

An answer to the Earhart mystery? New Zealand's Rubik's cube robot; Japan blasts off to Mars; and some very sticky sculptures.

Hello and welcome to Squiz Kids Today ... your fresh take on what's happening in the world around you.

I'm Christie Kijurina

It's Wednesday, October 21 -

In Squiz Kids today An answer to the Earhart mystery? New Zealand's Rubik's cube robot; Japan blasts off to Mars; and some very sticky sculptures.

That's what's making news, kids' style ...

THE LOWDOWN

Remember the research team heading to the tiny Pacific island of Nikumaroro to try to solve the mystery of Amelia Earhart? Well, they've got an answer ... just not the one they were hoping for.

We've been following the story of the search for the plane that went missing while pilot Amelia Earhart and her navigator Fred Noonan were attempting to circumnavigate the globe wayyy back in 1937. Nearly ninety years later, a shape in satellite pictures had raised hopes that their aircraft might finally have been found. But a closer look suggests it was most likely washed-up trees coated in shiny coral sand.

Disappointing? Absolutely. A waste of time? Well, not so fast.

Investigating a possible answer and discovering it doesn't fit is how we learn. The team gathered information about the island and collected objects for further study. And their adventure reminded us of a remarkable woman who pushed boundaries at a time when women had far fewer opportunities than today.

Because success doesn't always take the shape you first expect ...

Back here in Australia, we're thinking of Victorian politician Helen Haines, who is receiving hospital care after being seriously injured in an apparent attack outside her office on Monday.

Police are investigating, and we'll learn more in the coming days.

Representing a community is important, difficult work. And while debating ideas is part of democracy, hurting someone is never an acceptable way to disagree.

It's a conversation Bryce will be having with our Governor General, Sam Mostyn AC later this week ... a chat that will be important listening for all parents, teachers and kids. Stay tuned for news on when that discussion will be podcast.

Meanwhile: our thoughts are with Helen, her family and everyone who works alongside her.

SPIN THE GLOBE

Each day we give the world globe a spin and find a news story from wherever it stops ... and today we've landed in Aotearoa, New Zealand, where four university students have given a Rubik's Cube a seriously speedy workout.

Working together, they built a robot that has solved a 4x4x4 Rubik's Cube (that's one with 16 squares on each face) in under 10 seconds! Nine point eight seconds, to be precise.

The current recognised robot record is 45.3 seconds, while the fastest human time is 15.18, so this machine has zipped past both, although Guinness still needs to approve the record attempt to make it official.

But getting that fast, took plenty of slow, careful work. The students had to teach the camera system to tell similar colours apart, stop the cube jamming and keep everything steady as the motors whizzed. They used suction cups to help shift the puzzle into position more quickly, too.

A reminder that behind a few seconds of success, there can be an awful lot of testing, teamwork and trying again.

Now, I wonder if they can build one to sort out my sock drawer?

SPACED OUT

How far would you travel to collect a handful of dirt? Across the garden? Down the street? How about all the way to Mars?

Yesterday, a spacecraft blasted off from Japan on a mission to collect dust from Phobos, one of the two moons of Mars, and bring it back to Earth.

The trip out there will take about ten months, with the spacecraft, called MMX, expected to arrive there in August next year.

Mars's moons, Phobos and Deimos, are small and lumpy. Think, less perfectly round moon ... more wonky potato. And landing will be tricky. Phobos has very weak gravity, making it difficult for a little rover to settle safely onto its surface.

The rover will do some exploring before the main spacecraft collects the samples, aiming for at least ten grams. That is a whole lotta effort for something weighing about as much as two teaspoons of sugar! But scientists are hoping those tiny grains could help answer a giant question. They're wanting to discover how Mars's moons formed.

And this mission has an Australian connection too, with the precious cargo expected to land back on Earth near Woomera, in South Australia, in 2031. So, maybe don't hold your breath...

FOOD GLORIOUS FOOD

Some artists use paint. Others use clay. But in the New South Wales town of Griffith, the art supplies come straight from the orchard. More than 100,000 oranges and grapefruits have been turned into over sixty sculptures for the town's annual spring festival.

Local artists attach the fruit to wire frames using special elastic bands, carefully building their creations one orange at a time. The fruit even gets a protective wax coating to help keep moisture in and stop it shrivelling up in the sun.

I've stuck a link to pictures in the episode notes and the sculptures are on display until this Saturday, so there's still time to have a look if you're nearby. And afterwards? The fruit will be turned into juice.

That's what I call getting the creative 'juices' flowing [Mum Joke Buzzer]

Haha! I haven't heard the Mum Joke Buzzer in a while...Hello, my old friend!

Q+A CALL OUT

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Calling all Squiz Kids in NSW ... and any outside of it, for that matter.

Here's your chance to play a role in how your state is run ... as we hurtle ever closer to a very special Squiz Kids Q+A with NSW Premier Chris Minns ...

It's the podcast where you - the kids - get to ask the questions.

Premier Minns has bravely agreed to take the Q+A hotseat – which is your chance to show him just how smart kids are - and hurl some curly questions at him ..

What's with the plan to ban on screens in NSW classrooms? Why doesn't he want kids on social media? What does a Premier actually do, anyway? Why is he a Canterbury Bulldogs fan? And does he really eat cereal at night after every meal?

Send in a single question, get together as a class and send in a bunch of questions - just be sure to send them quicksticks by emailing squizkids@thesquiz.com.au – because the cut off date is the end of this week ...

And as a special treat: every Squiz Kids listener or class that sends in a question will go into the draw to get a personalised visit from me .. so don't just sit there get involved already!

THE S'QUIZ

This is the part of the podcast where you get to test how well you've been listening ...

1. What are the names of the two moons of Mars? You can have one point for each.
2. How many smaller squares are on each face of a 4x4x4 Rubik's cube?
3. Which town in NSW is celebrating spring with sculptures made of citrus fruit?

SHOUT OUTS

It's Wednesday, October 21 – International Day of the Nacho! Did you know this crunchy, cheesy favourite was named after a real person? Back in 1943, Ignacio “Nacho” Anaya whipped up tortilla chips with melted cheese and jalapeños for hungry customers in Mexico. His nickname stuck ... and a snack legend was born. Thanks, Nacho — that was a ‘grate’ idea! [Mum joke buzzer] Sorry ... that was a ‘cheesy’ joke [Mum joke buzzer] ... somebody stop me!

It's also a special day for these Squiz Kids, celebrating a birthday today... Brody from Albany Creek and Sophie from Bentleigh.

Belated shoutouts go to ... Mathilda from Bracken Ridge, Isabella from Westbury, Ollie from Trafalgar and Jade from Waterford.

Classroom shoutouts go to... class 3/4 Blue with Ms Spiteri at Malabar Public School, the students with Michelle and Adriana at Catalyst Training Services in Preston, Room 4 with Mr Draper at Mount Barker Primary School and class 3P with Mrs Macdonald at Southport State School.

The S'Quiz Answers:

1. Phobos and Deimos
2. 16
3. Griffith

Don't forget .. if you've got a birthday coming up and you'd like a shoutout, or if you want a classroom shoutout, or parents, if you'd like to shout out a class or a wonderful teacher... drop us a line at squizkids@thesquiz.com.au or fill out the form on our website.

And finally: if you love Squiz Kids, we'd love you do us a favour and hit follow on Apple Podcasts or Spotify or wherever you're listening to us. And while you're there, why not share this episode with someone you think would enjoy it too? The only way we can continue to do what we do is by growing and in order to grow, we need your support -

Well - that's all we have time for. Thanks for listening to Squiz Kids Today - we'll be back again tomorrow

In the meantime ... get out there and have a most excellent day ... over and out.