

Time Management

- Time can be a **cherished friend** or **despised enemy**.
- To a student, time may seem to be **both**:
 - **Four (or five) long years at UTD to achieve your education.**
 - **A seemingly endless stretch of life before you, with plenty of time to achieve all your goals.**
- **Or:**
 - **Just one week to study for tests, complete a major report, go to class, and (maybe) sleep.**
 - **Only *eight more hours* (you think, blearily, at two AM) until that Java test!**
- **Actually, time really is both; we can use it jealously by the second or waste it outrageously.**



Time “Conservation”

- Despite what you may think, with a little planning and organization, time can always be your BFF.
- The fact is that many students (and a lot of folks that are no longer students) waste a great deal of time because they don’t know simple methods for using time well.
- We will cover a few today. Note that we will be covering time management from the **student viewpoint**.
- Once you move into industry, there are many books and treatises on time management. A few are shown on the next page.



Time Management Books

- *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen R. Covey
- *First Things First*, Stephen R. Covey
- *The Time Trap*, Alec Mackenzie
- *Time Tactics of Very Successful People*, B. Eugene Griessman
- *The 25 Best Time Management Tools & Techniques: How to Get More Done Without Driving Yourself Crazy*, Pamela Dodd and Doug Sundheim
- *How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life*, Alan Lakein
- *Time Management (Business Skills Express Series)*, Marc Mancini

Note: Much of the material we will study and discuss today is from Mancini's book.

Reviewing Your Time Inventory

- **You were to keep a diary or chart of your activities for seven days prior to today.**
- **Pull out your summaries, and lets consider your week (note – your total time for the week should = 168 hours):**
 - What did you spend the most time doing?
 - What was the second biggest time consumer?
 - How many hours did you spend in classes and labs, studying, and doing homework?
 - How many hours did you spend watching TV, on the internet (non-school-related), on your mobile phone, and so forth?
 - Considering everything, **how much time did you waste?**



Reviewing Your Time Inventory (2)

- **All things considered (and assuming that what you recorded was a typical week):**
 - **What surprised you most in the amount of time you spent in a given activity last week?**
 - **Surveying your summary, what tasks during the week should you probably spend less time in?**
 - **What activities should you spend more time in?**
 - **Did you spend enough time in school-related activities during the past week?**
 - **Did you get sufficient sleep? Assume that you need at least seven hours sleep per night to operate at optimal levels in classes and in doing your school assignments and studying.**

Time Management Misconceptions



- With a little better knowledge about how you use (or misuse) time, you are now better armed as we consider how to use time wisely.
- First, consider a few misconceptions about time management.
 1. Managing every minute is just **obsessive behavior**.
No! Obsessive or compulsory behavior is doing one activity to the exclusion of others, sometimes being unable to quit (E.g., someone who washes their hands dozens of times or takes ten showers a day). We will not be dealing with dull, repetitive, counterproductive behavior, but with a few behavioral changes that will actually make life easier for you.



Misconceptions (2)

1. (continued) **People often associate time management with a “Type A personality.” A Type A personality is typically one that seems obsessed with time. However, it is the so-called Type M person that is really the mature time manager. Consider the difference:**

Type A

Sets unreasonable goals and schedules
Tries to cram activity into every second
Aggressive and hostile
Has few if any friends
Sick a lot
Frantic and continuing activity
Frequently late with an assignment

Type M

Sets reasonable goals and schedules
Plans well and anticipates problems
Relaxed, friendly, understanding
Lots of friends
Generally in good health
Steady work and activity
Gets a lot done (and on time)

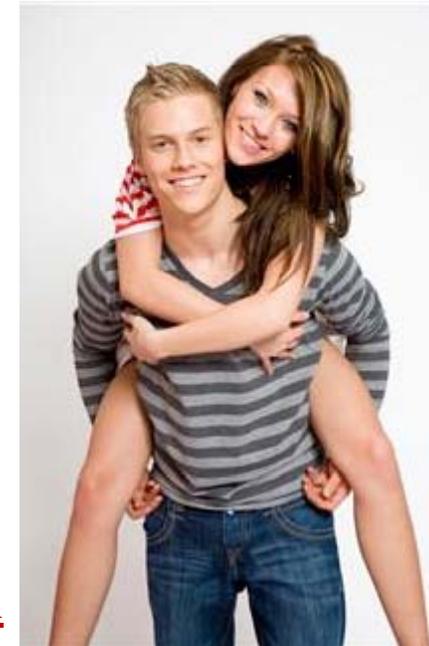
Intelligent time management is NOT the same as obsessive-compulsive behavior!

Misconceptions (3)

2. If I manage my time scrupulously, it will take all the fun out of my life!

It is amazing how many people believe this! In fact, a good time management plan will lay out blocks for “fun.” Recreation is an important part of life!

Another thing: Even doing the things you “must,” as a student, doesn’t necessarily mean you are not having fun. If you cannot get a great deal of fun and satisfaction out of the learning process here at UTD, and if (especially) your engineering and computer science courses don’t seem challenging and “fun,” then you are misplaced either in (1) engineering, (2) college, or (3) both!



Misconceptions (4)

3. Even if I can get myself “time managed,” it won’t help because my (pick one: professor, teammates, classes) are so chaotic that anything I do won’t matter!

In fact, the more organized you are, the better custodian of your time you become, the easier it is to accommodate all the chaos that you will sometime encounter or be forced to deal with. A person who is in complete command of his/her schedule is always able to cope more easily with problems that arise in the daily schedule and assure that time is available to deal with the unforeseen issue(s).

Prioritization

- **Although a major assumption of time management is that we have sufficient time for our life's activities, properly managed, there are periods where time is very precious:**
 - **It's Friday afternoon.**
 - **Three of your pals want to take in that Transformers all-nighter at the nearby cinema that will show all three flicks.**
 - **You have two tests next week.**
 - **A major English essay is next Thursday.**
 - **Your boss wants you to work an extra 10 hours next Tuesday and Wednesday.**
 - **It's Dad's birthday, and Mom wanted you to come home this weekend.**

Prioritization (2)

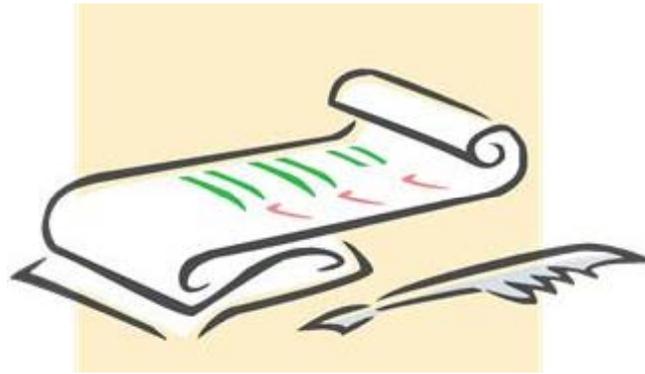


- **We all have periods like that.**
- **What's to do?**
- **Maybe it would be a good idea to consider all the things on our plate next month and try to prioritize them to help decide how to spend next week's precious time!**
- **Let's consider some prioritization systems that might help make useful decisions...**

The ABC System

- **This is a method touted by most time management experts. It is the “old man” of prioritizing strategies.**
- **First, a list is made of all current tasks on the table.**
- **Then tasks are given a value of A-B-C-D.**
 - **A tasks:** Must be done. Completed, they have great value. left undone, they can lead to disaster. They are **immediate**.
 - **B tasks:** Must be done; immediate impact is less, and **can be postponed at least temporarily**. Left undone too long, B's → A.
 - **C tasks:** Can be put off. May eventually become higher priority, but **urgency is far less than even B's**.
 - **D tasks:** “Nice-to-do's.” **Can be delayed indefinitely**. Oddly, when you do get around to them, can be very beneficial.

Practice



- **Now, a little practice: List all the important things you need to do tomorrow (if more than eight, stop at eight).**
- **Mark any must-do tasks A.**
- **Mark important tasks B.**
- **Mark less important tasks C and D, depending on how long they can be put off.**
- **Now reorder the list by priority. For items within a classification, prioritize them as 1, 2, 3, etc. (i.e., A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, ...).**

Practice (2)

- In doing this task prioritization, you have done two important things:
 - You have made a working list that can aid in accomplishing tomorrow's tasks.
 - You have given yourself an insight into a bit about how you think and what you consider important in your life.
- What can you do with the ABC method?
 - Each evening, consult your schedule (see below) and make out tomorrow's list, label items, **and set your priorities.**
 - If you carry a backpack or briefcase on campus, **reserve pockets for A and B tasks, and lump the rest in a third area.**
 - If you have a PDA or even a day-timer, **as you enter tasks by date, mark the priority to help in planning that day's work.**

Variations on the ABC Method

- Use index cards, one per task, lay them out, and prioritize them by putting them in order.
- A variation on the index card method is to have an **A card**, a **B card**, and a **C-D card** on which you list your work items. Attack the **A card** first, and so on.
- The **Inventory System** is sort of a **reverse-ABC** system.
 - Fill out an **evaluation** at the **end of the day**.
 - Include A's, B's etc. accomplished. Compare to plans.
 - **Did the day go as planned?**
 - **Did all A's get accomplished?**
 - **Did unforeseen problems change your plans.**
 - **How would you rate the day?**
 - **How could tomorrow be made better?**



The Payoff System

- An alternative to ABC is the Payoff System:
 - Make a list of the day's tasks.
 - Rate each task 4, 3, 2, 1, depending on the payoff.
 - Attack your task list depending on the payoff:
 - 4 = high payoff, 3 = medium, 2 = low, 1 = no payoff.
- Ex.: Say you have to work very hard to keep up in advance engineering math (ENGR 3300). A BIG test is coming up. Making a good grade on the test could have a huge return in terms of the semester grade. Hence, “Study for 3300 test” = 4.
 - With a payoff -rated list, you wish to complete as many 4's-3's as possible to maximize your score.



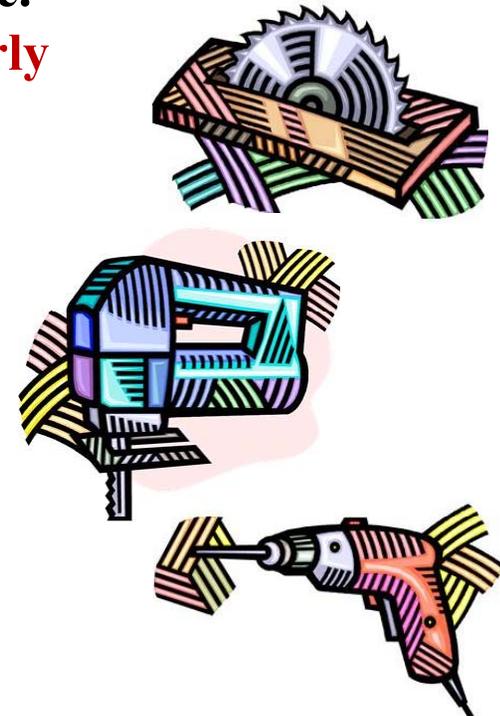


The Pareto Principle

- **Time management seems to be one of those activities that falls under the Pareto Principle:**
 - “Eighty percent of the value of any list of items comes from twenty percent of the items.”
 - Stated in time management principles, “Twenty percent of the items on your to-do list will generate 80 percent of the benefit of all the items you need to do.”
- **What this can mean to the average student is that many of the things you do every day at UTD give you very little net benefit! And a few of the things you do are hugely beneficial.**

A Tool for Change

- **The Pareto Principle: A power tool for change.**
- **Write down a list of things that you do regularly in your life, such as:**
 - Cleaning the apartment (or dorm room).
 - Going to the local Starbucks to relax.
 - Working twenty hours a week.
 - Volunteering at a local hospital.
 - Visiting office hours to get some help.
 - Helping a friend wash a car.
 - Helping a friend with math homework.
 - Going on a date.
- **Following the Pareto Principle, prioritize the list by analyzing potential benefit.**





Procrastination

- **Procrastination** is the habit (or art) of **putting things off**.
- **There is even a National Procrastinator's Club.**
 - **No one is sure of the membership, as a list has never been made.**
 - **The president has been in office for decades, as elections have been postponed.**
 - **Meetings are occasionally scheduled but usually postponed.**
 - **They do celebrate all national holidays, usually months late!**
- **Of course, putting off some task may not necessarily be bad.**
 - **You might put off going to the grocery store for one or two items until you need a few more things, thus saving gas.**
 - **You might put off studying your C++ programming material until next week because you have two other tests this week.**
- **However, procrastination can be a deadly habit to the student or engineering/computer science professional.**

Why Do People Procrastinate?

- There are lots of (seeming good) reasons:
 - Some tasks seem so overwhelming, i.e., just too big to start.*
 - Some jobs are unpleasant (cleaning home bathrooms!).
 - Sometimes the goal or route to completion is unclear.
 - Sometimes people over commit and then really don't have time.
 - Sometimes people fear change – or failure!
 - Some people need the adrenalin rush of postponing a task until there is a frantic, near life-or-death pressure to finish.
- Why do you procrastinate?
 - Looking at the list above, write down your major reasons.
 - List at least three reasons you put things off.
 - Do you feel you are a chronic procrastinator?

* The first three procrastination reasons are primarily outer-influenced, i.e., influenced by the task. The last three are primarily inner-influenced, that is, due to the psychological makeup of the procrastinator.



Your Procrastination

- **Make a list of any tasks you are putting off as follows:**

Tasks I am Putting Off	Reasons I'm Putting Task Off

- **How many tasks can you come up with?**
 - **Is this number of tasks larger or smaller than what you consider your normal “task deferment?” Is it about right?**
 - **Try to relate those tasks to the list on the previous page. Do you feel they represent your normal “mode of operation” with respect to putting things off?**

Putting Off Procrastination (!)

- When you think about it, you can even procrastinate about procrastination!
- That is, you can put off putting things off.
- How can one do that?
- It depends on the task and whether the tendency to procrastinate is influenced by some internal characteristic or by the task itself.
- Let's consider some strategies to remove ourselves from the ranks of the National Procrastinator's Club, basing those choices on the six reasons shown earlier.

Unpleasant Tasks

- Some tasks **aren't fun to do** (bathrooms come to mind)!
- How to turn inertia to action:
 - **Do an unpleasant task first in the day! Now you don't have time to dread it and put it off!**
 - **Put a reminder on your bedside to get you started. That way, the task is hard to avoid.**
 - **Make an advantage/disadvantage list to convince your to do it. Useful for highly unpleasant tasks!**
 - **The “measles” approach. When putting off a task, put a red dot by it. When the dots accumulate (“measles”), you know it's time to start work!**



You Are Overwhelmed



- A task may seem **HUGE**. You can't imagine finishing, so why start?
- **How to make it more “underwhelming?”**
 - **Divide and conquer: Break a large task into smaller tasks, each of which is not so scary. A time-honored approach in engineering projects!**
 - **Find a solitary place to work where there are no distractions. Leave the dorm and go to the ECSN engineering library (usually pretty quiet). Go to a corner of Starbucks! Isolate yourself and force action.**
 - **Ride the momentum: Once started on a hard task, you may get suddenly energized. When this happens, pour on the coal! Don't stop until your mind starts to wander.**

Task Flow or Goal is Fuzzy



- Sometimes a task flow (path to the goal) or the goal itself are fuzzy.
This may be true on a semester project assignment in a new class.
 - See a mentor, classmate, or the instructor to clarify the goal or intermediate steps.
 - As you understand better, draw a diagram of the major steps to the goal.
 - Clearly define the goal. Your instructor can ALWAYS help you with this. Of course, a certain amount of “fuzziness” in the goal may be a way to give you some freedom in an assignment.
 - Once you have clarified the steps and end point, proceed.

You Fear Change



- **This is the first of the inner-directed reasons for procrastination.** It is a common reason, as all of us generally dislike to change our routines and habits. How to address this fear?
 - **Change your physical environment; old habits cling to old places. This might mean changing where you study.**
 - **Change your daily routine. Always go to the cafeteria at 12:30? Go at one PM! Go to class by a different route. Forcing a pattern change may change your attitude toward a deferred job.**
 - **Do nothing (!). Force yourself to sit in your apartment or dorm, stare at a wall, do nothing. Soon boredom will make change seem good!**

You Fear Failure



- All of us fear failure – even VERY confident people! **Some people put fear of a failed public speech as greater than fear of death!**
- A difficult fear to overcome for many. I am not able to offer you six months of psychoanalysis. However:
 - Sometimes, the best way to address this inner-driven reason for procrastination is to “plunge in.”
 - Since fear of failure usually means **public failure**, you may be able to start such a task in private and practice until you feel comfortable.
 - Remember these quotes:
 - Capote: “Failure is the condiment that gives success its flavor.”
 - Roosevelt: “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”

You Tend to Overcommit

- Can you say “No?” **I know those who can’t.**
- A fellow student needs help, a students organization needs workers on Saturday, your boss at your part-time job needs extra help tomorrow evening, the local soup kitchen desperately needs volunteers.
- **Its easy to over commit!**
- **Try this:**
 - Right now, list on a page of paper all the tasks you are committed to that you would like to avoid.
 - **Prioritize them.**
 - **Cross out the bottom half.**
 - **Contact the person(s) you are committed to and “uncommit.”**



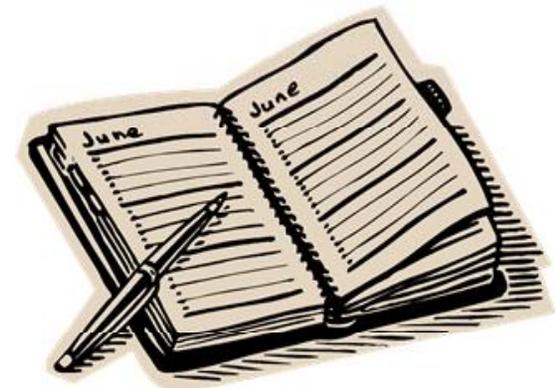
You LOVE the Adrenalin Rush

- A relative ALWAYS leaves for the airport late. **He hates to sit around the airport. Besides, think how exciting it will be seeing if he makes it onto his flight!**
- This habit – “cramming” – can be dangerous.
 - Last minute work increases the probability of mistakes.
 - You may not have time to correct mistakes.
 - Some new, unexpected task may preempt your task.
- Eliminating cramming is hard. You might:
 - Convince yourself that cramming is dangerous.
 - Try previously-mentioned strategies to help eliminate this toxic habit, including clearly writing out task steps, dividing and conquering, and the “measles” approach.



Scheduling and Allocating

- **Now that you know how you have recently spent your time, we can think about how to be more productive.**
- **You will need a scheduling tool.** This can be a simple “day-timer” (pocket or briefcase paper journal) or you can use something like Microsoft Outlook™, if you have MS Office on your computer.
- **You can use this, and some of the techniques we have discussed, to carve out a schedule that allows time for all significant activities (including sleep and leisure time!).**





Scheduling (2)

- **Do the following:**
 1. **Enter 100% commitments first. These are items like classes, MD appointments, teacher conferences, labs, meetings with project teams (as you will soon have in ECS 1200).**
 2. **You will want to go out the full semester, at least. Clearly, you cannot do this in one setting!**
 3. **Try to include all tests as soon as they are scheduled.**
 4. **Add study and homework segments as make sense. Don't put them all on the weekend!!!!**
 5. **Add other important items like meetings of IEEE or ACM student chapter groups.**
 6. **Be sure to reserve leisure blocks, especially if you have some weekly scheduled items (dates, group outings, etc.).**



Scheduling (3)

7. **Make sure to include uncommitted blocks. Remember, things come up! One study found that high-level executives (by nature, pretty efficient) that purposely included blank areas in their schedules were actually more productive.**
8. **Use the concept of “clustering.” Say you live in an apartment and pay the electric bill. You have a credit card and a gas card as well. Try to schedule a time when you can pay all the bills at once, increasing your efficiency. Try to limit time to answer emails and/or texts to specific time periods.**
9. **Try to work around your natural body clock. See next slide.**
10. **Don’t be a slave to your schedule, but try to hew to it whenever possible. That way, you WILL conserve time!**



Your Body Clock*

1. I naturally wake up: early ___ late ___
2. I have an energy loss: early afternoon ___ night ___
3. I naturally wake up: 6:30 AM ___ 8:30 AM ___
4. Light in my bedroom disturbs me: Yes ___ No ___
5. I hate to watch late-night TV: Yes ___ No ___
6. To study, I pull all-nighters: No ___ Yes ___
7. Eating late affects my sleep: Yes ___ No ___
8. When traveling, I eat early: Yes ___ No ___

***If you answered mainly in the left column, your body clock operates on an early cycle. To the right, you are a night person.**

Comments on Scheduling

- **A schedule is not a decree.** It is simply another tool in your arsenal to help you manage your time more effectively.
- **You should use a personal schedule to help your keep your life on track, to manage your time more easily, and to help you work more effectively as you attack the tasks that all of us must juggle in our lives at UTD.**
- **Help to manage your schedule by reviewing tasks, prioritizing, and eliminating marginal tasks whenever possible.**



Some Final Comments

- **Learn the art of anticipating:** The saying goes, “A stitch in time saves nine.” This simply means that **if we anticipate problems before they appear, we can save a great deal of time.** How do we do this?
 - Allow for problems that might occur. Example: You are going into the UTD bookstore, and it shouldn’t take you ten minutes to run your errand. **Put enough coins into the parking meter for thirty minutes. What if the bookstore is crowded? What if you can’t find what you need? Think ahead.**
 - Be a pack rat. **Make a list of common things you need as a student and keep them on hand** (e.g., printer paper). **If you run out of something you really need, it can waste time!**



Anticipating (2)

- **Have backups! Make an extra copy of important material for each course and have it stored in a different location. Remember the Wallenda effect!**
- **Be careful how you use your phone and your texting capability! Texting, voice communication, using the internet – all are integral parts of our lives, and actually useful as well. However, know how to use them to help yourself, and avoid addiction! Mobile/notepad actions to avoid:**
 - “Phone tag.”
 - Getting stuck on hold.
 - Trying to decipher a message that is partly stuck in the ether.
 - Not writing down items in a key phone message so that you can remember!
 - Wasting time on your phone or notepad (text, talk, web surfing).

Learning to Say “No!”

- This goes along with our discussion of over-commitment.
- You **cannot overcrowd your schedule** if you do not commit to tasks unrealistically.
- **How to say “No!”:**
 - Decline by giving a solid reason.
 - Use your schedule. Consult it, decide you are completely (or nearly) booked, and decline.
 - Don’t say “Let me think it over...” Eventually, you’ll say yes.
 - If possible (and the person is important), suggest a trade-off or alternative action.





Time Leaks and Eliminating Them

- All of us (including your teacher) waste too much time!
- **Where does all time go? Consider:**
 - How much time do you watch TV/week? You ___ Avg. 40
 - How many hours do you read/week? You ___ Avg. 2.8
 - How much time will you spend eating in your lifetime? You ___ Avg. 6-8yr
 - How much time will you spend in lines? You ___ Avg. 5 yr
 - How much of your time will you squander in your life looking for things? You ___ Avg. 1 yr
- Clearly, we waste a good deal of time in unproductive ways (**can you believe that TV number?**).



Leaks (2)

- If we can identify leaks, we can eliminate or plug them.
- **Consider some of these potential leaks and how to plug them:**
 - **Socializing:** Most of us like to interact with our fellows. That's fine, in general, as people are social animals. However, it can get out of hand. **The schedule can help you here!**
 - **Misplacing tools you need:** This can be really tough if you lose something like (1) lecture notes, (2) today's homework assignment, or (3) your billfold/purse (my wife always misplaces her sunglasses). For school – and eventually work-related – items, **have a file or storage method that allows you to keep your most important items at your fingertips.**



Leaks (3)

- **Forgetting things:** Again, a schedule can help, as can a “daily to-do list.” Write things down. Not only do you have a written record of those three items you need at the store, but the act of writing reinforces your memory (**tactile reinforcement!**).
- **Personal interactions:** Some people are long-winded (guilty!). It is often necessary to interact with (1) teachers, (2) counselors, (3) bosses, (4) the advising office. If stuck in a situation where “time is a-wastin,” disengage by:
 - Stating a time limitation to the interaction.
 - Staying standing.
 - Keeping your body at an angle to the person. This “body language” says you need to leave.
 - Say, “Can we walk and talk? I have an engagement.” Then start walking! This pretty much says it all.



Summary

- **There are easy and easy-to-learn ways to manage your time.**
- **Create a schedule. But make it your servant, not your master.**
- **Prioritize tasks daily.** Eliminate the “nice to do’s” when time is at a premium.
- **Don’t procrastinate!** Do the hardest things first/early!
- **Work with your body clock to be at peak efficiency.**
- **Anticipate problems** to avoid them and save time.
- **Plug “time leaks.”**