Solitude – Stories & Illustrations

**Take two acorns from the same tree, as nearly alike as possible; plant one on a hill by itself, and the other in the dense forest, and watch them grow. The oak standing alone is exposed to every storm. Its roots reach out in every direction, clutching the rocks and piercing deep into the earth. Every rootlet lends itself to steady the growing giant, as if in anticipation of fierce conflict with the elements. Sometimes its upward growth seems checked for years, but all the while it has been expending its energy in pushing a root across a large rock to gain a firmer anchorage. Then it shoots proudly aloft again, prepared to defy the hurricane. The gales that sport so rudely with its wide branches find more than their match, and only serve still further to toughen every minutest fiber from pitch to bark. The acorn planted in the deep forest shoots up a weak, slender sapling. Shielded by its neighbors, it feels no need to spread its roots far and wide for support. (Joe Griffith, in Speaker's Library of Business, p. 13)**

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**Today, 35.7 million Americans live alone, or 28 percent of households. That's up from 13 percent of households in 1960 and 23 percent in 1980, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Demographers attribute the trend to delayed or forgone marriage, longer life expectancy, urbanization, and greater wealth. *(The Week magazine, June 14, 2019)***

**28 percent of Americans live alone, an increase of 23 percent since 1960, and re4tailers are reacting. Sales of 18-inch-wide dishwashers and 15-inch stovetops are up 30 percent since March. *(The Wall Street Journal, as it appeared in The Week magazine, June 14, 2019)***

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**An authority on jungle beasts says almost all animals with spotted or striped fur are somewhat solitary. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Alice Springs, Australia, is a town literally a thousand miles from nowhere. (George Luzzatto, in New York News World)**

**If typical, your blood pressure goes up when you walk into a roomful of people, goes down after you walk out alone. So say the medical researchers. (L. M. Boyd)  
The only bone that does not connect with any other in the body is the hyoid bone, which is in your throat and supports your tongue and its muscles. (Barbara Seuling, in You Can't Sneeze with Your Eyes Open, p. 13)  
  
The American explorer Richard Byrd, the first man to fly over the North and South Poles, once spent five months alone in Antarctica.  
(Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 79)**

**Emily Dickinson, whose poetry thrills millions today, fantasized about the earth and sky and heaven itself, but left her home state, Massachusetts, exactly once, and that was to visit her father in Washington where he was a Representative. She became such a recluse that she would not stay in the same room with her guests but would speak with them from an adjoining room. (Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 201)  
Three-quarters of U.S. commuters drive to work alone. (Rocky Mountain News, 10-25-1993)**

**A fox hunts alone. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Only four people, and not a one of them a chose personal friend, showed up at the Baltimore funeral of poet Edgar Allen Poe. (Boyd’s Curiosity Shop, p. 123)**

**About one-quarter of all U.S. households now consist of one person living alone, the U.S. census has found. For the first time, the percentage of one-person households now exceeds the percentage of “traditional” households comprised of a married couple and their children. *(The Boston Globe, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 16, 2005)***

**The least densely populated country in Europe is Iceland -- it's designated as part of Europe. Land there runs 123.5 acres per person. In the most densely populated country in Europe – Malta -- it is one acre for each 68 people. (L. M. Boyd)  
The Indian goes solitary into the forest, on rare and stated occasions, to gain a certain sense of his own superior strength and poise. Then he comes back to familiar scenes and regular activities, and runs, and leaps, and rides, and sings, and plants, and harvests, and tells the stories that inspire his race, and ministers to those in need in the spirit of love. (Myrtle Fillmore's Healing Letters, p. 56)  
The 299 people on Tristan da Cunha, in the Atlantic Ocean, live on the most isolated inhabited island on Earth. Their nearest neighbors are on the island of St. Helena, 1,320 miles away. Bouvey Oya, in the South Atlantic Ocean, is the most isolated uninhabited island on Earth. It is 1,050 miles from the east coast of Antarctica. (The Usborne Book of Facts & Lists)**

**The joys of living alone: “More people live alone than at any other time in history,” said Eric Klinenberg. In major U.S. cities, such as Atlanta, Denver, and Minneapolis, 40 percent of households contain a single occupant. In Manhattan and Washington, D.C., nearly 50 percent of households consist of one person. Throughout the country, 32 million people live alone – 15 million of them between the ages of 34 and 65. Once, most people thought about living alone with a sense of “anxiety, dread, and feelings of loneliness.” But today, many appreciate the freedom and independence from intrusive family members, annoying roommates, or spouses that turn out to be “the wrong person.” Far from being lonely, research shows, single people are generally more socially active than those who “hunker down at home,” and are more likely to spend time with friends and neighbors. And the advent of online social networking makes the solitary existence less isolated still, allowing us to “engage with others when and how we want to, and on our own terms.” It may not be for everyone, but going solo has clearly become a viable option. (The Week magazine, February 17, 2012)**

**Charles Lindbergh was not the first man to fly the Atlantic. He was the sixty-seventh. The first sixty-six made the crossing in dirigibles and twin-engine mail planes. Lindbergh was the first to make the dangerous flight alone. (David Louis, in Fascinating Facts, p. 20)**

**People talk about the melancholy mood in my pictures. I think the right word is not “melancholy” but “thoughtful.” I do an awful lot of thinking and dreaming about things in the past and the future – the timelessness of the rocks and the hills – all the people who have existed there. I prefer winter and fall, when you feel the bone structure in the landscape – the loneliness of it – the dead feeling of winter. Something waits beneath it – the whole story doesn’t show. People always feel that anything like that – which is contemplative, silent and shows a person alone – is sad. Is it because we’ve lost the art of being alone? (Andrew Wyeth, artist, in an interview with Richard Meryman, published in Life magazine)**

**“Monakhnos" is Greek for “solitary” and is where we got the word “monk.” (L. M. Boyd)**

**Only one person walked with Mozart 's coffin from the church to the cemetery for its burial in an unmarked pauper's grave. (Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 385)  
The painter must be solitary. For if you are alone you are completely yourself, but if you are accompanied by a single companion, you are only half yourself. (Leonardo da Vinci)**

**When he was a child, Blaise Pascal once locked himself in his room for several days and would not allow anyone to enter. When he emerged, he had figured out all of Euclid’s geometrical propositions totally on his own. (David Louis, in Fascinating Facts, p. 129)**

**The Madonna Chapel of Bayou Goula, La., is just large enough to accommodate the priest while saying mass. The worshipers must remain outside. (Ripley's Believe It or Not!: Odd Places, p. 19)**

**As for the bona-fide rattlers, their noisemaking is not, contrary to what many people think, the prelude to an inevitable strike. It is, instead, a warning: “Don't step on me.” If something suggests to the snake that its message is not getting through, it will then poise, ready to attack. Given the option, though, the rattler would rather twitch than fight; it just wants to be left alone. (Eugene J. Walter, Jr., in Reader's Digest)**

**Joshua Slocum was the first person to sail around the world alone. When he was fifty-one years old, he left Newport, Rhode Island, in 1895, in his thirty-six foot oyster boat Spray, returning three years and two months later after sailing 40,000 miles. (Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 380)  
What are those three rules for saving money at the supermarket? 1. Make a list. 2. Eat first. 3. Go alone. (L. M. Boyd)**

**A solitary Norwegian spruce survives on Campbell Island in Antarctica. Most isolated tree in the world, that one. Nearest other trees are 120 miles away in the Aucklands. (L. M. Boyd)  
Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), the American author and naturalist who spent more than two years in close harmony with nature, leading a near-solitary life free of materialistic pursuits, built his hermitage cabin on the shore of Walden Pond near Concord, Massachusetts. The cabin was only 500 yards from the railroad tracks connecting Fitchburg and Boston. *(Isaac Asimov’s Book of Facts, p. 147)***

**On maps of the Sahara is a spot called “Tree of Tenere.” Nothing is there but one scrawny acacia tree. There is no other tree within 100 miles. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Solitary trees, if they grow at all, grow strong. (Winston Churchill)**

**In the United States there is more space where nobody is than where anybody is. This is what makes America what it is. (Gertrude Stein)**

**Feeling that the hour of his departure out of this world was at hand, George Washington desired that everyone leave the room so that he might have some time alone to commune with his God, as he had all of his life. (Dr. D. James Kennedy)**

**Woodchucks build a special hibernating chamber in their winter dens. When the woodchuck is ready to hibernate, it seals the door to the chamber with dirt or leaves and settles down for the winter. (Jeff Harris, in Shortcuts)**

**In praise of the introvert: We’d all be better off spending more time working alone, said Susan Cain. Our workplaces have been taken over by New Groupthink, in which teamwork, collaboration, and open-plan offices have displaced solitude, independence, and privacy. “Anyone who has ever needed noise-canceling headphones in her own office,” knows what I’m talking about. This trend is bad for business, because “people are more creative when they enjoy privacy and freedom from interruption.” Some 70 percent of U.S. employees now work in open-plan offices, and nearly all spend time working in teams. That may help us exchange ideas, but it also stifles creativity, lowers productivity, and even makes us sicker. Studies show workers in open-plan offices are “hostile, insecure, and distracted,” and more likely to suffer from high blood pressure and the flu. Brainstorming sessions have been shown to be “one of the worst possible ways to stimulate creativity,” and the bigger the group, the worse the performance. Teamwork has its place. But it’s often in quiet, private moments that our best work is done. (The Week magazine, January 27, 2012)**

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