

Hitchin' a Ride

By Trazom and Rubrick

(from the March 2018 Berkeley Equinox Party)

The summer I spent hitchhiking across the U.S., visiting famous destinations, is forever etched in my memory. Or at least it would be, if it weren't for the fact that a coconut fell on my head shortly afterwards, resulting in total amnesia. (Yes, that's exactly how amnesia works.)

How do I know about my trip at all? Well, recently I found my old journal tucked away in the bottom of a backpack in my closet.

In retrospect (not that I have any anymore), writing all my journal entries in the form of puzzles was probably a mistake. Surely I must have left a more conventional record than that? Maybe solving the puzzles will tell me more.

Solve the five puzzles in any order. Each solution will be **an item or attribute associated with the driver for that leg of the journey.**

When you have all five answers, go ahead and solve the final stage of this hitchhiking mystery.

Niagara Falls

Somewhere near Rochester, I was picked up by a man with a complete wardrobe in the back of his van. As it happened, we were both headed to Niagara Falls. When we got there, he invited me to join him on the Maid of the Mist boat tour. It turned out he'd grown up nearby. Unfortunately, the noise of the falls made it difficult to hear exactly what he said when he recounted his childhood memories.

The following transcript contains many misheard words. In each case, one phoneme has been replaced by another. For each sentence in the transcript, the correct (new) phonemes, read in order, will yield a single word.

When you've completed this step, you'll be most of the way to determining **the item of clothing the driver selected to put on for the boat ride.**

I glue up two or through miles mouth of hair, in a frailer park. In foes days, life was full of winder. We were moor, but I was happy; I could heed the falls as I went to slope, and I could be the mist on the horizon wean the bun came up.

I pride hard in skill. In worst grade, moo essay about the first person to go over the falls in a barrack won a prize — not bath, if I say so myself!

My, hue rhymes have changed. The places hair I played when I was a cod are all mosh hotels now. I used to mow skinny-dipping in a pinned near the falls with my friends on mealy hot sucker days — I stole remember the time we merely got cough. Nowadays, it's charred to oven get near that spot. Still, Zen I close my ooze, hearing the whore of the falls makes me feel young again.

The Everglades

South of Miami, a self-proclaimed outdoorsman and thrill-seeker in a pinstriped pickup offered me a ride to Everglades National Park. There we watched a hunting crocodile repeatedly slide into the water, then invariably return with a tasty morsel in its belly.

Each clue on the left leads to an answer of at least five letters; write it in the first column of blanks. If you insert one new letter, then reverse the word, the result is the answer indicated by one of the clues at the bottom (given in alphabetical order by answer). Write this answer in the second column. The letters you inserted, read in order, will spell out **the item I noticed in the back of my driver's truck**.

| | | |
|--|-------|-------|
| Deli meat | _____ | _____ |
| Literary figures of speech or clichéd plot devices | _____ | _____ |
| Low cards | _____ | _____ |
| Nation neighboring Chad | _____ | _____ |
| Not as good | _____ | _____ |
| Hedgehog of video-game fame | _____ | _____ |
| Infrequently | _____ | _____ |
| Casino employee | _____ | _____ |
| Bands for tying hair or presents | _____ | _____ |

Light cotton trousers

Fund held in trust by a third party

Chevrolets named for antelopes

Discrete units, as in programming,
education, or furniture design

Take possession of once more

In the same family

Baltimore, Odessa, or Singapore

Made safe

More condescendingly superior

Mount Rushmore

In South Dakota I caught a ride with a European gentleman in a Peugeot, and we headed to Mount Rushmore. We were impressed, yet I couldn't help feeling disappointed at how few great American presidents were represented. "There should be room for a lot more," I said, "especially if they double up." My driver thought this idea was "très bonne!"

In each row, determine the word represented by the picture in the first column (whose length is given in parentheses). The letters of this word, combined with those from one of the pictures on the second page, can be rearranged to form the names of two American presidents. One is listed; it's up to you to determine the other. To help make this clear, the first steps for the first row have already been done.

When you're finished, take the letter indicated in brackets from the name of each president in the final column to get **an item of clothing my driver wore**.



(5)

+ CAMERA = ADAMS + _____ [1]



(5)

+ _____ = MONROE + _____ [4]



(5)

+ _____ = WILSON + _____ [2]



(5)

+ _____ = MADISON + _____ [1]



(6)

+ _____ = GRANT + _____ [8]



(7)

+ _____ = GARFIELD + _____ [3]



(4)

+ _____ = HAYES + _____ [3]

(Answers are in alphabetical order.)



(7)



(6)



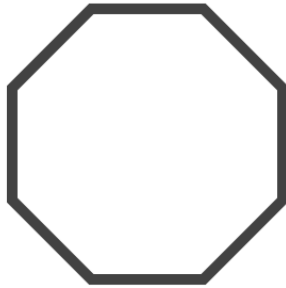
(8)



(6)



(7)



(7)



(5)

Times Square

The folk musician who picked me up in New Jersey and drove me all the way to Times Square was good company, but the destination was a big disappointment: It wasn't especially square, and it had nothing to do with multiplication at all! I decided to make my own Times Square instead.

Each clue leads to a 6-letter word that runs from one side of the square to the other, in either direction, horizontally, vertically or diagonally. The first and last letters of each word are for you to enter. The other letters are already in the grid in their correct positions; each will be used no more than once. When you've filled in the grid, reading clockwise, will tell you how to find **the musical instrument my driver played**.

Academic's job security

Book of the Bible

Extremely pressing

Iguana, emu, or swordfish

Like Abe Lincoln, per his epithet

Name for a cartoon waterfowl

New Jersey inventor

Outcry, as of protest

Post-performance performance

Shish kebab holder

| | | | | | |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|--|
| | | | | | |
| | ENU | DDN | LOU | EOX | |
| | ACL | IOW | ANR | CNP | |
| | DIO | EIM | ENS | MOU | |
| | NRS | AEE | GOR | KRR | |
| | | | | | |

Arches National Park

In the hinterlands of Utah, I was offered a ride by a delightful woman in a pickup truck. Owing to a misunderstanding (I was just trying to get to the nearest McDonald's), we ended up driving through Arches National Park. The name turned out to be entirely accurate, as arches could be found in every conceivable location.

Each of the eight clues below (which are in no particular order) indicates a short word of 2-5 letters. The answer to each of the numbered clues, in turn, *contains* one of those short words. As you solve the numbered clues, write each answer in the space next to it. Then find the short word it contains, and *replace* it with the letters ARCH to get a new word or phrase. Write that new word or phrase in the corresponding set of blanks. When you've finished, the circled letters will spell out **some things my driver possessed which were unusually large**.

Jason's ship

Note following *do*

Molecule's constituent

Exists

Deficiency

Delicate openwork fabric

Terminus

Star-shaped flower

- | | | | |
|---|-------|-------------|---|
| 1 A sharp fold, as in a pair of slacks | _____ | ___ _ _ _ _ | ○ |
| 2 Study of the human body | _____ | ○ _ _ _ _ | |
| 3 Leafy vegetable also known as chicory | _____ | _ ○ _ _ _ | |
| 4 Stately tempo in the key of Florida? | _____ | ○ _ _ _ | |
| 5 Convent's counterpart | _____ | _ ○ _ _ _ | |
| 6 Sorcery, perhaps (2 wds.) | _____ | ○ _ _ _ _ | |
| 7 Careful positioning | _____ | _ _ _ _ ○ | |
| 8 Most sage | _____ | _ _ _ _ ○ | |

Returning to the Scene

The journal puzzles gave me some inkling of what went down during my hitchhiking trip, but it turns out there was more! While I was leafing through, a loose page fell out which suggested that each puzzle contained a second, hidden answer. I feel sure these answers will lead me to a more complete recollection of my trip, and especially of the kind people who gave me rides.

Follow the instructions below to find the second memory of each driver hidden in each puzzle. When you've found all five, come back for a final set of instructions.

The Everglades:

Take one of the words from the right-hand column, reverse it, and insert a single letter to discover **this driver's car-related occupation**.

Niagara Falls:

Find the word that was mistranscribed as something born every minute, and remove its first half. Now find the two words in the introduction that are homophones of one another, and append the one that appears first. This will tell you **the creature depicted in this driver's tattoo**.

Mount Rushmore:

Find the presidential name in the first list that is also a verb, and write it down. Now find the name in the second list that is also a verb. Remove its first and last letters, then write it down next to the first one, resulting in a string of 9 letters.

Take a third presidential name listed, and remove its last letter to get a word often seen on the bottom item pictured on the first page. For each letter in this word, cross off the *first* time it appears in the string of 9 letters. Read the result from right to left to get **another item this driver wore**.

Times Square:

For the first ten letters in the outer ring, find the clue which yielded the answer word it belongs to. Write down the first letter of that clue. These letters, read in order, make a two-word clue; solve this clue to identify **the unusual object this driver wore as a necklace pendant**.

Arches National Park:

Take the answers to the top set of clues. Cross off any that are more than 4 letters long. Cross off any that end in 2 consecutive consonants. Cross off any whose last 3 letters form a word. In each of the remaining words, cross off all letters (if any) after the second one. Read all the remaining letters from right to left to get **the model of truck this driver drove**.

Finding Memories

With this new information, I was starting to get a clearer picture of what went down during my trip, but I still craved more. I felt sure that if I could only remember the names of my various drivers, everything would somehow come back to me.

Suddenly I realized that the names were right there in front of me! Not only that, but they spelled out what I'd been looking for all along: a proper, conventional record of my hitchhiking journey. And there it was, hidden in the same backpack under some fossilized socks.

For each puzzle, write the original answer in the left-hand column, and the second, hidden answer in the right-hand column. Running across the two answers you can find the name of the driver for that destination; the length of the name is given in parentheses.

| | Original Answer | Hidden Answer | Driver's Name |
|----------------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|
| The Everglades | _____ | _____ | _____ (3) |
| Niagara Falls | _____ | _____ | _____ (5) |
| Mount Rushmore | _____ | _____ | _____ (3) |
| Times Square | _____ | _____ | _____ (4) |
| Arches National Park | _____ | _____ | _____ (6) |

If you read the first letters of these names, followed by the last letters, you'll get a two-word phrase which encapsulates this hitchhiking trip perfectly, both literally and figuratively:
