

THE NEW YORKER

THE BOOK BENCH

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January 27, 2009

In the News: Scripture Contest, Bathroom Reading

Posted by *Victoria Loustalot*

The Bible Bee, a new competition for children between the ages of seven and eighteen, requires participants to memorize Bible passages and facts in the hopes of winning one hundred thousand dollars.

The Iranian Poets Society intends to publish a collection of Persian poems in English as part of its initiative to create “dialogue among the Iranian and world’s poets.”

Ian Falconer’s award-winning picture-book series about a pig named Olivia is now a Nickelodeon TV show.

Japan hopes to curb wasteful use of toilet paper with a poetry campaign featuring three “toilet poems,” which will be posted in Japanese public restrooms beginning in February.

Neil Gaiman has won the John Newbery Medal for his young-adult novel “The Graveyard Book.”

The Governor of Illinois, Rod Blagojevich, explains his repeated recitations of Rudyard Kipling’s poem, “If”: “That poem to me really exemplifies the ups and downs and struggles of life, and the need to have perseverance and stick to things and come back, that really make you a person of character.”

“The Speeches of Barack Obama,” a collection of President Obama’s speeches, has become a best-seller in Japan, thanks to aspiring English speakers who are using it to improve their English-language skills.

The Arts Council of Silicon Valley is seeking its first-ever poet laureate of Santa Clara County.

The Austrian novelist Johannes Mario Simmel, famed in the German-speaking world for his Cold War thrillers, has died, at the age of eighty-four.

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