prophet, he became a Caodaist saint. Caodaism is a combination of Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Daoism, and spiritualism. Victor Hugo is one of the Venerable Saints, alongside Sun Yat-Sen, a Chinese philosopher, and Trạng Trình, a Vietnamese educator and poet.

A Hidden Cause of Climate Change

Madison Morris, Junior
Reporter

What's on your plate? For many Americans, that answer is some type of meat. The average American consumer ate an estimated 222.2 pounds of red meat and poultry in 2018, the highest amount in recorded history. This seemingly harmless meal is causing a bit more damage than we may have originally thought.

What impact does this have on the planet? Animal agriculture creates huge emissions of greenhouse gasses. These emissions mostly come directly from ruminants, which are mammals such as cows, buffalo, and sheep that are able to acquire nutrients from plant-based food by fermenting it in a specialized stomach prior to digestion. The emissions are then released into the atmosphere, which absorbs infrared radiation, thus warming the Earth and contributing to the greenhouse effect. Greenhouse gasses can be natural, such as carbon dioxide, water vapor, methane, and nitrous oxide, or be made by humans, such as chlorofluorocarbons and hydrofluorocarbons. An excess amount of these gasses in the atmosphere causes the Earth's temperature to rise. In 2018, an article published by *The New York Times* stated that "farming is responsible for the equivalent of 574 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions in the United States each year." About 42 percent of agricultural emissions come from, you guessed it, animal agriculture.



So what can we do to help lessen the negative impact of animal agriculture on the climate? By attempting to reduce our meat consumption, we can reduce the greenhouse gas emitted into the atmosphere. According to PETA, producing just one hamburger uses enough fossil fuel to drive a small car 20 miles. A stop to meat consumption is not necessary and simply not practical, considering America's current consumption of meat. However, if meat was viewed as a luxury instead of a large portion of one's diet, the amount of gas emitted into the atmosphere would be drastically reduced.

Origins of All Fools' Day

Riley Bowen, Sophomore
Reporter

With April just around the corner, it seems only appropriate to understand the origins of the pesky little brother of holidays – April Fools'. Also known as All Fools' Day, this holiday's roots have been speculated upon by many a historian. While it is true that the exact origins are unknown, the holiday can generally be dated back to 1500s France.

One possible theory on the birth of April Fools' begins in 1582 France, when the country switched from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar. In doing so, New Year's Day was moved from April 1st to January 1st. When this change was made by the Council of Trent, many people were unaware of the switch. These unfortunate folks became the laughing stocks of the 16th century. A common occurrence at this time during the last week of March was to place paper fish known as "poisson d'avril" on people's backs to symbolize their foolishness. Although this theory is the most entertaining, it is not the only one.

The Vernal or Spring Equinox, which falls in late March, has been linked to the emergence of April Fools'. Historians hypothesized this idea because the Equinox is when the weather changes and becomes unpredictable. Therefore, people are 'fooled' by nature. Also, around the Equinox, the festival Hilaria occurred in ancient Rome. This festival celebrated resurrection and involved people fooling others by dressing up in disguises and costumes.

Much later, in the 18th century, April Fools' traditions were seen in Scotland. The beginnings of All Fools' Day in Scotland was a two-day celebration. The first day entailed 'hunting the cuckoo bird,' which was when people were tricked into going on fake errands or wild goose chases. The second day was Tailie day, when people put fake tails on others as a prank.

Whatever the case may be, April Fools' has become an annual holiday loved (and hated) by all. To this day, historians don't know the true origin of All Fools' Day, but it can be said for sure that the legacy possibly created in the 1500s has continued on with force.



Apply for RYLA 2019!

Calling all sophomores and juniors! The Rotary International Organization invites you to apply for this year's Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA), a weekend leadership conference! For three days this May, participants can engage in indoor and outdoor activities that promote teamwork and foster lifelong leadership. Taking place in the supportive environment of Camp Glen Brook, participants will not only have fun but grow immensely. This opportunity is open to anyone in the 10th or 11th grade, whether or not they are a member of the Rotary-affiliated Interact Club at MHS. As long as applicants are interested in developing greater leadership skills, this program is the right fit for them.

As a junior at Marblehead High School and a participant in the 2018 RYLA experience, Lydia Hurley can attest to the power of RYLA, which challenged her, "To try things [she's] never done before." Among her peers, Hurley was able to face her fear of heights and public speaking, demonstrating the diverse experiences the weekend has to offer. With these newly acquired skills, Hurley will now be returning as a counselor, or senior facilitator (as it's known at RYLA). Hurley's positive experience is just one of many, and the Interact Club urges any interested students to apply. After all, as Hurley reaffirms, "It's a weekend that will change your life."

The 2019 Rotary Youth Leadership Awards will take place from May 10 - 12 at Camp Glen Brook in Marlborough, New Hampshire. Applications are due on April 15, and can be downloaded from the Rotary District 7930 website at: bit.ly/RYLA2019

For more information, contact your local Rotary Club or email the RYLA Chair, Christina Harris, at: Christina@PartnerWithChoice.com

Headlight Staff

2018-2019

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