

THE CLASSICAL ACADEMY EXISTS TO ASSIST PARENTS IN THEIR MISSION TO DEVELOP EXEMPLARY CITIZENS EQUIPPED WITH ANALYTICAL THINKING SKILLS, VIRTUOUS CHARACTER, AND A PASSION FOR LEARNING, ALL BUILT UPON A SOLID FOUNDATION OF KNOWLEDGE.

PALMARIUM

Honoring Our Veterans

Each year for the past five years (*starting in 2014*) TCA families, students, and staff have contributed to providing wreaths for the **National Wreaths Across America** day each December. The motto for the organization is **REMEMBER** - our fallen U.S. veterans, **HONOR** - those who serve, and **TEACH** - your children the value of freedom. You can find out more about the organization by [clicking here](#). For 2018, TCA donated the most wreaths to date with 397 total. Over the past five years 1,550 wreaths have been donated to honor the men and women that have made the ultimate sacrifice for our nation. On December 15, 2018 - TCA students will volunteer at Memorial Gardens Cemetary, in Colorado Springs, in conjunction with the national day of remembrance that takes place at more than 1,400 locations in all 50 states.



This month our *awakening wonder* focus was written by Amy Nelson, TCA's East Elementary Principal. Many attribute Socrates with the following quote "*Wonder is the beginning of wisdom.*" This idea of cultivating wonder fits in well with the VIA Institute on Character's *character strength* of curiosity - which is grouped in the umbrella of wisdom (creativity, curiosity, judgment, love-of-learning, and perspective). Find out more about these individual character strengths by visiting the [VIA Institute of Character](#) (click on the title) and learn a little more about how we can all individually benefit from awe and wonder as described by Amy in this month's feature article.

The Editor

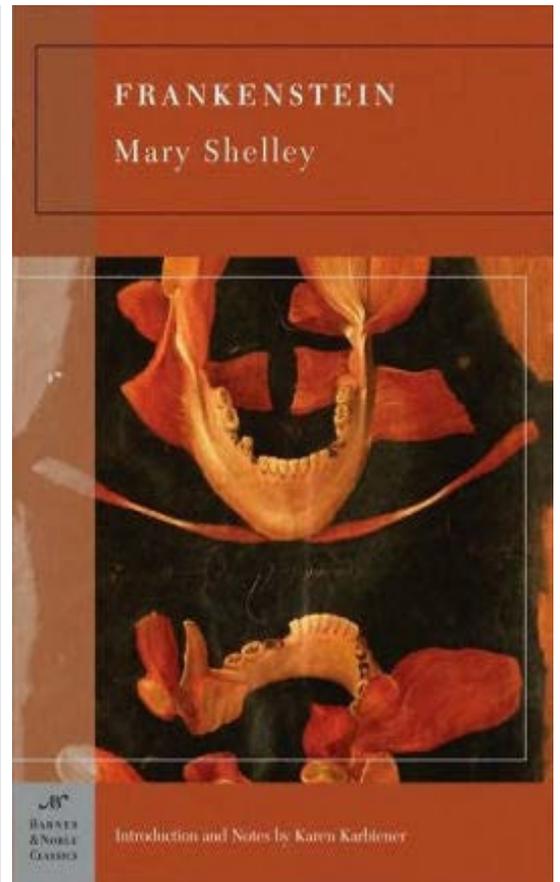


A NATION MOURNS

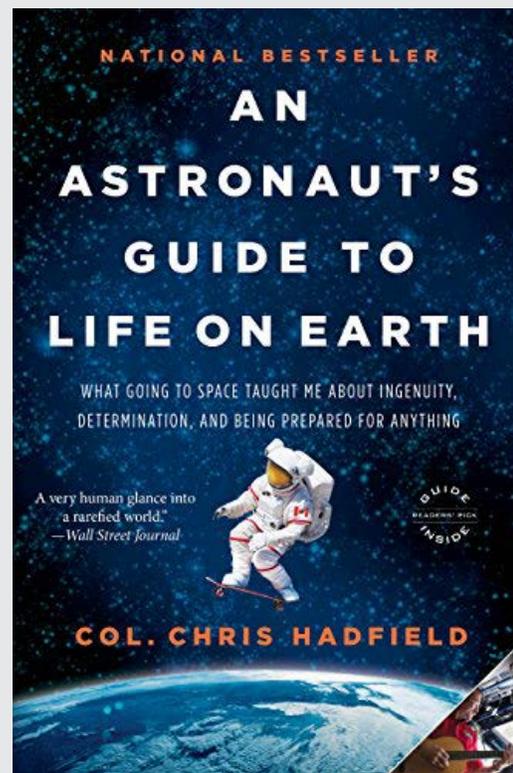


On November 30, 2018 the 41st President of the United States **George H. W. Bush** passed away. The national and local news, since his death, have been filled with stories about his life and how he impacted a myriad of people over the years. For thirty days our nation's flag will be at half-staff - until December 30th. As you see that flag at half-staff for the remainder of this month, use it as a reminder to stop and reflect on our nation, the leaders that have influenced you, and maybe how you'd like to be remembered one day. For me personally, the day I got to shake then Vice President Bush's hand at my graduation ceremony is a day I will never forget, and a moment that changed the trajectory of my life. As I reflect on his life, this quote of his stands out: **"Be bold in your caring, be bold in your dreaming and above all else, always do your best."**

The final two **Beyond the Book Club** meetings will take place the second semester of the school year. In late February/early March we will discuss a book our 10th graders read, **Frankenstein** by Mary Shelley and then in late April, Col. Chris Hadfield's **An Astronaut's Guide to Life on Earth** will be the focus of our discussion. The specific dates and locations of the meetings will be sent out as we get closer to February. The sessions last 90-minutes and typically start at 4:00 pm. As dates are being finalized, if you would like to be added to the RSVP list send me an e-mail request at wjolly@asd20.org and I'll make sure to include you on the invites. Staff and parents are both welcome to participate in the studies. For staff, I do have a few copies available of both books if you'd like to stop by and pick up a copy - or send me an e-mail and I can put it into distribution to your school.



ENGAGING MINDS:



Colonel Chris Hadfield has spent decades training as an astronaut and has logged nearly 4,000 hours in space. During this time he has broken into a Space Station with a Swiss army knife, disposed of a live snake while piloting a plane, and been temporarily blinded while clinging to the exterior of an orbiting spacecraft. The secret to his success – and survival – is an unconventional philosophy he learned at NASA: **prepare for the worst – and enjoy every moment of it.**

In *An Astronaut's Guide to Life on Earth*, Chris Hadfield takes readers deep into his years of training and space exploration to show how to make the impossible possible. You might never be able to build a robot, pilot a spacecraft or perform basic surgery in zero gravity like Colonel Hadfield. But his vivid and refreshing insights will teach you how to think like an astronaut, and will change, completely, the way you view life on Earth – especially your own.

Chris Hadfield is one of the most seasoned and accomplished astronauts in the world. He most recently served as Commander of the International Space Station, where he gained worldwide acclaim for his breathtaking photographs and educational videos about life in space. His music video, a zero-gravity version of David Bowie's 'Space Oddity', received over 10 million views in its first three days online.



I parked our Subaru Outback Sport in the parking lot, and the five of us poured out of the doors ready to stretch our legs after a long ride. Remnants of the big snowstorm the week prior were plowed up into piles throughout the parking lot, but the sunshine that day felt warm on our skin. We walked through the small pines interspersed between buildings wondering if we were headed in the right direction. With a suddenness that struck almost physically, the ground dropped away and the canyon was before us in all its grandeur. Awe and Wonder. No words or pictures can truly express that moment of overwhelming awe when I first stepped to the edge of the Grand Canyon.

Thoughts from Amy

TCA East Elementary Principal

What brings you a sense of awe and wonder?

- A single wildflower growing on a gravel path
- A crack of thunder so close that you feel it in your chest
- The "light-bulb" moment as a student finally understands
- A baby's fingers slowly folding and unfolding
- A young man helping an elderly woman with her groceries
- Scientific discoveries like vaccines
- Man-made wonders like the Golden Gate Bridge
- Acts of heroism like Corporal Desmond Doss in WW II
- Michelangelo's *David*
- Tolkien's *Silmarilion*
- Handel's *Messiah*
- Seeing the Milky Way in the night sky
- Your dog cocking his head and looking at you with mute sympathy

These things and many others create a sense of awe and wonder in our spirit. We can cultivate intentional awareness of the everyday occurrences that help to develop our sense of wonder. This awareness brings many benefits, which include developing a readiness for learning.

In their research on the psychological impact of awe, [Dacher Keltner](#) and [Jonathan Haidt](#) proposed two essential aspects shared by experiences of awe: vastness and need for accommodation. Vastness is the sense that something is much larger than our normal, every-day experience - whether that is physically or metaphorically. The need for accommodation simply means that we have to adjust our

Awakening Wonder

Clicking on names/items in blue will take you to the referenced article or website.



thinking in some way based on the new experience.

Current research has identified many benefits to experiencing these moments of awe. **Anna Mikulak**, writing for the *Association for Psychological Science* cites multiple studies identifying the many benefits of awe.

1. Awe focuses our cognitive thinking helping us to understand ideas on a deeper level.
2. It helps us focus intensely on the present moment and expands our sense of time.
3. It prompts us to shift our thinking from ourselves to more transcendent and universal thoughts (it makes us feel small, yet more connected to the greater world).
4. Awe increases our connectedness to a sense of spirituality.
5. It may encourage prosocial behaviors (urge to help others, help us be more patient).
6. It may enable us to experience more satisfaction in life.
7. Awe creates physical health benefits.

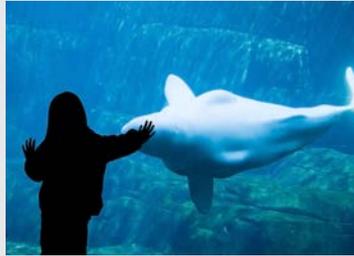
If you want to hear more about how experiencing awe can improve your physical health, watch this seven minute **TEDMED** talk where Jennifer Stellar, PhD makes the case for awe being the most powerful of the positive emotions for physical health based on her research. She shares that her study of awe has changed her focus to believing that experiencing awe is essential for good mental and physical health.

Writing for *Psychology Today*, **Emma Stone, PhD** describes the potential of harnessing awe-inducing moments to swiftly and powerfully instigate personal growth and re-orientate values.

Thoughts from Amy

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She argues that we must be open to and mindful of these more subtle moments that occur every day, or we will miss powerful opportunities. When we experience a moment of awe, our mind is more open to



new ideas and can see things in a new way. Moments of awe have triggered creative output for many artists and writers, like Katherine Lee Bates. Those of us who have hiked 14ers can relate to her words.

“One day some of the other teachers and I decided to go on a trip to 14,000-foot Pikes Peak. We hired a prairie wagon. Near the top we had to leave the wagon and go the rest of the way on mules. I was very tired. But when I saw the view, I felt great joy. All the wonder of America seemed displayed there, with the sea-like expanse.”

In response to this experience, she wrote the words to *America the Beautiful*.

These experiences of feeling small, and becoming

Awakening Wonder

continued

more aware of our surroundings in the moment, also make us more thankful. We begin to see and appreciate all of the amazing things around us, and we cultivate a sense of gratitude. **Louie Schwartzberg** makes this point in his short film about gratitude. This film describes what it means to be mindful of the everyday experiences of awe. There are so many things in each day that can bring us this experience of awe; the sunrise, having hot water in our home, snowflakes, wildflowers, kindness of others, food to eat, meaningful work, sleep. We don't have to wait for the big experiences in life to reap the benefits of awe.

Once we learn the gratitude for the many gifts in our life, we actually become happier. This may be one of the ways the emotion of awe has a positive effect on our health. Experiences which produce awe make us more humble, more grateful, and then happier. **This article** from Harvard Medical school shares some studies that explore the ways that gratitude produces happiness.

Wonder creates humility and that opens the mind to learning. When we experience that feeling of vastness, we realize our own *smallness* in the universe. Plato taught that humility was essential to learning. The first stage of Socratic dialogue is to question in such a way that the learner realizes his or her ignorance. It is only with the humility of admitting our ignorance that we are ready to learn. Then our education must detach us from the false and form an attachment to the true. In Plato's thought, it is through the contemplation of beauty, and the awe that it produces, that we are led on toward the good and the true. As Plato states, “The object of education is to teach us to love what is beautiful.” Plato taught that this education occurred in both the moral realm, through the practice of virtue, and the intellectual realm through the pursuit of beauty (*Awakening Wonder*, Stephen Turley, PhD).

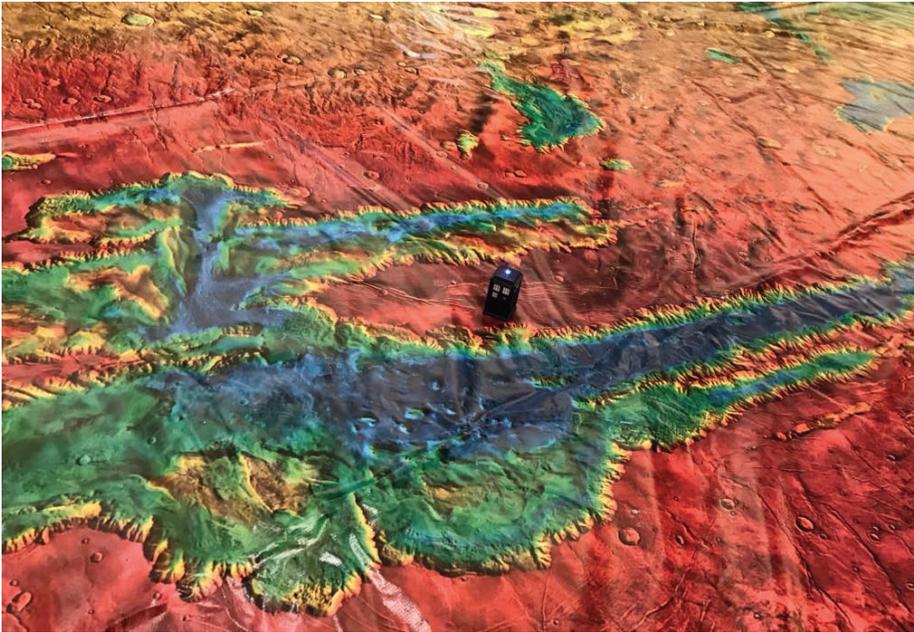
At TCA, our Core Values document contains many references to this pursuit of truth, beauty, and goodness. It also speaks to the ways we awaken



wonder in our students through living books, nature studies, and hands-on activities. As we take our students on meaningful field trips and invite experts into our classrooms to share their passions with students, we give our students the opportunity to experience those moments of awe. We seek to keep that sense of wonder alive in our students so that they will truly have a life-long passion for learning.

So, look for those everyday moments of awe and wonder, and enjoy all the benefits that come with them.

WALK ON MARS MAP at TCA



On Friday, January 11, 2019 TCA will be hosting the **Walk on Mars** map at our North Auxiliary gym for the entire day. Over 500 students in 6th, 7th, 8th grades at TCA North, and some high school students, including College Pathways, will have the opportunity to spend time interacting with the map and volunteer leaders.

At times to be designated in the afternoon on that Friday (*make sure to read the school newsletters or check with you principal after the holidays*) the gym will be open for parents of elementary kids to bring their students for an approximate 45-minute session on the map.

Here is a snapshot description from the walkonmars.space website on the effort: "The 2001 Mars Odyssey spacecraft and the Thermal Imaging System (THEMIS) have been acquiring images of Mars for more than 16 years. The best quality images from the mission have been compiled into a global mosaic at 100 m/pixel resolution and printed on a walkable basketball-court-sized vinyl mat to spread awareness and excitement about Mars exploration!"



THE CLASSICAL ACADEMY

Corpus mens Spiritus

Excellence with honor

Groundbreaking Study Examines Effects of Screen Time on Kids



highlights so far. Click [here](#), or on the image above to view the segment. Once on the site, there are also other links to related screen time and "brain hacking" efforts as related by some tech insiders.

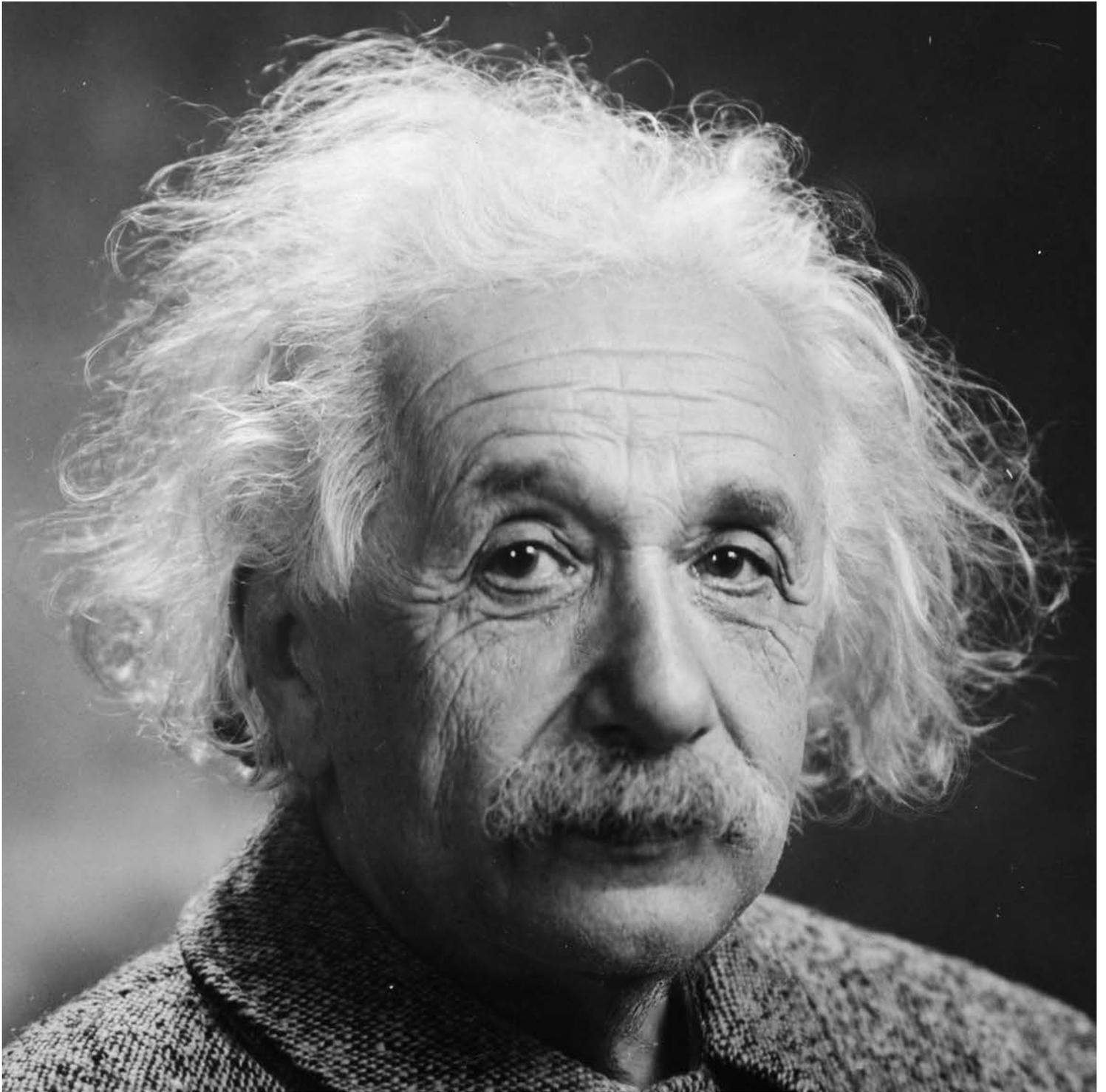
On December 9, the CBS program *60 Minutes* aired a nearly 13-minute segment on a new **National Institutes of Health** study on the brains of nine and ten-year olds. The study, slated to take more than a decade - involving 21 sites and 11,000 kids - will give us the first major government led study on the impact of screen time on kids. This segment touches on some of the



SCREEN AGERS

GROWING UP IN THE DIGITAL AGE

In addition to the *60 Minutes* segment, just today, December 11th, the website **SCREENAGERS** (associated with the documentary film we showed at TCA in November 2017) published a blog post on the same ongoing study and the association between screen time and actual brain changes. You can read this post by clicking [here](#), or on the **SCREENAGERS** logo to the left.



The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science. He to whom the emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand wrapped in awe, is as good as dead - his eyes are closed. *Albert Einstein*