

L1 No Escape from the Web

Have you ever run into trouble when you needed to contact a friend you had lost touch with? In the past, people didn't have any effective solutions to this problem. Asking mutual friends about this friend was the only thing that most people could do, and it would often take ages to find a long-lost friend. However, today, we don't need to worry about this problem any longer. We can simply go online, upload a picture of the friend, and provide some information about his or her background. Then, we will soon be able to find that friend. How could this be possible? Today, the Internet plays a crucial part in this kind of search process, and so do various online communities.

Nowadays, many people are involved in online communities. Some people have even become known as netizens. These people share their opinions online, upload and download pictures and videos, and make friends on the Internet. Some netizens spend a lot of time doing these online activities, and a few even have difficulty walking away from their computers once they have entered this virtual world. Interestingly, the "footprints" that Internet users leave online become clues when other people use human flesh search engines. Because of this type of search process, Internet users have been able to find out about anything or anyone that they are interested in.

An example of this occurred in Taiwan when a man treated a dog cruelly. The whole thing was recorded and uploaded online. This 17-second video then quickly caused public anger. Using human flesh search engines, some netizens, especially dog lovers, were able to track down this man. In just 18 hours, they had collected a lot of information about this man and reported him to Animal Rescue Team Taiwan. In the end, he apologized for his behavior and promised that this would never happen again.

Another time, in South Korea, a college student who refused to clean up after her dog on the subway was recorded on video. As soon as the video was shared online, this student was identified by many netizens. In order to punish her, some of these netizens even revealed her personal information on the Web. Because the student was widely blamed for her behavior, she ended up dropping out of college. However, this event stirred up a debate about whether a witch-hunt like this had gone too far.

Sometimes, when netizens are trying to discover the truth about something, some may violate other Internet users' privacy. Even worse, a few netizens may even become violent, taking advantage of their freedom of speech to get their own justice. Clearly, we should try to avoid doing these things so that everyone can enjoy the convenience the Internet provides. After all, the Internet should bring people together rather than separate them.

L3 A Song to Help the World

In 2010, many countries, including Chile, Indonesia, Mexico, and even the southern part of the United States, were affected by major earthquakes. Nevertheless, the most terrible and tragic situation occurred in Haiti. The severe earthquake that had struck this country wiped out much of the capital, Port-au-Prince. It took nature only a few seconds to change millions of people's lives there forever. Over two hundred thousand people died, and more than a million others lost their homes and businesses. Survivors were left without food or clean water, and they faced the threat of diseases and thieves. Port-au-Prince became hell on earth, and the government was powerless to help because many government officials had also been killed and many government offices had been reduced to piles of broken bricks.

It didn't take the singers and musicians in the United States long to decide to help the people in Haiti by re-recording the charity single, "We Are the World." This classic song had been written by Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie and originally recorded in 1985 to raise money for the poor in Africa. Now, twenty-five years later, a new group of artists, representing a who's who of the music business, have stepped up. The updated single contains a rap section, and Michael Jackson's original part was left unchanged as a mark of respect for the superstar. After all, if Michael Jackson hadn't written the original song, the 2010 version might never have been recorded.

The deeper meaning of "We Are the World" is to remind us that human beings are one big family. When other people are suffering, we should come to the rescue. It goes beyond duty—by offering help to others, our lives become more meaningful, joyful, and useful. Moreover, if each one of us reaches out to those in need, the world will become a better place for the entire human race.

L4 The World on a Plate

Visitors to Scotland are often tempted to try a Scottish national dish called haggis. Haggis is a boiled sheep's stomach that is stuffed with a sheep's lungs, liver, and heart. Although it is thought of as a delicacy by the locals, many visitors are not so sure about this. If you were in Scotland, would you dare to eat this dish?

Food is an important part of any travel experience, and nothing helps develop friendships or business relationships like sharing a meal. After all, if you don't want to taste another country's food when you travel, it's probably easier just to stay at home. Most people who travel frequently realize that trying the local food is not only a great way to show respect for their host, but also an essential part of experiencing a different culture.

You may have difficulty eating exotic cuisine, but it is diplomatic to take a bite of whatever is being served to you in order not to offend. There is a popular saying, "Are you a tourist or a traveler?" A tourist is considered to be someone who just travels around on a tour bus that is full of people from his or her own country. Tourists rarely meet any locals, taste the local food, or struggle with the local language. Travelers, on the other hand, will never turn down any chance to experience a foreign culture in the local ways.

During my travels, I have eaten a lot of weird food. In China, I have eaten sheep's lungs and ducks' tongues. In Saudi Arabia, I have tasted sheep's eyeballs, which are a delicacy there. In Indonesia, I have eaten fried snake, which is actually not as tasty as chicken, but otherwise pretty similar. In Spain, I have tried blood sausage, and in Sri Lanka, I have eaten a very spicy pineapple curry, which is both hot and sweet at the same time and very different from a normal curry. Eating these dishes has not always been easy for me, but it has contributed greatly to my travels and given me terrific stories to tell back home!

As for my advice for travelers who are unsure about eating strange food, the most important thing to remember is never to offend your hosts. Here are a few tips for making it easier to try foreign food. First of all, don't ask what the food is before you try it. Very often, the food you consider weird is probably delicious—it is the thought rather than the taste that stops you from enjoying the meal. Second, take small bites, or if you are serving yourself, take just a small helping. Trying a small amount of everything first is wiser than filling your plate up with a lot of food. Finally, if you have trouble swallowing something, just sip tea or a cold drink during your meal. This can help disguise the unfamiliar taste.

Last but not least, remember that you are representing your country when you travel overseas. If you try some of the local food, you'll probably make friends for both yourself and your country.

L6 The Beauty of Trash

When you look at a pile of litter, what do you see? If you think that it is just trash, Tim Noble and Sue Webster might ask you to look again. These two artists collected garbage from the streets of London and formed it into simple piles. However, when they shone a light on these piles in just the right way, the shadows that were made suddenly came to life. What looked like a bunch of useless junk suddenly became a man and woman sitting back to back.

The practice of making art from trash is now known as "junk art." It began with a trend called "found art" in the early 1900s. The artists involved with found art used found objects to create artistic pieces. In the 1960s, the German artist Joseph Beuys, along with other artists, began using ordinary pieces of trash, such as candy wrappers and old tools, to make pieces of art. Some people might have thought that Beuys's creations looked plain, but others found his creations meaningful because Beuys's artwork strongly expressed his beliefs in humanism.

Decades later, junk art still remains popular. Some junk artists are serious when they are creating artistic pieces, and their works of art often deal with the subject of environmental protection. A photographer named Chris Jordan often takes pictures of trash, and these pictures show how much the modern world wastes. For example, from a distance, one of his photographs looks like a collection of pretty colors. When people approach this photograph, however, they can see that it actually shows two million plastic bottles, which is the number of plastic bottles thrown away in the United States every five minutes.

In Taiwan, a group of junk artists have gathered in Taidong to remember the tragedy caused by Typhoon Morakot in August of 2009. By using pieces of driftwood that were washed up on the beach because of the typhoon, these artists have carved sculptures that stand for the loss caused by the storm as well as the tremendous power of nature. Although driftwood is normally viewed as worthless trash, it holds a special place in the hearts of many junk artists in Taiwan. Rahic Talif, a local artist from the Amis tribe, has great respect for driftwood. He does not begin carving a piece of driftwood until he has imagined its history. By thinking about where the wood came from and how long it had floated until it was washed ashore, Talif creates a story that provides inspiration for his work. One of his carvings shows a group of people dancing and singing on the beach, and it represents rebirth.

Junk art's versatility means that it can be both serious and entertaining. Many junk artists create fun things from old or recycled materials. Some create wall decorations by using disposable cups and containers, while others make paintings from unwanted computer parts. The only limit to junk art is the artist's imagination, and there are countless ideas out there waiting to be discovered. Junk art truly embodies the saying that "one man's trash is another man's treasure."