

Quintessential EDucational Resources And Knowledgeware

We wish the Education Fraternity New Beginnings for AY: 2023-24 Greetings for the April festivities!

April, 2023 | Issue 10



IN Focus

A TALE A DAY MAKES LEARNING STAY!

On asking some people about their most vivid memory since childhood, almost 73% recounted their joy, engagement and memories of listening to *Stories*- the enrapturing accounts of fictional stories, stories about relatives far and near, stories about successes and failures, about hilarious moments; and yes, even stories about mishaps and the *unexpected*, that left one with a crucial lesson for life.

This April, at the onset of a new Academic Year, we celebrate the art and *Importance of STORYTELLING!* Its relevance in school curriculum has been explained in good measure in the **NEP 2020**, with impactful guidelines in the **National Curriculum Framework-FNDL**.

There is increasing evidence to suggest that students learn best, when there is a *narrative*; even for subjects such as science, history, mathematics, . . . in fact, for *any* subject domain! Just as the *elements* of a story form connections and are part of a flow, the dry theoretical concepts of pure academics can *come alive*, if presented in the form of a story and contextualized with real-life situations.

Storytelling is an age-old art shared friends, families among strangers. Today, Storytelling is being used everywhere- social media, marketing, pharma, education, influencing, etc. It's all about stimulating the brain by sparking emotions and increasing "curiosity" & "excitement" hormone".

The May 2023 theme is "Recharge to Refresh - retreat, reflect, restore, rejuvenate"

Please send your contributions of an effective classroom strategy / class humour / vocab

word / a featured article / book titles, to - team@qedrak.com

* TALE

A *Tale* is a story about imaginary events; an exciting or dramatic story that may not be completely true. *E.g.: Fairy tales, such as Cinderella*. A *Folktale* is a story originating in popular culture, usually passed on by word of mouth. *E.g. Panchatantra, Jataka Tales*.

* FICTION

Fiction relates to stories about people & events that are not real. It tells a story that has been imagined by the writer, at times interwoven with some true facts.

* FABLE

A narration intended to enforce a useful truth is a *Fable*, usually involves *animals* that speak and act like human beings, and convey a moral. *E.g. Aesop's Fables*.

* NARRATIVE

A novel written from the point of view of the main character is a narrative. The story may or may not be true, and the events are placed in a specific order. Example: "What I did during my summer vacation", OR an article written by a cycling-blogger would be a narrative.

"We are all storytellers. We all live in a network of stories. There isn't a stronger connection between people than storytelling."

- Jimmy Neil Smith

QED Talk

NEP 2020's focus on IMPORTANCE OF STORY TELLING

DEEPTHA VIVEKANAND

Storytelling & Reading Lead: St Kabir Public School, Chandigarh Co-created the online training module - 'Storytelling As Pedagogy' commissioned by the CBSE.

Founder: Ever After Learning



At the onset, let's begin by asking you a very basic question...What IS a story?

Well...after air and water, a story is **that** which sustains human life. It's a shortcut that can take you really fast into a person's mind and heart. To take a leaf out of Mary Poppins, 'a spoonful of story helps the truth go down!'

Why are stories so endearing, captivating and enjoyable?

Humans are hardwired for stories. It's a framework through which we process information and facts - the truth. Stories are a lens through which we can view our own lives through the lives of the characters that inhabit them. At the same time, they allow us an escape route through which we can, albeit temporarily, live in a different - happier, freer, safer - world. The emotional connection we make with stories - whether it's happiness, sadness, fear, jealousy, etc. - makes us more invested in the plot; makes us care about something or someone. Stories teach us lessons about life, without really 'teaching' us. And yes, the way we relate to a story, which is unique to everyone, can give us rich insights into who we are. So, it is a powerful tool to understand human nature and to connect with other human beings at a deeply emotional level. An important element of story telling is the power of orality. When a story is told using words, voice, and expressions in an artistic, skillful manner, it creates a vivid image in the mind of the listener that is imprinted there forever. The listener is transported into a different space and time, where she creates an emotional connection with the subject, the characters, and the storyteller too. Stories inspire new ideas and ways of thinking in both the storyteller and listener. Stories have the potential to inspire action in the listener. A powerful story can motivate people to take action, make changes, or adopt new perspectives. Stories encourage critical and creative thinking that's overlaid with empathy. This forms the basis for understanding, and building meaningful relationships. In children, storytelling improves cognitive and linguistic skills. It helps to improve LSRW, vocabulary, and comprehension. A child who is used to listening to stories from an adult, would naturally gravitate to a book as she grows older because she knows from an early age what it feels like to live in a story. Since we live in a fragmented, disconnected-from-our-roots world, storytelling becomes an important way of preserving cultural, historical, and family traditions. We can move ahead only when we know where we come from, and stories are a potent medium to understand our pasts.

Storytelling has been given a lot of focus in the NEP 2020 – please share your views on this.

When the NEP came out, I was thrilled to see the word 'Storytelling' appear in the document in so many places! After spending so many years advocating for it as a methodology, I felt vindicated that it has finally found enough favour among educationists, to now be a part of our national education policy. We have such a rich tradition of storytelling that it would be a shame to not bring it into our classrooms...I'm grateful that the **NEP** has positioned storytelling in the right light. That said, there is still a lot of work to be done by schools to adopt storytelling as a pedagogy, across grade levels, and not just limit it to the primary grades. For this to happen, there is a huge need for training of teachers and heads of schools on how to integrate storytelling into the curriculum more consciously - this is where the gap between policy and practice lies. Story pedagogy must be implemented scientifically. We need greater intersection between schools and storytellers who specialise in curriculum-based storytelling. Having a specialist storyteller on board - not just as someone who comes in for a one-off session or workshop - could make a big difference to how storytelling can be used in daily classroom transactions. While the NEP has set the right intention, the right action must be taken by schools.

■ How did Storytelling become such a huge success mantra across life – corporate sectors, governance, education, medicine?

Storytelling isn't new. It has existed from the time humans learnt to speak. A quick look into the history of the world will show us how stories and storytelling have been used to *transmit knowledge*, *spread religion*, *propagate culture*, *and even cause wars*! Given this proven track record storytelling has, and also because it is so inherent to the human condition, it is no surprise that industries and businesses have begun to leverage

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"The most
powerful person
in the world is the
story teller.
The storyteller
sets the vision,
values and
agenda
of an entire
generation that is
to come."

- Steve Jobs



its power in new and improved ways. The modern world recognizes that storytelling is an effective medium for communication, learning, and engagement. In the corporate sector, storytelling is increasingly being used to make presentations that are memorable, relatable, and persuasive. *Data and visual storytelling* have gained a lot of traction in recent times. Design thinking, a popular method used to bring in innovation, is directly related to the *problem-resolution aspect of storytelling*.

The relationship between *education and storytelling* is like bread and butter. Made for each other! Take the Panchatantra, for example. It is perhaps the oldest evidence of how stories were used to teach complex topics like warfare, strategy, governance, etc., to 'dull' princes and successfully groom them to become kings later on. A story is remembered long after it has been told. And so any piece of *information that's packaged in the form of a narrative* is bound to stick better in a student's mind. While the textbook is important, an educator who can '*storify' the lesson*, always has an advantage.

In recent years, doctors and healthcare professionals have come to appreciate the importance of softer aspects of patient care as an add-on. *Narrative medicine is a discipline* that has been around for about two decades now. It lies at the intersection of arts, humanities, literature, and clinical practice and sets out to provide equitable healthcare by understanding a patient's story-his/her experiences, perspectives, and beliefs. At its core, are *deep listening & empathy*, which caregivers and medical professionals must have while dealing with patients, to make treatment more wholesome and humanized.

Governments use stories in the form of advertisements to inform the public about its performance, various schemes, especially during election time! We're actually witnessing how stories can be used to even mislead people into forming opinions about leaders, history, and political parties. The emergence of fake news has shown how stories can be used to manipulate people. So with so many advantages, sadly, this is the dark side of storytelling.

■ It is often said – Teachers must be storytellers. Can anyone become a Storyteller? Or do you think there are certain personality types that make better Storytellers?

Great question! Not just teachers, I'd say **anyone who wants to be a good communicator must be a good storyteller**. Teaching is communicating, isn't it? If a person enjoys being in the company of words, revels in reading and research, appreciates the fine nuances of language, loves to talk animatedly and expressively, does not feel inhibited in front of an audience, then storytelling is definitely something they should consider doing. **A teacher need not necessarily be a storyteller from a performance perspective**; although it would certainly be an advantage. But, even sharing a piece of news excitedly (in connection with the subject), reading a story or poem aloud from a book with the right voice modulation, telling a personal story, and talking in an inspiring, engaging manner about something - all constitute storytelling.

Teachers would do well to *present their lessons in the form of a story* - with the 6 key elements of a story - so that the content sticks better in the students' minds. A narrative structure built into anything that you wish to communicate can be impactful. *TED Talks* are a great example of how to communicate something effectively in 18 minutes. All talks follow a storytelling style, if you've noticed.

Please share with us your story with Storytelling and Ever After Learning.

I began my career as a Corporate Trainer and used stories to illustrate concepts in my sessions, rather unconsciously! I stumbled upon an article on **storytelling as a teaching-learning methodology** and realised there was a **design** to it. I saw the *true purpose of stories* in our lives. My grandmother (a school teacher) taught me many things through stories, which I remember to date. It all began to make sense. I invested in getting better educated about storytelling; attending workshops in India & abroad, learning from some of the greats in the industry. I finally quit my corporate job and plunged into storytelling full-time. **Ever After Learning** was born in 2010 out of a simple desire: **to infuse classrooms** with the **joy of storytelling and story-making**. I work closely with teachers to equip them with storytelling skills, create story-based lesson plans, integrate stories in subjects and build a literary culture within the school.

READ TO SUCCEED

FOR TEACHERS

The Storytelling Classroom:*Applications Across the Curriculum*

- by Diane Williams, Jane Stenson & Sherry Norfolk

This amazing guide consists of a series of essays written by storytellers who work in the classroom, as well as teachers who use storytelling in the classroom, this title addresses specific curriculum areas, with practical, easily replicable lesson plans.

Teaching with Story: Classroom Connections to Storytelling

- by Margaret Read MacDonald

This invaluable resource book includes everything teachers and librarians need to know for using storytelling in their classrooms with ready to tell tales correlated to the Common Core Standards.



FOR STUDENTS

Animalia Indica (a compilation)

- by **Sumana Roy**

Tales with animal protagonists are an important part of every culture and in India, where biodiversity rivals our cultural diversity, these tales are an inherent part of our culture. The creatures native to us and their peculiar traits have often sparked the imagination of writers. The stories in this compilation are fairly contemporary, only going back about as far as a century - tales from *Premchand* and *Rudyard Kipling* as well as excerpts from modern masterpieces like 'Poonachi' by Perumal Murugan. Through the animals, we get an idea of the culture and attitudes of the humans, with illustrations.

You have been a renowned exponent of Storytelling in mainstream education. Is it true that any subject, any concept can be made more enjoyable through stories?

Well, it would be presumptuous to think that any subject or any concept can be taught through a story. If it were that easy, we'd be telling stories in class all the time, wouldn't we? The Language Arts and Social Sciences lend themselves to storytelling very well, however, the *challenge is in integrating stories to teach complex topics in Mathematics and Science*, especially in the higher grades. While the definitions must be remembered and the equations must be derived, *stories can be used to create curiosity, to act as explainers for a specific portion of the lesson, or as a device to break monotony in the classroom*. Often textbooks reduce scientific knowledge that took several years to build to one or two sentences. *Telling the story of mathematicians and scientists behind these abstract ideas, helps to humanise these subjects. Students see the world through their lens; they appreciate the challenges, struggles they faced, understand the subject better and develop scientific temper.* So, while the concept itself may not be presented entirely through the story, the story can set the stage for a rich discussion in the classroom. Stories may not replace the textbook, but they certainly can complement them.

Please share some tips and examples for teachers to integrate story-telling, in order to make student-learning more meaningful and lasting.

There is a whole world of them out there, but here are a few:

- Select stories that relate to the topics or themes being covered in the classroom. This can help students connect the material to real-world situations and increase their understanding and retention. For example, if the topic is biodiversity, share a story about a specific species that faced extinction and how conservation efforts helped save them.
- Incorporate a variety of storytelling genres, including folktales, personal narratives, and non-fiction stories. This can help cater to different learning needs and keep students engaged. For example, share a personal story about how you overcame your fear of swimming (or any other activity/emotion) to inspire your students to face their fears.
- Have students participate in the storytelling process by asking them to share their own stories or asking open-ended questions that encourage discussion and critical thinking. Encourage them to create short stories to demonstrate their understanding of a topic/concept. For example, after teaching the lesson on angles, ask students to come up with a story in which angles behave according to their properties.
- Use stories to integrate different subjects, such as science, history, and literature. This can help students make connections between different topics and understand how they relate to each other. For example, use a story about a famous scientist or inventor to introduce a science lesson, or use a historical story to introduce a lesson on social studies.
- Research, research, research, about story pedagogy. There is a lot of material available on the Internet and in books. Arm yourself with as much knowledge as you can before you decide to put storytelling into practice. Story pedagogy is two parts research and one part delivery!
- You will have to read several stories before you find the one that appeals to you the most. Look up children's books that can be used to complement the lesson. There are some wonderful books currently being published in India that can be mapped to the syllabus.
- **Practice presenting routine information in the form of a story.** This will help you internalize story structure and use it effectively.

■ Your final comments - one MUST DO advice + the future of Storytelling.

Storytelling is as old as the mountains. It has stood the test of time and we know beyond doubt that it is a powerful medium of communication in a variety of environments. The importance of storytelling in the teaching-learning process is being underscored now more than ever. In the **age of reducing attention spans**, and **instant gratification, storytelling offers us a means of slowing down**. It enables us to create an atmosphere that is both **sensorial** and **intellectual** - something that every classroom needs. Above all, storytelling helps the **student and the teacher build a connection** that's based on trust, which forms the basis for meaningful learning. So, go on, **embrace storytelling with open arms!**

QED Feed

Once upon a time... in ANY subject!

Using Storytelling for building connections and deepening learning!

Children *love* listening to their teachers telling stories. While they listen, they begin to focus and follow the story through until its end. As a teacher, isn't this what you want? A way to centrally focus the thirty / forty students sitting in front of you? Once *one* child follows, it's magical to see how one by one, all the others too, soon settle down and listen. They will stop moving around or making distractive faces at each other, and focus. From a very young age we learn how to enjoy a story both for pleasure and to help us make sense of the world and ourselves.

The best way to **teach** people is by **telling a STORY**.

Stories form wonderful bridges for the flow of information to students.

RELATED TERMS:

* STORY READING

Reading pre-existing text and using techniques of :informing, inviting, eliciting, reviewing, recapitulating, reacting, etc. It is more effective in improving the students' comprehension skills

* STORYING

Constructing stories in the mind, which are more effective for creativity, thinking out of the box and constructing meaningful connections between elements in innovative ways.

* STORYTELLING

Using oral, written or digital mode to narrate something with a schema. It is more effective for accuracy & fluency in speech with appropriate modulation, intonation, speed, volume, AND/OR clarity of thought + skills in writing.

The question is: *How goal-centered should these storytelling sessions be*? No one has the luxury of wasting too much curriculum-time simply sharing stories about one's experiences. Instead of using the odd five minutes of time you have left at the end of class, to quickly tell a story, you can try *incorporating storytelling as a part of your lesson,* so that your students stay engaged and focused throughout.

MYTH 1:

The use of Storytelling is meant for 1st language literacy & development, extendable at best to the 2nd/3rd languages.

MYTH 2:

Storytelling is meant for the pre-primary or at best, primary years of school education.

REALITY:

Storytelling is NOT meant *only* for languages. It can be used for many domains of knowledge. You will also be surprised to know how well middle and high-school students relate to it, and understand concepts better through stories. For e.g. when trying to teach the theory of gravity, you could share how you managed to understand and remember the concept when you were in their shoes. Tell them a story; they may understand that although we are visibly fixed firmly to the ground, there are forces of gravity constantly working against us.

So what are the *advantages for Storytelling*? Here are *some golden reasons* why **NEP 2020** is also proposing its inclusion in curriculum. **Stories can...**

- enhance listening skills and increase verbal proficiency
- encourage curiosity, imagination, prediction and creativity
- increase children's willingness to communicate thoughts and feelings
- encourage active participation
- enable kids to empathise with unfamiliar people / places / situations
- offer insights into different traditions and values
- offer insights into universal laws and life experiences
- help children consider new ideas, find connections
- engage students in a multisensory way especially, if with videos and pictures, flashcards, items and experiments, trips into the real world
- reveal differences and commonalities of cultures around the world
- encourage cooperation between students
- finally, promote a feeling of well-being, fun and relaxation



BEAR IN MIND...

When using *Storytelling* for subjects other than language and literature appreciation, DO NOT read the story from a book. Customise it and *tell / show* it as if it were your own.

Choose / create a story that fits the topic, concept, occasion, environment, agegroup. Be mindful of the length and number of elements in the story. Ensure that the elements / characters are relatable to the concept. Most importantly, check if the storyline & characters are aligned to the lesson's Learning Objectives and Goals!

Once upon a time... in ANY subject!

STORYTELLING & MNEMONICS for meaningful learning!

As children, we have fond memories of enjoying a story at our bedside, or pleasant memories of story-time during our school-years. Even as adults, we enjoy curling up in bed with a good book, to escape to another world, into the life of a character. Essentially, every story has *six key elements:* character(s), a setting, tension, action, climax, and a resolution. The secret of our attachment to stories is that it stimulates our *emotions*. It is *exciting* to discover how the conflict gets resolved.



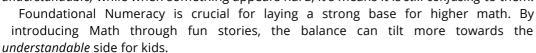
In the classroom, students tend to acquire deeper knowledge and remember facts when they connect it with a classroom *activity*. One effective activity gaining in popularity is, *Storytelling*. Whether you are a teacher educator, a parent, a researcher or a policy maker, after going through the first 5 pages of this newsletter, you would agree that there are *many benefits of teaching and learning through stories*. Tying a concept to a memorable *story* is the best method of engaging students and ensuring they will never forget the importance and relevance of the concept. The other *very useful strategy* comprising a mini story-statement, is a *Mnemonic*, a memory aid to remember difficult facts.



Having said this, is it really possible to use storytelling in Science? Math? Economics? Now imagine taking any topic, in any subject (except literature) and using the story elements or Mnemonics to ensure learning! In fact, kids these days are into mnemonics even in their social media connect. Here are some ideas on how to embrace these 2 approaches.

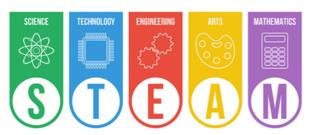
Mathematics through Stories

Math always seemed challenging for me; even so, I had Math till school-leaving. Now, as an adult with a fair amount of experience in education, I realise that Math *isn't* really easy or hard; *it's just Math*! For students as well, when something seems *easy*, that means it's *understandable*; while when something appears hard, it's means it is *still confusing* to them.





We chanced upon the *Sir Circumference series* of stories for introducing Math in elementary school. Each story covers a different concept through a story - *capacity* with an adventure at the International Pastry Academy; *fractions* with a numeric trap to catch the thief at the Fractions Fair, *charts & graphs* through an Annual Bake-off, mathematical *angles* through King Arthur's '*Edgecalibur*' and the cone, and so many more. Puns, both literal and visual, abound in these fun adventure stories with beloved characters and a solid pedagogical foundation. *Do explore* :https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x9IW2w1al0E, https://www.amazon.in/Cindy-Neuschwander/e/B00699FJ34/ref=aufs_dp_mata_dsk,



Science through Mnemonics

Mnemonics as we all know, are a pattern of letters, words or numbers that help us to remember challenging terms. The one that is hugely popular among Indian teachers is - My Very Educated Mother Just Served Us Nankhatai, which helps students to remember the order of the planets from the Sun. Here are some more mnemonics to get you started:

MRS GREN: for 7 characteristics of a living organism (Movement, Respiration, Sensation, Growth, Reproduction, Excretion, Nutrition)

Dear King Philip Came Over For Good Soup: for the hierarchy of biological classification's 8 major taxonomical ranks (**D**omain, **K**ingdom, **P**hylum, **C**lass, **O**rder, **F**amily, **G**enus, **S**pecies)

Happy Harish Likes Buns But Could Not Order Fancy Nuts: for the 1st elements of the periodic table (Hydrogen, Helium, Lithium, Beryllium, Boron, Carbon, Nitrogen, Oxygen, Fluorine, Neon)

Try Stringing Mangoes Through Explosion: for the order of the 5 layers of the atmosphere (**Tr**oposphere, **Str**atosphere, **Me**sosphere, **Th**ermosphere, **Ex**osphere)

NICER DRUMS: for the 10 organs systems of the human body (Nervous, Integumentary, Circulatory, Endocrine, Respiratory, Digestive, Reproductive, Urinary, Muscular, Skeletal)

Biology through Storywalk

The collaboration between biology and storytelling serves as a learning enrichment opportunity and provides an alternate perspective on viewing nature, life-forms in the world around. A school in the US has a beautiful array of *signposts* for possible children's stories along the walking path through the greenery. For many, the *Storywalk* holds a significance beyond the beautiful signposts. Kids chose their sign based on its closeness to some unique aspect of biology in the garden - type of plant, pollination, insects, worms, flowers n fruits, birds, life-cycle. The signposts have an opening scenario for a story, and students then research, collect information and write (& *illustrate*) a story to depict their learning, by using the 6 elements of story telling. *You may also like to refer to*: *Biology Stories (50 Stories for Teaching and Learning Biology), by MICHAEL TVETEN*





Commerce / Economics and Storytelling

Commerce/Economics deals with financial data, leading to **Data Storytelling**. Data storytelling is the ability to effectively communicate insights from a dataset using narratives and visualizations. The brain's preference for stories over pure data and graphs, stems from the fact that there is so much information to take in, one needs to filter what's important to process & remember and what to discard. Data storytelling uses the same narrative elements as you've read before: characters, setting, conflict, and resolution.



Example: Case study for Commerce students: Kids are presented with the facts about a company's recent decline in sales driven by customers of all genders between ages 14-23.

Fact: drop was caused by a viral social media post highlighting the company's negative impact on the environment.

Characters: The players and stakeholders include customers between the ages of 14 and 23, environmentally conscious consumers

Setting: Setting the scene of the recent drop in sales driven by customers of all genders ages 14 to 23. Using data visualization, kids can show the decline across audience types and highlight the largest drop in young users.

Conflict: The root issue - a viral social media post highlighted your company's negative impact on the environment and caused tens of thousands of young customers to stop using your product.

The students' task is to use the 3 elements, *build a narrative* and propose a *conflict resolution*.

Social Sciences and Storytelling

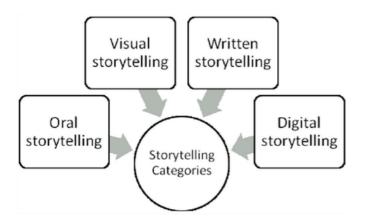
Generally, in schools, we have found that Storytelling is being used as a major activity to make children learn about *historical* facts, events, wars, culture, arts, power plays, etc. Have you thought about telling stories for *Geography*? Or *Civics / Political Science*? The best example of it in practice, can be seen in the work of Bangalore based *GeoVidyaa Geography Centre*.

Example - Cauvery isn't just a blue line on a map. Students learn, feel, experience the river from its Talacauvery origin to the delta. Following the water, they learn about the architecture of buildings old and new along its route; dig deep into agriculture, mingle with the people living on its banks, listen to stories of struggle and power. They discuss the politics of water, and at Srirangapattana, explore how and why a place gets chosen to be the capital of a kingdom...all culminating into a story. **Some more** - By sprinkling stories with interesting GK facts, one can tell a story about geography, transportation and the **OK sign behind trucks**, that once stood for "On Kerosene" when fuel was rationed. **Another idea**: with a **story of a rail journey tracking altitudes**, the students would learn to understand the **MSL (Mean Sea Level)** numbers on station boards.





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These are just a few suggestions of how easily one can incorporate *Storytelling* and *Mnemonics* into the everyday fold of academics, for any subject. While *Mnemonics* may not have too many variations, *Storytelling* can acquire various styles (as depicted here on the left). The choice of which one to use, depends entirely on the subject, topic, learning environment, age-group and resources available - *Oral* storytelling being the earliest form since cave-man, flowing through the spectrum of *other types* that address the MI component in classrooms, and finally coming to the newest form - *digital* storytelling.

Team QEDRAK *believes* that Storytelling is **POWER BEYOND MEASURE**: Stories communicate meaningful, long-term information with less effort, more responses and involvement, stimulating both emotions & reasoning. ***

QED News

Counting down to AY 2023-24!

The most sought after topics for the upcoming academic year:





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