




# Sharon Griffiths

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## A word in favour of books

**V**ICTORIA Beckham has never read a book, not a whole one, not all the way through. It hasn't done her much harm, has it? Especially when you remember that she revealed this in an interview some years ago when her autobiography (We can guess she didn't actually write it, but did she not even read it?) was at the top of the best seller lists.

So it's a fair bet that their posh house which boasts, a gym, nail bars, catwalk, spa and man cave probably doesn't contain a library.

The Beckhams are not alone. One in ten adults in this country doesn't own a single book, according to research this week.

To me – with a house full of words and thousands of books piled up in every room – that seems desperately sad. There again, I don't use Instagram or Twitter or Spotify and plenty of non-book owning people would find that equally sad.

Each to his own and all that. I haven't got a nail bar or my own private catwalk either and we manage to struggle along.

But never mind what the grown ups do, we must give books to our children. Children NEED books.

You're never too young for books and stories. For small children stories are an introduction to the world, a door into the imagination that can stretch their little minds without them realising. You're giving them a pleasure that could last them a lifetime.

On a purely mundane level, reading to children gives them the gift of language and words – which will always give them a head start when they start school. If they enjoy books and are eager to read, they're going to fly through the system.

Much more importantly, their lives will be richer.

Even the Beckhams realise that. Victoria has shared pictures of four-year-old Harper engrossed in a story book. It's a great start.

Meanwhile, dad David is the guest on Desert Island Discs on Sunday. Every castaway gets a copy of the Bible and Shakespeare to while away the desert hours and are offered another book to take.

We wait to see what David chooses...

**S**TUDENTS taking part in an official experiment on the effect of caffeine on exercise at the University of Northumbria in Newcastle were put in "a life-threatening situation" because they were given 100 times the amount of caffeine they should have had.

The calculations were apparently done on a mobile phone. Instead of receiving 0.3g of caffeine, the students had 3.0g – the equivalent of 300 cups of coffee in one go.

The students could have died, were in intensive care and needed dialysis – all because of a decimal point.

Still think maths isn't really important?

**MOVE away from that toaster now....**

**Burnt bits are bad for you. In**

**the latest piece of advice from the nanny state we've been told to avoid crunchy roast potatoes along with burnt toast.**

**In recent years we've also been warned off bacon, sausages and eggs. Fried bread, of course, has always been a no-no.**

**The same health naggers keep telling us that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. But at this rate all we'll be left with is a few mushrooms and**

**half a tomato...**

**S**O 1957 was the year we were happiest, say researchers at the University of Warwick. The very year, in fact, when Prime Minister Harold MacMillan was telling us "You've never had it so good".

The news unleashed a torrent of rose-tinted memories in newspapers and online, generally featuring stories of full employment and children being allowed to roam freely for days on end and getting no more than an orange and a doll/train for Christmas.

Fair enough. Distance lends enchantment and all that. So how about...

- Children's homes where hundreds of children were abused;
- No heart transplants, new knees, hips or effective drugs for cancer;
- Six day working weeks and two weeks holiday if you were lucky;
- Many houses without indoor plumbing. Smelly people;
- Ice inside bedroom windows. Chilblains;
- Few students going to university and very few girls;
- Lower wages for women;
- Back street abortions;

- Few washing machines, fridges or even electricity in many homes;
- Very little in the way of Health and Safety, hard hats, hi-vis, or compensation;
- No understanding of the mentally ill, or "loonies" as they were known;
- A class system in which you were still expected to know your place.
- Scratchy clothes;
- Blochy marks on your legs from huddling too close to the fire trying to keep warm.

The one really great thing about 1957 – apart from Davy, Davy Crock-

ett – was the terrific feeling of optimism. There was a feeling that things were getting better, that the future really was going to be good.

Well, there was certainly plenty of room for improvement...

**M**Ps have called for a law that will forbid firms from insisting that women wear high heels to work. Excellent.

Of course employers can insist that their staff look smart and business-like, but high heels are something else.

Great some of the time, but not day in day out if you're on your feet a lot. Agony in fact.

But apart from that, isn't a make boss insisting that a female employer wear high heels just a little bit pervy?



**Elizabeth Taylor and her husband Mike Todd at Derby Day with Eddie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds in 1957**





**Victoria Beckham kisses daughter Harper**

**Picture: INSTAGRAM**