



from ***All I Ever Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten***

by Robert Fulgham, 1988

Good friends finally put their resources together and made themselves a child. Me, I'm the godfather in the deal. I take my job seriously. So far I've introduced the kid to the good things in life—chocolate, beer, cigars, Beethoven, and dirty jokes. I don't think he cares much for Beethoven. But he's only a year and a half old, and he'll get tired of chocolate, beer, cigars, and dirty jokes...

Also I introduced him to crayons. Bought the Crayola beginner set--the short, fat, thick ones with training wheels. Every few weeks I would put one in his hand and show him how to make a mark with it. Mostly he just held it and stared at me. He had a cigar in his other hand and couldn't tell the difference between it and the Crayola. Then we went through the orifice-stuffing phase where the Crayola went in his mouth and ears and nose. Finally, last week, I held his hand and made a big red mark with the Crayola on a sheet of newsprint. And WHAM! He got the picture. A light bulb went off in a new room in his head. And he did it again on his own. Now, reports his mother, with a mixture of pleasure and pain, there is no stopping him.

Crayolas plus imagination (the ability to create images)—these make for happiness if you are a child. Amazing things, Crayolas. Some petroleum based wax, some dye, a little binder—not much to them. Until you add the imagination. The Binney Company in Pennsylvania makes about two billion of these oleaginous sticks of pleasure every year and exports them to every country in the United Nations. Crayolas are one of the few things the human race has in common. That green and yellow box hasn't changed since 1937. In fact, the only change has been to rename the "flesh" color "peach." That's a sign of progress.

The way I know about "flesh" and "peach" is that when I bought my godson his trainer set I indulged myself. Bought my very own set of sixty-four. In the big four section box with the sharpener built right in. Never had my own set before. Seems like I was always too young or too old to have one. While I was at it I bought several sets. Got one for the kid's mother and father and explained it was theirs, not his.

What I notice is that every adult or child I give a new set of Crayolas to goes a little funny. The kids smile, get a glazed look on their faces, pour the crayons out, and just look at them for a while. Then they go to work on the nearest flat surface and will draw anything you ask, just name it. The adults always get the most wonderful kind of sheepish smile on their faces—a mixture of delight and nostalgia and silliness. And they immediately start telling you about all their experiences with Crayolas. Their first box, using every color, breaking them, trying to get them in the box in order again, trying to use them in a bundle, putting them on hot things to see them melt, shaving them onto waxed paper and ironing them into stained glass windows, eating them, and on and on. If you want an interesting party sometime, combine cocktails and a fresh box of Crayolas for everybody.

When you think about it, for sheer bulk there's more art done with Crayolas than with anything else. There must be billions of sheets of paper in every country in the world, in billions of boxes and closets and attics and cupboards, covered with billions of pictures in crayon. The imagination of the human race poured out like a river. Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev used crayons, I bet. So did Fidel and the emperor of Japan and Rajiv Gandhi

and Mrs. Thatcher and Mr. Mubarak and maybe even the ayatollah. And just about everybody else you care to name.

Maybe we should develop a Crayola bomb as our next secret weapon. A happiness weapon. A Beauty Bomb. And every time a crisis developed, we would launch one. It would explode high in the air—explode softly—and send thousands, millions, of little parachutes into the air. Floating down to earth—boxes of Crayolas. And we wouldn't go cheap either—not little boxes of eight. Boxes of sixty-four, with the sharpener built right in. With silver and gold and copper, magenta and peach and lime, amber and umber and all the rest. And people would smile and get a little funny look on their faces and cover the world with imagination.

Guess that sounds absurd, doesn't it? A bit dumb. Crazy and silly and weird. But I was reading in the paper today how much money the Russians and our Congress just set aside for weapons. And I think about what those weapons will do. And I'm not confused about what's weird and silly and crazy and absurd. And I'm not confused about the lack of, or the need for imagination in low or high places. Pass the crayons, please.

This essay has a major thesis—perhaps two. Use your crayons to express the main point of the essay as you see it. Then underline the phrases in the essay that support your opinion.

