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SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:

- Lots of articles by our talented KT students
- A crossword to test your English vocabulary
- A film quiz with an end of the world theme
- A few words from Kip to round off the year

INSIDE
THIS ISSUE:

Just a Superstition	1
A Wonderful New World for 2013	2
The End of the World For Sale	2
Should We Believe the Mayans?	3
Celebrating the End of the World	4
In Nature Nothing Changes	4
Nothing is Forever	6
Some Reassuring Words from NASA	6
The Latest Business Scheme	7
A Dream for the Future	7

The Definite Article

ISSUE 38

WINTER 2012

The End of the World As We Know It?

Just a Superstition

by Laura Pigani

The end of the world in 2012? We are on the brink of an historical turning point as regards the political and economic situation, but the end of the world in December 2012 is just a superstition. It would be terrible if it was true!! My daughter will be three years old and my son only six months! I don't believe it. An asteroid or something else hitting the earth and causing her end? Well,

indeed, every day there is a planet (even Earth) which is at risk from by the crossing of one or more meteors, but the universe goes on. If it happens, it probably would be the end for the earth as we know it. I can imagine a new Big Bang and everything will have to be recreated: plants, animals and the human race. In my opinion, the end of the world might be possible in the distant future, probably because of the damage to the planet's environment



caused by progress. People should be more careful about how to use natural resources and not think only of their material interests. We have to take care of the Earth, but I don't think the world is going to end in December 2012. And I'd like to celebrate New Year 2013 with my family (it is going to be the first time with my son too) without any problem!

Kip Talking

I am not surprised that Berlusconi has once again decided to reappear among us mortals but I am shocked by his poor timing, i.e. just a few days the planet turns into a big crisp. Elections in February? Forget it! For a lesson in good forward planning you only need to look at our UK sporting heroes and marvel at the way we managed to get all our greatest sporting triumphs in before 21st December. And it's not all football; Italy! Bradley Wiggins won the Tour de



France and just about everything else on two wheels (cycling, everyone). Harlequins won the English Premiership (that's rugby, by the way). Europe (i.e. GB with the help of a couple of token Europeans) won the Ryder Cup against the USA - that's golf, you fools! Andy Murray won a Grand Slam

event for the first time in only 76 year - tennis, idiots! Team GB won 63 gold medals at the wonderfully organized London Olympics/ Paralympics and Chelsea miraculously won the Champions League (yes, football!). Last but not least, England achieved a historic win against the All Blacks 38-21 (hallelujah, more rugby!) a couple of weeks ago. And a new expression entered the English language - the Ash Splash (google that!). What am I going to do on 21st December? Die happy. Very, very happy.

A Wonderful New World for 2013



"On my first day in the new world, I hope to find more countryside and fewer cities, more trees and less buildings, and more respect for nature."

by Elisa De Nardo

Actually, it's hard to imagine a different world from the one that you are used to seeing

around you, with its many beautiful and varied landscapes, mountains full of snow in winter and rich in colors and animals in summer, cities full of history, monuments, streets, people and hustle and bustle, and, at the same time, isolated and empty villages at the top of the mountains. But if today is my last day in this world and I stop myself thinking about what is still waiting for me tomorrow, on my first

day in the new world, I hope to find more countryside and fewer cities, more trees and less buildings, and more respect for nature. I hope that in the new world all guns and governments will disappear and people will no longer die for religious and political reasons. I hope that we will be able to get around without cars but only with our mind, thus avoiding smog and car accidents.

End of the World For Sale

by Francesca Avian

I don't believe in the Mayans' prediction about the end of the world but I do believe that people involved in marketing will benefit from this idea. I think they will play on this concept in different ways to promote and sell more products and services.

First of all, lots of advertisements are using catastrophic pictures and settings like earthquakes or tsunamis. They play on

inner fears to convey the idea that a specific product can save us or prevent us from any damage. Other advertisements are less subtle and, whether we believe in the Mayans' prediction or not, they tell us not to wait and not to deny ourselves anything and to buy and enjoy experiences.

Some advertising agencies have a very strong belief in the end of the world. One example stands out - when a customer asked an agency to

design a company Christmas gift the agency produced a calendar that stops on the 21st of December 2012!

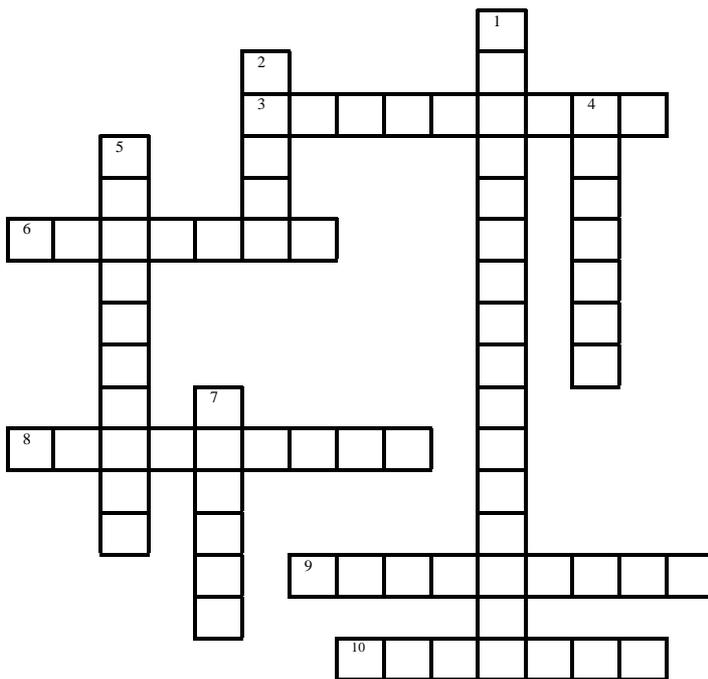
I don't know if this could be defined as ultimate creativity or a stupid joke but the Mayans have given us something to think about and to joke about, maybe to exorcize our fear of dying.



Some examples of Armageddon-inspired advertising



The KT Crossword: Natural Disasters!



Down

1. A mountain throws hot rock into the air. (2 words: 8,8)
2. It rains a lot and rivers and lakes become too full.
4. It doesn't rain for a long time.
5. There was a very serious one in Friuli in 1976.
7. People don't have enough to eat.

Across

3. Dirt and rocks slip down the side of a mountain.
6. A funnel-shaped column of wind.
8. A lot of snow falls quickly down a mountain.
9. A tropical storm with very strong winds.
10. A very big wave comes from the sea onto land.

Should We Believe the Mayans?

by Marina Segalin

There are only a few days left before the end of the world that the Mayans predicted. Is it really true that the world is going to end? If we look back, we have made a lot of progress in many fields like medicine and technology, so why should we focus our beliefs on a prediction made many

years ago? We can't be sure about this thought but certainly a lot of people seem to believe it. If we look back on this year everyone can find events that have changed our planet to some extent and on a grand scale, the Earth has experienced a lot of changes. This has always happened but people tend to associate catastrophic or natural events with the

coming of the end of the World. There is no scientific proof for it and anyway we do not have the means to predict exactly what's going to happen; let's just wait and see and maybe have a chat the day after the 21st of December to see if we are still here.



Celebrating the End of the World



Go out with a bang—not a whimper! How about roller-coastering into oblivion with Anna and her family??

by Anna Sindona

My son and my husband are now my little world. They are the first and the last thing on my mind every day. Matteo, my two-year-old son, is too little to understand what the end of the world means. If I were convinced that the world was going to end on December 21st, I would organize a fantastic and surprising day.

Maybe, my family and I would go to Disneyland in Paris. Disneyland could be the right place to wait for the big moment. At Disneyland park, all the employees will be obliged to smile and not to show their apprehension, in particular Mickey Mouse, Minnie, Donald Duck and the other Disney characters. If we were in a movie the big end would come when our "car" started to fall from the highest point of the roller coaster. We could gloss over our emotions with a rush of adrenaline

and a big hug all together. This could occur if I were sure that the Mayan prophecy would come true. Nevertheless, I think that the Mayan calendar is set to end on December 21st, but our calendars will continue for many and many years without a global cataclysm. For this reason, on December 21st I will be without my husband and my son, at the Gervasoni Christmas party. The only big fear is... that the party could be really boring!

"The thought that our extinction is bound to happen is something that periodically has been a cause of concern for people."

"In nature nothing is created, nothing is lost, everything changes."



by Flavio Lorenzon

As the above quote of Antoine-Laurent

de Lavoisier suggests, nature cannot make an

exception for humankind. In fact, humans are constantly changing as well. What about events that could lead to a rapid decline or even the sudden extinction of our species, like the end of the world?

The thought that our

extinction is bound to happen is something that periodically has been a cause of concern for people. It is historically well-known...

Continued on page 5.

Continued from page 4.



A monarch butterfly emerging from its cocoon.

...that the fear of doomsday spread around the Western World simply because the first millennium was about to end. Unfortunately, nowadays it is still the turn of irrational expectations, like the famous prediction of the Mayans. Whatever the case, humans have become more and more aware that, like all the other animal species, they might be at risk of extinction. This concern is the result of the wider knowledge we have attained about physical and biological laws governing our planet and the universe, their dynamics in the past and what may occur in the future. For example, scientists estimate that the impact of a massive asteroid on Earth occurs on average about once every 100 million years. And about five have occurred during the evolution of complex life on Earth. Yet 65 million years ago a large comet smashed into our planet causing the end of the age of dinosaurs.

The fact the majority of species that have existed on Earth have become extinct has led to the suggestion that all species have a finite lifespan. It would be easy to

conclude that human extinction is inevitable as well. However, many experts object that humans are unique in their adaptive and technological capabilities, so it is not possible to draw reliable inferences about the probability of human extinction based on the past extinction of other species.

On the other hand, the peculiarities of humankind increase the likelihood that a mass extinction or, at least, a severe reduction in human population might be caused by our own behaviour, more than by natural events. The threat of nuclear annihilation was actually a daily concern in the lives of many people in the 1960s and 1970s. Nowadays there are still thousands of hydrogen bombs in existence despite the collapse of the Soviet Union. Because of the chaos of its collapse, the risk of accidental nuclear war could well be greater now than in the past. The principal fear in the last decade has been more of terrorist attacks, rather than a global war. As technology develops, there is a slight chance that a huge number of humans may be deliberately destroyed by the actions of a State or individuals in a form of suicide attack.

Another scenario that may lead to war on a large scale is overpopulation. The world's population has now exceeded the seven billion

mark, which means very little usable land to go round. There could be up to twelve billion humans by the end of the next century. Overpopulation, massive migrations or just the rising number of international travellers may facilitate an uncontrollable spread of pandemic viruses.

Even without warfare or lethal world-wide diseases, the environment could come under disastrous pressure. Yet humans have sadly understood how catastrophic climate change could be, as a result of global warming or the effects of extensive deforestation and pollution. In spite of all these dangers, I like to be a bit more optimistic about the destiny of human race. It is likely that the human species will die out sometime in the distant future, but it would be very stupid if we contributed to this. Actually, we are the only species on Earth, and perhaps in the universe, with a conscious prior knowledge of our own demise and therefore we can at least take steps to avoid global disasters, which might be directly or indirectly caused by our own behaviour. After all, we are able to learn from our mistakes and our intelligence always gives us the chance to find brilliant solutions.

Back to Antoine-Laurent de Lavoisier's quote: since we have no choice but to change, let us try at least to change for the better.

"Since we have no choice but to change, let us try at least to change for the better."



Nothing Is Forever

by Doris Bulfon

One of the images that most impresses me and makes my heart tremble is that of the Planet Earth "seen from the outside". Seeing that colourful, floating ball and realizing we are doing homework on it, in the infinite immensity of the unimaginable universe, enlightens me on the reason why we are so stupid. We don't have any kind of influence on what is happening outside (and also sometimes inside) and around us. We are so tiny that we spend the most of our lives trying to look bigger than we are and forgetting the real meaning of life- death! Well, by that I mean that since we are all born and die in a relatively short period of time, we are

supposed to do our best to make our existences wonderful, but it's not always quite like that.



The Earth from Space

Anyway, I guess only few people believe that on 21st December 2012 the world will collapse in a catastrophic way as shown in some movies - 2012 directed by R. Emmerich is a good example - but I'm sure that a lot of us have spent a moment dreaming about the end of the world as we know it. I live on the wealthy

side of the globe but I can't pretend there is something wrong in the way wealth is distributed and the way our time is organized and also in the manner we use our natural resources. Of course everyone can do something to make things change but, to be honest, I don't think it will be enough. I think that human beings will change their habits only in the face of imminent danger. So maybe we have lost the opportunity to take this eventuality seriously in order to improve the way we live. Maybe the Mayans were already conscious of the influence of mankind on Planet Earth and they were just trying to tell us to be careful and not to forget that nothing is forever.

"Maybe the Mayans were just trying to tell us to be careful and not to forget that nothing is forever."



According to scientists, the world is not going to end after all!

Some Reassuring Words from NASA

Are there any threats to the Earth in 2012?

The world will not end in 2012. Our planet has been getting along just fine for more than 4 billion years, and credible scientists worldwide know of no threat associated with 2012.

What's the origin of the prediction that the world will end in 2012?

The story started with

claims that Nibiru, a supposed planet discovered by the Sumerians, is headed toward Earth. This catastrophe was initially predicted for May 2003, but when nothing happened the doomsday date was moved forward to December 2012 and linked to the end of one of the cycles in the ancient Mayan calendar at the winter solstice in 2012 - hence the predicted

doomsday date of December 21, 2012.

Does the Mayan calendar end in December 2012?

Just as the calendar you have on your kitchen wall does not cease to exist after December 31, the Mayan calendar doesn't cease to exist on December 21, 2012. This date is the end of the Mayan long-count period but then - just as your calendar begins again on January 1 - another long-count period begins for the Mayan calendar.

The End of the World—The Latest Business Scheme

by Dario D'Antoni

Although the end of the world may provide liberation for a lot of people, I'm sorry to tell you that we are going to celebrate a lot more New Year's Eves to come.

Does anyone believe that 3,500 years ago, people of a civilization called the Mayans were able to predict the precise end of the world? Unfortunately for all of them, the end of the world was something that happened over 3,000 years ago, while for all of us the end of the world will be something absolutely personal and not a collective event.

While a small group of fanatics are hoping for the

end, a much larger group of entrepreneurs are ready to



An End of the World greetings card. Yes, you can really buy these!

sell us all kinds of stuff through special events and advertising, from gadgets to movies, to increase their profits.

What's more, another much bigger group of

people is ready to spend money to get any kind of product that could satiate their idiocy.

So, after Halloween, St Valentine's, Women's Day, and so on, we'll finally have another chance to spend some money to celebrate some stupid, dreamed-up day in the year to come.

Let's say that maybe after discovering that life goes on in spite of the catastrophic prediction, some people will take the opportunity to try to understand that change is necessary—and one of those could be giving up rising to the bait of any stupid way of making money.

"While a small group of fanatics are hoping for the end, a much larger group of entrepreneurs are ready to sell us all kinds of stuff... to increase their profits."

A Dream for the Future

by Luca Celeghin

Today is January 21st 2013. It's incredible, but something strange happened in the world one month ago. The world as we know it is over. No wars, no earthquakes and no meteors occurred, but a big shock to people's minds. It's very difficult to explain but it seems that since the event people have changed their way of life.

People are quieter and smile more often. I see that they are less stressed and agitated than in the past. I think that people have discovered that they had lived in the wrong way for a long time. They have discovered the importance of human contact and the beauty of spending time together with other people. The government has passed a law forcing people to work less to spend more

time with their families, with friends and with themselves.

The limit is six hours per day and... Riiiiiiiiinnng... Oh my God! That's my alarm. I must wake up - it was only a dream! Today is November 30th 2012. I'm late, and my boss will be angry with me, and today I have a lot of work to do.

Mayans help me please!



The KT End of World Film Quiz

The end of the world makes a great subject for an action movie. Can you identify the ones in the pictures below?



Answers: 1) The Planet of the Apes 2) 2012 3) 12 Monkeys 4) The Road 5) Terminator 2
 6) Armageddon 7) The War of the Worlds 8) The Day of the Triffids 9) Dr Strangelove
 10) 28 Days Later 11) Mad Max 2 12) I Am Legend 13) The Night of the Living Dead
 14) Children of Men 15) The Day After Tomorrow