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My Stutter

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The Voice of a Champion

World Series hero George Springer has a stutter. He's encouraging kids who stutter not to let that hold them back. **Page 4**

Heads Up!

Staring at a phone while crossing the street may cost you in Hawaii's capital.

You've probably been taught to look left and right before crossing the street. But these days, many **pedestrians** are looking down—at their phones. Honolulu, Hawaii, recently became the first city in the U.S. to ban people from looking at a phone, tablet, or other mobile device while crossing the street.

The new law went into effect in October. It aims to prevent people from texting, watching videos, or looking down at a device for any reason while walking across a street. Anyone caught doing so has to pay a fine

Word to Know

pedestrians *noun, plural.* people walking, especially near traffic



of up to \$35. The fine increases to as much as \$99 for people caught three or more times staring at their devices while crossing the street.

"Distracted walking has become a serious safety concern," says Brandon Elefante. He's the Honolulu city council member who proposed the new law.

Last year, nearly 6,000 pedestrians died in the U.S., according to the Governors Highway Safety Association. That's an 11 percent increase from 2015.

Some experts think that because more people have



smartphones, they're paying less attention to traffic around them.

In a recent study, researchers in Seattle, Washington, found that people who text while walking take longer to cross the street than other pedestrians. They're also nearly four times as likely to practice unsafe behaviors, such as not looking both ways.

Picture THIS



Can-Tastic!

Who says you shouldn't play with your food? These sculptures of minions from the *Despicable Me* films are made out of cans of food. They were part of a competition called **Canstruction**. It's held in cities across the U.S. at different times each year. Teams create sculptures using unopened cans. After each competition, all the food is donated to people in need. Last year, 11.5 million pounds of food from **Canstruction** was donated to charities.

The First Face-Off

The National Hockey League played its first games 100 years ago.

Today, the National Hockey League (NHL) has millions of fans around the world. A century ago, the league barely survived its first season. Players from the new league took the ice for the first time on December 19, 1917. All four clubs were based in Canada: the Ottawa Senators, the Toronto Arenas, and the Canadiens and the Wanderers, both from Montreal.

The Wanderers won on opening night but never again. Two weeks later, their arena burned down, and the team went out of business.

The Toronto Arenas went on to win the first NHL championship the following March. But they played poorly the next season, and attendance suffered. The Arenas withdrew from the NHL



A newspaper ad for one of the NHL's opening-night games

before the season ended, leaving the league with just two teams.

The struggling league **persevered**. In 1919, it again had four teams, including a re-formed Toronto club. (Today, they're known as the Maple Leafs.) Five years later, the Boston Bruins became the NHL's first team in the United States.

Over time, the NHL has grown in size and popularity. League attendance topped 21 million fans in each of the past four seasons. And this year, the NHL added its 31st team, the Golden Knights of Las Vegas, Nevada.

Word to Know

persevered *verb, past tense.* kept going or continued despite facing difficulties

The National Hockey League: Then and Now

1917		2017
4: all in Canada	Number of teams	31: 24 in the U.S., 7 in Canada
40 Canadians, 3 Americans, 2 British players	Nationalities of the players	366 Canadians, 206 Americans, 225 players from 14 other nations
Newsy Lalonde of the Montreal Canadiens made \$1,300.	Salary of a star player	Sidney Crosby of the Pittsburgh Penguins makes \$10.9 million.

Sources: NHL.com, quanthockey.com, hockey-reference.com, Montreal Canadiens



Shrinking Shrews

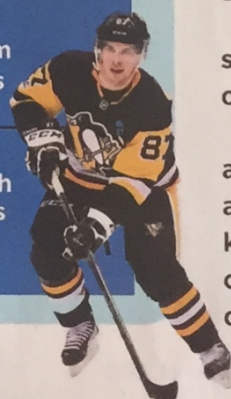
Animals have different ways of getting through the cold winter months. Many birds fly south to warmer climates. Most bears hibernate in dens. And according to a recent study, shrews shrink their skulls!

Researchers in Germany spent more than a year tracking a group of 12 red-toothed shrews. Each month, the team took X-rays of the mouse-sized mammals' heads. They found that the shrews' heads would shrink between July and February, becoming about 15 percent smaller. In March, the shrews' skulls would begin to regrow, in time for the warmer spring months.

Javier Lazaro is one of the scientists who conducted the study. He says shrews' skulls likely shrink because smaller animals require less food—and food is harder to find when the ground is frozen in winter.

Lazaro says the findings show that people shouldn't overlook animals like shrews.

"We usually pay more attention to large, beautiful animals," he says. "I hope this kind of study will trigger kids' curiosity about the huge diversity in nature."



Speaking Up

World Series hero George Springer has a stutter. He's encouraging kids who stutter not to let that hold them back.

Houston Astros outfielder George Springer is a standout on the baseball field. On November 1, the Astros won the World Series—and Springer was a major reason why. He hit five home runs in the seven-game series and was named Most Valuable Player. But when Springer was a kid, standing out was the last thing he wanted to do.

Springer has a stutter, a speech disorder that sometimes causes him to repeat sounds at the start of words. Growing up in New Britain, Connecticut, he was often too embarrassed to talk in front of other people because of his stutter.

"It made me very **isolated** because I started to tell I wasn't like everybody else," he says.



Springer's five home runs tied the all-time record for one World Series.



George Springer celebrates after hitting the game-winning home run in Game 2 of the World Series.

But playing baseball helped Springer gain confidence—and learn to accept his stutter as a part of who he is. He's now on a mission to encourage kids who stutter to do the same.

Scared to Speak

More than 3 million people in the United States have a stutter. Stuttering can affect speech in different ways. Springer says that for him, it feels like he gets "stuck" and can't get the words out of his mouth.

For many kids, having a stutter can make them feel ashamed or anxious. Like a lot of kids with a stutter, Springer went to great

lengths to try to hide it when he was growing up.

"I only wanted to talk around my close friends and my close family," he says. "I certainly didn't want to participate in school."

In school, he'd sit in the back of the classroom and avoid raising his hand. At restaurants, he would ask his family members to order for him.

When he did speak up, some of Springer's classmates bullied him simply because of the way he talked.

"You get your speech made fun of, you get the word that you couldn't say said back to you, they call you weird," he says.



Springer talks to reporters at an event for the Stuttering Association for the Young (SAY) in June.

Gaining Confidence

The one place where Springer always felt comfortable, though, was on the baseball diamond.

“That was my outlet to be myself and show everybody who I was,” he says.

In 2008, Springer’s talent earned him a scholarship to play for the University of Connecticut. His coach noticed something interesting: Springer didn’t stutter when he was talking about baseball.

“He always said that I never stuttered when I was talking about anything I was comfortable with,” Springer says.

Springer decided to apply the confidence he had on the field to

his everyday life. He no longer feared stumbling over words. He also learned techniques to manage his stutter, such as slowing down his speech, changing the word when he has trouble with one, and using his hands when he talks.

But most important, Springer says, was learning to accept his stutter as something that’s a part of him—just like his eye color or hair color.

“I’ve kind of just **embraced** it,” he says. “I was like, you know what, I am who I am.”

An All-Star Voice

These days, as one of the biggest stars in Major League Baseball, Springer does a lot of

interviews—which would have frightened him as a kid. When people see him speaking on TV, most of them hardly notice that he has a stutter.

Springer no longer shies away from talking either. In fact, he’s making his voice heard for kids who are going through the same frustrations as he did when he was their age. For the past three years, he has been the spokesperson for the Stuttering Association for the Young (SAY). The organization helps kids who stutter build self-confidence. SAY also runs a summer camp for children who stutter and their families.

Springer talks to kids who have a stutter about believing in themselves and celebrating what makes them unique.

“You can’t let anything stop you from who you want to be in life, especially if it’s something that you can’t control,” he says.

—by Joe Bubar

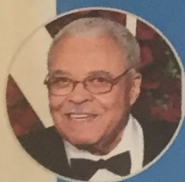
Words to Know

isolated *adjective*. lonely; separate from others

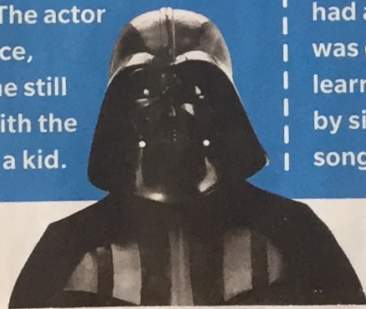
embraced *verb, past tense*. accepted something or someone readily and gladly

Finding Their Voice

George Springer isn’t the only famous person who stutters. In fact, many people whose voices are vital to their jobs have also dealt with stuttering. Here are a few of them.

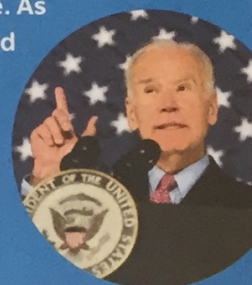


Darth Vader may have the most famous voice in movie history. The actor responsible for that voice, James Earl Jones, says he still sometimes struggles with the stutter he has had since he was a kid.



Pop star **Ed Sheeran** had a stutter when he was growing up. He learned to manage it by singing along to songs on the radio.

Former U.S. vice president **Joe Biden** has given countless speeches during more than 40 years in the public eye. As a kid, he would stand in front of his mirror and recite poetry to help manage his stutter.



2017 The Year in Review

Here's a look at some of the top news stories of the year.

Trump Takes Over

On Friday, January 20, Donald Trump was officially inaugurated, or sworn in, as the 45th U.S. president.

"When America is united, America is totally unstoppable," he said during his inaugural speech to the nation.



Spinning Sensation

Just how popular were fidget spinners this year? They were out of this world! Not only did kids across the planet play with the gadgets, but astronauts on the International Space Station posted videos of themselves doing tricks with the toy.

Watch fidget spinners in space at www.scholastic.com/sn56.

"I am humbled by the trust placed in me today."

— Neil Gorsuch after being sworn in as the newest member of the U.S. Supreme Court, on April 10. The Supreme Court is the highest court in the country. Its nine judges, called justices, determine whether laws meet the standards set by the U.S. Constitution.



Neil Gorsuch

Song of the Summer

It was hard to go anywhere this summer without hearing "Despacito." The song was recorded in Spanish by Puerto Rican singers Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee. (*Despacito* means "slowly.") A remixed version, featuring Justin Bieber, became the No. 1 song in the country on May 27. It stayed in the top spot for 16 weeks, tying the all-time record.



Luis Fonsi (left) and Daddy Yankee

Serving Up a Record

Tennis star Serena Williams made history on January 28 when she defeated her older sister, Venus, in the championship match of the Australian Open. The Australian Open is one of four Grand Slam events—the most important annual tennis tournaments. The victory was Serena's 23rd Grand Slam title, the most by any tennis player, male or female.*

*The record is for most championships in the Open Era, which started in 1968 when professional players were first allowed to compete in Grand Slam tournaments.

Eyes on the Sky



On August 21, people across the United States looked to the sky to witness a rare event: a total solar eclipse. This **phenomenon** happens when the moon moves between Earth and the sun so that just about all of the sun's light is blocked.

Total solar eclipses happen on Earth about once every year and a half. But they don't always occur where you can see them. What made this total eclipse special is that its path of totality—where you could see the total eclipse—cut across much of the United States. People along its path, which stretched coast to coast from Oregon to South Carolina, were able to see the total eclipse. Millions of Americans who weren't in the path of totality still saw a partial eclipse. The last time a coast-to-coast total solar eclipse was seen in the U.S. was in 1918.

Word to Know

phenomenon *noun*. an unusual or remarkable event



People in New York City wear protective glasses to watch the eclipse.

CONTINUED →

A Year of Disasters

Wildfires in the West

On the night of October 8, three wildfires broke out within two hours in Northern California. By the end of that week, more than a dozen other wildfires had started in that part of the state. It was the deadliest wildfire outbreak in California's history. At least 43 people died, and nearly 9,000 homes and other buildings were destroyed.

The wildfires spread quickly, aided by powerful winds, with gusts of up to 75 miles per hour. Residents were caught off guard, with little time to escape.

"There was no notice, no warning," Maureen Grinnell, who lives in Napa, California, told *The New York Times*. "I drove down the road through smoke with flames on both sides."

About 11,000 firefighters from across the U.S. and even Canada and Australia battled the blazes. It took two weeks to finally get the biggest fires under control.



A firefighter battles a blaze in California on October 9.



Back-to-Back Earthquakes

"The building moved back and forth two or three times. Then it started jumping up and down like a horse."

— Martin Mendez, to CNN, after a massive earthquake hit Mexico City, Mexico, on September 19. Mendez and three others were trapped in the rubble of a building for 17 hours before being rescued. The quake killed nearly 370 people. It came just 12 days after an even larger quake rumbled off the coast of Mexico, leading to at least 90 deaths.

Girl Power!

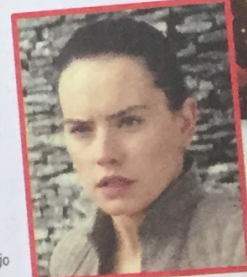
It has been a big year for women on the big screen. Two of the top-earning movies in the U.S., *Beauty and the Beast* and *Wonder Woman*, feature strong female lead characters. And *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, starring Daisy Ridley as Rey, is expected to pass both films as the year's biggest box-office hit. The eighth episode in the *Star Wars* series will be released on December 14.

Wonder Woman
\$413 million

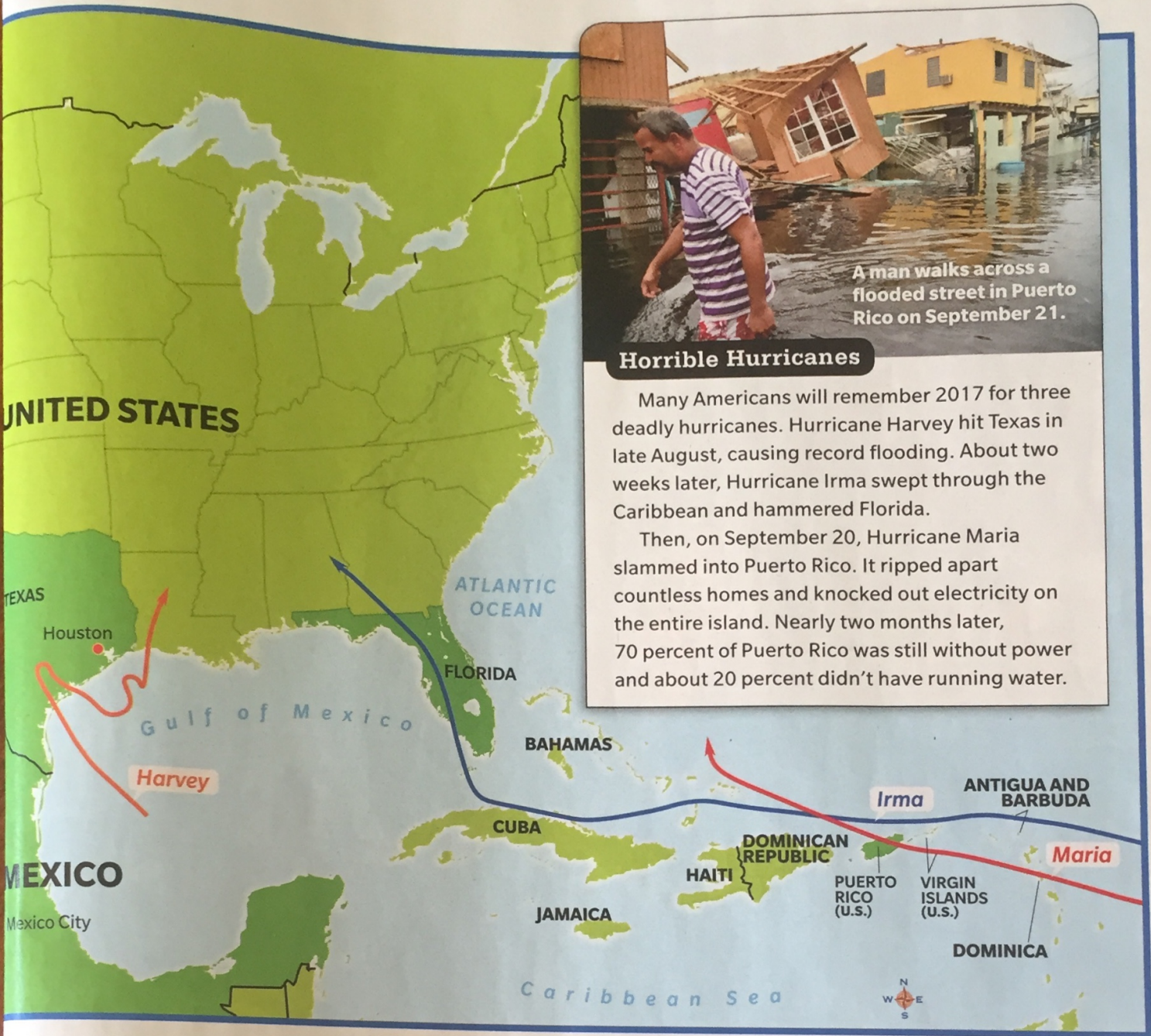


Daisy Ridley in *The Last Jedi*

Beauty and the Beast
\$504 million



Note: Box-office figures are through November 15 and are rounded to the nearest million. Source: Box Office Mojo



A man walks across a flooded street in Puerto Rico on September 21.

Horrible Hurricanes

Many Americans will remember 2017 for three deadly hurricanes. Hurricane Harvey hit Texas in late August, causing record flooding. About two weeks later, Hurricane Irma swept through the Caribbean and hammered Florida.

Then, on September 20, Hurricane Maria slammed into Puerto Rico. It ripped apart countless homes and knocked out electricity on the entire island. Nearly two months later, 70 percent of Puerto Rico was still without power and about 20 percent didn't have running water.



The Houston Astros celebrate after the final out of the World Series.

History in Houston

Nine weeks after Hurricane Harvey devastated Houston, Texas, the city had something to celebrate. The Astros defeated the Los Angeles Dodgers to win the World Series for the first time in the team's 56-year history. (See page 4 for an article about Astros outfielder George Springer.)



A CHRISTMAS CAROL

This play is based on the classic spooky holiday story written by Charles Dickens in 1843.