

## Community highlights

Written by The Conversation USA

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The Conversation receives a lot of comments each day and you can't read everything. That's why we occasionally end the week with a selection of community highlights: comments we enjoyed or thought interesting. Read on for five comments and discussions I thought highlighting.

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### [Explainer: poetic metre](#)

[Anthony Ash](#) had a question about poetic metre and modern poetry:

With the demise of rhyme and metre, I've heard detractors say modern poetry is mostly 'chopped up prose'. There's some truth in that because it is easy to 'reverse engineer' many back into prose. How do excellent examples of modern, unstructured, poetry differ from prose?

And author [Lucy Van](#) provided an answer:

I see that no one has taken this one up yet... I'd like to know how others approach this point. Anthony, this is in the great tradition of the excellent, vexing, and impossible question. Will you permit me to reuse your expression, 'some truth,' here?

So to me the difference is locatable despite what the detractors say. The difference is in each form's relation to truth, or 'truthiness.' The codes that generally govern prose lead us to anticipate some sense or perspective of reality: 'some truth.' Poetry in the form of the prose poem seems to me to ape the mimetic ambitions of standard prose. The prose poem is like a warped mirror image of the realism that prose tries to achieve - prose poetry relishes in a failed realism, or perhaps revels in making realism's attendant ideologies 'visible.' In this way, prose poetry enters on an already-ironic space.

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I think of something like Charles Bernstein's 'Foreign Body Sensation,' which seems at first glance to be a job applicant's cover letter, but becomes a broken, robotic voice of capitalist ambition:

'For a while, I served in the Peace Corps in Guatemala as a nurse working with cancer patients. After two years in Met State, I became increasingly eager to work with severely disturbed children. I am beginning to dabble in writing screenplays, humor, and poetry. What time is left I devote to coursework at the Divinity School, where I am studying for the priesthood. It seems I have done other things also, but maybe not. I guess I. In the future, I look forward to the private practice of pathology. Just when that will occur is uncertain. I am now administering substances to others to alter or obliterate their consciousness.'

This is just one way to think of the difference - I'm sure many of you have much more satisfying thoughts on how unstructured poetry differs (or not) to prose.

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## [We can't trust common sense but we can trust science](#)

[Sue Ieraci](#) explained how the world of emergency medicine approaches critical thinking.

Great article - thank you.

In my specialty of Emergency Medicine, where critical thinking is both essential and time-dependent, we are teaching trainees to understand and classify cognitive error and how to avoid it. Even with the best of intentions, our preconceptions, previous experiences and inbuilt prejudices can influence the way we assess situations.

At a wider level, we really need to understand the difference between correlation and causation. It is the scientific method - both the inquiry style and the associated technology - that now allows us to test whether our personal perceptions lead us to correct conclusions.

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In ancient times, when there was no sophisticated technology and only the intellect with which to reason, fundamental errors were made by the best intellects in the world. They had only their human senses and their internal logic to assess complex situations.

We now have the ability to test assumptions in a systematic way, using sophisticated measurement technology, large populations and sophisticated data recording and analysis techniques.

While “healthy scepticism” can be an asset, cynicism is not, however. Perhaps those who hold a suspicion for the scientific process, and prefer their own judgement, should learn more about how the scientific process, and rational problem solving, works.

Science isn’t “evil” or systematically corrupt. It’s science that brought us here - to be able to comment on TC. The internet wasn’t built from “common sense.”

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### **[Australian students are becoming increasingly disengaged at school & here’s why](#)**

Hannah Stark and Nathaniel Swain explored the difficulties of keep students engaged, particularly those who have trouble with social and emotional expectations.

[Hannah Stark](#)

Thank you for your article, Pearl. I read with interest the AITSL report that your article links to. As is clearly highlighted, engagement is an ambiguous term and is very difficult to quantify.

For a student to be engaged, they must be able to access the curriculum - not only the academic curriculum, but the many hidden curricula. These include the social and emotional regulation expectations that participation in the classroom and broader school environment

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require. There is strong evidence that there are numerous students progressing through primary and secondary school without acquiring and making progress in the development of these core skills. This is in addition to the acquisition of the necessary language, literacy and numeracy skills to access the academic curriculum. Indeed, the difference between the engaged and disengaged starts early (if not before school entry), and this progressively growing divide, as your article highlights, is captured well by the Matthew principle, by which the rich get richer and the poor get poorer

[Nathaniel Swain](#)

Thank you for starting the conversation Pearl. Further to Hannah's comments, research into disengagement should also determine the 'student factors' in the engagement equation. As many teachers will attest, no matter how 'engaging' they make their lessons, 95% of the time there will be a few students who would not (or could not) engage.

While working with disengaged and excluded teens, I always wonder what more could we have done to keep these students engaged. When these students talk about their history of failure – that they have 'always' been bad at school – it resonates with the call for early identification and intervention for these learning needs, before chronic disengagement settles in.

The core of my thoughts on this problem is that disengagement isn't a simplistic phenomenon. Each student likely has a different set of reasons for their disengagement: Are they struggling with Literacy or Numeracy? Or is it Oral Language, Social Skills, or Self-Regulation? Students who are missing these 'taken-for-granted' skills can never fully engage, no matter how engrossing the curriculum is.

So any proposed response must address these educational needs. If we try to lift engagement without

While [Rachel Richardson](#) questioned the ability of traditional schools to really engage kids:

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I think 'engagement' is a difficult thing. It is talked of as if there 'should' be engagement, as if engagement in a regular school experience is a normality. I think we need to remind ourselves that formal modern schooling - especially of a 'comprehensive' childhood experience to 18 years (and beyond if you count the post secondary years) is a relatively recent phenomenon.

There seems a need for society to engage more seriously with alternatives to traditional schooling - there's certainly prima facie evidence that some children could do with an alternative!

The challenge may be for credentialing authorities to recognise the validity of such educational alternatives and not invalidate the achievement of those emerging from them.

I personally spent almost half of Primary and High School in non-traditional educational experiences. I doubt very much I would have had the achievement I have had over my life without the freedoms (including the freedom NOT to be cloistered in artificial peer hot houses) that such an experience afforded me.

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## [Health Check: what happens to your body when you're dehydrated](#)

Finally, Jason Statham's hydration habits gave author Toby Mündel a chance to explain how much water the body can use when you exercise.

[David Thompson](#) :

According to what we all agree is a trusted source for health information, Men's Health magazine says that actor Jason Statham gets through 5.5 litres of water a day. How does he get any filming done - wouldn't he constantly have to be excused to run to the bathroom?

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[Toby M&uuml;ndel](#)

Whether a trusted source or not, water turnover (or water balance) is much like that of our (other) friend, the calorie! The more water we use (lose) then the more we are required to replace. Body size, and more importantly body composition accounts for a large part of the variability in needs (muscle is about 70% water, fat only 10%) so for a relatively heavy yet muscular and active person (in the example you use, Jason) the water needs will be greater. Considering sweat rates during a work-out can reach almost 2 litres/hour, when keeping trim for a role it is not surprising that Jason would need to drink more. Hypothetically speaking :)

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Read a comment you thought interesting? Let me know during the week. You can leave a comment below or send me an [email](#) .

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