

THE RACKET

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Hi.

How's everyone doing?

I've been reading bits and pieces of Eula Biss's new book - *Having and Being Had*. It's about a lot of things. Mostly it's about the dire effects of late-stage capitalism. How a system built entirely on the concept that they who makes the most money is the most successful is, unsurprisingly, a corrosive, knee-capping horror show that swallows us whole and spits us out red-eyed and thirsty for another glass.

It's also quite funny. You should, really, read it.

There's a particular line in the book about the idea of "work" and the varying definitions of the word. The idea of work like a day job versus the idea of work as in what you do when you're tending your garden because tending your garden is something you love to do. Biss's point is that we work (day job) so that we have the means to, well, "work." Because the United States (the world, even) is what it is and now, aside from the uber-rich, we are all just staring up at an increasingly steep climb to what amounts to "success", we are left dragging ourselves through soulless corporate work so we can chisel time out of the schedule mountain to, ostensibly, *work* on our own projects. We work so we can work.

Eula Biss is one smart cookie.

As we slide into this, for some, shortened holiday week, this idea has landed like a sack of potatoes on my shoulders. The break given in America to celebrate Thanksgiving has always been one of the long-ish weekends I've allowed myself to do just about nothing. No paying work, no non-paying side projects, nothing but food stuffs, content consumption and naps.

But this year, I've stacked the plate too high and I am battling against a tide of "too much" to open up even a sliver of space to just watch a movie while drifting on the ocean of food coma. There is work (a brief contractual gig to keep the lights on) and there is this work and there is all the other "work" that goes into being a responsible 38-year old, a loving partner and an anxious dog-dad. Everything either feels like I'm working, or it feels like I'm using time I could be working.

And it grosses me out because I know I'm bitching to the choir. That this eye-rolling, privileged self-pity isn't a malaise I own. That we are all just looking for one fucking second where what we're doing doesn't feel like work or a sacrifice of it.

I don't see my situation changing anytime soon. But that said I know this: I'm going to cook some stuff this long weekend, watch way too many movies, read a fantasy novel, probably buy a tree.

And, for a brief time, I'm going to try and make sure work has nothing to do with any of it.

Maybe you can do the same.

'Till next time.

- N

The Racket stands against
police brutality, racism and violence
perpetuated towards BIPOC
communities in all forms.

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BLACK LIVES MATTER

<https://blacklivesmatter.com/>

SWEET RELIEF

<https://www.sweetrelief.org/>

THE INDIE THEATER FUND

<https://tinyurl.com/y6a7qz1x>

STAY INSIDE. WEAR A MASK. HELP OTHERS.
savethechildren.org.

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IG: [@siouxsiepod](#)

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Blowing out the candles feels dangerous.

WWW.THERACKETSF.COM

WE HAVE A PATREON

We aren't in this for the money.

That said: there are costs in doing what we do.

Any help with those costs (and with the costs of future endeavors) would be greatly appreciated.

If not, we get it and we still appreciate you.

If so, we're working on some special rewards. And we know you love special rewards.

THANK YOU TO THESE FOLKS

MATTHEW CARNEY
CATHY & JOHN SANDERS
HALLIE YOUNG
JAMIE ENGELMANN
CASEY BENNETT
LILIAN CAYLEE
LAUREN C. JOHNSON
ANGIE MCDONALD
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UNTITLED #1 FROM "LESS IS MORE LESS" SERIES
MEGAN CHIN
2016

Three Views
of a Woman
Undergoing Treatment

after "Woman (Seated Torso)" by Henry Moore

REBEKAH BLOYD

i.		ii.
woman front		woman side
amputated bending joints		ample torso
bulbous belly	iii.	tumored
	woman back	
butternut		head
breasts	broad buttocks pontoons she sails by	a turnip
	torso the green-grey sea she sails	
diminutive head		peeled
	head a sheep's muzzle	
	open for forbs	
	at voyage's ends	

California is not the only beautiful place to live

AMELIA FURLONG

rationally, I know it wasn't as good as all that
but *jeez louise* I miss the hustle.
the way I could always bum a bit
from the rattlebreaths on the MUNI
or how it takes 45 minutes to get anywhere
from anywhere else
fog chasing us east to the bridge
last exit spit's distance from our lips.
I never took it, tasted my last shot of sake
at the black & white restaurant where we went
when we knew no one else.
it was all a dream wasn't it?
outside skirts hiked peeing on Hayes & Masonic
just to prove it could be done
& later, crushed together in a jukebox of latex
saw the warm gold rain down on a greased-up street
of prospectors, yeah

we were prospectors too

trying to make it rich
or just trying to make it out alive.
we'd hijack the rent but there are too many cops
& not enough pickup trucks
to hold all the cash we're owed.



NO HEART
ORIN CARPENTER
2020

Bone and Blood

MEL SHERER

When I was a coming up, we ate greens
with neck bones or ham hocks.

My sister and I would finish
the steaming pot, one sticky
bowlful at a time.

Then, I would take the bones
and whittle rings just big enough
for my pinky fingers.

Some if it was for punk rock's sake,
celebrating the macabre.

Most of it was because I wanted
to feel closer
to an ancestral practice within myself,

to take the off-cut, the undesirable gristle
of death, and lend it back to life.



CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW
ORIN CARPENTER
2020



ANIMALISTIC: I AM HUMAN
ORIN CARPENTER
2020

Alligators

LAUREN C. JOHNSON

When you're a little girl in Florida, you stay out of the palmettos. You learn how to distinguish a coral from a king snake. You learn that running from alligators in zigzags is a myth. Sinkholes open beneath Hillsborough County, and you learn that's caused by acidic groundwater eating the limestone bedrock.

You can't anticipate a sinkhole, so, you watch Bay News 9 and hope those tragedies keep happening to other people. Like the tornadoes in the trailer parks in Land O'Lakes. Or on the cover of a tabloid, Satan's face in the sky while Hurricane Andrew sweeps Miami. How on Bearss Avenue, by the railroad tracks, seedy, neon lights in a nightclub say *Girls! Girls! Girls!*

*

On the cusp of my adolescence, my great Aunt Mimi had a stroke and all that remained of her voice was a phrase she repeated like a prayer: "So pretty, so pretty, so pretty." Eventually, "pretty" became the only word she could tell me.

I was beginning to grow self-conscious, aware of the social hierarchies that sprung from beauty, and I never felt pretty enough. Aunt Mimi had me hooked on her adoration; my self-esteem hinged on compliments.

Aunt Mimi had a soft, smooth face despite her eighty years and thin, penciled-in eyebrows. Sometimes, in my memories, she recedes into Aunt Nita. Aunt Nita's arms were covered in sunspots and she smelled of cigarettes, but she didn't care. Once, I accidentally kicked her under the table at Red Lobster and she

bled from the bruise. Once I asked her, “Why don’t you quit smoking? Don’t you want to live to one hundred?”

Aunt Nita only laughed. “Now, why on earth would I ever want that?”

*

I still remember the Florida panther a veterinarian brought to my elementary school. It paced the stage where we held our choir performances and Thanksgiving pageants. We watched the glide of muscles beneath the cat’s tawny coat while the vet talked about deforestation.

There are less than one hundred Florida panthers living in the wild. We Floridians love our wildlife, but we’re so bad at sharing the land.

*

The year I turned 18, I started going to the nightclubs in Tampa. Get Low on the radio. Give me your money and shut your mouth. It was 2003 and we went out every night. Rolling the windows down on the drive back home, the scent of rain and grass. We ashed our Black & Milds.

That summer, I met Eric. He didn’t go to college because he sold used cars and made money. We drank too much on the Fourth of July and I passed out in his room, though at some point, he woke me up to mess around. I was half awake. I don’t know if he bothered with a condom. I didn’t stop him. My hips responded accordingly.

“Yeah, I had sex with Eric,” I told Tamara and Nicole the next day.

I didn’t tell them it had happened in a twilight bordering blackout. I would have said yes had he asked me. I was going to do it with him anyway.

*

I smile a lot, especially when I’m uncomfortable.

You know what else smiles a lot?

Alligators.

Alligators have 80 teeth and each time they lose one, another grows in to replace it.

*

My mother used to water ski over the backs of alligators. She was a kid, maybe nine or ten. Mid-century. A central Florida town called Lake Alfred. In the memories my mother gave me, I see my grandfather, too. Suntanned and guiding the motorboat. I have to wonder if he heard warplanes in the humming engine. In hospice care, he gestured toward the ceiling, watching jets crisscross his bed. I sat beside him and refused to look, too absorbed in a book to see the contrails.

But that's beside the point; I love to think about the lake and my mother trusting the tow rope—sparkling, laughing—waterskiing over alligators.

*

In Tampa, near the neighborhood where I grew up, there's a highway with marshes wild on one side and gated communities on the other. There's a trail along the water where I like to walk when I'm home. I like the great blue herons and sandhill cranes. I like the alligators, too. I see them swimming close to the embankment, their eyes just visible above the waterline, and I remember how someone once told me that if apex predators can survive, the ecosystem is still healthy.



UNTITLED
NORA SIBLEY DENKER
2020

Untitled

COLE SARAR

We were peculiar children, bloomed like phytoplankton
spilled dreams into our cereal bowls each morning.
My sister was a sleepwalker, I pleaded like Cassandra.
Every night we poured into our bunk beds, and

spilled dreams into our cereal each morning.
We were too much liquid, viscous little heads;
every night we poured into our bunk beds and
dissolved the universe in our unconscious.

We were too much liquid, viscous little heads
heavy, oceanic depths of dreams and nightmares
dissolved the universe in our conscious.
The tentacled truths swimming up through

heavy, oceanic depths of dreams and nightmares.
As children we knew nothing but riding the night,
the tentacled truths swimming up through
the seas of our sheets. Were disturbed by the day

as children, we knew nothing but riding the night.
My sister was a sleepwalker, I pleaded like Cassandra.
The seas of our sheets were disturbed by the day.
We were peculiar children, bloomed like phytoplankton.



UNTITLED
NORA SIBLEY DENKER
2020

THE BACK PAGE

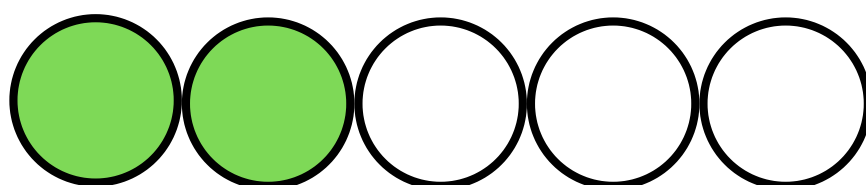
BY
LAURA JAYE CRAMER

THE WEEKLY MUMBLE

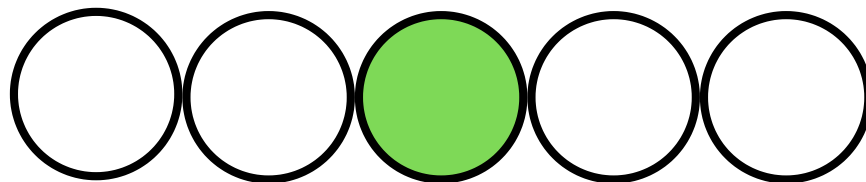
WORD STUFF

Unscramble each Mumble to form five ordinary words.
Then, arrange the green letters in the highlighted spaces to
complete the punchline.

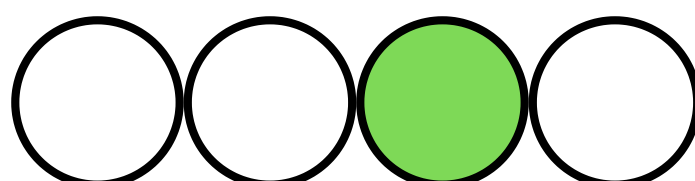
NDXIE



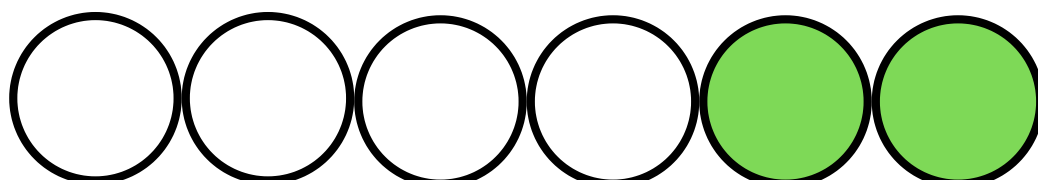
I OGCL



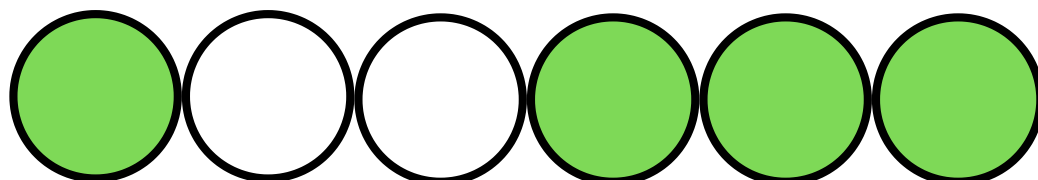
AAJV



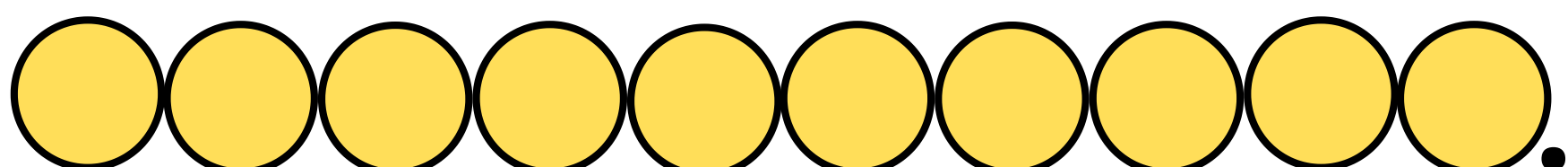
TZNIHE



YEERAT



**Don't
trust
atoms,
They
make
up...**



(Answers next week.)

Last week's answers:

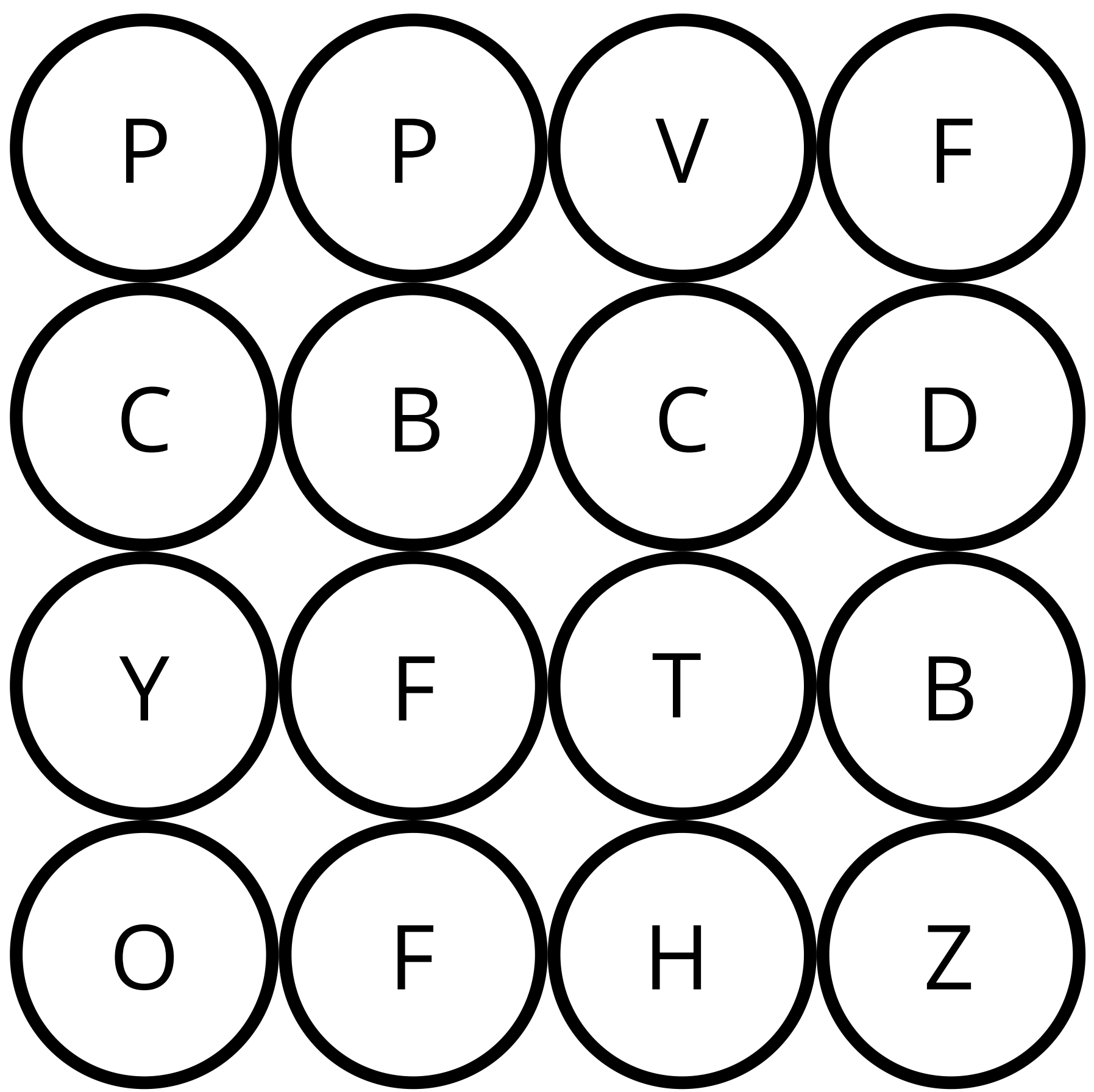
MIGHT, REUSE, GIVEN, BUSHEL, ACTUAL

Russian dolls are so full of themselves.

BONGGLE

Set a timer for three minutes (honor system!) to find as many words as possible within the grid by connecting letters horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.

You know, like Boggle.



SCORING (by word):

- three/four letter - 1 pt.
- five letter - 2 pt.
- six letter - 3 pt.
- seven letter - 4 pt.

Send your list of words and your score to:
theracketreadingseries@gmail.com

High score gets a shout out in the next issue!

BONGGLE

LAST WEEKS WORDS

alko
cel
elf
erf
erk
fem
fer
flog
goa
goal
golf
golfer
koa
kola
log
mel
merk
merl
oak
oka
olm
rec
ref
rem

THIS WEEK'S WINNER:
Maggie Percy

*TO BE A WINNER -
SEND US YOUR
ANSWERS!*

CONTRIBUTORS

REBEKAH BLOYD

ORIN CARPENTER

MEGAN CHIN

NORA SIBLEY DENKER

AMELIA FURLONG

LAUREN C. JOHNSON

COLE SARAR

MEL SHERRER

THE
RACKET

READING SERIES

HOLIDAY

12/3 - 7PM - ZOOM

THE RACKET

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**WHAT A
PARTY.**

