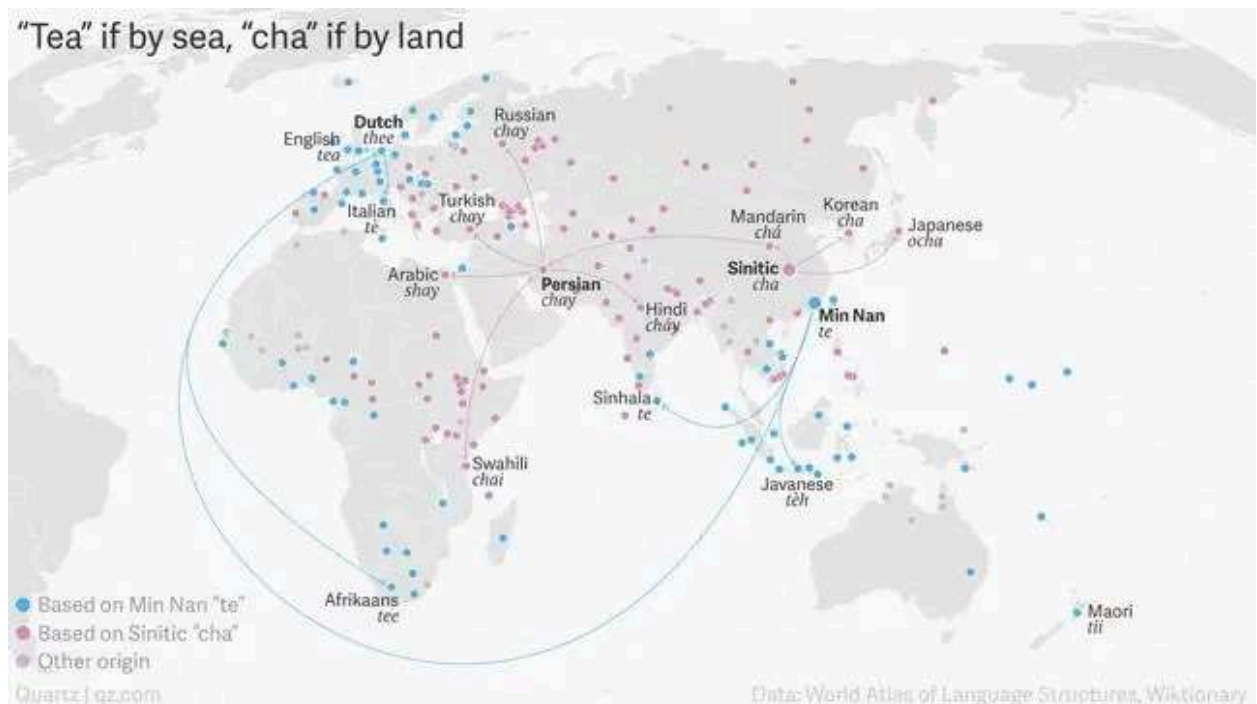


# 52 things I learned in 2022

Kent Hendricks

Here are some of the most interesting things I learned this year:

1. In 1992, Southwest Airlines and Stevens Aviation resolved a trademark dispute with an arm-wrestling match between their CEOs. (“Armed and Dangerous: The Malice in Dallas”)
2. Women are 1.8 times more likely to think the office is too cold. (“Overcooling of offices reveals gender inequity in thermal comfort”)
3. By the time the Saturn V rocket clears the launch tower, it has burned 4% of its fuel. (“Rockets, SpaceX, and the quest for reusability”)
4. In 1800, it took 10 minutes of human labor (harvesting, milling, etc.) to produce one kilogram of wheat. By 2021, it took only 2 seconds, a decline of 99.7%. (*How the World Really Works*)
5. It’s legal to break out of prison in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Austria. (Wikipedia)
6. You call it *tea* if it first came to your country via by ship, but you call it *chai* if it first came to your country over land. This is because speakers in the port cities of the Chinese coastal province of Fujian called it “te”, while overland Mandarin-speaking traders used the word “chá.” (“Tea if by sea, cha if by land: Why the world only has two words for tea”)



You call it “tea” if it came by sea, and “chai” if it came by land, via Quartz

7. Compared to irritant-induced crying (e.g., caused by onions), the tears you cry when you're sad contain 24% more protein, which means they roll down your face more slowly and are more likely to be noticed by others, who, in turn, can comfort you. ("Effect of Stimulus on the Chemical Composition of Human Tears")
8. In response to poaching, rhinos are evolving smaller horns. ("Image-based analyses from an online repository provide rich information on long-term changes in morphology and human perceptions of rhinos")
9. Icelanders are evolving an ability to make the smell of rotten fish indistinguishable from the smell of ketchup or caramel. They are more likely to have a variant of *TAAR5* (2.2%, compared to 0.2% of Africans), which makes them incapable of smelling trimethylamine, the chemical that gives rotting seafood its distinct smell. ("Sequence Variants in *TAAR5* and Other Loci Affect Human Odor Perception and Naming")
10. The fundamental limit to the amount of information that can be stored in a given space (like a hard drive) is  $\sim 10^{69}$  bits per  $m^2$ . If you try to store information more densely than this limit, your hard drive will collapse into a black hole. ("Is Information Fundamental?")
11. In 2000, 3% of British fathers had never changed a diaper, compared to 43% in 1982. ("Research punctures 'modern' fathers' myth — except for diapers, that is")
12. In English, the word "blue" describes all three shades below, but speakers in areas around Florence use three distinct words, because Florence was the center of the medieval blue dye trade. ("Florence 'blues are clothed in triple basic terms")



Shades of blue

13. At art auctions, people bid 18.57% more for blue-hued paintings compared to neutral paintings. A one standard deviation increase in blue hue (20%) increases the amount people are willing to pay by 10.63%. ("Colors, Emotions, and the Auction Value of Paintings")

14. Attractive students get higher grades, except when courses are taught online (though only for women). (“Student beauty and grades under in-person and remote teaching”)
15. Cars that weigh a thousand pounds above average are 46% more likely to kill you. (“Pounds That Kill: The External Costs of Vehicle Weight Get access Arrow”)
16. In the United States, 33% of men claimed to be six feet tall or taller, though only 14.5% of men are. Men who are 5’11” round up. (Reddit)

## Body Height Reported by U.S. Men

As part of a comprehensive health survey, the U.S. CDC asked roughly 200,000 adult men in 2021 this question: "About how tall are you without shoes?"

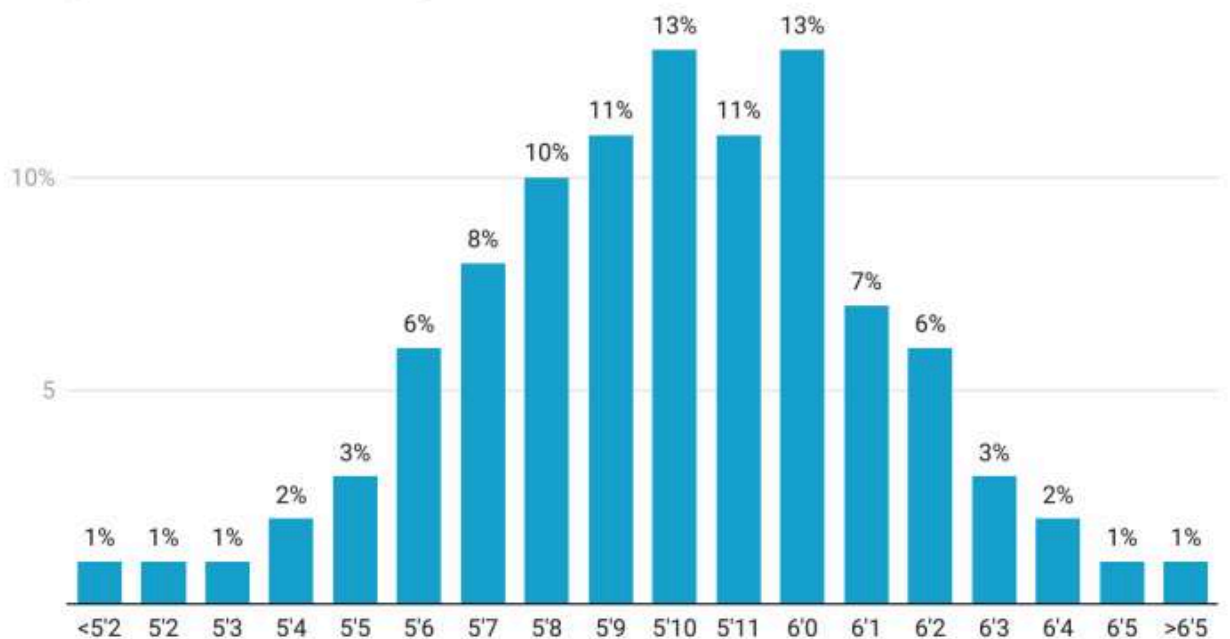
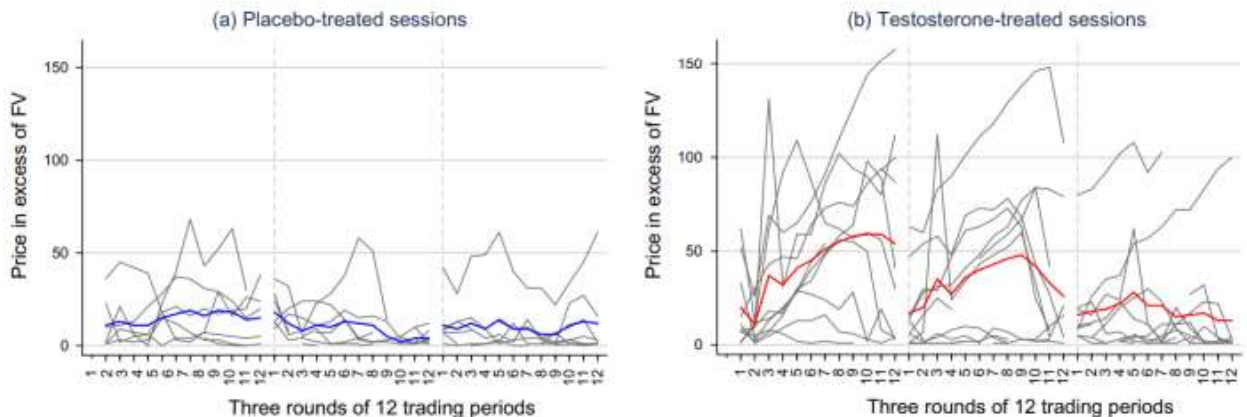


Chart: u/academiaadvice • Source: CDC

Body height reported by U.S. Men, via Reddit

17. Employees whose boss has an MBA make 6% less than employees whose boss never went to business school. (“Are MBAs to Blame for Wage Stagnation?”)
18. Attractive people get better discounts. In an Israeli market with mostly male vendors, male shoppers negotiated discounts that averaged 26%, while female shoppers negotiated discounts that averaged 40%. The size of the discounts correlated with attractiveness. (“Produce vendors offer better prices to beautiful women”)
19. Parents usually hold babies with the child’s head on the left because both parent and child’s left eyes are controlled by the right hemisphere of the brain, which governs feelings of empathy and connection. This is true for parents from every culture, and even true of children when they hold dolls. (Ted Gioia)

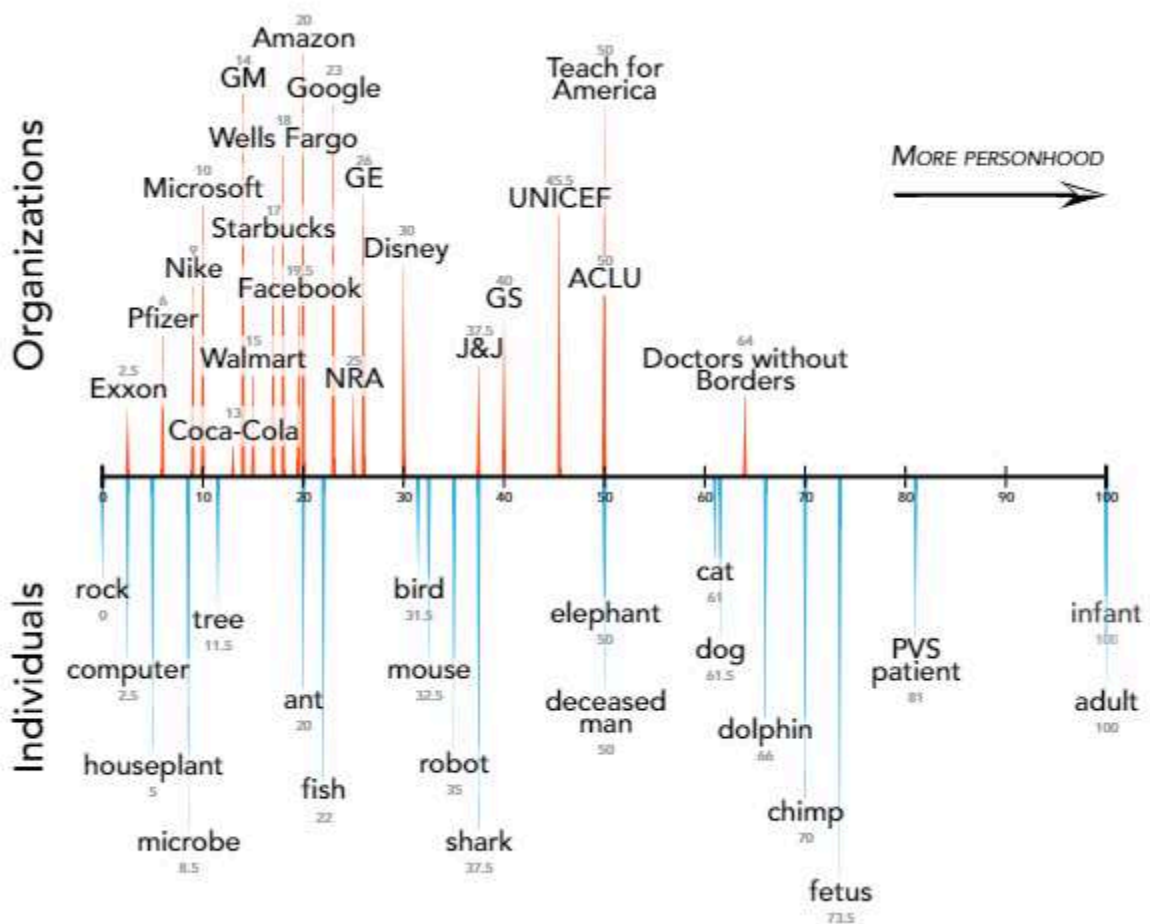
20. 95% of mosh pits rotate counterclockwise, and it's possibly related to handedness. ("Collective Motion of Humans in Mosh and Circle Pits at Heavy Metal Concerts")
21. Stock traders given testosterone created more price bubbles and market volatility than those given a placebo. You shouldn't trust hormonal men, it seems. ("The Bull of Wall Street: Experimental Analysis of Testosterone and Asset Trading")



The effect of testosterone on stock trading

22. Herds of cattle align themselves north south while grazing. ("Google Earth shows that cow and deer herds align like compass needles")
23. Organizers of the 2012 Republican and Democratic national conventions tried to prevent delegates from bringing handguns onto the convention floor, but local laws allowed them to ban only water guns. ("Water Guns Banned, Handguns Allowed at GOP Convention")
24. Swiss cheese tastes better when it listens to hip hop. Nine wheels of cheese aged to music for 24 hours a day for 6.5 months straight; the cheese that listened to A Tribe Called Quest's "We Got it From Here" outperformed the other cheeses in two blind taste tests by a wide margin. ("Cheese in Surround Sound – a culinary art experiment")
25. No prime minister of Pakistan has ever completed a full term in office. (Tyler Cowen)
26. Pantone 448 C is considered to be the ugliest color in the world. When, in 2012, the Australian government called it "olive green," the Australian Olive Association lodged a complaint to the health minister on the grounds that it "denigrated olives."  
Pantone 448 C, the ugliest color in the world
27. When a restaurant gets a Michelin star, the median home price in the neighborhood goes up 0.5%. ("Michelin Guide Restaurants' Effect on Neighborhood Economic Development") The average menu price goes up 5% and dish descriptions on the menu are 10%–12% longer. ("Michelin Is Coming to Town: Organizational Responses to Status Shocks")

28. When an area's housing costs exceed 32% of income, homelessness begins rising at a faster rate: 32% is the inflection point. ("Inflection points in community-level homeless rates")
29. Only 2.4% of people are willing to tell others they have food stuck in their teeth. ("Just letting you know..." Underestimating others' desire for constructive feedback")
30. When people ask for a free bus ride when their pass doesn't work, whites are allowed on 72% of the time; Asians 73% of the time; Indians 51% of the time, and Blacks 36% of the time. ("Still Not Allowed on the Bus: It Matters If You're Black or White!")
31. Corporations aren't people, but when 76 corporations were rated on traits of personhood (self-awareness, moral valence, theory of mind, etc.) they received the average personhood rating as ants. Some companies fared better than others: Teach for America had personhood equivalent to an elephant or a deceased man, while Exxon barely outranked a rock. ("Corporate Insecthood")
- 32.



33. People reveal about 26% of other people's secrets. ("Morality, Punishment, and Revealing Other People's Secrets")

34. Reindeer can see UV light, which helps them avoid wolves (mostly white) in their environment (also mostly white). (“Tests show Arctic reindeer ‘see in UV’”)
35. In 1810, nails accounted for roughly 0.4% of GDP in the United States, equivalent to the role of the airline industry or computer manufacturing in today’s economy. (“The Price of Nails Since 1695: A Window into Economic Change”)
36. The top 0.5% of stocks traded by Robinhood users return an average of -4.7% over the following month and underperform the market by 9%. (“Attention-Induced Trading and Returns: Evidence from Robinhood Users”)
37. When walking with women, right-handed men prefer to walk on the right, and left-handed men prefer to walk on the left. One possible reason could be “males preferring to occupy the optimal “fight ready” side.” (“Who goes where in couples and pairs? Effects of sex and handedness on side preferences in human dyads”)
38. In 18th-century England, the rise of tea consumption reduced mortality and increased overall health, but it had nothing to do with tea itself. Instead, the increase of tea consumption meant people were more likely to be drinking water that had been boiled — and hence, free of pathogens. (“For Want of a Cup: The Rise of Tea in England and the Impact of Water Quality on Mortality”)
39. In June 2022, Canada gained a land border with Denmark. The two countries agreed to split the remote Hans Island, thus bringing to an end the 30-year Whiskey War, which had principally been fought by Canadians and Danes laying claim to the island by discarding empty bottles of whisky on it. (Wikipedia)

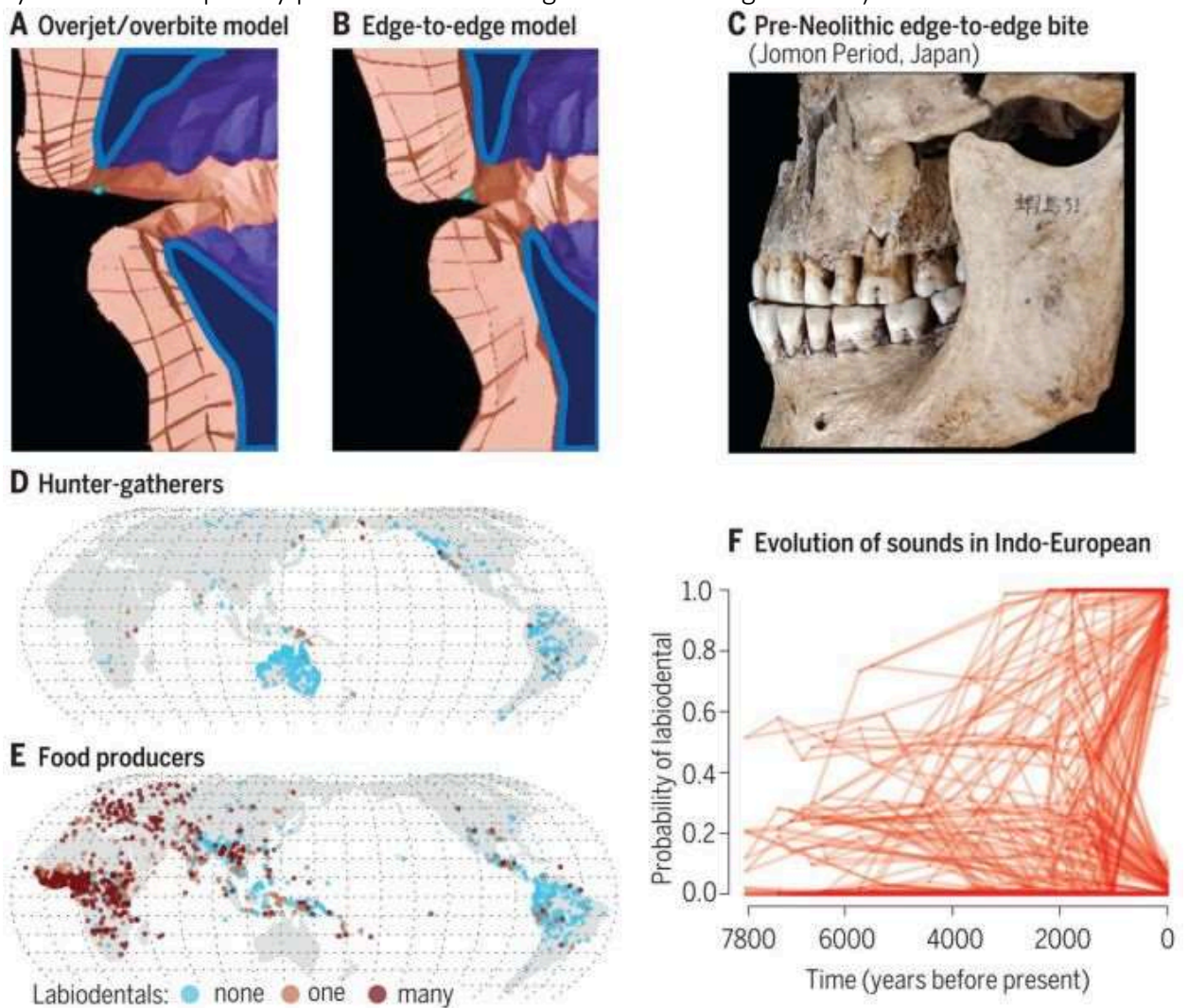




The location of Hans Island

40. In addition to being the patron saint of love, St. Valentine is also the patron saint of beekeeping, epilepsy, the plague, fainting, and traveling. (“6 Surprising Facts About St. Valentine”)
41. All the gold that has ever been mined in all of human history could fill about three Olympic-sized swimming pools. (“We’re a Long, Long Way From Running Out of Gold”)
42. Pixar almost deleted Toy Story 2 by accident, but they were able to release the movie because someone on maternity leave happened to have a copy on her home computer. They drove it to the studio wrapped in blankets. (Chris Albon)
43. 94% of the entire population of Paris lives within a five minute walk of a bakery. (@parisyimby)
44. The F-word is 29% easier to pronounce thanks to the agricultural revolution. Humans developed overbites in response to diets made up of softer foods, which affected speech as well: among other things, it’s 29% easier to pronounce labiodentals (“f”

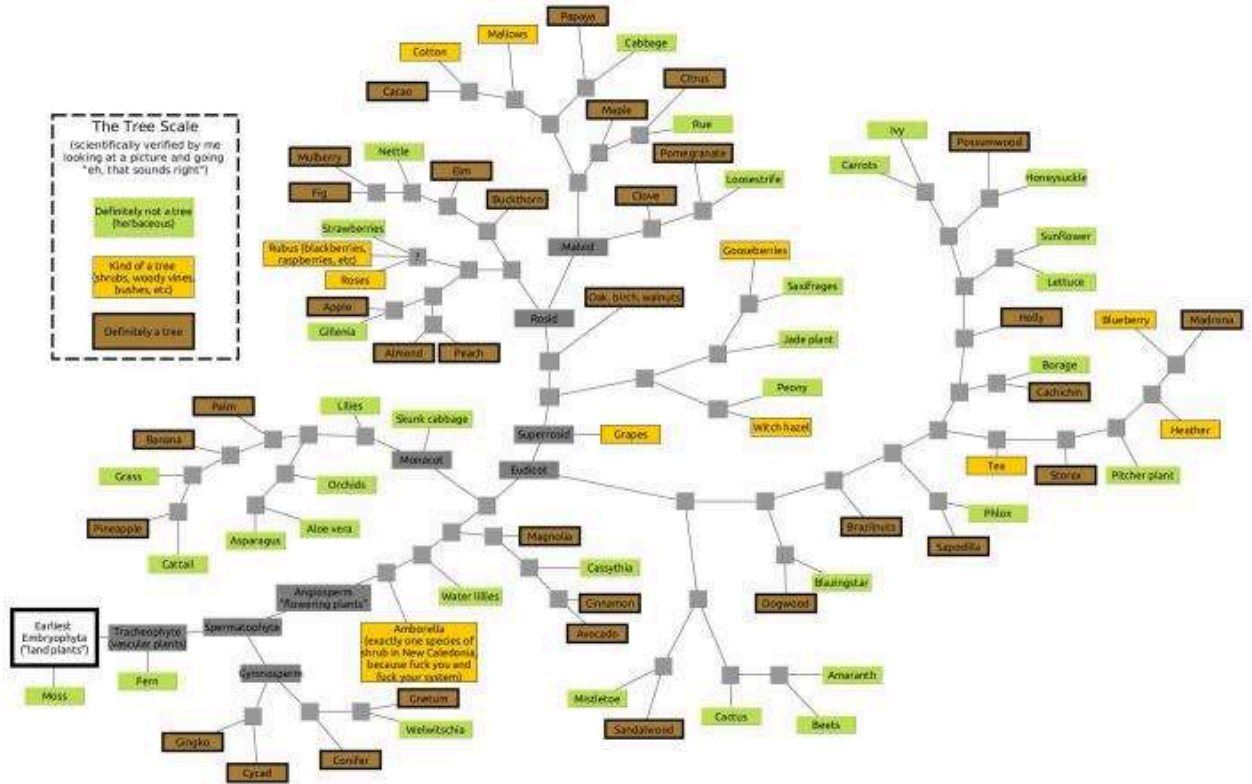
and “v” sounds) with an overbite, which prompted the change in many Indo-European languages from words like *patēr* to the Old English *faeder*. (“Human sound systems are shaped by post-Neolithic changes in bite configuration”)



45. Romance novels published in Europe are more likely to have been written in areas with more clay in the soil. This is because these areas adopted the heavy plow earlier than non-clay-soil areas, which led to an earlier transition from kin-based society to manorial society, which not only gave greater priority to romantic love, but also had long run effects on literacy rates. (“The cultural evolution of love in literary history”)
46. Every Purple Heart medal awarded since World War II continues to draw from supplies manufactured in anticipation of the Allied invasion of Japan. As of 2000, there were still 120,000 unawarded Purple Heart medals in stock, all produced in the 1940s. (“75 Years Later, Purple Hearts Made for an Invasion of Japan are Still Being Awarded”)
47. When an Apple store opens in a mall, foot traffic goes up 10% *in every other store*. (*Better, Simpler Strategy*)
48. Most trees are phylogenetically unrelated to each other: the common ancestor of maples and mulberry trees was *not* a tree, while the common ancestor of stinging



nettles and strawberries was a tree. (“There’s no such thing as a tree (phylogenetically)”)



via Eukaryote Writes Blog

49. People who grow up in cities with grids (like Chicago) are worse at navigation. They are also more likely to lose at video games. (“Entropy of city street networks linked to future spatial navigation ability”)
50. In medieval Germany (before 1200), it was legal for husbands and wives to settle their disputes by fighting with clubs, but to make it fair the husband had to stand in a waist-deep hole. (“Trial by combat between a man and a woman”)
51. The opening of a new ecommerce fulfillment center (e.g. an Amazon warehouse) costs your county an average of 938 retail jobs, and the average hourly wage of retail workers drops 2.4%. (“Creative Destruction? Impact of E-Commerce on the Retail Sector”)
52. The ratio of trucks to cars parked on city streets predicts voting patterns. When there are more trucks, there’s an 82% chance the city votes Republican. When there are more cars, an 88% chance they vote Democrat. (“Using deep learning and Google Street View to estimate the demographic makeup of neighborhoods across the United States”)
53. Want kids to do better