

Life of Fred Farming

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A Note Before We Begin the Sixth Book in the Series

The year was 1970. I bought a small fish tank and put it on my desk. I filled it with water and added a plastic plant and a thermometer.

An instant later, my one-year-old had converted it into part of her education.

Jill had climbed up on her own. The thermometer was in her left hand. The water and the plastic plant were about to be investigated.

I guess you could call it part of home schooling.

Kids love to learn. They want to know everything about everything:

- ◇ Why are some curbs painted red?
- ◇ What do pennies taste like?
- ◇ Where do babies come from?
- ◇ If $f:A \rightarrow B$ and $g:B \rightarrow A$ are two one-to-one functions, how can we show that there must exist a function $h:A \rightarrow B$ that is both one-to-one and onto?*

It takes a lot of effort to kill a child's love of learning. If you are interested in doing that, here's how to do it:

How to Kill the Love of Learning

1. Lock a child in a room ("classroom") for hours with 20 other kids.
2. Insert a guard ("teacher") who really doesn't love learning. (It helps if the teacher majored in "education" or in "general studies," rather than in a real academic major.) People who teach history should love history.



Education

* I get this question all the time. We answer it in the first chapter of *Life of Fred: Calculus*.

Those who teach math should love mathematics. The *Acid Test*: Do the teachers of XYZ talk about XYZ with their spouses and friends? Do they read and learn new things about XYZ?

Would you want to study oenology (pronounced ee-KNOLL-eh-gee) from someone who doesn't drink?

3. Make sure there are lots of external rewards (A+!) and punishments attached to the "education." Don't let the learning itself be the reward. Focus on getting the diploma or the degree.

4. Do not let a child get carried away with any subject. Set a schedule of 50 minutes per day for each of the five required subjects. If a child gets fascinated with how log cabins are built or with reading Dante's description of the horrors of hell, make sure they do it "on their own time." This will teach them that "education" and their own interests are two different things.

5. Finally, if you want to kill a child's love of learning, it is critically important that you do not become a good role model. Don't do any serious, sustained, and joyful adult learning of your own. Just read murder mysteries or romance novels, talk on the phone a lot, and watch daytime television.



On the positive side . . . that one-year-old who had climbed up to study my aquarium never spent a day in an American high school classroom. Home schooling doesn't take as long as government schooling. There are no football rallies or teacher-training days to get in the way of learning.

At 13½ she finished her high school studies and became a college student.

At 15 she headed to Europe for a year as an exchange student.

At 20 she graduated from the University of California, Berkeley.

Isn't it amazing what a little work with a fish tank will do?



BY NOW YOU KNOW HOW THESE BOOKS ARE ORGANIZED

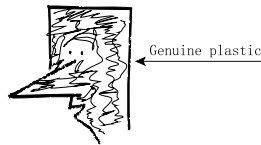
Each chapter is six pages. At the end of each chapter is a Your Turn to Play. Your child writes out all the answers to each Your Turn to Play before looking at the answers on the next page.

Just reading the questions and looking at the answers is passive learning. It doesn't work. It's like trying to learn how to ride a bicycle by just reading about it.

CALCULATORS?

Not now.

Kill the Love of Learning
and you get . . .



Contents

Chapter 1	Working at Night.	13
	what causes trashy work	
	a secret about dolls	
	numbers that add to 14	
	a googol (one followed by a hundred zeros)	
Chapter 2	Good and Great.	19
	three things needed to be great	
	paleobiogeography	
	good instead of great	
	Kingie's five Kansas brothers	
	percents of 100 items	
Chapter 3	Exploring the Fort.	25
	the drawbacks of not being able to read	
	numbers that add to 16	
	most artists, most baseball players, most boxers . . .	
	how to add more quickly	
Chapter 4	The Least and the Most.	31
	sets	
	collective nouns	
	union of sets	
Chapter 5	Mouse Brains.	37
	clearing the brain by playing the piano	
	the empty set	
	what would be left if every physical thing were gone	
	the universal set	
Chapter 6	Saturday Morning.	43
	dreams of a warm nose	
	the music of ancient Greece	
	what "Sir" in front of your name means	
	elapsed time from 2:40 to 6:55	
	the commutativity of $\cup$	

Chapter 7	Off to the Farm. 49
	where the morning sun is when you're heading south what roosters say in German, French, and Italian collinear points what artists offer to the world
Chapter 8	Main Entrance. 55
	cotton candy—\$23 subtraction and borrowing “one” median average writing numbers as numerals one meter $\approx$ 39 inches
Chapter 9	The Napkin. 61
	Fred doesn't steal past tense definition of <i>fraud</i>
Chapter 10	The Farm. 67
	8:55 a.m. \$152 = 1 hundred, 5 tens, and 2 ones borrowing twice 503 $\underline{\quad 7 \quad}$ triangle, rhombus, and trapezoid
Chapter 11	Not Heading South. 73
	circumference of the earth when your brain feels dirty how to show a lamb that you are friendly consecutive natural numbers cardinality of a set
Chapter 12	Little Lamb Farm. 79
	the second sound recording ever made why lambs sometimes need cars the proof that every number is interesting the whole numbers bar graphs

Chapter 13	Secrets That Adults Know.	85
	eight 7s equal 56 . . . without doing addition	
	are milkshakes colder than light bulbs?	
	functions, domains, and codomains	
Chapter 14	Down From the Trees.	91
	examples of functions	
	some people think that trees don't have hair	
	constant functions	
	learning to count up to 1	
Chapter 15	Meat Turnovers.	97
	better than a food fight	
	a kitchen equation: flour + water = ?	
	rhetorical questions	
	π	
Chapter 16	The Game of Questions.	103
	ordinal numbers	
	2×60	
	multiplication is commutative	
Chapter 17	Bones.	109
	radius, ulna, and humerus	
	the reduction of a fracture	
	consecutive odd numbers	
	128 scoops of ice cream for Johnny	
Chapter 18	Eddie Ready.	115
	easy way to add up $1 + 2 + 4 + 8 + 16 + 32 + 64 + 128$	
	a handful of ice cream	
	what if we had \$1, \$2, \$4, \$8, \$16 . . . dollar bills	
	why \$1, \$3, \$9, \$27, \$81 . . . would be even better	
Chapter 19	Home.	121
	noon	
	Fred almost eats something	
	nine vending machines = $4 + 5$	
Index.		125

Chapter One

Working at Night

Kingie is just your average doll who enjoys doing oil painting. When Fred was about four days old, he got Kingie as a free toy at King of French Fries.



It wasn't until Fred (and Kingie) became five years old that Fred learned how good Kingie was at art.

Most of the time Kingie did his oil painting when Fred was gone. When Fred was teaching or visiting Edgewood, Kentucky, Kingie would take out his oil paints and begin working.

Kingie did his best when it was quiet and he could concentrate on the work he was doing. No radio. No television.

During the night when Fred was sleeping was a perfect time for Kingie to paint. When Fred was awake, he liked to talk to Kingie and hug him. That made it difficult for Kingie to pay attention to his painting.

Dolls (and people) often do trashy work when there are too many distractions.



small essay

A Secret about Dolls

Have you ever noticed that many dolls have this big vacant stare? Their big glassy eyes don't seem to be looking at anything.

If you ask them what is $8 + 9$, they will just look at you and not say 17.

Everyone knows that eight plus nine is seventeen, but many dolls will just sit there. Do you know why?

The answer is that many dolls stay up all night. While you are sleeping, they use that quiet time to get their work done.

By morning, when you wake up, they are really tired. Some dolls sleep all day with their eyes open.

Now you know their secret.



asleep



Fred was sleeping. He was tired out from his trip to Edgewood. It was a quarter to one in the morning.

Kingie was just finishing up his second oil painting of the



12:45 a.m.



Woman Descending Stairs
by Kingie

night. He had used a dry brush to make the picture grainy. That gave a dreamlike feeling to the painting.

As with many of Kingie's paintings, you are drawn into the painting.

You start to think:

- ◇ Those stairs seems steep.
- ◇ Where is she going?
- ◇ Why is she holding her

back?

With great art, you remember it long after you have seen it.

But dolls are not the only nocturnal* things. As Kingie worked, he could hear some sounds coming from Fred's backpack. It was a cute little mouse that had sneaked into his backpack when he was on the bus to Edgewood. 

The mouse came up and stood beside Kingie. He gave the mouse a little pat on the head. Here was an animal that Kingie liked. He was terrified of cats and dogs, but mice were different. Kingie now had a pet of his own.

* KNOCK-turn-el Active at night.

Kingie knew that mice eat just about anything. They are not obligate carnivores (like cats who must eat meat).

Kingie tiptoed over to Fred's desk. He didn't want to wake Fred who was in his sleeping bag under the desk.

Everyone knows that Fred is not a big eater.* Whenever he gets any food, he sticks it in his pocket and says, "for later." Then he puts it in his desk. When Kingie opened the desk, he found 14 pounds of food.

There was 5 lbs. in one drawer and 9 lbs. in another drawer. (lbs. is an abbreviation for pounds.)

There were 6 lbs. of sandwiches and 8 lbs. of other stuff.

$$\begin{array}{r} 5 \\ + 9 \\ \hline 14 \end{array} \qquad \begin{array}{r} 6 \\ + 8 \\ \hline 14 \end{array}$$

Please memorize these before you turn the page. There is no hurry. The mouse is enjoying one of Fred's sandwiches.

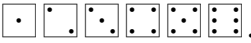
* *Fred is not a big eater* is an example of litotes. (LIE-toe-tease) Here are other examples of litotes: *A billion dollars (\$1,000,000,000) is not a small amount of money. The Pacific Ocean is not a little pond. A toothpick is not a fat log. A dime is not a heavy coin.*

Litotes are fun to invent.

Please take out a piece of paper and write down the answers. Then turn the page and compare your answers to mine.

You will learn a lot more that way than just reading the questions and reading the answers.

Your Turn to Play

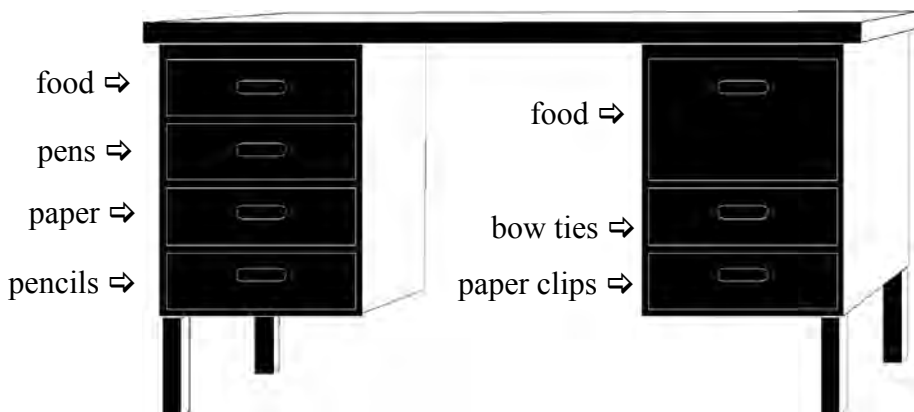
1. Name a value for x that will make this true:
 $x + 6 = 14$.
2. Name a value for y to make this true: $14 - y = 5$.
3. Name a value for z that will make this true: $z > 99$.
4. A die has six different faces: .

If you shook two dice, how could they add up to 10?

5. (Harder question) We know that there were 5 lbs. of food in one drawer and 9 lbs. in another drawer.

We also know that of the 14 lbs. of food, 6 lbs. are sandwiches.

Does that mean that both drawers must contain sandwiches?



.....ANSWERS

1. If x is 8, then $x + 6 = 14$ is true.
2. If y is 9, then $14 - y = 5$ is true.
3. $z > 99$ means “ z is greater than 99.”

There are many possible answers you might name.

If z is 100, then $z > 99$ is true.

If $z = 103$, then $z > 99$ is true.

If $z = 1,000,000$, then $z > 99$ is true.

If z were equal to a googol, then $z > 99$ would be true.

A googol is 1 followed by a hundred zeros.

This is a googol:

10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,
000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,
000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000.

4. To have two dice add up to 10, you could have:

✓ the first die be  and the second die be  or

✓ the first die be  and the second die be  or

✓ the first die be  and the second die be .

5. Both drawers do not have to contain sandwiches.
(They could, but they don't have to.) All six pounds of
sandwiches could be in the bigger drawer that contains
nine pounds of food.

Index

152 = 1 hundred, 5 tens, 2 ones	70	denominations of money. . .	117-120
acre	69	diameter	101, 102
are milkshakes colder than light bulbs.	88	Eight 7s are 56—without adding	86
arrest warrant	64	elapsed time—from 2:40 to 6:55	47
bar graph.	83, 84	<i>Electric Cows</i> by Kingie. . . .	51
blessings in life that we are not aware of	44	empty set.	39
caesura in music, poetry, and conversation.	109	every number is interesting—the proof.	82
calculators?.	9	Farmer's Nachos	57-59
cardinal number	87	<i>Farmland</i> by Kingie.	51
cardinality	77	fast way to add $1 + 2 + 4 + 8 +$ $16 + 32 + 64 + 128$. . .	115
cardinality of { }	40	fortnight	103, 104
circumference.	73, 76, 101	fraud.	64
collective nouns.	34	Fred almost eats something	121
collinear	52, 71	Fred doesn't steal.	62
commutative law of addition	30	Fred's happy dreams.	43
commutative law of multiplication.	108	functions, domains, codomains	89, 91-95, 103
commutative property of set union.	47	gallon is equal to four quarts	85
consecutive even numbers. . .	77	geometry without drawing lines	40
consecutive natural numbers	77	googol.	18
consecutive odd numbers. . .	112	heart dirty.	74
constant function	94	how lambs frolic.	75, 76
cotton candy \$23	57	how to add faster.	29
counting by twos	77	how to kill the love of learning	7
Dante	8		
definition of a function. . . .	96		
definition of alive.	38		

Index

- how to pronounce *forehead* 117
- how to show a lamb that you are
 friendly. 76, 77
- humerus 111
- ice-cream-scoop bills and Fred
 Bucks 120
- images in a function. 90
- Joyce Kilmer. 92
- kids playing without adult
 supervision. 88
- Kingie's Georgia brothers. 22
- Kingie's Kansas brothers 21
- kitchen equation: flour + water =
 98
- laconic. 42
- litotes 16
- median average. 29
- meter 60
- “Middle C Played 24 Times”—
 piano piece. 38
- million 60
- more fun than a food fight 98
- morning sun on your left when
 you're heading south. 50
- most artists, baseball players,
 boxers, etc. 27, 28
- “Mouse Ascending”—piano piece
 32
- “Mouse on Keyboard”—piano
 piece. 22
- mysteries of life. 26
- natural numbers 78
- normal set = Russell set. 41, 83
- obligate carnivores. 16, 45
- oenology. 8
- oldest trick in the book. 57
- one of the biggest challenges any
 good teacher has. 38
- ordinal number. 87, 105
- oxymoron. 22
- paleobiogeographer 19
- paleobotanist 19
- past tense 64
- percent 53
- pi 102
- plagues that Egypt had. 103,
 104
- playing the piano to clear one's
 brains 38
- prolix 42
- Questions game. 100, 101, 103
- radius and ulna. 110, 111
- Ralph Waldo Emerson. 28
- rhetorical question 99
- rhombus 71
- rooster talk in German, French,
 and Italian. 50
- Row of Practice
 30, 36, 42, 54, 60, 66, 72,
 78, 84, 96, 102, 123, 124
- second sound recording ever
 made in human history
 81
- sets 33
- setting a bone = reduction. 111
- small essay: A Secret about Dolls
 14
- small essay: If You Own Acres
 of Rocks. 72
- some people think that trees
 don't have arms 93

Index

spelling rule for mathematical
 sets 34
staying with the herd. 106
subtraction—borrowing one. . 65
Tall House by Kingie. 31
the fate of those who can't read
 26
Thomas Edison. 80
three feet equal one yard. . . . 21
three things to become great. . 19
trapezoid. 71, 101, 102
trashy work. 13
triangle. 71
twelve inches equal one foot
 21
two things to become good. . . 20
union of sets. 35, 107
Universal set. 40, 41
Universal set can't exist. 41
what artists offer the world. . . 53
what you could do if everything
 was gone. 40
whole numbers. 83
why lambs drive cars 81
Wizard of Addition. 123
Woman Descending Stairs by
 Kingie. 15
writing numbers as numerals
 59
yodeling 74

After you have read the elementary *Life of Fred: ABCDEFGH* . . . books, there are 14 hardback *Life of Fred* books that will take you all the way up into your third year of college.

Fred doesn't end.

(for details, see the next page.)