

## 1929 Article: WHAT MAKES TEACHERS CRANKY

Assuming that the foregoing paragraphs at least cast some doubt on the tradition of the short day, the short week and the short year of the teacher, let us examine a day of teaching. I would not indict the intelligence of my readers by insisting that all of the interruptions I shall enumerate are likely to occur in one day. I do insist that all of them can occur in one day, that many of them do occur on many days and that we teachers are never free from the threat of any of them.

This morning, after calling the roll, recording my absences in my record-book and transferring them to the office-slips that require four entries a slip, I started in to "develop" a lesson on the causes that led up to the discovery of America. At five minutes after eight my telephone rang and I was asked to send a boy to the office. The pupils followed him with their eyes, speculating as to the possible relation between his fight on the playground and his summons. There are grins on the faces of his cohorts and Columbus wastes a day in the court of Genoa. Order is restored and the broken thread is taken up. At eight minutes after eight a tardy pupil strays in. A correction must be made in the roll-book and a corrected slip is sent to the office. At eight eleven the psychological department sends

for a pupil who is thought to be strong enough for special promotion. Another mental test is to be given to check against the one that was given during the first week of school. At eight thirteen a note comes from the office, permitting another boy to go to a nearby grade school clinic to get a "shot" of toxin-antitoxin. At eight fifteen the library demands the presence of another pupil to answer a charge concerning the mutilation of a textbook. There is quiet until eight-twenty and Columbus has grounds for the revival of his hopes. At eight twenty-one I receive a bulletin. This bulletin states that the guidance program for the previous week is to be continued for the present week. I do not know what the guidance program for the previous week was but I lay the bulletin aside because I know that I can rob my lunch period of five minutes to find out. At eight twenty-five a monitor brings me a student bank-book that has been misplaced and which belongs to one of my home-room boys. Columbus cools his heels in Isabella's ante-chamber while I unlock a drawer and place the bank-book in it. Before eight thirty another tardy pupil presents himself. At eight thirty-five an upper-classman enters, bearing in his hand an order from the office permitting him to make

an announcement concerning a football game. At eight forty the dramatics teacher requests the presence of three pupils who are in the caste of a pageant that is soon to be presented in the auditorium. Columbus twiddles his thumbs before the sarcastic courtiers of Ferdinand. At eight forty-two the fire-alarm sounds. We grab the American flag and rush out of the building. At forty-six we are back in our places, a little breathless perhaps, but still game for more diversions. At forty-eight a messenger brings me my home-room allotment of school papers for the week. My pupils ejaculate, some inwardly, some outwardly, "Oh boy! The 'Tiger' is out to-day!" At eight fifty the school attendance officer demands another boy. All this time, those who have left for minor reasons have been filing back into the room. They are not invisible and they are not noiseless and it is difficult for adults, to say nothing of children, to rivet their attention on abstractions so heavily sprinkled with distractions. Columbus gives up in despair. We do not determine what the love of spice had to do with the discovery of America. Had Ferdinand's court been conducted upon the lines of the modern junior high school, it is doubtful if Columbus would have left Palos.

## 1948 Article: "Are Our Children Being Cheated?"

THE lamentable ignorance of college students concerning American historical events, as revealed by the study made a few years ago by the Committee on American History in Schools and Colleges, stirred up quite a furor for a while and brought forth scores of articles of explanation and defense. The more recent survey of schools by Benjamin Fine of *The New York Times* once again produced quite a shock to parents and to some school administrators. Editor Fine concluded: "Our schools were not bombed as were the European schools. But nearly two years after the end of the war they are being wrecked just as surely as though they had been blasted by heavy bombers." And some of the chief wrecking agencies are the aggressive thieves of time which are making ever widening inroads into a few hours allotted for pupil learning. Without being fully aware of what they are doing many chambers of commerce, women's clubs, church and civic organizations, commercial agents, athletic associations, debating societies, and other well-meaning groups of intelligent citizens are rendering it nearly impossible for schools to protect a sufficient amount of school time for boys and girls to do their studying and learning. Time allotted in the regular schedule for school seems to be so abundant that even on the slightest provocation administrators declare skip days, holidays, church days, contest days, etc., etc. There is no special virtue in time itself, yet a certain amount of protected time is necessary for immature children to form learning habits of the right sort. The situation is really becoming quite serious in many schools without parents, teachers, or pupils being aware of the Niagara toward which they are slowly but surely drifting.

In the copybooks of former days pupils were accustomed to write "Procrastination is the thief of time." It still is, but it has many rivals today—insidious, thoughtless, unscrupulous, blood-thirsty, vigorous rivals. Some of these make poor little "procrastination" appear insignificant. Let us take a look at some modern thieves of time: (1) Taking pupils out of school and classes to run errands for teachers, parents, and friends. (2) Calling pupils from classes to answer the telephone, to visit with neighbors and friends, etc. (3) Cutting in on classes over the public address system to make announcements of all sorts and kinds at indiscriminate moments, thus interrupting every class discussion for a thing which may concern only one or two individuals. (4) Interrupting recitations to introduce leading citizens, visiting teachers, and others. (5) Calling teachers from classes to go to the office to see the administrator, to talk with agents of various sorts, to converse with women who want help in arranging a special program for their afternoon tea or bridge club, etc., etc. (6) Permitting salesmen to barge into the school and call assemblies of seniors, sometimes seniors and juniors, and now and then the entire high school. These same salesmen return later to take more time delivering class rings, pins, programs, photographs, and anything else they may have for sale. . . . (7) Declaring holidays to welcome public or church dignitaries. (8) Scheduling during school hours athletic contests which have a school-wide interest. (9) Sending bands, glee clubs, debating teams, stock-judging groups, etc., on trips of several days, thus interrupting the work of the whole school. (10) Allowing five to fifteen minutes for pupils to assemble in their class-

rooms after previous recitations have been dismissed, even though all pupils are in a building where three minutes ought to be ample. (11) Permitting repeated instances of tardiness on the part of pupils, and some indifferent teachers. (12) Holding up the starting of classwork until late-comers arrive. (13) The most wasteful of all—permitting clever, unprepared pupils to sidetrack attention in the recitation from the topic under discussion to a current happening or other appealing topic. Putting it another way: Probably the source of the greatest waste of pupil time in secondary schools is the failure on the part of teachers to hold pupils to careful preparation and to a thoughtful discussion of the topics assigned. The attitude in some schools seems to be that pupils are conferring a favor on teachers by attending. Pupils and parents often look merely toward the diploma without realizing that educational values come only through endeavor and not from the diploma handed out at commencement time.

. . . . Wasting time is foolish enough in college but vastly worse in elementary and secondary schools. Declare a holiday in high

. . . . Adults by extra effort can make up part of the loss—with children it is nearly always a total loss. We cannot and dare not gloss over the situation; many schools are just not playing fair with innocent, thoughtless children when large amounts of precious time belonging to them is filched for extraneous purposes. . . .