

Ask Andy

Oxygen the Most Plentiful Element

Andy sends a complete 20-volume set of the World Book Encyclopedia to Glenn Edvard Robinson, age 11, of Montgomery 3, Alabama, for his question?

What is oxygen made of?

A chemical element is made from atoms all of one kind. An atom is too small for our eyes to see and countless trillions of oxygen atoms dance around in every thimbleful of invisible air.

An atom is an orderly arrangement of even smaller particles. It has been compared to a solar system with a central sun and a number of orbiting planets.

nite charge of positive electricity. Its planets are tiny electrons. They are charged with negative electricity and there are enough of them to balance the positive electricity in the nucleus.

There are many different particles in an atom and more are being discovered. The most important particles in the nucleus are protons and neutrons.

The oxygen atom has eight protons in its nucleus—plus eight or more neutrons. You have guessed by now that eight negative electrons swarm around its nucleus.

Eight is the number for the oxygen atom and so long as it keeps eight protons in

its nucleus it will be oxygen. But if it could lose a proton from its nucleus it would become an atom of nitrogen — which is chemical element number seven.

Andy sends a Hammond's Library World Atlas of America to Donald Shymanski, age 13, of Old Bridge, New Jersey, for his question.

What is meant by mean temperature?

It sounds unbelievable when we learn that the mean July temperature of Antarctica is below zero.

sense, but the word mean has other meanings. When the meteorologist talks about the mean temperature he is using a word which descended to us from a much older word for middle.

A daily mean temperature is the average temperature throughout a 24 hour period. The meteorologist may base the day's mean temperature on 24 hourly readings.

Andy awards each day a full set of the World Book Encyclopedia for the first question he selects to answer. When a second question is answered a large world globe or atlas is awarded.

Quo Vadis? To the Next Motel

'Modern Conveniences' Aren't So New

WASHINGTON—Ancient Roman travelers stopped at motels, complained about the food, bought paperback books, spent beyond their means, and in general behaved like 20th-century Americans on the road.

But the Romans faced a few exceptional hazards. They ran the risk of being sold into slavery and of practicing cannibalism unwittingly.

Roman highways stretched from Scotland to the Sahara and from western Spain to the Euphrates, the National Geographic Society says.

A Roman rode in the most luxurious carriage he could afford. The philosopher Seneca once took a trip in a compact

model, but the Stoic had to admit he felt wretched all the way.

On the road, Seneca and other scholars perused the ancient equivalent of paperbacks — parchment books that were more convenient to carry than the ordinary papyrus scrolls.

Others stayed in expensive inns. Strabo, the well-traveled Greek geographer, recommended to his readers several inns where the food was excellent.

Along the major roads were mansions, rowdy lodging places where a Roman could pull up his chariot and spend the night. The Roman counterparts of traveling salesmen liked these primitive motels, but for the more sedate they could be sheer misery.

Innkeepers watered the wine, stuffed beds with rushes instead of feathers, and grossly overcharged. They often were in league with highwaymen who seized wayfarers and sold them into slavery.

One mansion's guest found what looked like a human finger joint in an otherwise excellent stew. His suspicion was quickly confirmed by a traveling companion, Galen, the great physician and anatomist.

The Roman poet Horace wrote wistfully of "knavish publicans." On one trip he complained of being kept awake by noisy frogs and the designing daughter of his donkey driver.

Greek cities revived the staged long-dormant festivals solely to attract Roman tourists. Obscure celebrations became popular if they offered a picturesque or startling ritual.

To Your Good Health

Changing 'Handedness' Not Good Idea

By DR. JOSEPH G. MOLNER

Dear Doctor Molner: My question is about a professional ball player. He is one of those mixed-up people who are partially right and partially left-handed.

At about 8 the left arm became natural in throwing but he never could hit that way, so he is handicapped by being a "left" thrower and "right" batter.

What can be done at the age of 19 to correct this? Is it possible for mixed "brain dominance" to affect the ability to learn? That is, to be a slow reader yet have outstanding athletic ability?—T.J.T.

I quarrel with the term "mixed-up" people in this case. Left-handers are no different from right-handers and they aren't mixed up.

Attempts to alter "handedness" must be done very early if at all, and I think the less

done about trying to change a left-handed child, the better. He should be allowed to do things in the way that is natural for him. Then he will do them best.

Except at a very early age (and I even have doubts about that) attempts to change the "handedness" confuse youngsters, and I feel sure it is well that this young man was let alone.

As to brain dominance having anything to do with the ability to learn—no. That is purely a matter of training, plus aptitude and liking to read. Whether the writing goes from left to right or right to left (or even up and down, as in some languages) is of no consequence.

There are some truly ambidextrous people who can do such precise things as firing a pistol accurately with either hand. I know an ambidextrous surgeon who sutures (sews) skillfully with either hand. It doesn't

bother their learning ability, any more than being right-handed or left-handed. Or mixed.

No, I'd let the young ball player concentrate on throwing left-handed as well as he possibly can, and batting right-handed ditto. Changing at his age is out of the question.

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Currents Perilous

The Indian and Pacific Oceans are divided by the Indonesian archipelago, the National Geographic Magazine says. Dangerous currents—as fast as 12 miles an hour—sweep through channels between the islands.

Farmers in Kashmir tend floating gardens anchored on lakes, the National Geographic Magazine says. Kashmiris harvest from boats, picking tomatoes and pumpkins that grow on a solid but buoyant mass of topsoil, grass, and weeds.

