

September 1, 2014

We treat ourselves to another day of ignoring President Trainwreck.

National Review's [Josh Gelernter](#) pens a piece arguing for better treatment for some zoo animals.

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*Which is not to say that elephants are jerks; in fact, they’re famously altruistic. An elephant-operator in India couldn’t figure out why his work-phant wouldn’t drop some logs into a hole, per his instructions. The operator found a dog napping in the designated ditch; when the dog was removed, the elephant resumed work. ...*

The slow growing young of humans and the subsequent intensive care has in many ways been portrayed as a liability. Turns out the altruistic behavior of our species might have grown out of solutions to that problem. [The University of Zurich](#) reports on a new study.

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We do have comments for one politician - the last GOP governor of Virginia; now on trial for corruption. **Bart Hinkle** of the Richmond Times-Dispatch writes on the handouts that greet the successful practitioners of public narcissism. He thinks the governor's economic slush funds are part of the problem.

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*Moreover, McAuliffe speaks about the state's economy much as McDonnell did. "We need to ... build a new entrepreneurial, innovative and dynamic economy," he told leaders of the General Assembly's budget committees a few days ago. "If Virginia is going to remain a leader in the global marketplace, we must renew our efforts to diversify our economy."*

*We? Our?*

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*Did Bob McDonnell surrender to some form of corruption when he took so much swag from Williams? No doubt. But by then he already had committed a form of corruption far graver — the kind that led Williams to assume he could get something for his swag in the first place.*

**The New Yorker** wonders if we're seeing the twilight of baseball.

*If Mike Trout walked into your neighborhood bar, would you recognize him? Let me rephrase: If the baseball player who is widely considered the best in the world—a once-in-a-generation talent, the greatest outfielder since Barry Bonds, the most accomplished twenty-two-year-old that the activity formerly known as the national pastime has ever known—bent elbows over a stool and ordered an I.P.A., would anyone notice? A few weeks ago, Trout, who plays center*

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... the Trout conundrum strikes me as a significant milestone in baseball doomsaying—more problematic, say, than the demise of corporate slow-pitch leagues, which the *Wall Street Journal* [recently foretold](#). When was the last time baseball's reigning king was a cultural nonentity, someone you can't even name-drop without a non-fan giving you a patronizing smile?

I've been thinking about Trout lately, because of the interminable retirement parade for Derek Jeter, and because of Bud Selig's planned departure from the commissioner's office in January. In a few months, Red Sox Nation will toast David Ortiz on the occasion of his thirty-ninth birthday. Soon enough, Big Papi, too, will be gone—and baseball under Commissioner Rob Manfred may be looking at a horizon devoid of personalities who exist beyond the realm of fantasy leagues. ...

Downton Abbey has new plot twists in the season 5 which airs Jan. 5th. [Huffington Post](#) has a short.

*It appears things are heating up at Downton Abbey.*

*The trailer for Season 5 of the hit series was released on August 30, and it foreshadows some major plot twists and turns. Lady Mary Crawley (Michelle Dockery) seems to have her sights set on Lord Gillingham (Tom Cullen), Tom Branson (Allen Leech) has a new love interest and the Countess of Grantham (Elizabeth McGovern) looks to be making a mysterious connection of her own with newcomer, Simon Bricker (Richard E. Grant).*

*Plus, it looks like a devastating fire breaks out, which could change everything.*

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## National Review

### [A Zoo Story](#)

***Bright animals need more than a concrete billet.***

by Josh Gelernter

Fifty years ago, four paintings by a young abstract expressionist named Pierre Brassau were displayed at a Swedish art gallery, to acclaim. A critic named Rolf Anderberg wrote: "Brassau paints with powerful strokes, but also with clear determination. His brush strokes twist with furious fastidiousness. Pierre is an artist who performs with the delicacy of a ballet dancer."

The young artist, Brassau, was very young — he was four years old, and he was a chimpanzee. This was a covert test of art critics. Anderberg stood by his remarks, saying that, chimp or not, Brassau had still produced “the best painting in the exhibition.”

Monsieur Brassau is not the only great ape to have had his imagination put on display. The ballyhooed gorilla Koko, who has a thousand-word sign-language vocabulary, invented a word for ring by combining the signs for “finger” and “bracelet” into “finger-bracelet.” When Koko met a green-winged macaw, she named him “Devil Tooth.” Evidently, the parrot reminded Koko of a red toy dinosaur she owned, named “Red Devil”; green-wings are mostly red, and macaws are famously dinosaur-ey. And as far as Koko knew, the bird’s big beak was a big tooth — a fair assumption; hence: Devil Tooth.

Parrots have some stories of their own along these lines. A psychologist named Irene Pepperberg taught an African Grey named Alex more than a hundred words; Alex could count in single digits and identify shapes. He could look at two matching objects — a couple of toy cars, for instance — and identify their differences: size, color, material, and so forth. He invented his own word for “apple”: “banerry,” because apples look like bananas on the inside and cherries on the out.

As for animal art, there have been some very avant-garde elephants; in some ways, elephants are the most compelling studies in wild IQ. Elephant literature could be its own genre — covering heroic elephants of World War II’s Pacific Theater, the workman elephants of Asia’s logging industry, the sportsmen of elephant soccer in Thailand. A conservationist named Mark Shand wrote a superb book called “Travels on My Elephant,” which recounts his story of buying an elephant and riding it across India. At the end of the book, one of Shand’s companions falls into a bonfire and badly burns his arm. At the beginning of his next book, Shand’s elephant, Tara, sees the burnt fellow for the first time in four years — the first time since the night he was burned. The first thing she does is run her trunk over his once-burnt, now healed arm — just checking up on him.

Elephants recognize themselves in mirrors. They make and use tools, ranging from fly-swatters to corks for watering holes. I once heard a story about a large African elephant who would get drunk on fermented fruit and then go around looking for trees full of baboons. He would grab a tree’s trunk with his trunk, and — to the baboons’ chagrin — shake it empty. There’s nothing funnier to a drunk elephant than an annoyed baboon.

Which is not to say that elephants are jerks; in fact, they’re famously altruistic. An elephant-operator in India couldn’t figure out why his work-phat wouldn’t drop some logs into a hole, per his instructions. The operator found a dog napping in the designated ditch; when the dog was removed, the elephant resumed work. A wild, angry elephant (possibly protesting deforestation) knocked down part of a house, and was trundling away, when he heard a baby begin to cry. He returned to the house, and, with his trunk, carefully dug away debris until the baby was uncovered (the baby was unharmed). An elephant was observed repeatedly trying to rescue a baby rhinoceros who was trapped in a mud pit — even though every time the elephant approached the rhinoceros, its mother charged.

This week, a middle-aged elephant in a Seattle zoo was euthanized; she was in such poor health that this, reportedly, was the humane thing to do. The elephant was named Watoto; according to a zoo-critic quoted by the *Huffington Post*, “Watoto was lame. She had arthritis, chronic bouts of colic and skin conditions, all caused by her environment.” Watoto was 45; in the wild, elephants generally live into their sixties.

A few weeks ago, I visited the National Zoo in Washington. Their elephants looked despondent, though, to be fair, it was a very hot day. The National Zoo has, among zoos, a very large elephant enclosure. In 2006, they had to euthanize one of their elephants, too. Another victim of poor health and arthritis.

They had a couple of green-winged macaws, who looked all right. The apes in the Ape House looked suicidal, dragging themselves around their smelly, straw-strewn cages. Though, as I said, it was a very hot day.

Stupid animals may not mind being in zoos, but your fancier mammals and birds need something more than concrete paddocks. I don't know how often writers in the National Review stable side with PETA, but PETA says it "opposes zoos because cages and cramped enclosures . . . deprive animals of the opportunity to satisfy their most basic needs" — and it's hard to disagree. There's no zoo billet that can fill the role of a great primeval forest.

Fortunately, we in the United States have great primeval forests. Lots of them. We have 59 National Parks; six and a half thousand State Parks. A new type of zoo has been cropping up — drive-through zoos, where people stay in their cars or ride around in safari trucks; the animals have the run of the place.

The National Zoo is part of the Smithsonian; the Smithsonian is administered by Congress, and Congress ministers to us the people. Let's take a national forest and fill it with some national gorillas.

Write to your congressman.

## **The University of Zurich** **[The roots of human altruism](#)**

Apes hardly ever act selflessly without being solicited by others; humans often do. What has caused this curious divergence, which is arguably the secret to our species' unparalleled success? A team headed by an anthropologist from the University of Zurich now reveals that cooperative care for the young was the evolutionary precondition for the emergence of spontaneous altruistic behavior.

Scientists have long been searching for the factor that determines why humans often behave so selflessly. It was known that humans share this tendency with species of small Latin American primates of the family Callitrichidae (tamarins and marmosets), leading some to suggest that cooperative care for the young, which is ubiquitous in this family, was responsible for spontaneous helping behavior. But it was not so clear what other primate species do in this regard, because most studies were not comparable.

A group of researchers from Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Italy and Great Britain, headed by anthropologist Judith Burkart from the University of Zurich, therefore developed a novel approach they systematically applied to a great number of primate species. The results of the study have now been published in Nature Communications.

For their study, Burkart and her colleagues developed the new paradigm of group service, which examines spontaneous helping behavior in a standardized way. With the aid of a simple test apparatus, the researchers studied whether individuals from a particular primate species were prepared to provide other group members with a treat, even if this meant missing out themselves (see box). The scientists applied this standardized test to 24 social groups of 15 different primate species. They also examined whether and how kindergarten children aged between four and seven acted altruistically.

The researchers found that the willingness to provision others varies greatly from one primate species to the next. But there was a clear pattern, as summarized by Burkart: “Humans and callitrichid monkeys acted highly altruistically and almost always produced the treats for the other group members. Chimpanzees, one of our closest relatives, however, only did so sporadically.” Similarly, most other primate species, including capuchins and macaques, only rarely pulled the lever to give another group member food, if at all – even though they have considerable cognitive skills.

Until now, many researchers assumed that spontaneous altruistic behavior in primates could be attributed to factors they would share with humans: advanced cognitive skills, large brains, high social tolerance, collective foraging or the presence of pair bonds or other strong social bonds. As Burkart’s new data now reveal, however, none of these factors reliably predicts whether a primate species will be spontaneously altruistic or not. Instead, another factor that sets us humans apart from the great apes appears to be responsible. Says Burkart: “Spontaneous, altruistic behavior is exclusively found among species where the young are not only cared for by the mother, but also other group members such as siblings, fathers, grandmothers, aunts and uncles.” This behavior is referred to technically as the “cooperative breeding” or “allomaternal care.”

The significance of this study goes beyond identifying the roots of our altruism. Cooperative behavior also favored the evolution of our exceptional cognitive abilities. During development, human children gradually construct their cognitive skills based on extensive selfless social inputs from caring parents and other helpers, and the researchers believe that it is this new mode of caring that also put our ancestors on the road to our cognitive excellence. This study may, therefore, have just identified the foundation for the process that made us human. As Burkart suggests: “When our hominin ancestors began to raise their offspring cooperatively, they laid the foundation for both our altruism and our exceptional cognition.”

## **Richmond Times Dispatch** **[Handouts corrupt all governors](#)**

by A. Barton Hickle

The defense of former Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell is actually an indictment — of him, and Virginia politics generally.

The prosecution wants to show that Jonnie Williams, the nutritional-supplement salesman who showered McDonnell and his wife, Maureen, with money and pricey gifts, got something special in return: the governor’s intercession on behalf of Williams’ company, Star Scientific.

McDonnell did do things for Star. He asked members of his administration to meet with company representatives. He held a launch party for the company's premier product, a tobacco extract, at the Executive Mansion. He personally pitched the product to staffers. Maureen even pitched it to Ann Romney.

The governor's defense, though, boils down to this: "So what? He did the same for lots of other companies, too." On the stand, "the former governor said he was eager to promote all Virginia businesses," reported The Washington Post. As The New York Times noted, "the Richmond-based insurer Genworth Financial won a \$7 million tax savings from the McDonnell administration. A local brewery . . . got a bill-signing ceremony. The governor pulled out all the stops to help an Israeli firm partner with Pepsi-Cola to make Sabra hummus in Virginia."

"Gov. McDonnell Joins First Lady, Sheila Johnson at Salamander Resort Reception Touting Wine Industry," reported Leesburg Today back in 2012. In court, the McDonnell defense "offered up hundreds of notices like this," noted a TV reporter. Hundreds.

If Jonnie Williams now thinks he got the short end of the stick, you can't blame him. At times the McDonnell administration was a geyser of corporate welfare. It gave the online retailer [Backcountry.com](http://Backcountry.com) \$300,000 from the Governor's Opportunity Fund — essentially, a state slush pile, begun in 1992 by Doug Wilder. It gave General Electric a similar sum to help the company, which is worth \$265 billion, with employee recruitment. (Every little bit helps, right?)

Under McDonnell the state spent nearly \$7 million to bring a 50-job Microsoft data center to Mecklenburg. It threw millions at Steven Spielberg, one of the richest men on the planet, to film part of "Lincoln" in Virginia. It bribed the Washington Redskins to stay in state with millions more.

Near the end of his term, McDonnell's staff produced a glossy, 50-page brochure summarizing his accomplishments. It boasts of the increased funding for the Opportunity Fund; of how McDonnell "developed and passed [the state's] first film industry tax credit;" of how he "led more foreign trade missions than any other governor;" of how he convened a Governor's Conference on Energy, and "passed legislation to establish a Green Jobs Tax Credit," and "established the Clean Energy Manufacturing Incentive Grant," and on and on.

If you read the Constitution of Virginia, you won't find anything remotely connected to any of that. The governor's job, as defined in the constitution, is simple and straightforward: He is to execute the laws of the commonwealth, fill departmental vacancies, serve as commander-in-chief of the state's armed forces and, if necessary, repel invasion or suppress insurrection. Maybe offer up a clemency now and then — but that's about it.

There is nary a word about hawking products like a late-night infomercial.

And yet, from the way McDonnell and other upper-tier politicians talk, you would think the governor's principal function is to act as the promotion and marketing department for Virginia Inc.

**McDonnell ran** for governor on a three-syllable platform: "Bob's for Jobs." With the country still dragging its hindquarters out of the Great Recession, the message sold well: McDonnell won 59 percent to 41 percent against state Sen. Creigh Deeds, whom he had edged past in the race for attorney general four years earlier by a mere 323 votes. In fact, the theme sold so well Democrat Terry McAuliffe borrowed it for his own campaign theme: "Putting Jobs First."

By the time McAuliffe won, the festering McDonnell scandal had burst. High dudgeon was de rigueur. In his inaugural address, McAuliffe announced he would sign an executive order imposing gift limits on himself and members of his administration, and he urged the legislature to “enact the strongest possible new ethics rules.” What McAuliffe did not do was address the original sin beneath the McDonnell scandal — the real reason business interests want to grease politicians’ palms in the first place.

Like his predecessor, McAuliffe has continued to give away millions of dollars to companies big and small. Last month, he awarded \$4.5 million from the Governor’s Opportunity Fund, plus another \$5 million from a different pot of economic-development money, to bring the headquarters of CEB, a business-services company, to Arlington. He also has shelled out \$5 million for a Chinese paper plant, \$300,000 for an engineering company expansion, \$350,000 for a fitness-equipment maker, \$65,000 for a packaging company and so on.

(McDonnell’s predecessor, Tim Kaine, did much the same. Among other things, he used the Opportunity Fund for Hilton hotels, Rolls-Royce and Maersk. Republicans accused Kaine of not using the fund enough. Democrats blasted McDonnell for having voted to cut it.)

The funds come from the state’s coffers, which are filled by Virginia taxpayers, which include businesses that might have done other, better things with the money. But politicians find the political allocation of economic goods irresistible because the benefits are clear and concentrated, while the costs are hidden and dispersed.

Despite his calls for tougher ethics rules, however, just three months ago McAuliffe vetoed one. The bill would have prohibited both him and his political action committee from taking money from companies that seek or get handouts from — you guessed it — the Governor’s Opportunity Fund.

Moreover, McAuliffe speaks about the state’s economy much as McDonnell did. “We need to ... build a new entrepreneurial, innovative and dynamic economy,” he told leaders of the General Assembly’s budget committees a few days ago. “If Virginia is going to remain a leader in the global marketplace, we must renew our efforts to diversify our economy.”

We? Our?

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As long as they think that — as long as they try to direct the state’s economy using slush-fund handouts, special tax favors and product promotions — business interests will continue trying to grab a piece of the action. And the higher the stakes, the harder they’ll try. As Jonnie Williams testified when asked why he made his private jet available to McDonnell: “If you’re a Virginia company, you want to make sure you have access to these people. He’s a politician, I’m a businessman.” Q.E.D.

Did Bob McDonnell surrender to some form of corruption when he took so much swag from Williams? No doubt. But by then he already had committed a form of corruption far graver — the kind that led Williams to assume he could get something for his swag in the first place.

**The New Yorker**  
**The Twilight of Baseball**  
by Ben McGrath



If Mike Trout walked into your neighborhood bar, would you recognize him? Let me rephrase: If the baseball player who is widely considered the best in the world—a once-in-a-generation talent, the greatest outfielder since Barry Bonds, the most accomplished twenty-two-year-old that the activity formerly known as the national pastime has ever known—bent elbows over a stool and ordered an I.P.A., would anyone notice? A few weeks ago, Trout, who plays center field for the Angels, hit a ball nearly five hundred feet. At the All-Star Game, he was clocked at twenty miles per hour—rounding the bases, on foot. Yet his Q rating is about on par with that of Jim, the guy in South Jersey whose burgers Trout’s mother sometimes mails, frozen, to her superhuman son in Anaheim, to keep him rooted in the tastes and comforts of home. The pride of Millville: a chubby-cheeked mama’s boy with a haircut certified by the Marine Corps. He strides among us like a colossus, anonymous.

“Is baseball in trouble?” is one of those questions—like “Is football too violent?” or “Is golf too boring?”—that is both everlasting and newly inescapable, symptomatic of an era in which the games we watch, ostensibly to amuse ourselves, are commonly analyzed like brands. It’s the wide world of sports as a high-school cafeteria, surrounded by bleachers. “Will the center table make room for soccer today?” we all ask ourselves, while keeping a suspicious eye on the commotion that’s quietly been gathering around lacrosse, in what used to be the preppie corner. “Is football drunk? If he’s not careful he might soon be expelled.” Meanwhile, “Poor

Nascar. His parents got whacked by subprime, and now, after a brief flirtation with some cheerleaders, he appears destined for trenchcoat mafia.”

The discussion of baseball’s health, pro and con, generally peels one of two ways: economic or cultural. The economic argument points to the league’s paid attendance, for instance, which is very high. Thirty thousand people attend the average ballgame today, compared to fifteen thousand in the early nineteen-seventies. Annual revenues, too, are strong: eight billion, more than double what they were when McGwire and Sosa were chasing Maris, owing to ever more lucrative TV-rights deals. How bad can the situation really be if it’s substantially better than it was back when home runs were on everyone’s mind? (Consider that the N.F.L.’s annual ten billion is often cited casually as prima-facie evidence of football’s invulnerability: concussions consmussions.) In absolute terms, baseball is doing just fine—thriving, even.

The cultural argument returns us to the cafeteria, and it begins by noting that nobody seems to be discussing home runs any longer. It’s a relativist perspective, whereby the pecking order is foremost. On television nowadays, the World Series can hardly compete with Browns versus Jaguars, Week Seven. The so-called Fall Classic’s ratings have been declining in recent decades, roughly mirroring the vaunted gains in midsummer attendance. It’s not baseball that’s doing fine, in other words; it’s the Yankees, the Red Sox, the Cardinals, the Dodgers, the Giants, the Brewers—everyone except South Florida, basically. You watch your team, but not mine—an arrangement befitting our partisan moment. What’s more, the other major team sports have made similar or, in some cases, greater proportional gains in attendance during the same supposedly triumphant period in baseball. This suggests, or at least raises the possibility that, M.L.B. owes its economic boom to little more than the Baby Boom: more people, with more disposable income. Who will fill the seats vacated by Boomers after they come up lame? Relatively speaking, baseball fans are geriatric. (And white—let’s not forget the waning African-American enthusiasm for the sport, to the extent that stories like [this one](#), about the success of an all-black team in the Little League World Series, are meant to be read as surprising good news.)

As a fan of not just baseball but hockey (good revenues and great attendance, by the way!), I’ve long since grown hardened to the bullying implicit in the relativist argument. As long as the athletes we admire are paid enviable wages, and as long as the games we want to watch are broadcast on TV or streamed on the Internet, who cares what the smirking zeitgeist surfers think? But the Trout conundrum strikes me as a significant milestone in baseball doomsaying—more problematic, say, than the demise of corporate slow-pitch leagues, which the Wall Street Journal [recently foretold](#). When was the last time baseball’s reigning king was a cultural nonentity, someone you can’t even name-drop without a non-fan giving you a patronizing smile?

I’ve been thinking about Trout lately, because of the interminable retirement parade for Derek Jeter, and because of Bud Selig’s planned departure from the commissioner’s office in January. In a few months, Red Sox Nation will toast David Ortiz on the occasion of his thirty-ninth birthday. Soon enough, Big Papi, too, will be gone—and baseball under Commissioner Rob Manfred may be looking at a horizon devoid of personalities who exist beyond the realm of fantasy leagues. (Barroom debates are at their best amid the buzz of a couple of beers, so let’s set aside [the Puig factor](#), as well as [the Mo’ne phenomenon](#), which produced better ratings for ESPN last week than any adult game since 2007.)

“It feels as if he rolled into baseball out of the pages of a W.P. Kinsella novel,” [ESPN’s Jayson Starke wrote of Trout](#) last month. Kinsella’s “Shoeless Joe” inspired “Field of Dreams,” a movie whose appeal (however treacly, no matter the Costner) derives from romantic, rather than

economic, assumptions about baseball's role in the national consciousness. It debuted in the spring of 1989, the rookie year of Ken Griffey, Jr., a prospect so highly anticipated that he had his own branded candy bar. The quarter century that followed gave us Bonds and A-Rod, Pedro and the Rocket—and now Mo'ne Davis, a thirteen-year-old girl whose dream is to play point guard for UConn.

## Huffington Post

### ['Downton Abbey' Season 5 Trailer Foreshadows Some Shocking Twists](#)

by Leigh Blickley

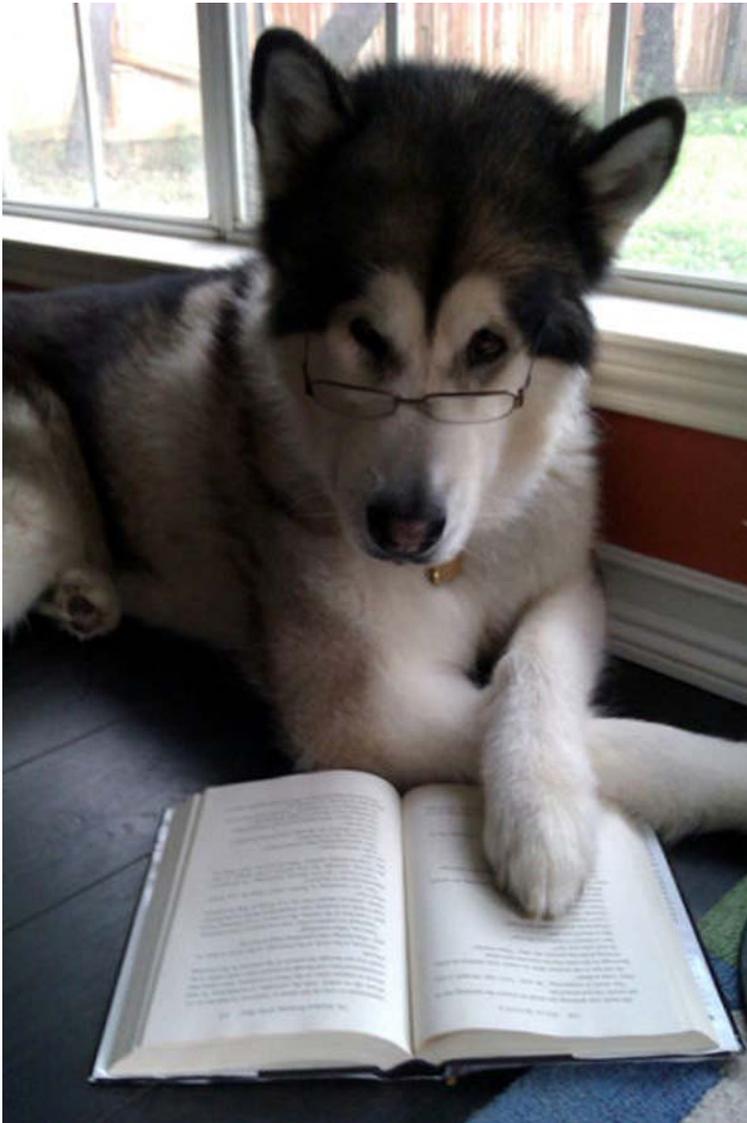
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The trailer for Season 5 of the hit series was released on August 30, and it foreshadows some major plot twists and turns. Lady Mary Crawley (Michelle Dockery) seems to have her sights set on Lord Gillingham (Tom Cullen), Tom Branson (Allen Leech) has a new love interest and the Countess of Grantham (Elizabeth McGovern) looks to be making a mysterious connection of her own with newcomer, Simon Bricker (Richard E. Grant).

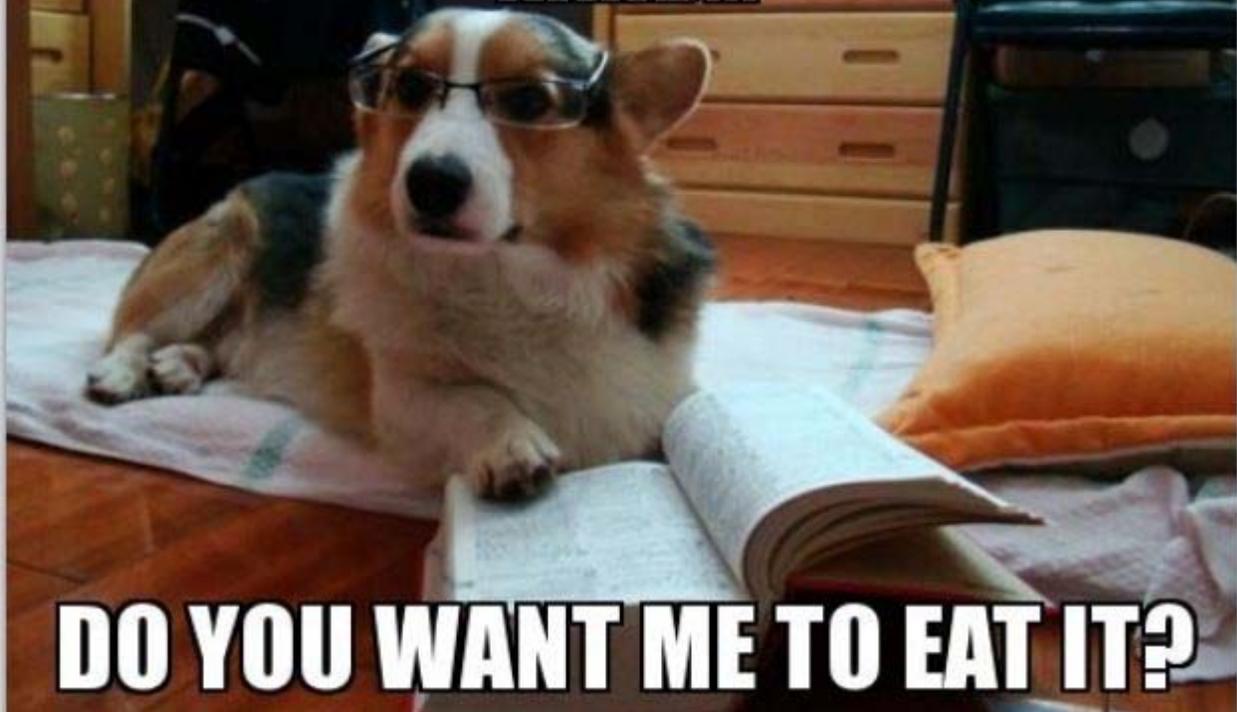
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**THIS HOMEWORK LOOKS  
HARD...**



**DO YOU WANT ME TO EAT IT?**