**FL Talking Books Narrator Audition**

Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, spelled \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. This audition is a necessary step on my path to becoming a narrator for the talking books program. While it’s the voice of the narrator that everyone associates with talking books, there are three other members of the recording team without whom talking books would not exist. Equally important to a quality recording are the monitor, reviewer and editor. The monitor sits in the studio with the narrator but outside the sound booth. He or she operates the digital recording equipment and software to make the recording happen and, by reading along with the narrator to ensure accuracy, serves as the first line of defense in quality control. The monitor is what some might call the engineer or the director and, when disagreements occur between the two parties in the booth, the monitor’s decision prevails.

The reviewer, who was not part of the original recording team, provides an additional element of objective quality control. This important member of the team listens to the recording while reading along in the original text. It takes a good ear, and a command of the language to listen for and catch errors in pronunciation, phrasing, inflection, tone, pacing or any other component of the narration that could alter the author’s meaning or adversely affect the listener’s ability to follow and enjoy the material.

The 4th member of the production team is the editor. This person is part of the professional staff and is ultimately responsible for the finished product that gets released to the library’s patrons.

It’s this team, each member equally important, that makes talking books possible. While everyone seems to start out thinking they want to read, the reality is that not everyone is cut out to read aloud.

On the surface, this reading thing should be a no-brainer; heck, we all know how to read...right? But it appears that reading aloud is quite different from reading to yourself. Most things aren’t written to be read aloud, so a lot of those catchy little ditties that look good on paper and sound good in the head just seem to fall, rather than roll, off the tongue. And it’s amazing how many words I’ve never actually said aloud or heard pronounced! So, it may be that reading aloud is not for everyone, and this audition will help the production staff, and me, determine: 1) whether my voice and reading talents are compatible with the program, 2) whether reading aloud is something I might actually enjoy doing, and/or 3) whether I might be happier and more effective as a reviewer and/or monitor. I will have to remember that the positions of monitor and reviewer are just as important, just as challenging, and just as rewarding.

This audition consists of several pieces of varying styles and genre, to help determine where I might be most effective. While it is conceivable that I will shine in all of them, it is more likely that I will excel in one or two and be anywhere from downright horrible to reasonably acceptable in the others. If I am accepted as a narrator, the staff will work with me as much as possible to match my talents and interests with available material. If I’m not initially chosen as a narrator, I can be a very valuable part of the recording team as a monitor and/or reviewer and, if I still want to, work toward becoming a narrator. Even if I do become a narrator, I will first be trained and expected to work as a monitor and reviewer, as well.

Fortunately, this first piece provides some invaluable insight into what is expected of a talking books narrator.

**Excerpts from *Tell Me a Story* by**

NLS Narrator Ray Hagen

Recording a book would seem to be a pretty straightforward affair, but an inordinate number of complications do somehow manage to get in the way. Finally, though, when all the nervousness and self-consciousness and confusion and intimidation and downright panic have abated, it all comes down to one basic premise - Tell Me a Story. What story? The one the author wrote. Tell it how? The way the author wrote it. What could be simpler?

This is not to suggest that there aren't a few ....

MINEFIELDS

Okay, there are a few minefields. For example; as one's eye is racing across the page while talking up a storm, it's pretty difficult to distinguish "bought" from "brought", "abroad" from "aboard", "county" from "country", "these" from "those", or "trough" from "tough" from "though" from "through" from "thorough" from "thought". And one should never have to speak of "wasps nests" or utter the word "listlessness" aloud. Each of us has our Enemies List of words we fear and loathe.

And while you're barreling your way through a sentence that takes up half a page or more - weaving your way through sub-clauses and parenthetical musings on the way to Armageddon - it's almost impossible to remember the point of the sentence, or how it began way back up there before your last birthday.

Then there's the book you hate, written by an author you detest, on a subject that bores you to death or a premise you heartily oppose - but that you nonetheless must sound utterly fascinated by, and in total agreement with, for every one of its five hundred pages. Sincerity is a must. Faking sincerity is a useful skill. (It's been said that a good book requires a good narrator and a bad book requires a great narrator.)

The above problems have one thing in common:. they're inevitable and unavoidable. Like noisy page turns, they're just that, problems, and only slogging, practice and patience will get you through them. No magic solutions. But let's now address some very common problems that can be corrected, at least in theory. We begin with an especially vexing conundrum:

YOU

Most Talking Book narrators are quirky, stylish, interesting people. But once in the recording booth, the most amazing transformation sometimes occurs: they cease to exist. And in his or her place suddenly appears - gasp! - The Generic Narrator. A voice without a person. And an incredible crashing bore.

"I don't want to intrude upon the text", one hears, or "I don't want to overdo it", or "the listener should do the interpreting, not the narrator".

You know the list. All very honorable, all very well-intentioned. But, dear narrator, you passed your audition because of your particular abilities to breathe life into a printed text, not because you could simply string words together with lifeless clarity. What's the point of trying to assume a whole other, and lesser, persona whenever you pick up another book? Your humor, quirkiness, anger, sarcasm, passion, compassion - all these qualities must be brought into the booth. Each particular author will tell you (just listen to them) which aspects of your personality to let loose and which to, for the moment, park outside. But without a menu to choose from, there ain't gonna be no meal.

Often a well-meaning narrator, unable to decide how to approach a book, will opt for safety by making no decision. The "conservative" approach. This spells death. As with an audition for a part in a play, you have to make some decisions, right or wrong, in order to make any impression at all. At the very least, since you are the author's stand-in, you must approach the text with the same vitality and interest that he/she invested in writing it. Energy takes a lot of energy, but it's always better than no energy.

Yes, of course it's possible to go too far, to add too much, to overwhelm the story. This is where experience, discipline and technique come in (not to mention other people's opinions). But the other extreme, doing too little or nothing at all, is equally inappropriate. That kind of flat, uninvolved, bloodlessly correct distancing from the material claims two victims: it sabotages the author and puts the listener to sleep.

(Incidentally, this also applies to such mundane items as opening and closing announcements, bibliographies, acknowledgments, copyright info and tables of contents. After all, these obligatory announcements will be the listener's first introduction to you. Why not get off on the right foot?)

So please, bag that lifeless drone. Is that the way you talk? If not, then don't talk that way.

ON THE OTHER HAND - let us consider the reverse problem,. as we enter the merry land of.....

FUNNY VOICES

There is a dangerous tendency for some narrators to go totally bonkers at the sight of quotation marks. A sad affliction indeed. Let's take the cases of two venerable narrators, Max and Laverne (not their real names). Give them third-person narratives and they deliver the goods in an efficient, professional manner. But hand them books filled with various people's quoted dialogue and they become completely unhinged.

For such narrators, undergoing gender reassignment is most unsettling. For the listener, it's sheer hell. Every female character in Max's books sounds like a penny-whistle, while every male character in Laverne's books sounds like a frog. See, Max is convinced that in order to deliver any woman's dialogue, he must disguise his rolling-thunder manly bark by swooping up into a piping falsetto. And lovely LaVerne, when confronted by a man, digs deep down into her shoes to produce a gravelly rumble that would register on the Richter scale. But a man speaking in a falsetto doesn't sound remotely like a woman, he just sounds like a man speaking in a falsetto (thereby making every woman sound stupid in the bargain). And a woman's bottom register sounds equally unlike a man. It just sounds like - well, a frog.

Well, all women aren't sopranos (Tallulah who?) and all men aren't booming basses. But it's not only a matter of gender. All children don't talk baby­talk (it's adults who do that), all older people aren't creaky-voiced octogenarians, all troublemakers aren't mustache-twirling villains, all pretty women aren't bubbleheads, all blue-collar men aren't half-wits, all blacks don't talk jive, and all southerners aren't redneck crackers or Designing Women.

Think of the last time you were telling some friends an anecdote regarding an encounter with people of varying personas and genders. Did you go to great throat-torturing pains to give each person a wildly different character voice? Were you ACTING to beat the band? Or did you simply Tell the Story? Did your audience have any problem keeping track of who said what? Probably not. So why assume that when you read a book aloud, you have to come up with all these vocal disguises for every poor fool who enters the story?

Then there's the matter of range. If you want to use a character voice, does it have the same range, flexibility and color as your natural voice? Or are you stuck with a two-note range and a sore throat? Keep in mind that the listener can tell the difference, and while he/she is pondering your vocal gymnastics, the story (remember the story?) is out the window.

Does all this mean you should never never never use a character voice for anything ever? Of course not. But if you do, it needs to be (1) justified, (2) a full-bodied characterization, not merely a funny voice, and (3) comfortable - for both you and the listener. Here's one useful guideline. If you've decided to use a trick voice for a comic character, consider whether you'd be able to maintain that exact voice if he or she were to be suddenly plunged into a profoundly tragic scene in the next chapter. If you can pull it off, then great, run with it. If not, ditch it.

Playing characters is mainly a matter of attitude anyway. Get that right and the voice naturally follows. There are, after all, only so many people living in your throat. Consider the different ways you yourself sound when speaking to your spouse, your boss, your parents, a stranger, a thief. The colors of the human voice are wondrous and limitless, with no need for superfluous exaggeration. Do yourself, the author and the listener a favor. Talk like a person.

**LISTEN UP**

The single most important requirement for narrating is a great ear. That's what helps you to reproduce the rhythms of foreign accents and languages, discerns the subtleties of the mother tongue, keeps your dialogue natural and believable, and lets you hear with your eyes the cadences of the written word even as you're speaking them. For some folks such an ear is pure instinct, like a singer with perfect pitch, while others may have to consciously work at developing it. It's worth the effort.

That ear is useful outside as well as inside the recording booth. One should be constantly aware of all those voices you hear every day - while talking with friends, watching TV, listening to the radio, arguing with the boss, making phone calls. All that talk gets filed away in your memory bank, consciously or not, and is there to be retrieved when you're in front of the microphone.

A sharp ear has another solid use. An invaluable tool in learning how to do this kind of work is to listen to as many other narrators as possible, either as a monitor-reviewer or simply by borrowing tapes to listen to at home. You'll quickly find out who youlike and who youdon't, what to emulate and what to avoid at all costs. Eventually, you'll develop your own style, but attempted emulation is a pretty good way to start off. This is how we all learned to talk in the first place.

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Similarly, the best way to gauge your own work is to listen to your tapes as often as possible. Listen for at least a half-hour at a time, preferably longer (without following the print copy - just listen). Far too often we sound nothing whatever like we think we sound. Apply this standard: if someone started speaking to you this way, say at a social gathering, how would you react? Would you be fascinated? Bored? Amused? Offended? Irritated? Interested? Insulted? Would you be eager to hear more, or want to run screaming from the room? Does what you're hearing sound energetic and committed? Bizarrely eccentric? Stiff and lifeless? Try being your own audience for a while. You may be surprised.

It's also important to learn how to hear, as you're reading, how this will sound to the listener who will be hearing this book without a print copy to refer to. Are the transitions back and forth from dialogue to narrative bell-clear? How about the dialogue between different characters? What about changes of scene, mood, subject, timeframe, et al? Whatever the demands, we must be constantly gauging the sound of what we're doing, not just the look of the page.

But probably the most valuable use for a fine-tuned ear is to hear the voice of the author as you scan the page. The writing may be coldly factual, warmly compassionate, ironic, angry, humorous (sly to slapstick), snippy, cerebral, profound, laid back, pumped up, coy, cozy, inhibited, uninhibited, affectionate, affected, downright incomprehensible - or any combination of the above. The sensitive narrator will wean him/herself from concentrating on listening to "How'm I doin'?" to listening for the writer's silent rhythms.

None of which, you may have noticed, has much at all to do with the voice. A good ear is every bit as important, maybe even more so. With it, the most ordinary voice can be riveting to listen to.

Without it, nothing else matters.

All right, enough about you. Now let's talk about ....

**THEM**

Namely, all those folks outthere who'll be listening to these books. It issafe to assume that they: (1) speak and understand English, (2) have read a book before, and/or (3) have listened to a recorded book before. This absolves you of the need to talk v-e-r-y s-1-o-w-1-y so as not to confuse them.

We may also assume that they listen to recorded books not because they're hard of hearing (you don't have to shout) or, shall we say, intellectually challenged. If a non-fiction book on any given subject is requested, do assume that the reader cares about that subject, has read other material on it, has some degree of expertise in or knowledge of it (possibly a good deal more than you have), and/or wants to learn more about it. And if the selection is fiction, the reader may be a fan of the author or of the genre, has probably read similar material in the past, and simply wants a good story well told. (Gosh, just like the reasons we read books! Amazing.)­

And they know more about you than you suspect. They know, for instance, that you are an adult human of the male or female persuasion; that you have certain human attributes (mouth, saliva, teeth, stomach, nose) ; that you are a person reading from a book into a microphone with the deliberate intention of having it listened to; and that you are not a roomful of people, just one lone soul. This should relieve you of the responsibility of trying to con them into thinking otherwise.

Also, except for the children, they're not children. And even the children have their own smarts. None of these listeners will appreciate being condescended to - that creepy tone of charity some well-meaning but ill­advised narrators use when they read to "those less fortunate". And, having lives of their own, they tend not to much care about your needs or your insecurities or your artistic vision, if any. They just want to read the book, and it's your job to get it to them. Tell them the story. What story? The one the author wrote. Tell it how? The way the author wrote it.

What could be simpler?

**From *THE HARDSCRABBLE CHRONICLES***

By Laurie Bogart Morrow

*How To Get Here*

Likely as not, you’re coming from the south, so head north about two, two and a half hours. You’ll know your first turn when you see the lake on the right, but keep your eyes peeled between May, when the trees are in bud, and October, when the leaves are falling, because you can’t see the lake for the trees. Once you have your bearings, look for a right—not the one that ends at the old Demeritt farm, but the one that goes past the fire-pine swamp. A stone’s throw after the spot where Clydie Mason hit the twelve-point buck that wrecked his Ford pickup, hang a left. (Don’t look for Clydie’s truck. They towed it away an hour or so after it happened, about six years ago.) Finally, you come to the bridge. Cross over, but if it’s nighttime, you might not realize you’re on the bridge because it looks just like a road with a river underneath. You can make a right after that, but the next one is better because it takes you onto Brush Hollow Road and over Daniels Hill, which gives you a lovely view of the Village. You’ll know you’re on the right track when you see the big field with the pond. When you see the field, then you’re just down the road apiece.

One word of advice: Don’t look for road signs. There aren’t any in Hardscrabble because everyone knows where they’re going. Oh…and another thing. If you ask a man who’s wearing denim overalls, a plaid shirt, a soft-brimmed felt hat called a crusher, and he’s chewing tobacco, then you’re asking a native. A native is a dyed-in-the-wool Yankee, and Yankees are plain-speaking folk. Ask him where the road goes, and he’ll probably say, “Wal, I reckon it jest stays where it is.”

If you get turned around and all else fails, your best bet is simply to head north by northeast as the crow flies and go straight.

You’ll get here…eventually.

**From a Review of Susan Cheever’s *American Bloomsbury***

By George Black

Once upon a time, in a small, pretty town in Massachusetts, three houses by a crossroads were home, over a 40-year period, to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Louisa May Alcott, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Margaret Fuller. Here, the Transcendentalists, inspired by Emerson’s genius and kept from penury by his wife’s family fortune, set out to fling open the doors of American thought. Among them they invented the national literature: *Walden*, *The Scarlet Letter*, and *Little Women* all came out of the intellectual crucible of Concord. Sharing ideas, sharing love affairs, Emerson and his acolytes turned their backs on the authority of church and state, denounced slavery, challenged the sexual straitjacket in which men bound women, and communed ecstatically with the natural world. The Transcendentalists were nothing if not comprehensive

For the Concord group, nature was at the core of things. And that’s the great lesson that echoes from Emerson down through the past 150 years—that the exaltation of the natural world is inseparable from a whole interconnected set of standards to live by, from Margaret Fuller’s protofeminism to the Alcott family’s militant support for the Underground Railroad. The same principle applies, needless to say, to the modern strain of environmentalism, with feminism, civil rights, and antiwar sentiment having played a comparable role.

**Some Often Mispronounced Words**

Vehemently impious asterisk compromise

Hyperbole pseudonym awry entourage

ewe parameters ecosystem nomenclature

telemetry library subtle bayou

promulgate February infamous epitome

long-lived rhetoric

**From The Story of Mankind, by Hendrik van Loon**

When I was twelve or thirteen years old, an uncle of mine who gave me my love for books and pictures promised to take me upon a memorable expedition. I was to go with him to the top of the tower of Old Saint Lawrence in Rotterdam.

And so, one fine day, a sexton with a key as large as that of Saint Peter opened a mysterious door. "Ring the bell," he said, "when you come back and want to get out," and with a great grinding of rusty old hinges he separated us from the noise of the busy street and locked us into a world of new and strange experiences.

For the first time in my life I was confronted by the phenomenon of audible silence. When we had climbed the first flight of stairs, I added another discovery to my limited knowledge of natural phenomena—that of tangible darkness. A match showed us where the upward road continued. We went to the next floor and then to the next and the next until I had lost count and then there came still another floor, and suddenly we had plenty of light. This floor was on an even height with the roof of the church, and it was used as a storeroom. Covered with many inches of dust, there lay the abandoned symbols of a venerable faith which had been discarded by the good people of the city many years ago. That which had meant life and death to our ancestors was here reduced to junk and rubbish. The industrious rat had built his nest among the carved images and the ever watchful spider had opened up shop between the outspread arms of a kindly saint.

The next floor showed us from where we had derived our light. Enormous open windows with heavy iron bars made the high and barren room the roosting place of hundreds of pigeons. The wind blew through the iron bars and the air was filled with a weird and pleasing music. It was the noise of the town below us, but a noise which had been purified and cleansed by the distance. The rumbling of heavy carts and the clinking of horses' hoofs, the winding of cranes and pulleys, the hissing sound of the patient steam which had been set to do the work of man in a thousand different ways—they had all been blended into a softly rustling whisper which provided a beautiful background for the trembling cooing of the pigeons.

Here the stairs came to an end and the ladders began. And after the first ladder (a slippery old thing which made one feel his way with a cautious foot) there was a new and even greater wonder, the town-clock. I saw the heart of time. I could hear the heavy pulsebeats of the rapid seconds—one—two—three— up to sixty. Then a sudden quivering noise when all the wheels seemed to stop and another minute had been chopped off eternity. Without pause it began again—one—two—three—until at last after a warning rumble and the scraping of many wheels a thunderous voice, high above us, told the world that it was the hour of noon.

On the next floor were the bells. The nice little bells and their terrible sisters. In the centre the big bell, which made me turn stiff with fright when I heard it in the middle of the night telling a story of fire or flood. In solitary grandeur it seemed to reflect upon those six hundred years during which it had shared the joys and the sorrows of the good people of Rotterdam. Around it, neatly arranged like the blue jars in an old- fashioned apothecary shop, hung the little fellows, who twice each week played a merry tune for the benefit of the country-folk who had come to market to buy and sell and hear what the big world had been doing. But in a corner—all alone and shunned by the others—a big black bell, silent and stern, the bell of death.

Then darkness once more and other ladders, steeper and even more dangerous than those we had climbed before, and suddenly the fresh air of the wide heavens. We had reached the highest gallery. Above us the sky. Below us the city— a little toy-town, where busy ants were hastily crawling hither and thither, each one intent upon his or her particular business, and beyond the jumble of stones, the wide greenness of the open country.

It was my first glimpse of the big world.

**From Courting Disaster, by Carolyn Keene; a Nancy Drew and Hardy Boys mystery.**

"Joe! Watch it!" As he shouted, Frank grabbed his brother and dove to the right. Frank grimaced as his hip slammed into the pavement, and he and Joe flipped over.

A split-second later the pickup roared by, missing Joe's foot by inches. The boys raised up in time to see the truck take a skidding turn around the side of the main lodge.

"What was *that* about?" Joe shook his head and tried to catch his breath.

"That truck tried to hit us," Frank replied, up and ready to take off. "You all

right?"

"I'm okay," Joe said. "Where'd the pickup go?"

Joe was right behind his brother as Frank sprinted toward the main lodge. An instant later they heard the crunch of metal, and Frank stopped so short that Joe nearly ran into him.

"Youch!" Joe said. Twenty yards in front of them the truck had smashed into an old tree. The engine had died, and the driver's door hung open.

Frank cocked his head to one side. "Listen!"

Joe heard footsteps running away from the scene. He and Frank raced in the direction of the noise but stopped when they found themselves facing a dense tangle of undergrowth at the boundary of the resort.

"Forget it," Joe panted, bent over hands on knees to catch his breath. "We'll never catch them in there."

He and Joe made their way slowly back to the truck. "Hey, it belongs to the resort," Joe said, pointing to the door, which had the McCallum logo on it.

"Key's in the ignition," Frank commented, leaning in the open door. He took out a handkerchief and removed the key by its McCallum key ring, careful to handle only the edges. "Maybe there'll be prints on it."

Joe frowned at the smashed truck. "I wonder who has access to—"

"Hey! What are you doing?" an angry voice cut Joe off.

Turning, Joe saw three men in colorful sports clothes approaching from the direction of the main lodge.

"Did you happen to see who was in this truck?" Frank asked the new arrivals.

"I didn't see anyone but you two," one of the three, a heavy-set, balding man, replied. "What did you do to that truck?"

"What did we do?" Joe echoed. "We—"

He broke off as a fourth person, a thin man in a sport jacket and khaki slacks, hurried up, a flashlight bobbing in front of him. "I'm the night manager," he said. When he saw the wrecked truck, he frowned and shone his flashlight on Frank and Joe. "Looks like you two have some explaining to do."

**From Time Magazine, June 7, 2004**

**Critical Condition: America's Obesity Crisis Are You Responsible for Your Own Weight?**

Pro: Absolutely. Government has no business interfering with what you eat.  
by Radley Balko

Nutrition activists are agitating for a panoply of initiatives that would bring the government between you and your waistline. President Bush earmarked $125 million in his budget for the encouragement of healthy lifestyles. State legislatures and school boards have begun banning snacks and soda from school campuses and vending machines. Several state legislators and Oakland, Calif., Mayor Jerry Brown, among others, have called for a "fat tax" on high-calorie foods. Congress is considering menu- labeling legislation that would force chain restaurants to list fat, sodium, and calories for each item.

That is precisely the wrong way to fight obesity. Instead of intervening in the array of food options available to Americans, our government ought to be working to foster a personal sense of responsibility for our health and well-being.

We're doing just the opposite. For decades, America's healthcare system has been migrating toward nationalized medicine. We have a law that requires some Americans to pay for other Americans' medicine, and several states bar health insurers from charging lower premiums to people who stay fit. That removes the financial incentive for making healthy decisions. Worse, socialized health care makes us troublingly tolerant of government trespasses on our personal freedom. If my neighbor's heart attack shows up on my tax bill, I'm more likely to support state regulation of what he eats - restrictions on what grocery stores can put on their shelves, for example, or what McDonald's can put between its sesame-seed buns.

The best way to combat the public-health threat of obesity is to remove obesity from the realm of "public health." It's difficult to think of a matter more private and less public than what we choose to put in our bodies. Give Americans moral, financial and personal responsibility for their own health, and obesity is no longer a public matter but a private one - with all the costs, concerns and worries of being overweight borne only by those people who are actually overweight.

Let each of us take full responsibility for our diet and lifestyle. We're likely to make better decisions when someone else isn't paying for the consequences.

*Radley Balko, based in Alexandria, VA, is a policy analyst with the Cato Institute and a columnist for* [*FoxNews.com*](http://FoxNews.com)*.*

Con: Not if blaming the victim is just an excuse to let industry off the hook.  
by Kelly Brownell and Marion Nestle

The food industry, like any other, must grow to stay in business. One way it does so is by promoting unhealthy foods, particularly to children. Each year kids see more than 10,000 food ads on TV alone, almost all for items like soft drinks, fast foods and sugared cereals. In the same year that the government spent $2 million on its main nutrition-education program, McDonald's spent $500 million on its We Love to See You Smile campaign. It can be no surprise that teenagers consume nearly twice as much soda as milk (the reverse was true 20 years ago), and that 25% of all vegetables eaten in the U.S. are French fries.

To counter criticism, the food industry and pro-business groups use a public relations script focused on personal responsibility. The script has three elements: 1) if people are overweight, it is their own fault; 2) industry responds to consumer demand but does not create it; and 3) insisting that industry change - say, by not marketing to children or requiring restaurants to reveal calories - is an attack on freedom.

Why quarrel with the personal-responsibility argument?

First, it's wrong. The prevalence of obesity increases year after year. Were people less responsible in 2002 than in 2001? Obesity is a global problem. Is irresponsibility an epidemic around the world?

Second, it ignores biology. Humans are hardwired, as a survival strategy, to like foods high in sugar, fat and calories.

Third, the argument is not helpful. Imploring people to eat better and exercise more has been the default approach to obesity for years. That is a failed experiment.

Fourth, personal responsibility is a trap. The argument is startlingly similar to the tobacco industry's efforts to stave off legislative and regulatory interventions. The nation tolerated personal-responsibility arguments from Big Tobacco for decades, with disastrous results.

Governments collude with industry when they shift attention from conditions promoting poor diets to the individuals who consume them. Government should be doing everything it can to create conditions that lead to healthy eating, support parents in raising healthy children, and make decisions in the interests of public health, rather than private profit.

*Kelly Brownell is chairman of Yale's department of psychology; Marion Nestle is professor of public health at N.Y.U.*

**An Excerpt from “Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince’ by J.K. Rowling.**

“Here we are,” said Mrs. Cole, as they turned off the second landing and stopped outside the first door in a long corridor. She knocked twice and entered. “Tom? You’ve got a visitor. This is Mr.. Dumberton….sorry, Mr. Dunderbore. He’s come to tell you … well , I’ll let him do it.”

Harry and the two Dumbledores entered the room and Mrs. Cole closed the door on them. It was a small room with nothing in it except an old wardrobe and an iron bedstead. A boy was sitting on top of the gray blankets, his legs stretched out in front of him, holding a book. There was no trace of the Gaunts in Tom Riddle’s face. Merope had got her dying wish: he was his handsome father in miniature, tall for eleven-years-old, dark haired and pale. His eyes narrowed slightly as he took in Dumbledore’s eccentric appearance. There was a moment’s silence.

“How do you do, Tom?” said Dumbledore, walking forward and holding out his hand. The boy hesitated, then took it, and they shook hands. Dumbledore drew up the hard wooden chair beside Riddle, so the pair of them looked rather like a hospital patient and visitor.

“I am Professor Dumbeldore.”

“Professor?” repeated Riddle. He looked wary. “Is that like ‘doctor’? What are you here for? Did *she* get you in to have a look at me?” He was pointing at the door through which Mrs. Cole had just left.

"No, no," said Dumbledore, smiling.

"I don't believe you," said Riddle. "She wants me looked at, doesn't she? Tell the truth!" He spoke the last three words with a ringing force that was almost shocking. It was a command, and it sounded as though he had given it many times before. His eyes had widened and he was glaring at Dumbledore, who made no response except to continue smiling pleasantly. After a few seconds, Riddle stopped glaring, though he looked, if anything, warier still.

"I have told you. My name is Professor Dumbledore and I work at a school called Hogwarts. I have come to offer you a place at my school....... your new school, if you would like to come.

Riddle's reaction to this was most surprising. He leapt from the bed and backed away from Dumbledore, looking furious. "You can't kid me! The asylum, that's where you're from, isn't it? `Professor,' yes, of course.....well, I'm not going, see? That old cat's the one who should be in the asylum. I never did anything to little Amy Benson or Denis Bishop, and you can ask them, they'll tell you!"

"I am not from the asylum," said Dumbledore patiently. "I am a teacher and, if you will sit down calmly, I shall tell you about Hogwarts. Of course, if you would rather not come to the school, nobody will force you...."

"I'd like to see them try!" sneered Riddle.

"Hogwarts," Dumbledore went on, as though he had not heard Riddle's last words, is a school for people with special abilities..."

"I'm not mad!"

"I know that you are not mad. Hogwarts is not a school for mad people. It is a school of magic."

1. communique
2. extradition
3. gazebo
4. recessionary
5. impotent
6. ideology
7. Nevada, Iowa
8. stalwart
9. unconscionable
10. fraught
11. con parameter
12. vivial
13. cogent
14. adulation
15. per se
16. pinnacle
17. esophagus
18. inculcate
19. melee
20. unanimity
21. Allamakee County, Iowa
22. societal
23. espionage
24. protege
25. echelon
26. vociferous
27. hallucinatory
28. amalgamation
29. maniacal
30. apostasy
31. cavalry
32. odiferous
33. manipulable
34. attache
35. equivocal
36. paraphernalia
37. lambaste
38. Des Moines, Iowa
39. bacchanalian
40. ratio
41. meringue
42. panacea
43. coercion
44. scion
45. prodigious
46. poem
47. subliminal
48. vignette
49. sutured
50. Des Plaines, Illinois
51. bilateral
52. mischievous
53. decipher
54. inexorable
55. envoy
56. bubonic
57. harass
58. evangelical
59. contaminant
60. apostolic
61. reconciliation
62. acclimatize
63. Madrid, Iowa
64. vicissitudes
65. chrysanthemum
66. reciprocity
67. cliche
68. rationale
69. charismatic
70. niche
71. clientele
72. cuisine
73. dichotomy
74. carcinoma
75. entrepreneurial
76. emissary
77. ambivalence
78. bourgeois
79. sequestered
80. pejorative
81. euphemism
82. abominable
83. cinnamon
84. eccentricities
85. acquiesce
86. amenable
87. anachronism
88. obsequious
89. ophthalmologist
90. irrelevant
91. androgynous
92. regime
93. ecumenical
94. acronym
95. preventive
96. autonomy
97. epidemiology
98. imbroglio
99. divisive
100. recoup
101. Louisa County, Iowa