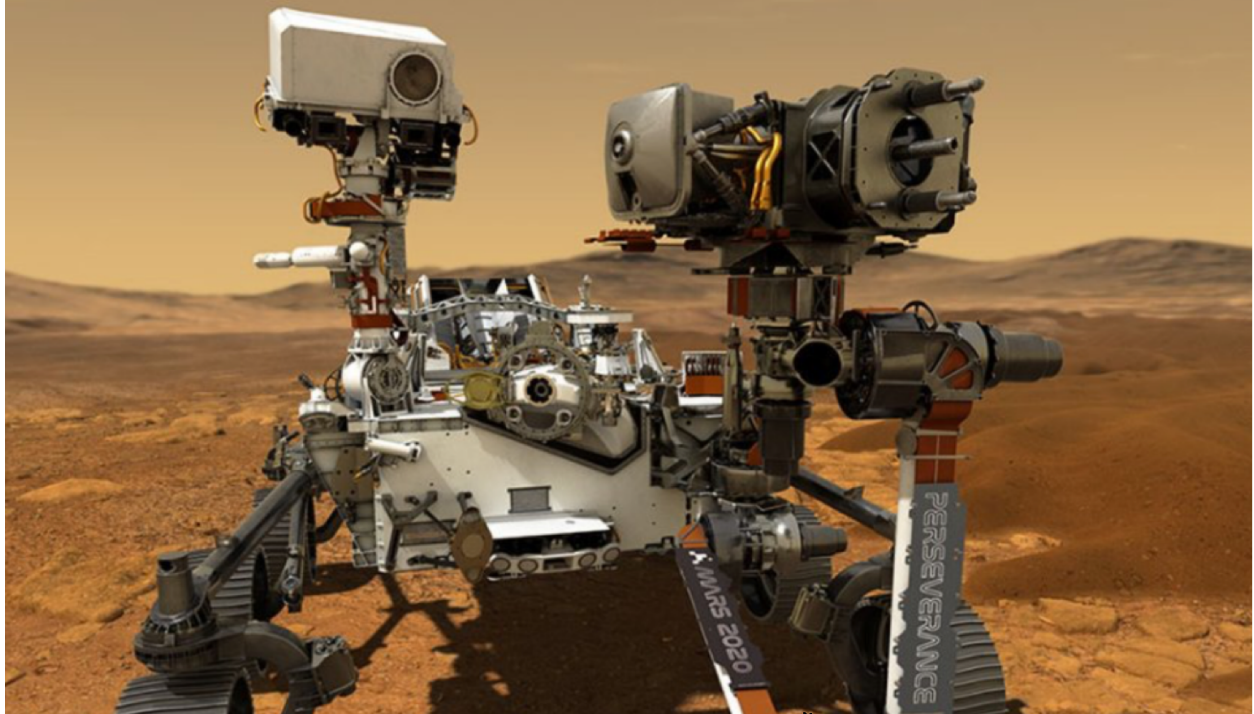


# THE ZESTY PRESS



NASA's Mars rover, Perseverance, landed on Mars on February 18th, 2021.

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# Watch Over Me Book Review

Rebecca Cole



*Watch Over Me* by Nina LaCour was packed with emotions, to say the least. Mila, a foster child who just aged out of the system, just graduated from high school. She accepts an offer to teach at a schoolhouse farm for children near the Northern Californian coast. While she's relieved by the people at the farm, she's also haunted by her past and her present. Mila's main hope is just to feel accepted and loved by the people around her without feeling out of place, which is proven to be pretty difficult. Everyone seems kind and caring, but there's something unsettling and mysterious about it all. Secrets about both the other characters and the farm are pervasive.

Mila is a character that you don't fully understand until towards the end of the book. You mostly learn about her through flashbacks that start to happen around the middle of the book. I love this type of writing style because it leaves you anticipating secrets that could be revealed at any moment. It is also a difficult style to write since the flashbacks have to be carefully written in order to flow with the main, present plot. Nina LaCour was able to do this perfectly so that it added a lot of depth to Mila, the reader's empathy toward her, and the story itself. Mila's journey in emotionally unpacking her past is bittersweet, as it is both extremely heartbreaking and ends in a satisfying way.

The style of the structure of this book was one that I have not seen often. There are chapters, but each chapter title has its own page, which encourages the reader to truly think about what is going to happen and the significance behind the title. It was also refreshing to read a book with an unconventional structure, so I was kept interested even more.

One thing that I wasn't always a fan of was when LaCour described things that didn't relate to the plot in almost any way. I enjoyed it every once in a while, but it happened enough that the book got a bit boring in certain parts. The imagery itself was very vivid, though, which I did find intriguing.

You should definitely check out *Watch Over Me* if you are looking for a book that is set around deep, internal feelings. It also has a bit of a ghost aspect, but not in a horror way. The ghosts add a dark whimsical feel to the setting. I also recommend *Watch Over Me* for anyone who needs some inspiration for writing main characters that are centered around their backstories. It's a shorter read at 261 pages, but don't be fooled. It'll be an unforgettable experience.

Overall, I would give this book 4.5/5 stars for Mila's backstory, her flashbacks, the intriguing and cozy (yet haunted) atmosphere, the formatting style, the suspense of it, and Nina Lacour's attention to emotion.

# 2020 in Hindsight

Emma Ton

What started as a normal year  
Soon taken over by worry and fear

An insidious virus that turned our world upside down  
Businesses closing for weeks in our town

Spring break extended unexpectedly into summer break  
As zoom invaded our personal space, our only option to take

Our frontline heroes working day and night  
To save people's lives no matter how tired

Families torn apart, grieving from a distance  
Saying their goodbyes as they cried in reminiscence

Face masks became the new fashion  
As 6 feet became the new standard to limit interaction

Unemployment numbers on the rise  
As more people became homeless with their cries

People of all ages and races, joining hand in hand  
Marching in the streets, tired of social injustice

A presidential election like no other  
With the entire world watching in wonder

Vaccines are finally here  
The end is near

# Gold vs. Bitcoin: Which is the Better Investment?

Leah Deckter

Gold has been valuable all throughout history, yet is bitcoin taking gold's thunder? To understand gold and bitcoin, one must understand inflation and interest rates, but to understand inflation and interest rates, one must know what an investment is. You see, in grade school, the teachers taught me there were two things you could do with your money. My teachers taught me you could either spend it or save it, but there is actually a third thing to do. You can invest your money. Investing money is the act of distributing money with the hope of making more money.

Due to the craziness caused by COVID-19, the federal government has been printing more money. This may seem irrelevant to bitcoin and gold, but it is causing inflation. Inflation is when the amount of money needed to buy items increases. For example, the price of clothing, food, electronics and housing is increasing. So, which investments can combat the decrease of the dollar's spending power?

There are certain investments that can fight inflation. Stocks, owning a small portion of a company, are very overpriced making them extremely expensive and risky. Bonds, a way to loan an individual or business money, now have close to zero interest rates. This means that if someone loaned their friend \$200, the interest rate would be so low that it wouldn't be worth it (financially speaking) to loan that friend the money. What do gold and bitcoin have to do with any of this?

Well, in the past, gold would do well in these circumstances, but these circumstances have never exactly happened before. While COVID-19 has never happened before, there have been other financial crises and pandemics. In the past few months, gold, the metal used for jewelry and other industrial uses, has decreased in value. This could be partly because the investors that would be buying gold are instead buying Bitcoin. At the same time, Bitcoin, the crypto currency created by an anonymous user, has increased in value by huge proportions. Despite the market capital, calculated by multiplying the number of shares by the price per share, being over 600 billion dollars, Warren Buffet, a billionaire investor and CEO of Berkshire Hathaway, said that Bitcoin is "rat poison" and not to invest in it.

This all may be confusing and seem overly complicated, and if it does, just know, it is. That being said, if while figuring out where to invest your money you come across someone claiming to know exactly what will happen, be very cautious and remember, no one can predict the future. That being said, we can only guess what the future of Bitcoin and gold hold, but it will definitely be interesting to watch it play out.

# April Fools' Day: A Brief History of Annual Jokes

Plus Some Actual Jokes

Annie Ehrlich

We all know what April Fools' Day is. It's a day of pranks! But, how did April Fools' Day come to be? Well, the exact origin of April Fools' Day is unclear, although there has been some speculation about it. One possible origin story for April Fools' Day is when, in 1582, France switched calendars. They switched from the Julian Calendar, to the Gregorian Calendar. The Julian Calendar is very similar to the Gregorian Calendar (which is what we use today), except it has 365.25 days a year and the Gregorian Calendar has 365.2425 days. This may seem like a trivial difference, but today, in 2021, the Julian Calendar is actually 13 days behind the Gregorian Calendar. Anyway, the new year, in the Julian Calendar, is celebrated during the spring equinox, which is around April 1st. People who didn't know that the calendar was switching to celebrating the new year on January 1st were confused and still celebrated on April 1st. This made them look like fools, hence the name, April Fools' Day. People would play pranks on these "April Fools," which is why we play jokes on our friends and family every single year.

Since I'm sure that you all are all looking for the list of pranks, well...  
There isn't one!!!

***KEEP READING***

***SCROLL DOWN***



No, I'm kidding. **April Fools!** In reality, I've compiled a list of many pranks that you can prank anybody with.

***DISCLAIMER: I am not accountable for anyone getting upset with you for pranking them with pranks on this list. Prank at your own risk...***

**a. ZOOM BEARD**

This one works great on parents who don't know about Zoom filters. You probably know how Zoom filters work, and that they don't carry across meetings. But, did you know that you can put a colored beard filter on, and that it will stay through all of their meetings until they figure out how to turn it off? Here's how: Click the up arrow on the Stop Video button. Click choose video filter from the menu that appears. On the very bottom of the page, there is a button that says Studio Effects (Beta). Click this and you will see another window pop up, and you will be able to put a fake beard, fake eyebrows, and fake lipstick on your face! Make sure that at the top, the apply to all future meetings box is checked. Now run, hide, and watch them struggle with their new appearance. When you are done with the prank, get back to the Studio Filters, and click reset at the bottom of the window. This will clear the filter.

**b. HIDING THE WRONG AMOUNT**

A lovely trick is to hide two of your sibling's things. You could hide their phone, toothbrush, etc. Then, tell them that you hid three. They will spend a long time looking for something that is in its normal place. Once you've had enough fun "give them a hint."

**c. DISAPPOINTING COOKIES**

This one is a no-brainer. If you like to bake, make a batch of oatmeal-raisin cookies. Then tell everyone in your family who likes chocolate that you made them a chocolate chip cookie. When they take a bite, they will be thoroughly disappointed. Hopefully, though, someone in your family likes oatmeal-raisin cookies, and will eat them all. They really aren't that bad if an oatmeal-raisin cookie is what you're expecting.

**d. FAKE BUGS**

This one is plain and simple. Pillows are a great place to start.

**e. COMPUTER MOUSE FAILURE**

Write April Fools with a marker on a piece of Scotch tape. Stick it over the infrared or mouse ball on someone's computer mouse. When they turn their mouse over, they will remember what day it is...

**f. TEXT REPLACEMENT**

Add in some autocorrect on someone's iPhone. Go to Settings, General, Keyboard, then Text Replacement. Click the plus sign on the upper right hand corner. Type the phrase that you want a word to transform into. Type the word that transforms in the shortcut box. For example, "you" in the phrase box, and "me" in the shortcut box. Or "bye," and "hello." Now watch them try to send a text.

**g. TEST TODAY?**

Go up to someone before class, and ask if they turned in their paper, if they are ready for the test, etc. If you get another person to say that there is a test, or that there actually was a paper due, this prank is even more effective. (Do tell them at some point, though. The sooner you tell them, they won't be as angry. The later you tell them, the more fun it will be, but the angrier they will be when you do tell them. Find a balance.)

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# UV Cleaners: Helpful or Harmful?

Jack Talarico

As COVID-19 cases rose, cities and businesses turned to more options than just hand sanitizer to combat the virus. This included using experimental lighting in entryways that supposedly only eliminated pathogens and didn't harm humans.

According to the *New York Post*, a bakery planned to install a metal detector-like arch that saturated the customers in UV rays. Something you may not have known was that UV light is made up of three kinds of rays: UVA, UVB, and UVC. UVA and UVB rays cause sunburns which we all hate, but the third type UVC has too small of a wavelength to make it through the Earth's atmosphere to harm humans. Though, it can be recreated in a lightbulb and may be dangerous.

## How Is UVC Helpful?

UVC does not eradicate the Coronavirus, but it does stop it from reproducing. Although UVC light can harm human skin and eyes, that rule does not apply to far-UVC rays which are used as an alternative to hand sanitizer. Far-UVC rays appear to be absorbed by the top two layers of the skin and eyes which are made up of dead cells, therefore, the dead cells protect the living cells from being harmed by far-UVC.

## Helpful But Has There Been Enough Research?

There appear to be no studies that have focused on the effects that far-UVC could have on humans. The only complete research on the long-term effects of far-UVC has been conducted on mice. Notably, the mice did not develop a severe terminal long-term illness after continuous exposure to far-UVC. Despite the lack of research on humans, leading researchers in the field feel confident that the pros of far-UVC rays outweigh the cons. According to, David Brenner, the director of the Center for Radiological Research at Columbia University's Irving Medical Center, who leads the university's research with far-UVC light, "The evidence we have acquired to date, even at these much higher doses than one would use in the real world, are all reassuring."

Despite these reassurances, there are still skeptics due to the lack of research, and how it is being used as an alternative to hand sanitizer. A person who has the virus will still be able to breathe out the pathogen after they walk through the far-UVC light archway. Very little of the virus is eliminated if the archway can only cover the small part of their body showing such as their face or hands. According to Ed Nardell, an infectious disease researcher with Harvard Medical School who has spent much of his career examining UV sanitation, "It is a bad application of a really good technology."

Although it's too soon to tell whether or not far-UVC is harmful to humans, the possible benefits of another method to tackle coronavirus may be worth the risk that businesses and their customers are willing to take. Regulators may very well take a different stance.

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# **A Very Brief Overview of President Joe Biden's Foreign Policy Agenda**

Josh Goldenberg

It is safe to say that President Joe Biden has a lot on his plate at home, such as the COVID 19 pandemic, but what is president Biden doing abroad? Here are a few things President Biden is doing, region by region, to enhance the United States' international image, crack down on human rights abuses abroad, and help allies of the U.S. flourish.

## **North America**

Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau and President Biden exchanged a thirty minute conversation over the phone on January 22nd, and for the most part the two countries' priorities aligned well. The only disagreement was on President Biden revoking the construction permit for the Keystone XL Pipeline which transports oil between the two countries. While Biden admitted the decision would create hardship in Canada, he defended his decision by saying he was restoring a decision made by the Obama administration and upholding campaign promises.

With immigrants piling up at the U.S.-Mexico border president Biden has publicly stated he will not make a visit even though it could be good for his international image. Biden has told possible immigrants, "Don't leave your town." Most immigrants say that they are coming because they think the Biden administration would be more willing to let them in than the Trump administration. In a press conference when Jen Psaki, White House Press Secretary, was asked why president Biden has raised the refugee caps (the maximum number of asylum seekers let into the country), she said that Biden didn't raise the refugee cap because the government "wants to do it in an effective manner."

## **South America**

President Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil is at a political standstill with President Joe Biden when it comes to deforestation in the Amazon Rainforest. For three years now, Bolsonaro has continued to cut environmental protection funding, and deforestation was reportedly 10% more in 2020 than in 2019. Will the U.S. do anything about this? There is question that Bolsonaro will even try cooperate with Biden on stopping the deforestation of the Amazon and climate change after a letter sent by New Jersey Democrat, Bob Menendez, who is the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, to Bolsonaro expressing a warning that Bolsonaro's foreign minister's alignment with domestic terrorists in the United States "could have ramifications for our diplomatic relationships moving forward." This could be a warning that the U.S. might not be able to cooperate with Brazil to help stop deforestation in the Amazon in the near future.

## **Europe**

After the poisoning, arrest, and conviction of Alexey Navalny in Russia, along with the European Union, President Biden revealed that the U.S. would be imposing numerous new sanctions on Russia. The Treasury Department went further and sanctioned seven Russian officials. The sanctions were met by overall approval from the rest of Europe, the UK foreign secretary tweeted, "The British government welcomes EU and US sanctions against those responsible for the poisoning and arbitrary detention of Navalny".

## **Africa**

When president Biden lifted the Muslim travel ban during his first day in office, he allowed people from these predominately Muslim countries in Africa to get visas and enter the U.S.: Nigeria, Sudan, Eritrea, Egypt, Libya and Tanzania. This will allow families who split because of the refugee crisis to reunite and visit each other more often.

## **Asia**

The rise of China has caught Biden's attention and even said it is one of the administration's biggest foreign policy challenges. President Biden's government has already started to connect with its allies in the Asia-Pacific region. Biden has had phone calls on the subject of China with prime minister Yoshihide Suga of Japan, Scott Morrison PM of Australia, and the president of South Korea, Moon Jae-in. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has also had conversations about the PRC with his equivalents in many more countries in the region. China has been openly willing to work with the U.S. to, "Get back on the right track," with their relationship. However China still continues to deny that the Uighur minority in the Xinjiang province have been mistreated even though there is significant evidence of secret internment camps and what the U.S. government describes as genocide. It is clear that this will be a big issue in future U.S.-China negotiations, but if China won't stop there will most likely be more sanctions and international investigations.

## **Australia**

The U.S. maintains a healthy relationship with Australia. In fact, Australian PM Scott Morrison has stated he already invited president Biden to visit the country and continued to say that Biden reacted positively to the invitation. Joe Biden has not talked publicly about the floods in Australia and has not given any hint that he will send humanitarian aid down under.

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# Book Recommendations

Caroline Cloyd

Hi! I hope you have been enjoying the first issue of the St. Stephen's newspaper. Over the break I read some books, so I thought I would share my book recommendations.

## ***When You Reach Me* by Rebecca Stead**

This book is a mystery, and it's very very good, but a little confusing at some points. It's hard to give a description without giving away the ending, but I'll try my best. It's about a girl named Miranda, who, after being told by her friend that he wants to take a break from their friendship, receives a note. The note says that she needs to save her friend's life. This is one of my favorite books by a great author, and I recommend you read it.

## ***We Were Liars* by E. Lockhart**

I read this book over the break, and it might be one of my favorites ever. It follows the Sinclair family on their vacation on a private island. It has an amazing twist at the end and I highly recommend this one. This book is also a little sad at the end, in case some of you don't like those endings.

## ***Wildwood* by Colin Meloy**

This is not my usual type of book (because it's fantasy), but I re-read this recently. It's about a girl named Prue, who, after her brother was, yes, *abducted by crows*, ventures into a land called the Impassable Wilderness. This one is very interesting with really nice cover art, although it is a little long.

## ***One of us is Lying* by Karen McManus**

Another very good book that was recommended to me by someone. It's about four high school kids who are framed with murder. This one is really good and has an unexpected ending.

I hope you can find the time to read any of these books. Thank you all for reading *The Zesty Press*!