

National Bike Month—May

Jessica Wade

May is National Bike Month. Sponsored by the League of American Bicyclists since 1956, National Bike Month is a celebration of bicycling. National Bike Month is observed to raise awareness of the benefits of cycling, to share knowledge of cycling safety tips, and to encourage people to bike more often.

There are numerous activities and opportunities to participate in National Bike Month. CUbike.org has an extensive list of activities and a calendar that lists bike rides and activities for participation. While the entire month of May is dedicated to cycling awareness, May 11-May 15 is Bike to Work week. Log your miles and compete with friends to see who can bike the most miles!

If you are new to cycling or would just like to learn more about safety, there are lots of opportunities for learning about safety and introduction to bikes. The League of Illinois Bicyclists offers an online safety quiz. This quiz is a great way to improve your skills and learn about laws, as both a bicyclist and a motorist. There is a quiz for child cyclists, adult cyclists, and motorists. Their website also has great maps and rides that are available in Illinois.

Champaign-Urbana is a very bicycle friendly community. In fact, Urbana is recognized as a Gold Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists. This Gold designation recognizes that Urbana strives to create optimal bicycling conditions through a variety of means, such as education, infrastructure, and biking polices. There are many bike lanes throughout Champaign-Urbana. Maps of designated bike lanes are available across campus.

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PSA: Public Squirrel Announcement

Jennie Avery

Spring is here—and you know what that means...our furry little squirrel friends are out enjoying the sunshine and scurrying around campus in search of food and friendship. It may be difficult to imagine the campus without these cute little guys, so it will probably come as a shock to know that squirrels have not always been a fixture in Champaign-Urbana. In fact, at the beginning of the 20th century, they were rather scarce, and it was thanks to the University’s president at the time, Andrew S. Draper, that squirrels were first introduced to the campus. Draper wrote to the Board of Trustees regarding the issue in 1901: “For some years I have had in mind the domestication of squirrels upon the grounds of the University...If successful, the influence upon University life, and upon the feelings of students, would be considerable, and students would carry that influence to all parts of the State.” So whether, like Draper, you think that the squirrel is a majestic little creature, or, like Carrie Bradshaw on Sex and the City, simply a “rat with a cuter outfit,” please remember that they are still wild animals, and should be treated as such.



Celebrating Our Nation's Wordsmiths:

National Poetry Month

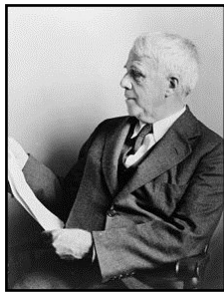
Jennie Avery

"Poetry is the rhythmical creation of beauty in words." -Edgar Allan Poe.

April in the United States is National Poetry Month, celebrating this country's many outstanding poets and their work. The original organizers of the month hoped that it would help create greater awareness and appreciation for poetry among the general public in the U.S. Here we spotlight a few famous American poets, including excerpts from some of their most well-known poems.

Robert Frost (1874-1963) was born in San Francisco, and moved with his family to Massachusetts, following his father's death in 1885. His New England surroundings highly influenced his work, resulting in themes of nature and man's reaction to it in many of his works.

"Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf,
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day
Nothing gold can stay."
-Nothing Gold Can Stay



Maya Angelou (1928-2014) was an American writer, poet, actress, dancer, and singer. While her best-known works are arguably her seven autobiographies, her poetry is highly praised for its depictions of female strength of women and the human spirit.

"The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom."
-Caged Bird



For more information on National Poetry Month, please visit the website of the [Academy of American Poets!](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/)

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) is considered one of the most important American poets. She lived an introverted and reclusive lifestyle, which may explain why only eight of her poems are known to have been published during her lifetime. The remainder were discovered and published after her death. Much of Dickinson's work touches on the themes of death and immortality.

"'Hope' is the thing with feathers—
That perches in the soul—
And sings the tune without the words—

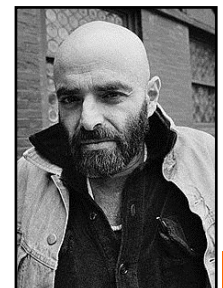
And never stops—at all—
And sweetest—in the Gale—is heard—
And sore must be the storm—
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm—

I've heard it in the chilliest land—
And on the strangest Sea—
Yet, never, in Extremity,
It asked a crumb—of Me."
-'Hope' is the Thing with Feathers



Shel Silverstein (1930-1999) was born in Chicago, IL and studied at Illinois! He was a poet, cartoonist and screenwriter, as well as the author of a number of children's books, including "The Giving Tree," which has been translated into more than thirty languages.

"There are no happy endings.
Endings are the saddest part,
So just give me a happy middle
And a very happy start."
-Happy Ending? (Everything On It)



Independence Day and Juneteenth

Nick Dunn

As in many former colonial nations, the most important civic holiday in the US is Independence Day, celebrated every July 4th. Many use their day off from work to travel; others enjoy cookouts, parades, and fireworks displays.

This holiday marks the signing of the Declaration of Independence which formalized our ultimately successful revolution against colonial rule. Unfortunately, approximately 4 million slaves in the US were unjustly excluded from the notion that “all [men and women] are created equal,” and were only freed in 1865 at the conclusion of the Civil War. Emancipation Day, also known as Juneteenth, is celebrated every June 19th, marking the day when the last remaining slaves in Texas heard the announcement that they’d been emancipated, released from slavery.

In keeping with our National Poetry Month theme, we offer these two excerpts from great American poems on liberty and independence. First, there is the Star-Spangled Banner, written during the War of 1812. Originally four stanzas long, only the first stanza is regularly sung as the US national anthem. You’ll hear this at the beginning of many sporting events, at patriotic celebrations, and fireworks displays.

O say can you see by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming,
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?
And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there;
O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave,
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

Second, here are the first, second, and seventh stanzas of Paul Laurence Dunbar’s *Emancipation*.

Fling out your banners, your honors be bringing,
Raise to the ether your paeans of praise.
Strike every chord and let music be ringing!
Celebrate freely this day of all days.

Few are the years since that notable blessing
Raised you from slaves to the powers of men.
Each year has seen you my brothers progressing,
Never to sink to that level again.

....

Never again shall the manacles gall you.
Never again shall the whip stroke defame!
Nobles and Freemen, your destinies call you
Onward to honor, to glory and fame.

Mark Juneteenth (June 19th) and Independence Day (July 4th) in your calendars this year as special dates to celebrate and reflect on liberty. Join in a Juneteenth celebration on Saturday June 20th; visit this link for details: <https://champaignparks.com/event/juneteenth-celebration/> . Check out <http://www.july4th.net/events> for details about July 4th activities.





Golf with Martin

Martin McFarlane



This newsletter's sports spotlight is on golf, and therefore marks the first column on a sport that isn't intrinsically American. While baseball and basketball are played in other parts of the world, the elite pros play in the USA and both have a very American feel to them. Whereas golf is played the world over, was invented in Scotland, and at the time of writing only 4 of the top 10 players in the world are American. So why is it deserving of a cultural spotlight?

Firstly, golf's biggest market is the USA. Approximately half of all the golf courses in the world are located in the USA, and in 2013, 25 million Americans considered themselves golfers. Golf coverage is big in the US, with even the smaller professional tournaments getting regular national TV coverage at the weekends. And a short stroll around any sporting goods store will show you golf's popularity, with national chains such as Dick's Sporting Goods normally devoting over a third of their floor space to golf.

However, golf's impact around the US is not as interesting as its impact locally. The University of Illinois' golf team has become a national powerhouse, finishing national runner up in 2013 and national quarter finalists in 2014. The University of Illinois has two beautifully maintained golf courses located south of campus near Willard Airport where students can play 18 holes for only \$15, and staff for only \$18. Aside from these courses, there are many others for residents to choose from, including the scenic Lake of the Woods course, a 10 minute drive to the west, or Urbana's Stone Creek course, which can be reached by the MTD's Green East bus service.

Yet despite the ease of finding a course, the readily available equipment, and continued television coverage, golf is on the downswing at the moment. The 25 million golfers I mentioned earlier sounds impressive, but it is down 5 million since 2006. More golf courses have closed than opened every year in the past eight years as many Americans find that taking 4-5 hours out of their day for a round of golf no longer fits in to a modern lifestyle. And golf is not a cheap pastime, so was hit badly by the troubled US economy at the end of the last decade.

None of this should dissuade you from playing a round though. The aforementioned university courses welcome players of all abilities, from first timers who are just happy if they don't hit double digits on any given hole, to the golf team who just won their 13th Big Ten title. Details can be found at www.uofigolf.com. Golf may not strike you as a particularly American sport, but more Americans play it regularly than almost any other, and it is certainly deserving of consideration as a good American experience during your stay here.



ISSS Summer Movie Picks

Things have finally started to warm up in C-U—summer and new big box office blockbuster movies are just around the corner! The ISSS staff shares some of their favorite summer blockbuster movies and/or summer-themed movies. Enjoy!



Afroza: *Inception* The ultimate blockbuster with an amazing ensemble cast; it makes you get lost in its fantastic visual effects as you question reality and the possibility of dreams, with an incredible twist of an ending!

Helen: *Body Heat* (1981) with Kathleen Turner and William Hurt. Steamy mystery romance with a great twist!

Jennie: *The Sandlot*. The quintessential story of summer in the United States: baseball, s'mores and the Tilt-a-Whirl at the State Fair. And the flash-forward at the end to show the childhood friendships that endured the test of time will warm even the coldest heart.

Julie: *American Graffiti*. Set in summer 1962, this coming-of-age story features multiple characters and their adventures over one night. It's both a comedy and a drama set at a pivotal transition time in US society and pop culture. You can see both the rock-and-roll era of the 1950s with hints of the British invasion, for instance. Just as the characters are moving on in their individual lives, so too is our society getting ready to undergo multiple changes in the mid- to latter years of the 1960s, which is nicely tied up at the very end of the film. *American Graffiti* is a classic summer-themed movie and is definitely worth seeing.

Lily: *(500) Days of Summer* is the somewhat melancholy and yet surprisingly uplifting sleeper hit of the summer of 2009. The story focuses on an ultimately failed relationship but brings hope to finding love in an otherwise cynical modern world, as summer turns into autumn.

Liz: *Up* I love the characters in it! It's an emotional roller coaster!

Martin: *Top Gun* Released in the summer of 1986, set in the summer, with a soundtrack that includes many classic summer anthems, there can hardly be a more 'summer' film than the classic blockbuster *Top Gun*. Released before Tom Cruise got crazy, Anthony Edwards got irrelevant, and Val Kimer got fat then thin again, this movie is an incredibly entertaining and fun way to spend a couple of hours on a summer night.

Nick: *Die Hard* (July 1988). Off-duty, on-vacation cop John McClane is the fly in the ointment interrupting (and defeating) the hostage-takers who are interrupting his estranged wife's company's Christmas party as they attempt to steal several hundred million dollars. Plot? Thin. Character development? Absent. Explosions? Yes. All the explosions.

Stephanie: *Dirty Dancing*. It's a classic movie – love the dancing and the music. Nobody puts baby in a corner!

Will: *Jurassic Park* was a huge deal and nothing like it had come out before. I vividly remember going with my dad to see it in the theaters. Probably the most clearly memorable summer blockbuster .

Have anything that you'd like to see in future Cultural Spotlight editions? Sports, holidays, local wildlife? Let us know! Email Jennie Avery at jsavery@illinois.edu with your suggestions for future content!