

CrossTalk

CROSSROADS Language Studio's Newsletter May, 2017

LAND OF FIRE

What would you call a place where even the water catches on fire? Hell? Not really. Yanar Bulag, or “burning



Collecting “fire water” at Yanar Bulag

spring”, is located in Astara, a city in southern Azerbaijan. There is a small pavilion in Astara that houses a standing pipe. Water comes gurgling out of this pipe which, at first glance, is not unusual. But if you touch this water with a lighted match, something very unusual happens. The water bursts into flames! The locals believe this water has remedial properties and they often drink it while it is alight! The water gets its combustible character from a high content of methane. So, where does the methane come from?

Azerbaijan is located on the south-west banks of the Caspian Sea next to Armenia and Georgia. It is among the oldest oil and gas producing countries in the world. Since antiquity, historians and travelers such as Marco Polo in the 13th century have recorded seeing numerous natural fires burning throughout the country. Spontaneous outbursts of fire there are caused by gas seepages and, over time, innumerable observations of this phenomenon have resulted in Azerbaijan being given the moniker “the Land of Fire”.



Ateshgah of Baku, “the Temple of Fire” near Baku

A cult of fire worshippers, the Zoroastrians, appeared in this region about 2,000 years ago. They built numerous Zoroastrian fire temples all over the region around the flames. Today, there are still places where you can see these fires. Yanar Bulag, in Astara, is one example. Another is Ateshgah of Baku, the “temple of fire”, near Azerbaijan’s capital city, Baku.

There is at least one other place to see the “Land of Fire” in action. This is Yanar Dag, literally “burning mountain”, a natural gas fire which blazes continuously on a hillside also near Baku. Some of the flames stretch into the air about 3 meters from the thin, porous sandstone layer beneath them. The surrounding air is said to smell of gas and the flames never die out.



Today, Azerbaijan has a population of well over 9,000,000 people and the cause of these fires is well understood. The export of oil and gas is a mainstay of the modern economy there. But, human habitat in the region goes back to the stone ages when much more of the terrain was baked in fire. What did these early inhabitants think of the “Land of Fire” then? And what did they call it?

Net News

NET LESSONS: Too busy to come to CROSSROADS?

.... Try our *lessons on the net!*

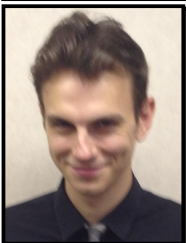
For more on Yanar Bulag, “the fire spring”, go here:
<http://www.atlasobscura.com/places/fire-spring->

Some Thoughts for the Month



Joshua Says: It is a great mistake to take things for granted, yet we so often do. Even the simplest, most common things around us have surprising secrets to reveal, if only we'd take the time and make the effort to pay a little more attention to them. The next time you buy a bunch of carrots, don't eat them all. Put one in a pot with plenty of water and sunlight. Then stand back and see what happens! If you're impatient to see the result, check out our Facebook page for the answer.

Junko Says: The characters in the portraits Rembrandt painted are usually depicted as emerging from the surrounding darkness. It's his use of light that pulls them forward, out of the darkness, toward the observer and into a dramatic atmosphere of light and shadow. Recently, I found a quote by Rembrandt. Here is part of that quote: "You must imagine that I'm looking at you in the same way as the water with which you wash yourself or the air you move in or the light that shines on you..."



Matt Says: This month is the Dragon Burn in China. It's a regional event of a community built around the Burning Man festival. They promote values such as radical self expression, self reliance and leaving no trace on the environment. I really enjoyed attending last year especially as it was in such a regimented country. Its always good to try and experience new viewpoints.

Scott Says: My name is Scott and I've just joined the Crossroads teaching team. Nice to meet you all! I moved to Matsuyama from Edinburgh, Scotland back in April last year and am enjoying all that Ehime has to offer. May is traditionally my favorite month of the year as the weather gradually gets warmer and the summer nights start to stretch out.



Danielle dit Je suis allé à la pointe la plus au sud de Shikoku, Ashizurimisaki, dans la préfecture de Kochi. Il est dit que c'est le point le plus proche du paradis où vit Kannon car de là, Kûkai l'aperçut lorsqu'il contemplait l'océan. J'ai bien observé l'océan mais je n'ai malheureusement pu que voir les vagues s'échouer sur les rochers.

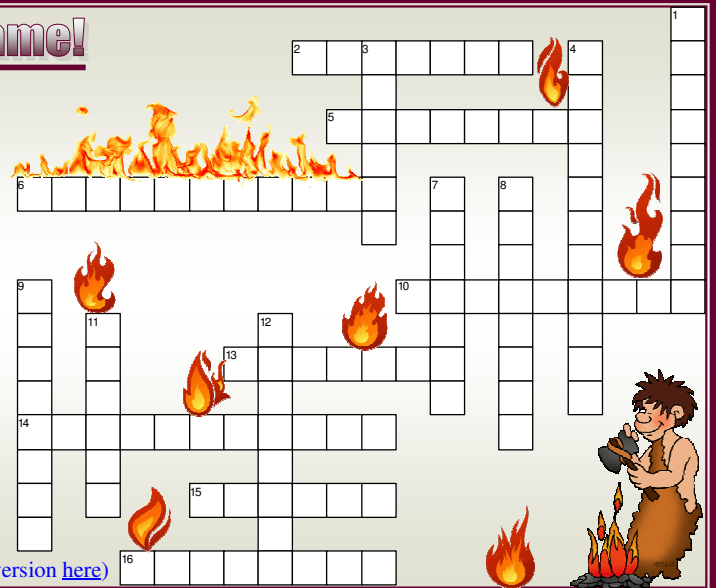
ACROSS

- 2 an environment where organisms live
- 5 a roofed shelter
- 6 capable of igniting or burning
- 10 the exact meaning
- 13 colorless, odorless gas
- 14 happening without external cause
- 15 light up usually by fire
- 16 irregular flow, e.g. water, with a bubbling sound

DOWN

- 1 very far back in history
- 3 a strong, bright burning flame
- 4 too many to count
- 7 common, easy to remember name
- 8 very many in number
- 9 main source of support
- 11 full of holes
- 12 tending to cure or restore health

Play A Game!



([print version here](#))

A few thoughts to ponder while you have nothing better to do.....



"Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving" - Albert Einstein



"Chop your own wood and it will warm you twice"

- Henry Ford

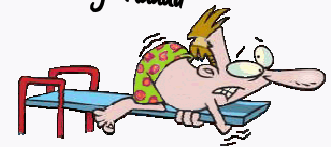


"Everything you've ever wanted is on the other side of fear"

- George Addair

"If you don't know where you're going, any road'll take you there"

- George Harrison



"When students cheat on exams, it's because our school system values grades more than students value learning"

- Neil Degrasse Tyson

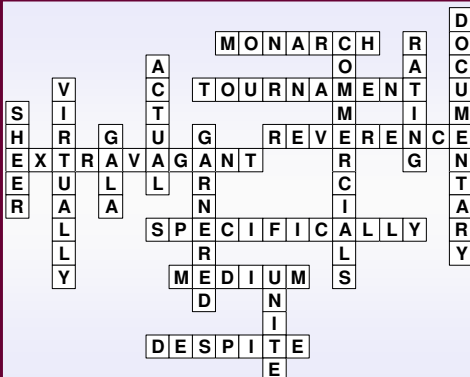


"You should sit in meditation for 20 minutes every day, unless you are busy, then you should sit for an hour"

- Zen adage

"The saddest aspect of life right now is that science gathers knowledge faster than society gathers wisdom"

- Isaac Asimov



Last Month's puzzle Solution

ACROSS

- 2 a nation's head of state
- 7 a sporting competition
- 11 feelings or a showing of great respect
- 12 excessive, overdone, wasteful
- 13 distinctly different from others
- 14 a way of communication information

DOWN

- 1 a film or TV program dealing with facts
- 3 advertisements on TV
- 4 an appraisal or ranking
- 5 real, a fact
- 6 essentially so, if not in fact
- 8 absolute, supreme, unlimited
- 9 a showy festive party
- 10 acquired, assembled
- 15 bring together



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