

Classroom Spice

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The Genius Kid Next Door

Who would have thought that David Meigooni at age 14 would be an award winning scientist? Of course he started before he was 14. In fourth grade he developed a science project called "Mom's Fear of Radiation" in which he proved that his mother actually was exposed to more radiation while gardening than while watching television. Later he wondered if the relationship between the curry in the Indian diet, and the low incident of bowel and prostate cancer was related. What he discovered was that both radiation and curcumin (the major component in curry) killed cancer cells. At the age of fourteen and still interested in radiation he decided to investigate the effect of curcumin on radiation effectiveness. What he found was that not only does curcumin prevent cancer, but it can sensitize cancer cells so that only one seventh as much radiation was needed to destroy them. So it is no surprise that David won several national science awards and now at age nineteen is studying to be an oncologist.

Who would have thought that 16-year-old Yunchao Lou, who was born in Shanghai and moved to the United States when she was 5, and was passionate about music, tennis and debate would be inducted into The National Gallery For America's Young Inventors in 2005. After a fire and near tragedy in

(Continued on page 3)

The Dust Bowl Balladeer was Okemah native Woody Guthrie, who was named after Woodrow Wilson. While Woody is often referred to as the voice of the common man and a singer with a social conscience, he was also a Renaissance Man. He was not only a singer, musician, and song writer, but also an artist and an author.

Knowing some of Woody's history might give light to his ability to empathize with the downtrodden. He grew up in one of Oklahoma's first Oil Boom towns. Before he was 12 his family had lost several homes and fortunes to fires; his older sister had died in one fire; his father, a cowboy/land speculator/local politician, was severely injured in another fire suffering financial ruin; and his mother was institutionalized in an asylum for life. But Woody was able to draw strength from his father's refusal to give up and continuous attempts to bounce back, and from his parents' love of singing.

Woody spent much of his early life working odd jobs in boom towns in Oklahoma and

Dust Bowl Balladeer

Texas; jobs such as working in the fields, carpentry, moving garbage cans, shining shoes, painting signs, and washing spittoons. His life changed when his uncle bought him a guitar and taught him to play. He found that all around him was life worth singing about. He wrote about what he saw and felt—the good, the bad, and how to make things right.

He married young, and had three children. He continued facing hard times with the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl and he left Texas, and his family, and hitchhiked his way to Los Angeles. Some of his songs of this period include *I Ain't Got No Home, Goin' Down the Road*



Feelin' Bad, So Long It's Been Good to Know Ya, and Hard Trav-elin'.

He eventually got a radio job giving him an opportunity to sing some of his protest songs, and comment on unions and some of his socialist beliefs about corrupt politicians, lawyers, and business-

men. In 1939 he moved to New York and wrote and worked with such folk singers as Burl Ives and Pete Seeger. In 1940 he wrote the song perhaps he is best known for, *This Land is Your Land*. The Department of Interior commissioned Woody in 1941 to write songs about the Grand Coulee Dam being built in Oregon. This included *Roll on Columbia and Grand Coulee Dam*. In 1943 his autobiographical book *Bound for Glory*, describing his Dust Bowl Years, was published to critical acclaim, and later would become a movie starring David Carradine.

His passion for justice led him to serve in both the Merchant Marines and the Army during World War II. Woody's life was hard on his family and after about 10 years and three children and having an affair, he divorced his first wife and married his mistress. This marriage produced four children, including his son Arlo who would follow in his father's musical footsteps. After a few years, Woody and his deteriorating health and behavior resulted in yet another failed marriage. He

(Continued on page 4)

Table of Contents

<i>The Genius Kid Next Door; Dust Bowl Balladeer</i>	1
<i>Yote</i>	2
<i>Who Was Boudica? The Literature Connection</i>	3
<i>Alvarado's Leap</i>	4

Yote

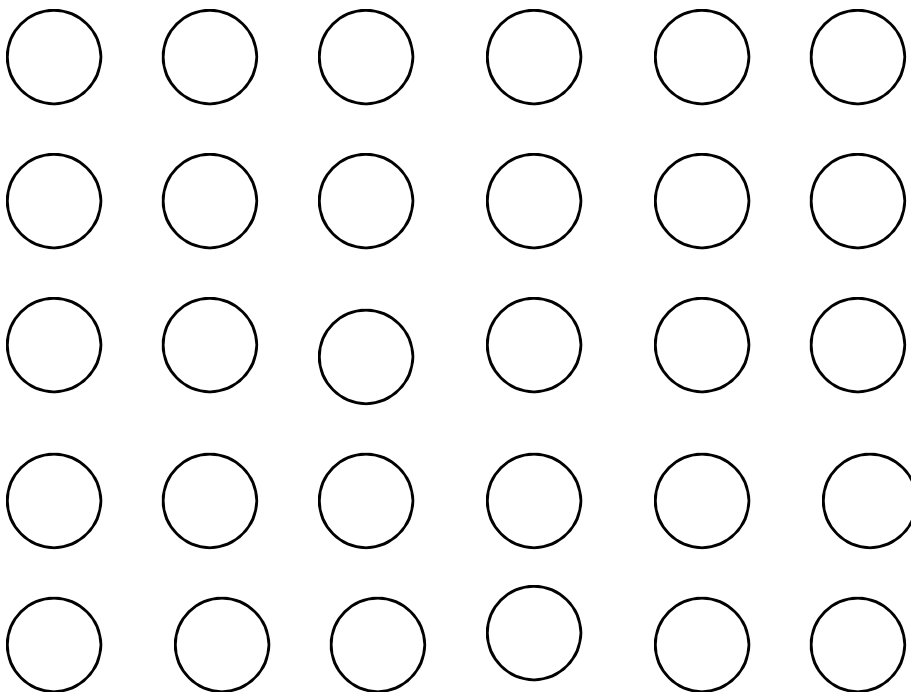
Yote is a West African game influenced by European checkers, but at a much faster pace. Traditionally it is usually played with sticks and pebbles as markers, on a grid of holes on the ground. Each player has 12 pieces and of course the object of the game is to capture all of the opponent's pieces.

Materials: A traditional grid of 5x6 is simply marked off on the ground, with 30 small holes scooped out. However, to play indoors you may use the grid below. Instead of sticks and stones you may use 24 markers (twelve markers of each of two colors)

Players: 2 players

Preparation: Enlarge playing board.

To Play: Decide who starts. Take turns placing a stone (marker) in an empty hole or on an empty circle. At any time you may use a turn to move one of your pieces already in play, or may add another to the board. *Note, you do not have to have all 12 pieces on the board before you can start moving any given marker already in play (in fact it is a smart move to do just that). Pieces may be moved up, down, right, or left, but **not diagonally**. As in checkers, when you jump an opponent's piece you capture and remove it from the board. However, unlike in checkers you may then select any other piece to remove from the board as a bonus capture! The first player to capture all 12 of the opponent's pieces wins. Note: it is possible for the game to end in a tie.



(Genius—cont'd from page 1)

her neighborhood and without ever having studied electronics Yunchao invented a life saving device called The Alarm-Triggered Shut-off Appliance System. It can be programmed to recognize an audio alarm and automatically turn off any appliance to which it is attached. Thus, if a television or stereo system were plugged into it they would automatically be shut off if a smoke detector went off, allowing the resident to hear the alarm and take appropriate action. Yunchao hopes to pursue a career in the medical field.

Who would have thought that Krysta Morlan who suffers from cerebral palsey would have become an award winning inventor as a tenth grader? Her first invention, the cast cooler, was a device that pumped air into a cast through a plastic tube to relieve the irritation caused by wearing the cast. In 2000, while still in high school, she also invented the Waterbike, a semi-submersible, fin-propelled pedaled vehicle featured in *National Geographic World*. Krysta's interests lay in adaptive technology and genetics.

Who would have thought two brothers, Brandon Whale age 10, and Spencer Whale, age 8 would be inducted into the National Gallery for Young Inventors? Their mother had to have a pacemaker implanted and when the sensor-bracelets used to send the EKG were found to be too big for her wrists, Brandon, then eight, decided to modify them by adding elastic to the sensors on her bracelet, and created packages with small electrolyte-soaked sponges to help the electrical conductivity. His invention the PaceMate, has been successfully marketed. Brandon's brother Spencer, at age 6, built a prototype IV holder to fit wheelchairs so children in the children's ward did not have to be trailed by their parents trying to keep up with the wheelchair rolling all their IV tubes and equipment behind them.

Who would have thought that children could be award winning inventors? Maybe a kid in **your class** could be the next inductee?



The Literature Connection

In recognition of Oklahoma's Centennial the first book to be reviewed is *Crossing Bok Chitto: A Choctaw Tale of Friendship and Freedom* by Tim Tingle, the well-known author of *Walking the Choctaw Road*, the "Oklahoma Reads Oklahoma" 2005 Book. This is a children's adaptation of one of the short stories from that book. It is set in Mississippi during the early 1800s. Bok Chitto is a river on one side live the Choctaw, on the other the plantation owners and their slaves.

Unbeknownst to the non-Indian population the Choctaw have built a stone path just below the water's surface, building it up in times of flooding, and down in times of drought. As a secret crossing it is not to be used by the children, however, young Martha Tom crosses the river in search of berries and loses her way. A young black boy helps her back to the river, where she shows him the secret path. In time the Black family of seven is able to sneak across the river to freedom. Illustrated in acrylic on watercolor board paintings, this is a touching, beautiful children's book. (ISBN # 0938317741)

It Doesn't Have to Be This Way: A Barrio Story, by Luis J. Rodriguez, is a bilingual story about a ten year old boy, Monchi, who

likes to write poetry and hang out with his cousin and uncle. But living in the barrio he finds himself enticed into a gang as so many youngsters do. The story follows the initiation and trouble that Monchi encounters. The author knows well the gang mentality and situation as he was a gang member from age 11 until 18, so this story shows how difficult it is to stay out of gangs and some of the consequences of being a member might be. Today Luis is a poet, author, and educator who counsels young gang members. (ISBN 0-89239-161-8)

The Ainu of Japan by Barbara Aoki Poisson is a fascinating book about the "native people" of Japan. After years of living with other Japanese, many of the ancient differences have disappeared, and relatively few full-blooded Ainu still live in Japan. As was/is true of many Native Americans, Ainu often do not want to reveal their heritage for fear of reprisal or discrimination. The book covers not only the land, but the ancient ancestors who had curly hair and pale skin, men had long beards and women wore painted tattoos on their faces. It talks about their culture (including their economy, homes, important animals such as the bear, clothing, art, language, festivals, and

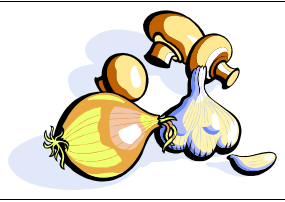
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Who was Boudica?

Following the Roman invasion, 43 AD, the Iceni British tribe stayed out of the fight and were allowed to become a 'client kingdom,' which allowed significant independence. However, in 60AD the client king died and the Romans negated his will which would leave the kingdom to his wife and two daughters. When his widow, Boudica, Queen of the Iceni tribe, appealed the action she was publicly stripped and flogged, and her daughters raped. Roman brutality enabled Boudica to gather forces among her tribesmen and women, including children and the elderly, for a rebellion. This tall, relatively young woman in her thirties, with red hair to her waist, lead an army waging war against Roman rule. Boudica was a fierce and brutal warrior. It is

estimated 70,000-80,000 Romans were killed by Boudica's warriors. But Boudica ultimately was defeated by the Romans lead by Paulinus, killing approximately 80,000 tribesmen with only 400 Romans killed. It is said that following the defeat Boudica committed suicide. A statue of Boudica, which is Celtic for 'victory,' and her daughters, was erected next to the Houses of Parliament in 1902.

A very interesting website appropriate for middle school and up can be seen at www.bgfl.or/bgfl/custom/resources ftp/client ftp/ks2/history/boudicca/ provides a perspective from four characters, a brief content summary, a brief discussion of related events, and thought provoking questions., all in a fun cartoon format. Check it out.



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In This Issue...

Woody Guthrie; The Genius Kid Next Door; Literature; Who Was Boudica?; Alvarado's Leap

Alvarado's Leap?

In 1519 in a battle between the Aztecs and the Spaniards, Pedro de Alvarado found himself cut off from his troops by a "very wide" body of water. Those who were watching declared it impossible to jump such a river, let alone in full conquistador metal uniform such as Alvarado wore. When both sides realized what Alvarado was going to try, the battle stopped and all watched. Alvarado did indeed make the jump, both sides cheered him, and then the battle continued. The feat gained fame and was called "Alvarado's Leap."

(Literature—Cont'd from page 3)
spiritual beliefs); and their struggle to keep it alive over the years. (ISBN 0-8225-4176-9)

Eve Bunting is an award winning author. Her children's books are insightful, sometimes haunting, but always touching. *One Candle* is no exception. It tells the story of one family's Hanukkah celebration which reflects not only the traditional Jewish ceremony, but the memory of the time spent by the elder women in the family in a German concentration camp. In this book Ms. Bunting shows the importance of tradition, family, and remembering the triumphs and tragedies of the past. In honoring the past, she gives hope to the future. The pastel drawings by K. Wendy Popp are stunning, and are an integral part of the story and its effectiveness.

(Woody Guthrie—Cont'd from page 1)
married yet once more and had one more child.

Woody's erratic behavior led many to believe he was an alcoholic, and others to believe he was schizophrenic. In actuality he had **Huntington's Chorea*** the same disease that caused his mother to be institutionalized when he was a youngster, although it was not correctly diagnosed at the time. (It is believed that most of the fires the Guthrie family suffered were due to his mother's mental health. Woody was in and out of institutions over the next fifteen years and died at age 55.

Woody's penchant for the people and his music can be seen in the following statement he placed on his songbook distributed to people who wanted the lyrics to his songs: "This song is Copyrighted in U.S., under Seal of Copyright #154085, for a

period of 28 years, and anybody caught singin' it without our permission, will be mighty good friends of ourn, cause we don't give a dern. Publish it. Write it. Sing it. Swing to it. Yodel it. We wrote it, that's all we wanted to do." He wrote over 1,000 songs between 1936 and 1954.

A wonderful website for teachers is www.woodyguthrie.org/curriculum/curriculumhome.htm. It has great lesson plans related to Woody Guthrie for elementary and secondary students, and includes connections to language arts, science, social studies, mathematics, music, and art.

* Note **Huntington's Chorea** is a genetic disease characterized by nerve degeneration causing spasmodic movements and progressive mental deterioration. The symptoms usually appear in the patient's 40s, with death following in 12-15 years.