

“Can you see anything?” Jesus asked. The man looked up and said, “I can see people, but they are like trees walking.” -Gospel of Mark



Inside this Issue:

1. People Like Trees Walking
2. Fibonacci: A Closer Look

People Like Trees Walking



“...I see people, but they are like trees walking.” What exactly could this mean? Why would Mark, in his writing, remember this first-hand account? What is the significance? In last month's newsletter on poetry, I mentioned some vocabulary that many may have been unfamiliar with, that I wish to put in context: exegesis and eisegesis. Expanding one's vocabulary is an important part of literacy and language learning, but often we let words intimidate us. I would like to start from the beginning.

No one would argue that literacy at its most basic level is the ability to read and write. How is this process mastered? Primarily, reading is broken down by pedagogists as a two-fold discipline: decoding and comprehension. At *Learn: A Project* this is where we begin and measure student's current skill level. Here is where I would like to note an observation in Mark's story, perception. At the level of perception we are always decoding with the hope of understanding; be it textual, relational, or symbolic.


Decoding is the first part of reading, as well as perception. “I can see people, but they are like trees walking,” says the learner to Jesus. As we are learning, often times I notice, in myself and in students, that we are too hard on ourselves if we don't first understand something. The other pitfall, I have observed, is to jump to conclusions too early and not work our way to comprehension. The former driven by despondency, the latter by lack of patience.

Whenever one is reading or writing, it best practice to simply soar through the text first. Read it without too much concern over content, allowing the mind's eye, or perception, to slowly open. Reading through it a second time one begins to notice the inner logic of the writer. A third reading and the text begins to open in a way that is submissive to interpreting the author.

As I stated, I used two words in last month's *Athenaeum* that are two ways to proceed from decoding to comprehension. Eisegesis is when the reader interprets a text subjectively, reading themselves into it, or their persuasions. This can most often be seen in writer's who respond emotionally to a text. Exegesis is the discipline that stewards us best in interpreting the written word, but requires stalling one's opinions, putting on Hermes winged hat, and sitting with the text... patience awaiting apocalypse.

Patience is the one underlying theme of *Learn: A Project*, in this case with one's perception. Do not worry if upon first reading you do not understand the text. Reading and waiting is like writing and editing, two sides of the same currency, necessary, though often not put into practice.

Fibonacci: A Closer Look at Mathematics?

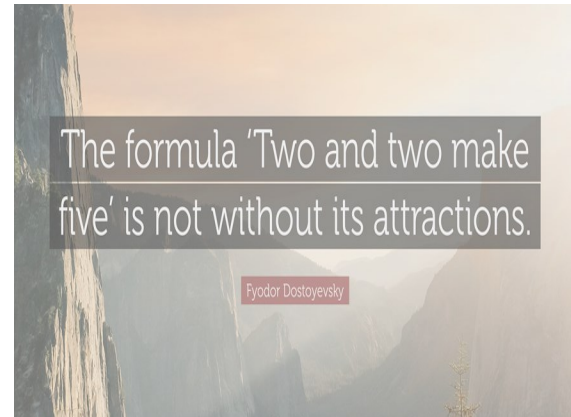


The 13th Century Italian Leonardo of Pisa, better known by his nickname Fibonacci, was perhaps the most talented Western mathematician of the Middle Ages. Little is known of his life except that he was the son of a customs official and, as a child, he travelled around North Africa with his father, where he learned about Arabic mathematics. On his return to Italy, he helped to disseminate this knowledge throughout Europe, thus setting in motion a rejuvenation in European mathematics, which had lain largely dormant for centuries during the Dark Ages.

In particular, in 1202, he wrote a hugely influential book called “Liber Abaci” (“Book of Calculation”), in which he promoted the use of the Hindu-Arabic numeral system, describing its many benefits for merchants and mathematicians alike over the clumsy system of Roman numerals then in use in Europe. Despite its obvious advantages, uptake of the system in Europe was slow (this was after all during the time of the Crusades against Islam, a time in which anything Arabic was viewed with great suspicion), and Arabic numerals were even banned in the city of Florence in 1299 on the pretext that they were easier to falsify than Roman numerals. However, common sense eventually prevailed and the new system was adopted throughout Europe by the 15th century, making

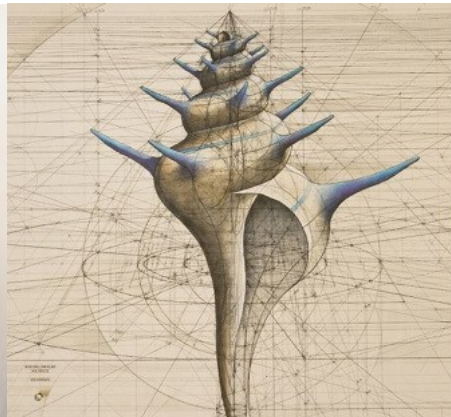
the Roman system obsolete. The horizontal bar notation for fractions was also first used in this work (although following the Arabic practice of placing the fraction to the left of the integer).

Fibonacci is best known for his introduction into Europe of a particular number sequence, which has since become known as Fibonacci Numbers or the Fibonacci Sequence. He discovered the sequence - the first recursive number sequence known in Europe - while considering a practical problem in the “Liber Abaci” involving the growth of a hypothetical population of rabbits. He noted that, after each monthly generation, the number of pairs of rabbits increased from 1 to 2 to 3 to 5 to 8 to 13, etc, and identified how the sequence progressed by adding the previous two terms, a sequence which could in theory extend indefinitely (Wikipedia. 2018. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fibonacci>).



The formula ‘Two and two make five’ is not without its attractions.

Fyodor Dostoyevsky



The wind is blowing.
Adore the wind.

Pythagoras