

Bathroom Problems: Read the articles and discuss the questions.

ARTICLE 1: In cities the world over, men (and, to a lesser extent, women) who urinate in the street — *al fresco* — are a **scourge** of urban life, costing millions of dollars for cleaning and the repair of damage to public infrastructure. And, oh, the **stench**.

Now, Paris has a new weapon against what the French call “wild peeing”: a sleek and eco-friendly public toilet. The urinal looks more like a modernist flower box than a receptacle for human waste.

You can even grow flowers in its **compost**.

The Parisian **innovation** was **spurred** by a problem of public urination so endemic that City Hall recently proposed dispatching a nearly 2,000-strong “**incivility** brigade” of **truncheon-wielding** officers to try to prevent bad behavior, which also includes leaving dog waste on the street and littering cigarette butts. Fines for public urination are steep — about \$75.

Even that was not deterrent enough, officials say. A small brigade of sanitation workers still has to scrub about 1,800 miles of sidewalk each day. And dozens of surfaces are splattered by urine, according to City Hall.

1 .What is a scourge? What is a stench? What is innovation? What does the verb “spurred” mean? What is compost?

2. What is an example, besides peeing in public, of incivility? For example, do you view talking on the cell phone at the dinner table as incivility? What things were acceptable to do in your parents day that are not acceptable now? For example, portraying women as weak and subservient was more acceptable 50 years ago than now.

3. Some women don't like men to open doors for them because they fear it makes men think they are dependent. Others feel this is courteous behavior by men. How do you feel about it?

4. Do American homes have more bathrooms than houses in your country? Many young married couples insist their house have double vanities (sinks) in the master bathroom. The idea of having to share a sink with their spouse is horrible. Does this seem natural to you or ridiculous?

ARTICLE 2: Smaller lavatories are helping airlines to add extra seats to new and existing aircraft for more profit, but some passengers — if they can get into the bathrooms — say they are being **shortchanged**.

The continuing installation of smaller and **reconfigured** bathrooms, which began in late 2013, has led to complaints about safety issues, say travelers and flight crew, who are concerned about **restricted access** for the physically disabled, as well as ease of use for other passengers

Barry Brandes, a retired singer from Somers, N.Y., travels several times a year on United Airlines. At 6-foot-4, Mr. Brandes said that getting into the new **lavatories** on the Boeing

737-900, a single-aisle airplane, is not easy. "If I don't **duck**, I hit my head on the door," he said. "I can't stand up completely, so I have to twist myself into a pretzel to use the facility."

1. Discuss the meaning of shortchanged, reconfigured, restricted access and lavatories.
2. Which would you rather have on a commercial plane, bigger bathrooms or more seats? This assumes that adding seats to the plane makes travel cheaper.
3. How do you feel about airplane seats? Have they become more uncomfortable as airlines downsize the seats in order to stuff more on the plane? Is it worth an extra \$100 to upgrade to a larger seat in premium economy? When you are booking a flight, what is most important: price, number of stops, time of the flight, comfortable seats, free checked bags?

ARTICLE 3: Austin is among many cities that don't have any public restrooms in the downtown area. This is a problem for tourists and homeless people who need a restroom. People complain that most stores don't let you come in just to use their restroom, so there is nowhere you can go. Homeless people frequently use the streets as a public restroom resulting in human waste on the sidewalk or at the entranceways to buildings.

City leaders are reluctant to build public restrooms downtown for fear that they would encourage homeless people to hang out there. Most businesses don't like to have large numbers of homeless hanging around outside their building. There is worry that the restrooms would be vandalized and would be an eyesore. It's a difficult problem.

1. Are there public restrooms in your home city? Is vandalism of public restrooms a problem in your city?
2. Do you think cities should be required to provide public restrooms?

Pick the right word. Use the words in bold above to fill in the blanks in these sentences.

1. Ending the _____ of polio was one of the most significant scientific accomplishments of the 20th century.
2. We created a website with _____ by the public so we could keep our discoveries private.
3. The parents of the intellectually disabled students felt they were being _____ by the school as more and more money was directed towards programs for the top academic students.
4. Injured soldiers are brought out of Afghanistan in a special cargo plane that has been _____ with hospital beds.
5. The police do not carry guns, but were able to subdue the terrorist by hitting him with their _____.
6. The lawyers were _____ to action by the public outcry over the president's unfair treatment of immigrants.
7. The indescribable _____ of the refugee camps caused by the lack of sanitation facilities was enough to deter us from entering.