

29th April

Memory verse

If we confess our sins **he is faithful and just** to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. I John 1:9.

Lots of interesting things today – take your choice of what to follow up or dig into more deeply!

Learn more about words

On 15th April we looked at Samuel Johnson's dictionary. Today is another important date in the history of **lexicography**. On **29th April** 1852 the first edition of Peter Roget's **Thesaurus** was published. (Sounds like a kind of dinosaur doesn't it?)¹

Roget's Thesaurus has been described as a reverse dictionary. Instead of making an alphabetical list of words enabling a user to find a meaning, Roget grouped **concepts** in a manner he borrowed from **zoological** classification. This enables the user to look up an idea or meaning and find an exact word to express it. Carl Linnaeus, the biologist who devised the classification system for living things, had laid out six groups for animals. Accordingly Roget (a medical doctor himself) came up with 1000 concepts which he classified in six groups:

- I **Abstract** Relations
- II Space
- III Matter
- IV Intellect
- V **Volition**
- VI Affections

You can see how this works if you look at the front pages of the Thesaurus. An alphabetical index, added by Roget as an afterthought enables the user to quickly find a **synonym** for any word.

I have highlighted some words in **green** above. You can use a dictionary to find their meaning and a thesaurus to find other words with similar meanings.

Dictionaries are also useful in studying foreign languages. Can you use a German dictionary to translate the words on the gate in the picture on the next page?

Something to read aloud

Today in 1784 Mozart's Sonata in B flat, K454 for violin and piano was first performed. Something that happened at this first performance gives us an insight into the way Mozart composed and the remarkable level to which he had trained his musical abilities and his musical memory. The sonata was written for a brilliant Italian violinist, Regina Strinasacchi, and was to be performed by them together at a concert in the Imperial and Royal Court Theatre of Vienna but Mozart was busy. He had given the violin part to Signora Strinasacchi: the piano part of the work was still only in his head. The concert date approached and he ran out of time to write it down. To fool the audience therefore, Mozart put two blank pieces of paper on the piano music desk and played from memory. However, there was someone in the audience who was not fooled. The Emperor Joseph II, looking through his opera glasses, spotted the blank paper. As soon as the concert ended he sent for the composer asking that he bring the manuscript with him. Mozart had to admit that there wasn't one!

¹ If you do not have your own copy, you can consult *Roget's Thesaurus* here: <https://archive.org/details/Rogets-Thesaurus/mode/2up>

A game to test your own musical memory

How many tunes from hymns, nursery rhymes and other sources can you remember? Sing a tune (any tune) and award yourself a point. Then another (different) tune – another point. This can be done as a competitive game among a number of children. Someone should keep score, noting what tunes have been recalled to avoid duplication. If you find you know hundreds of tunes between you and could go on for ever (I hope you do) then you can consider you all have good musical memories and stop after an agreed number of minutes!

Something to listen to

Find a recording of Mozart's violin sonata Sonata in B flat, K454 for violin and piano to listen to. I am sure you will be impressed by Mozart's feat of memory!²

Something sombre to read from history and think about

On 29th April 1945 the US Army liberated 31,601 people from the Dachau Nazi concentration camp in Germany.

The theory of evolution, which we looked at in the lesson for 19th April, popularised if not actually invented by Charles Darwin (1809-1882), gave rise to, and justification for, some evil ideas in the years that followed Darwin. These were ideas which ran directly contrary to Biblical principles. One of these ideas, “eugenics”, became established as a scientific principle in the early 20th century. Eugenics is the idea that evolution, by means of natural selection, is gradually perfecting the human race by allowing the “unfit” to die out. (In Roget's Thesaurus you will find the word “eugenics” listed under “658 improvement”.) The “unfit” in this definition includes those with handicaps, low intelligence, poor physical health or the inability to lift themselves out of poverty.

According to eugenic theory, disease and starvation eradicate these people from humanity and therefore if we feed the poor and help the handicapped, so that they live and reproduce instead of dying, we are hindering evolution. Eugenicists also thought that we can and should take steps to help evolution along by removing such people so ensuring that they cannot reproduce and so pollute the human race. Evolutionists classified whole people groups (“races” they called them) as more or less evolved and considered that the more involved “races” were superior to the less evolved ones.

When Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany in the 1930s he put these evolutionary ideas into practice.



² There is a recording here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zM6p0I2KTdU>. Even if you can only read music a little bit you might be able to follow the score which is displayed with the audio especially in the first movement which begins very slowly.

In his efforts to purify the German “master-race”, he instituted a programme of mass extermination by forced labour and euthanasia in gas chambers of any polluting elements – the handicapped, gypsies, Jews and those not enlightened enough to see the excellence of his scientific approach (i.e. his political enemies).

Hitler's ideas were well known to the the allies who fought against Nazi Germany. But the actual extent and horror of the outworking of eugenics was not fully realised until near the end of the war when the American 42nd and 45th Infantry Divisions and the 20th Armoured Division of the US Army liberated the prisoners at Dachau. The impression this made (especially in America where eugenics had been regarded as highly scientific and respectable before the war) was immense. Unfortunately, since the war, eugenics has crept back into the thinking of the ruling classes of America, Britain and Europe – if indeed it ever really went away – although it does not usually go by the old name any more. We should be on the look out for this idea and recognise it for what it is and where it leads wherever we see it.

Something you can contribute to history

We know something of what the liberation of Dachau was like from the recollections of those who were there.³ Oral history of this type is very valuable. As we noted in a previous lesson (25th March), you can collect some yourself. Anyone from your grandparents' or even your parents' generation will be able to tell you what it was like to live without computers, mobile phones or the internet, for instance. How they did their work and lived their day to day lives was very different to what you experience. You could conduct an interview (prepare your questions in advance and write them down) by phone or even by email or post. Although the latter would not be strictly “oral” history it would still be interesting and you would have preserved something that otherwise might be lost. Keeping a diary of your own is another valuable way of contributing to the study of history – but more about that tomorrow!

If you have access to photographs belonging to your parents or grandparents these also form a valuable historical record. Even simple snaps of family members show how people dressed, wore their hair and so on. Even the appearance of teeth is interesting – but more about that tomorrow too!

Something to research

Also on **April 29th** 1990 the demolition of the Berlin Wall began near the Brandenburg Gate. There are various other dates connected with the fall of the Berlin Wall but, as far as I can tell from reading about it, demolition cranes began knocking down the Berlin Wall at the Brandenburg Gate at this time even if other parts of the wall had come down earlier. What was the Berlin Wall, why was it built and why did it get demolished?



You might like to notice the connection between the previous item and this one. It is a deeper connection than first meets the eye. The oppressive Communist system which was imposed on the defeated Germans of East Berlin after the war was rooted in evolution just as Hitler's Nazism had been.⁴

3 You can hear American veterans give a measured description of what they encountered at the liberation of Dachau in short clips here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kP2baiy7yuQ> and <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/oral-history/james-rose-describes-his-impressions-of-dachau-upon-liberation>

4 You can read about this here: <https://creation.com/the-blood-stained-century-of-evolution>

The demolition of the Berlin wall is certainly something we can remember with gratitude to God. Many (but not all) the peoples of Eastern Europe now have freedom to worship God, to preach the Gospel and to bring up their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” which was denied them under communism.

A game to make

Younger children might like to use toy bricks or even Lego to build a simple toy city with a wall through the middle. The challenge is to demolish the wall *and only the wall* without injury to the houses. The scene does not have to be very realistic – individual bricks can stand for houses and so on – the point is to dexterously remove the wall. An umpire may be needed to declare whether any houses have been moved or not. The level of skill needed can be adjusted and the game can be repeated as often as liked.

Follow up work

There are some things that happened today which have links with things that we have already learned about. I list them here in case you are interested in following them up:

We learned about the siege of Leyden on 16th of April. On 29th April 1930 the North Sea floodgate at IJmuiden in the Netherlands officially opened. This was the biggest floodgate in world.⁵

We looked at the Gemini I space mission on 8th April. On 29th April 1985 the 17th space shuttle mission (51-B)-Challenger 7 was launched. What can you find out about this mission?⁶

5 Boys who enjoy big machines will love watching these promotional “how it's done” videos about the newer even bigger lock now being built at IJmuiden. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9s5zu58mDUM> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CC-vFJIZIwk>.

6 The astronauts narrate the voyage here with 1985 vintage film footage of their trip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5rdqaJGtQGo>.