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EARLY HANUKKAH THIS YEAR



Hanukkah's coming this November. How much do you know about the Festival of Lights?

By Amichai Mackerras

Jelly donuts, chocolate coins, potato pancakes, and little spinning tops with four sides called Dreidels, lighting a Menorah, presents, festival of lights, singing songs, and an interesting origin story about how the oppressed rose up against their oppressors and took back their homeland.

Of course you know I'm talking about Hanukkah, the Jewish holiday celebrated around December just like Christmas, except it's objectively eight times better than its Christian counterpart because it's eight days long (no offense, Christians).

When I was in elementary school, I went to a Jewish day school, so most people I met in my youth knew just as much about Hanukkah as I did. However, when I started

homeschooling at the age of 12, I discovered that Jews are actually a minority group in New York and the rest of America. Most people I meet in the homeschool community don't understand when I say things like "Sufganyah" or "Haggadah." Here's everything you need to know about the upcoming Jewish holiday of Hanukkah.

When is Hanukkah?

Jewish holiday dates are usually decided by the Jewish calendar rather than the Julian calendar, and Hanukkah is no exception. On the Jewish calendar, there are twelve months, but each month has only 29 to 30 days, which is why the dates don't line up with the Julian calendar. The first night of Hanukkah falls on the 25th of the Hebrew month of Kislev, the third month of the year. The last day is on the 3rd of Tevet, the fourth month. This year, these dates will fall on the Julian dates of the evening of November 28th until the last night of December 5th. This is much earlier than normal, even going so far as to have its first three nights entirely within the month of November, which is quite uncommon.

You might be wondering why I keep

begins when the sun sets on the previous day; so for example, while the first day of Hanukkah might be marked on the calendar as the 28th of November (or the 24th of Kislev), the first day of Hanukkah doesn't actually start until the evening of that day, where the next day in the Jewish calendar is officially marked as having started. This is why we light the Menorah on the night of each day. It signifies the beginning of each day of Hanukkah.

Lighting the Menorah

One of the traditions of Hanukkah is lighting the Menorah. What you might think is a Menorah is actually called a Hanukiah (hah-noo-kee-YAH). A Hanukiah is a candle holder that holds eight candles plus another candle we use to light the other candles called the Shamash (shah-MAH-sh). This is what we light on Hanukkah, not a Menorah. A Menorah looks a great deal like a Hanukiah, but is different in both looks and usage. A Menorah is the lamp that resides in the Beit Hakneset (beyt-hah-KNEH-set) or the holy temple, that has six branches and one middle candleholder, making for a total of seven places. You will also find Menorahs in synagogues, specifically the sanctuary.

During Hanukkah, we light the Hanukiah on each night, each succeeding night with more candles than the last. On the first night, one candle is placed on the right side of the Hanukiyah, then the second night, two candles are placed (one where the first one was and one to the left), and so on.

The Story of Hanukkah

Understanding the story of Hanukkah will no doubt give you a better idea of the meaning of all the traditions of the holiday. You might hear different versions of the story from different people, but the story usually goes something like this:

Long ago (somewhere around the third century B.C), the Jews' homeland of Israel was conquered by the Greek king

Antiochus. Under King Antiochus' new rule, the Jews were persecuted and forced to worship Greek gods. Some Jews wouldn't stand for this, so they studied Torah in secret. And if by any chance they saw the Greeks nearby, they pretended to be playing with little spinning tops so the Greeks wouldn't get suspicious (this is why we play Dreidels on Hanukkah).

One Jew was tired of King Antiochus' reign over the Jewish people, so he assembled an army of Jews called the Maccabees (meaning "hammer") to help him fight against the Greek army.



A Menorah

The Maccabees defeated the Greeks, but after they drove the Greeks out of Israel, they discovered the holy temple of the Jews was in ruin, and the Menorah that resided in the temple, whose fire was supposed to burn forever, had been put out. The Jews were only able to find enough oil in the temple for the Menorah to burn for one single day.

But then, a miracle happened: the oil kept the Menorah burning for eight whole days, giving the Jews time to find more oil elsewhere and keep the Menorah burning forevermore (this is why Hanukkah is eight days long).

Foods and Traditions

Latkes

Latkes are potato pancakes. They are usually made from potatoes and onion fried in oil. The name "Latke" is from Yiddish, but the Hebrew name is Levivah (lih-vee-VAH). These are eaten in honor of the miracle involving the oil used to light the Menorah in the story. Latkes are often eaten with sour cream or applesauce.

Jelly donuts

Jelly donuts are usually called in the Jewish world by their Hebrew name



A Hanukiah

'Sufganyot' (soof-gahn-YOHT). The Yiddish name for these delectable desserts is 'ponchkes' from Polish 'pączki' (pronounced ponchkee). Jelly donuts also usually have powdered sugar on the top. Like latkes, jelly donuts are eaten in honor of the oil used in the story of Hanukkah, because the donuts are made in oil.

Chocolate coins

Parents give chocolate coins out to kids on Hanukkah like it's candy on Halloween. These are more commonly known in the Jewish world by their Yiddish name 'Gelt' which literally just means money. The Hebrew name is D'mei Hanukkah (Hanukkah money). Children use Gelt as a currency for when they play Dreidel (which I'll get into in a bit), but why we have Gelt on

Hanukkah is unclear; one theory is that after the Maccabees defeated the Greeks and drove them out, they created national coins to celebrate their new found freedom; another theory is that during the 17th century, Polish Jews would give their children money to give to their teachers. Eventually, the children also wanted their own money, so the tradition became that the parents would give their children small sums of money. Ever since then, these coins sort of became a symbol of Jewish folkhood, and the Jewish children would always be given chocolate coins on Hanukkah.

Dreidels

Dreidels are little spinning tops with four sides. On each side is a Hebrew letter. Each letter stands for a word in a sentence: “nes gadol hayah sham” (a great miracle happened there), or if you’re in Israel, “nes gadol hayah poh” (a great miracle happened here), of course referencing the big miracle that happened in Israel in the story.

The letters are Nun (נ) (standing for Nes which means miracle), Gimel (ג) (standing for Gadol which means “big” or “great”), Hey (ה) (standing for Hayah which means “was” or “happened”), and Shin (ש) (standing for Sham which means there); and the Israeli Dreidels having the same thing except instead of Shin, they have Pey (פ) (standing for Poh which means here).

The Hebrew name for Dreidel is “Sevivon” (seh-vee-VOHN), as Dreidel is a Yiddish word.

Songs

There are a plethora of traditional songs Jews sing on Hanukkah that you might have heard of. Some famous ones include “Hanukkah, oh Hanukkah,” “Dreidel, Dreidel, Dreidel,” “Al Hanisim,” “Maoz Tzur,” and “Mi Yimalel” (the latter three you probably don’t know unless you’re Jewish).

Presents

It’s also tradition to give presents on Hanukkah (much like Christmas).



Latkes with sour cream and applesauce



Jelly donuts on a platter

I hope those of you who didn’t know much about Hanukkah have learned a lot from this article, but whatever you celebrate, I want to wish you a Hag Sameiakh (happy holidays).



Hanukkah Gelt



A Dreidel



Presents

Thanksgiving, should I travel or should I stay?

By Lenny Jelisavcic

Thanksgiving is where everyone wants to see their families. But that means that there’s going to be a lot of traffic since transportation (especially cars) is also going to be in huge demand. In fact there was an indescribably monstrous traffic jam in Los Angeles on November 22, 2017. According to the Los Angeles Times, “Since Thanksgiving weekend can be among the deadliest weekends on roadways, officials planned to educate motorists and enforce safety laws.”

So it might be a good idea to stay home for Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is, in fact, the busiest travel week of the year. According to airfarewatchdog.com, “In normal times, the week of Thanksgiving is usually the busiest travel week of the year. Last year, the TSA (Transportation Security Admission) screened a record 26 million passengers and crew between the Friday before Thanksgiving and the Monday following the holiday. This included the busiest day in the agency’s history when 2.8 million travelers were screened on Sunday, December 1, 2019.” Also, it’s not just transportation that gets really crowded during the time of Thanksgiving: restaurants are even more swarmed. For example, the manager at the restaurant Jones Wood Foundry (in Manhattan) says they get very crowded and their staff are very busy during Thanksgiving. He told me because of how crowded they are on Thanksgiving, the restaurant only allows reservations from 10am to 6pm.

If you don’t want to travel for Thanksgiving you could always have it at home. For those who think an at-home Thanksgiving is a good idea, you can do so by planning your menu, writing your guest list, cleaning out your freezer, shopping before Thanksgiving, preparing make ahead dishes, creating a cooking schedule (organizing what’s going to happen), determining who’s bringing what, deep-cleaning your home, and preparing for (possible) overnight guests.

Here are the pros to having an at-home Thanksgiving:

You don't risk getting trapped in traffic and travel jams.

According to the Los Angeles Times, "The airplanes are indeed crowded". According to the Associated Press; "Thanksgiving reservations were ticking upward in early October (2020) but fell back again as case numbers surged. In 2019, a record 26 million passengers and crew passed through U.S. airport screening in the 11-day period around Thanksgiving".

You're in control of who comes over to celebrate.

For instance, you won't have to worry about someone you don't like showing up or there being too many or too strict rules.

It may also be cheaper.

You don't have to spend money on travel, like renting cars and fueling them, as the cost of fuel has exploded during Thanksgiving travel time, according to AAA (American Automobile Association). You get to choose what you want to eat and set up for decorations.

Here are the cons to having an at-home Thanksgiving:

It might not be as exciting.

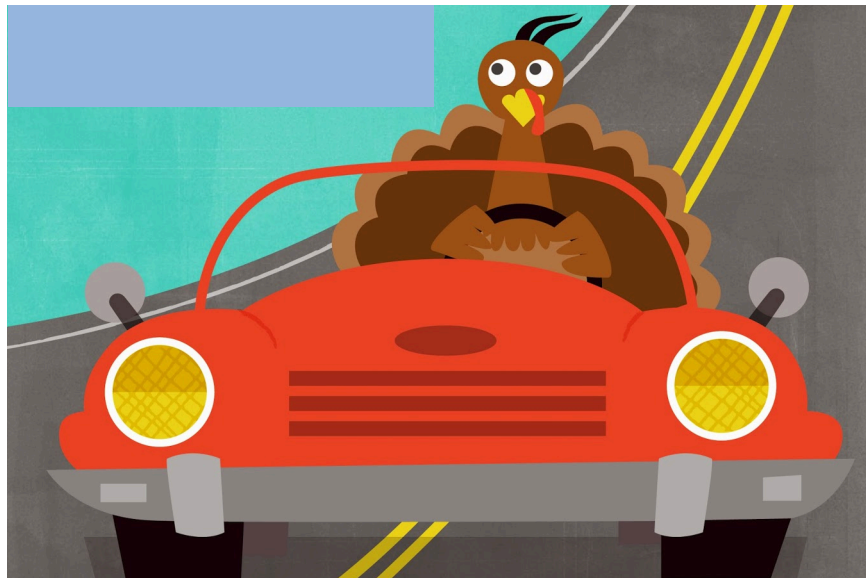
You might find your place boring and want to go somewhere new for Thanksgiving but be unable to because your family is sick, or your friends are sick, and travel restrictions related to coronavirus, etc. However, something you could do is go out to eat at a restaurant. You could also modify your home with Thanksgiving decorations or set up a festive table with things like pumpkin pie, a full turkey in the middle, etc. And, people you wish to come over might not be able to.

It might be more work.

You have to do the setting up and preparing and going shopping which is obviously a big burden. But you might get help from your friends, family members, and catering businesses.

And you might not know what to do at all if it's your first at-home Thanksgiving.

As a solution, you could reserve a table at a restaurant or buy pre-prepared food from certain supermarkets or caterers that prepare Thanksgiving food to go.



comfortingly funny in the way Seinfeld always is. Kramer gets all of Jerry's sneakers cleaned, George buys a car that he believes belonged to a movie star, and to top it all off the gang goes to a Thanksgiving party full of dentists.

The Grinder, S1 E8: "Giving Thanks, Getting Justice" In case you haven't seen The Grinder, it's a show in which Rob Lowe plays a former TV lawyer who moves back

Thanksgiving Themed Episodes of Sitcoms

by Lula Keteyian

This November, I'd like to give thanks for an American tradition: the sitcom. One of the things sitcoms do best is respond to the world around them, and what better way to do that than the holiday episode? Every TV show known to man has a Halloween episode and a Christmas special, but a good Thanksgiving episode is a rare gift. The best Thanksgiving specials embody the spirit of Thanksgiving with themes of family, comfort, friendship, and sheer chaos. Without further ado, I present seven of the greatest Thanksgiving episodes, best enjoyed with pie, after pie, or in anticipation of pie.

Friends, S3 E9: "The One With the Football" If there's one thing Friends does well, it's Thanksgiving. This is one of those classic Friends episodes, a quintessential contribution to the Thanksgiving genre. This episode is one of the first times on the show that Monica and Ross act like actual siblings, and it does not disappoint. This episode also features the cast in their 1997 casual football outfits, and that's a win for everyone.

New Girl, S1 E6: "Thanksgiving" New Girl has many classic Thanksgiving episodes, including a Thanksgiving in the wilderness and the legendary "Bangsgiving", but the episode that really captures the spirit of the season is the first one. Jess invites a friend from work to the gang's first Thanksgiving together, and things do not go smoothly to say the least. These are still the early days, so some of the characters haven't quite been figured out yet (looking at you, Winston), but in true New Girl fashion this episode is as full of shenanigans as it is full of heart.

Seinfeld, S6 E8: "The Mom and Pop Store" The show about nothing celebrates Thanksgiving in a classically meaningless way. While it's not an especially snappy episode, it's

home to practice real law with his brother, a real lawyer. If that sounds confusing, just wait until you watch the show. Tragically, only one season was ever made, but that season includes a Thanksgiving special. The Sandersons celebrate Thanksgiving in true Grinder fashion: weird family drama and poignant speeches about nothing. Plus, special guest star Timothy Olyphant plays, you guessed it, Timothy Olyphant.

Friends, S6 E9: "The One Where Ross Got High" By season six the writers have really hit their stride, so the jokes in this episode are (mostly) a delight. In this episode, the friends celebrate Thanksgiving like a sitcom should. Ross and Joey try to make dinner go by as fast as possible, Phoebe is weirdly attracted to Ross and Monica's father, and they all enjoy a lovely Thanksgiving dinner. Yet with all of this hilarity, for a true fan the highlight of this episode, and possibly this entire season, is that special moment when Rachel makes an English trifle with beef in it.

Gilmore Girls S3 E9: "A Deep Fried Korean Thanksgiving" As Gilmore Girls is the official Show of Fall, Thanksgiving in Stars Hollow is especially festive. In a memorable turn of events, Rory and Lorelai attend not one, not two, not three, but four Thanksgiving dinners. This episode has it all: romance, family drama, large amounts of food, Jess Mariano. I'm prepared to say this is my favorite Thanksgiving special of all time.





Homecoming Throughout the Ages

by Nina Watson

The limos, the dresses, the floats, are all staple parts of a classic highschool or college homecoming dance, but how did these traditions start? Homecoming has humble beginnings that start all the way back in...

1891

The Missouri Tigers of the University of Missouri face off the Kansas Jayhawks of the University of Kansas for the first time creating a long lasting football rivalry between the two teams and kicking off the first Border Wars.

1909

Both Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas, and Baylor University in Waco, Texas, hold two of the first recorded homecoming events inviting alumni to come back home for large football games. Students would raise money, decorate the town, serve food and hold barbecues for the alumni.

1911

In an attempt to keep the feud between the Missouri Tigers and Kansas Jayhawks alive, as well as create promotion for a new collegiate location where the game would be played, Athletic Director Chester Brewer invited alumni to come see the game. Alongside the event a bonfire, parade, and spirit rally were held. This event is credited as the first homecoming.

1924

The University of Illinois dedicates their homecoming to students who served in World War I.

1932

The University of Minnesota crowns their first ever homecoming queen. The competition was based on popularity, button sales, beauty, and smarts.

1953

Colorado State University hosts a "Kangaroo Court" where students were punished for small school violations. Examples of violations included, wearing a beanie, failing to show respect to an upperclassman, or walking on the grass. Rule breakers had to do tasks such as scrubbing the administration steps with

toothbrushes or bowing to the homecoming queen for 5 minutes during half time.

1968

Lynn Eusan is crowned the first African American homecoming queen at the University of Houston, a predominantly white school in the south.

1970-1975

The University of Minnesota paused homecoming queen elections due to it not being an "appropriate expectation of women" during the uprising of the feminist movement in the 70s.

1992

During Northwestern State and Louisiana Moneroes annual homecoming football game, the two team mascots got into a physical fight during halftime which resulted in the police separating them.

2011

1940s Rice University students started the tradition of electing things other than queens as homecoming royalty, such as a ferret, a car, and the creature from the Black Lagoon. In 2011 Saint Arnold Centenni-Ale, a locally brewed beer was elected homecoming king.

2021

Rock Bridge Highschool in Missouri votes for their first ever male homecoming queen. Homecoming has changed a lot through the years, from bonfires to DJs, but many traditions live on. It is a staple part of American teenage culture, so it is important to make it an inclusive and safe place for all.

My Thanksgiving Traditions

by Xander Heisler-Martin

During Thanksgiving at my house, there are always tons of people and tons of dishes prepared for everyone to enjoy. We typically have anywhere from 12 to even 24 people over at our house, which can become quite a squeeze sometimes. The people we have over are all friends and family, some living as close as around the corner and some as far away as Denmark and Brazil. My family usually makes most of the dishes, but some people that come sometimes bring things like stuffing, pies, other desserts, drinks, appetizers, and some sides.

The dishes we usually have are turkey, ham, stuffing, mashed potatoes, broccoli casserole, gravy, cranberry sauce, sweet potatoes, and some varied vegetable sides that some people bring. For dessert, we have pumpkin pie, concord grape pie, apple pie, vanilla ice cream, whipped cream, and small pecan tartlets. My

absolute favorites have always been the stuffing, mashed potatoes, and concord grape pie.

Traditionally, there is a larger table for all the adults to sit at and a smaller table for the kids to sit at, and at the kids table there are usually small bowls with a bit of kettle corn and a chocolate turkey on top for the kids to have as a treat. Right before eating dinner, we usually go around the table and say things that we are thankful for, and then my parents (who are the hosts) give a speech and thank everyone for coming.

I'm not exactly sure what type of Thanksgiving I am going to have in the future, but even if I'm living far away from home, I hope to come back for Thanksgiving because it's always been a very special part of the year for me and even if I can't come back I'll probably try to host my own smaller one wherever I'm living. If I host my own, I will try to replicate some of the traditions we had at my house.



Guinness World Records Day

by Norah Jensen

Have you ever seen or done something so crazy that it needed to be put on record? The Guinness World Records Book does just that. Released annually, it has continued to shock people for 68 years, and we celebrate Guinness World Records Day on November 18.

It all started on November 10th, 1951, when Sir Hugh Beaver (the managing director of Guinness breweries) went to a shooting party in Ireland. After missing a shot at a golden plover, he came into an argument with his comrades about the fastest game bird. That night, searching his books for which bird could be the fastest game bird, he found that nothing like that was really put on record. Then, he had the idea to compile extreme records like this in a book. Beaver's idea became reality when Christopher Chataway recommended two twin college students who were running a fact finding agency. So the twin brothers helped Beaver publish the first Guinness Book of World Records, and thousands were published and given away. Ever since then, they publish a new book every year in September, taking popularly asked questions, and finding ways to answer them. Here are ten of the most bizarre world records:

1) The largest human mattress dominoes (people standing

with mattresses both in front and behind them, and falling like dominoes) consists of 2,019 people, and was achieved by Globo Comunicação e Participações S.A. and Ortobom (both Brazil) at Riocentro, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on August 6th, 2019. The whole record attempt lasted 11 minutes and 13 seconds. After the record attempt, all the 2,019 mattresses were donated to charities.

2) A seven-year-old Texas longhorn from Alabama has earned a place in the record books thanks to his enormous horns. From tip to tip, the rack spans 10 ft 7.4 in – more than twice the width of a concert grand piano – as confirmed on May 8th, 2019.

3) The lengthiest dog in recorded history was Zeus, a great dane that measured 3 ft and 10in in length until his death last year. Zeus was a gentle giant and a part-time pet therapy dog. When he stood on his hind legs, he was 2.2m (7ft 4in) tall, more than a third of the height of an average giraffe.

4) Jeanne Calment was the oldest person alive, reaching 122 years and 164 days. She claims that she once sold colored pencils to Vincent Van Gogh, and describes him as dirty, badly dressed, and disagreeable. She witnessed the construction of the Eiffel Tower, and set the record for oldest actor in the film Vincent and Me. She said that the key to her long life was olive oil and chocolate.

5) The oldest criminal gang was a group of eight British criminals with an average age of 57. The oldest member was 83 and pleaded guilty to counterfeiting charges. The Serious Organised Crime Agency said the gang ran their money-printing operation like a legitimate business, working from sites in London and Glasgow. Each could produce a batch of notes worth \$1,084 in an hour. Police recovered a stash of \$6.7 million in counterfeit currency. They worked from scans of genuine notes, used a \$12,200 foiling machine for inserting metal strips, and produced what the Bank of England acknowledged were among the most realistic notes ever seized.

6) Justin Bieber is the youngest solo artist to get five #1 albums. He also set a record for the most disliked music video.

7) Leading a sort of a double life as a chef and DJ, Sumiko Iwamura (a.k.a. DJ Sumirock) now holds the Guinness World Records title for the oldest professional club DJ at 85 years old.

8) The most people riding a surfboard is 66, and was achieved by the Epic Big Board Ride in Huntington Beach, California on June 20th 2015. The surfboard measured 42 feet long, and was designed by the same team responsible for the prior successful attempt at this record in Australia in 2005.

9) The most toothpicks in a beard is 3,500, and was achieved by Joel Strasser in Lacey, Washington, on July 7th, 2018. It took Joel 3 hours and 13 minutes to successfully put all 3,500 toothpicks in his beard.



10) The most rattlesnakes kept in someone's mouth by their tails is 13, and Texas snake-man Jackie Bibby achieved it. He held the reptiles for 10 seconds in front of a live audience. Bibby has been managing snakes for a long time and has been bitten a total of 11 times.

Even though the Guinness World Records Book is released every September, Guinness World Records Day is in November to encourage more record breaking throughout the year. Find a record that inspires you to break it! Then let Guinness Records know at:

<https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/contact/application-enquiry>.

Write a Letter to a Friend Month

by Emma Ledesma

Dear Emma, thank you for being such a kind, friendly, happy, and committed friend. I am glad to call you, my friend.

Your Friend,
Norah

December is Write a Letter to a Friend month. My family and I love receiving letters! My mother, Raquel Ledesma, has a collection of letters written by friends and family in a cabinet in our living room. When asked about why she keeps these letters, my mom replied, "I have been collecting letters and cards from you and your sister Oribel for twenty-eight years. The reason I keep them all in a Ziplock bag is because of the memories each card holds." I followed in my mom's footsteps and I have a small Ziplock bag full of old letters from my friends.

My mom says, "The reason I like to write letters is to see how people are doing. I like to feel the excitement and surprise

of receiving a letter in the mail. I enjoy receiving postcards and photos. Letter writing is more personal than texting. I find that letter writing is freer and easier to express yourself. I feel you can elaborate more in a letter than through a text. As an immigrant child, my mother would have me write to my aunts and uncles in the Dominican Republic. My mother would dictate what to write. Letters help keep communications going." My mother shared many amazing memories with me of her childhood, and her love of writing letters.

Based on a CBS News Poll, taken in September of this year, thirty-four percent of eighteen to twenty-four-year-old people wrote a letter in the past year. "The first ever handwritten letter was thought to have been sent by the Persian Queen Atossa in around 500 BC, according to the ancient historian Hellanicus." (penheaven.co.uk) "Most Americans haven't written a personal letter on a paper in over five years!" (cbsnews.com) Letter writing has lost its popularity over the years, but in the year 1700 people wrote many letters. They wrote letters about war, love interests, family, and letters to friends who lived far away!



Writeshop.com offers these ideas for ways you can celebrate Write a Letter to a Friend Month:

-Send at least three friends a Christmas card.

-Read a book that has letters. I will read Letters to Rifka, a book about a Jewish immigrant girl from Russia and her struggles.

-Write a fan letter to your favorite celebrity, author, or singer. Write a pen pal! Amazing Kids! Pen pal Program is a pen pal program for ages 5-17 and it is \$10 to register.

-Make a stationary station! Fill a basket or box with paper, envelopes, pens, and pencils, stickers, and rubber stamps.

-Ask your mom if she has any postage stamps, note cards, or stationery you could add to your basket.

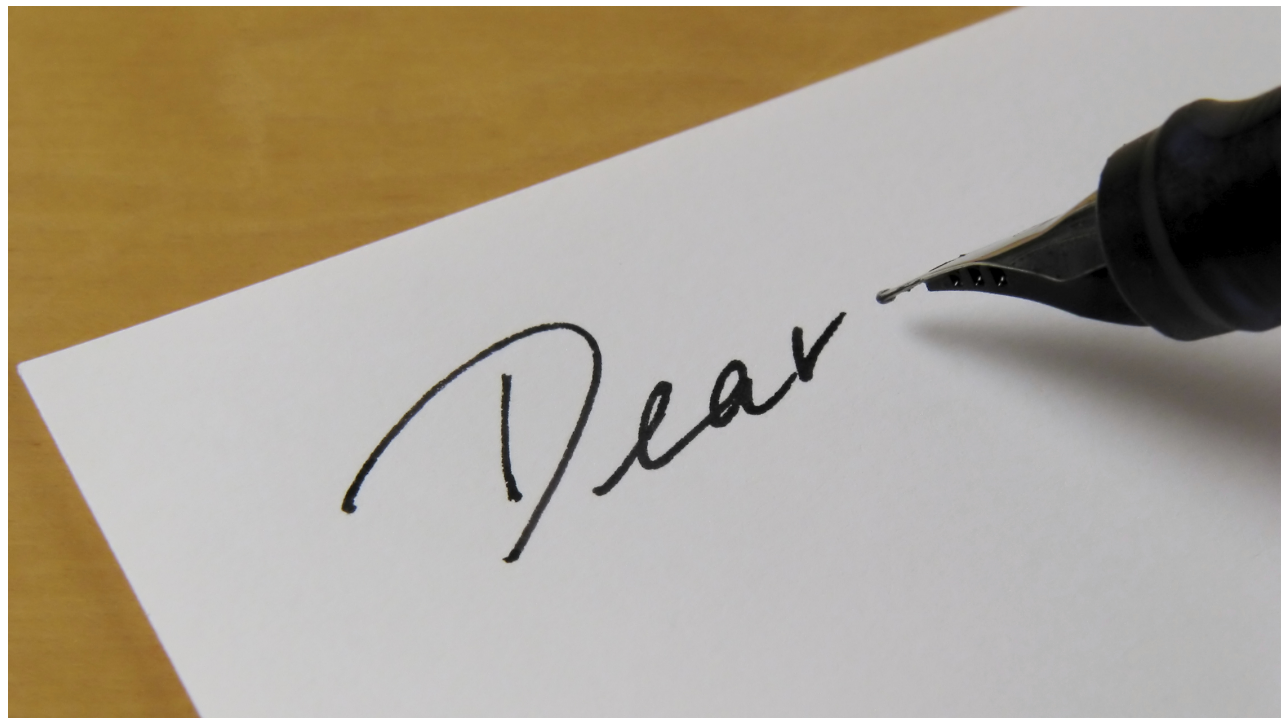
-Challenge your parents and siblings to join you and write at least one friendly letter each week during Letter-Writing Month."
(writeshop.com)

-You can even write to a Disney character and they will write you back! Here is the address:

Walt Disney World Communications
P. O. Box 10040
Lake Buena, FL 32830-0040

This website gives more information on writing a Disney character.

<https://www.themainstreetmouse.com>



Get involved with DD Compass Monthly!

If you are a homeschooler in New York City (or anywhere else, since everything is virtual these days), we invite you to get involved with our student newspaper in any of the following ways:

Do you know a homeschooler (including yourself) who has an interesting or unusual hobby, skill, or perspective? If so, our journalists might be interested in writing a profile about them/you. Email me with inquiries.

Submit your original art work for our Arts section.

Interview with one of our student journalists for a future issue of the Compass. Each month I send out a call for interview sources who have experience with or insight into the topics we are covering in our next issue. Parents count, too. Keep an eye out for that email. We'd love to hear from you!

Join the newspaper staff! After completing one trimester of Journalism I at Different Directions, you are invited to join our staff. Spring classes begin at the end of March.

Thank you for reading the DD Compass Monthly. Our student journalists seek to produce quality content that is relevant and interesting to the New York City homeschool community. We appreciate your feedback and suggestions on how best to accomplish this goal. Please send all inquiries and feedback to me at rivettijensen@gmail.com.

Cheers.