

FRIDAY MORNING: GET SMART

If yesterday was all about the stupid, today is smart – as in Get Smart. I usually explore a jazz genre on Fridays, but this morning's theme took over and found its own – well, what else! – theme music.

This is the entirety of the piece from which the 1960s television spy comedy Get Smart was taken. The most recognizable parts of the theme occur after the 7:30 mark. Some of the video's commenters called this variations on Get Smart, but I don't think they realize bigger pieces are often used in TV themes and cut to fit. Compare to the honed and polished piece used on air.

And now let's get smart.

Smart technology with a goofy name

Google released as open source its SyntaxNet – a neural network framework for development of natural language systems. With this anyone can develop their own voice-activated natural language systems. Google's already done the work on an English language parser called *Parsey McParseface*. Goofy name, but it's incredibly accurate at picking apart English as we use it.

What I want to know: is this English language parser based on SyntaxNet the tool Google's AI team has been feeding romance literature to teach it human speech? *Parsey McParseface* has already been fed the English version of the Wall Street Journal and Penn Treebank newswire sentences, but human speech is more irregular and colloquial than those written texts.

Get smart about the global technology gap

This is a nifty test and educational graphic pairing by New Internationalist. Amazing how many people have high-speed internet (less than you may think) and how few have access to clean water or toilets (far more than you may think).

Smart move: London's new mayor enlarges clean

air zone

Unlike that sad clown Boris Johnson, Sadiq Khan doesn't mess around, wasting no time on saving Londoner's lives with expansion of the Ultra Low Emissions Zone. Roughly 9,500 of them die each year due to air pollution. But why limit the number to be saved to some fraction of that number, discriminating against a portion of London drivers who will now pay a fee for driving polluting vehicles? At some point, the issue of VW's emissions standards cheating passenger diesel cars must enter the equation, too. Could Khan ban them until they are "fixed"?

Smart statement, rather too late

Perhaps if David Petraeus had worked against anti-Muslim sentiment before he blew up his moral authority he might be taken as seriously as he should be.

Get smart about history: on rhubarb and women's wear

- Fascinating look at the "rhubarb triangle" in Yorkshire UK (Guardian-UK) – Wow. Did not know they forced rhubarb, let alone harvested by candlelight. Really old school ag, this. Probably UK-only, but the popularity of rhubarb as an alternative to fruit in WWII surely shaped US' rhubarb farming.
- Women's skirt lengths, men's facial hair influenced by late Victorian science (Smithsonian) – Didn't know this either, that the fad for trailing skirts in mid-Victorian era died off

because of concerns about tuberculosis' spread. Also didn't realize "heroin chic" had a predecessor in consumptive women's appearance. Men's facial hair, though? Germ factories, just waiting for the development of the safety razor.

- 31 years ago, Philadelphia police exterminated a family (Films for Action) – This is still as horrifying today as it was then. The dead included five children, murdered by law enforcement.

And yes, this is not a smart observation or point, but it's Friday the 13th

The smartness is in Longreads' three lunch-sized stories about superstition. Coincidentally, that's one read each for today, Saturday, and Sunday.

I'll see you Monday morning right here if I don't get hit by lightning or a beer truck. Have a good weekend!