

Lessons from Using SuperMemo and Spaced Repetition

Steven Jonas – 9/16/12

Want to Remember Everything You'll Ever Learn? Surrender to This Algorithm

By Gary Wolf  04.21.08



Illustration: Steven Wilson

GET SMARTER: [12 Hacks That Will Amp Up Your Brainpower](#)

1: [Distract Yourself](#)

2: [Caffeinate With Care](#)

The winter sun sets in mid-afternoon in Kolobrzeg, Poland, but the early twilight does not deter people from taking their regular outdoor promenade. Bundled up in parkas with fur-trimmed hoods, strolling hand in mittened hand along the edge of the Baltic Sea, off-season tourists from Germany stop openmouthed when they see a tall, well-built, nearly naked man running up and down the sand.

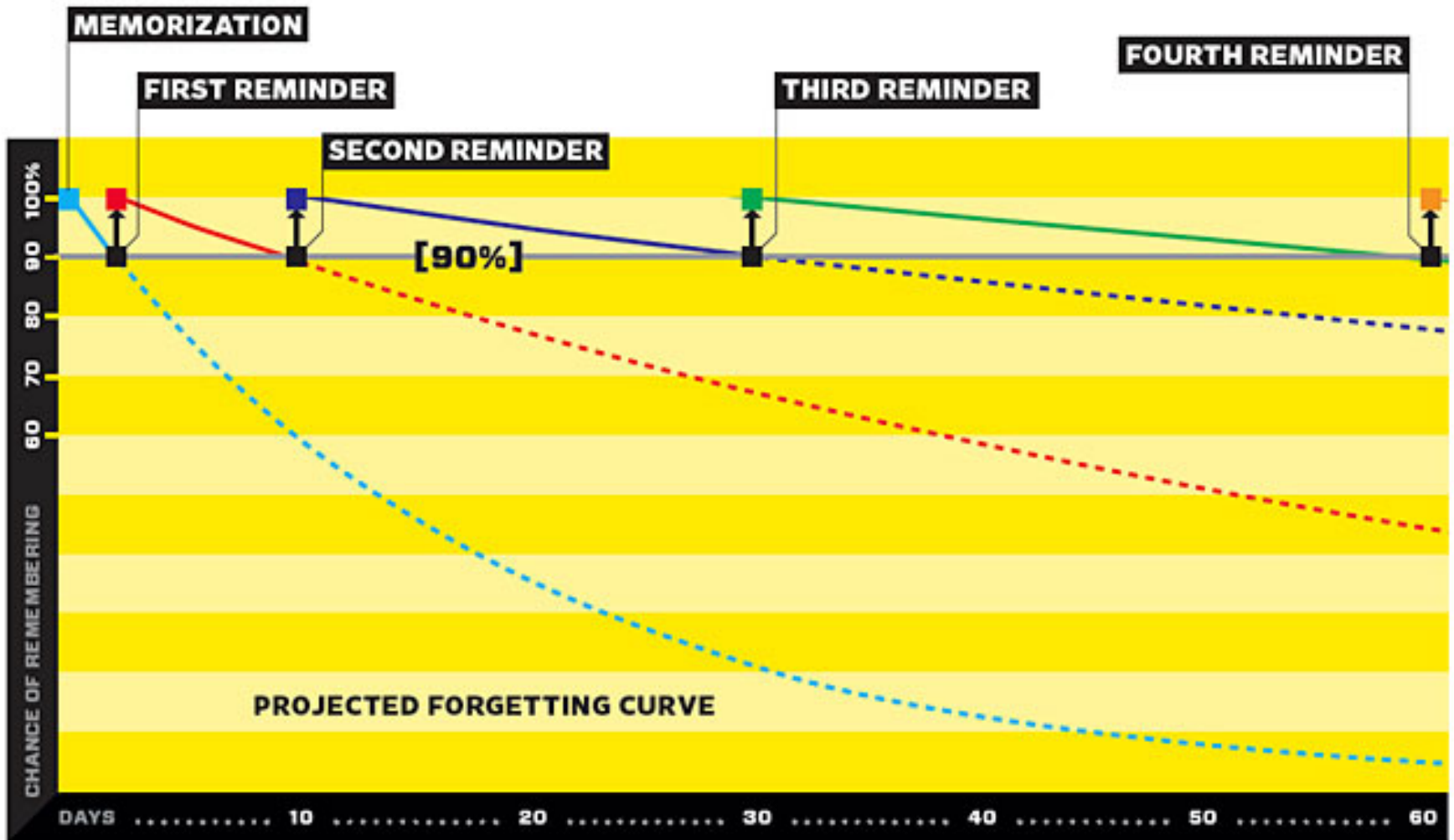
"Kalt? Kalt?" one of them calls out. The man gives a polite but vague answer, then turns and dives into the waves. After swimming back and forth in the 40-degree water for a few minutes, he emerges from the surf and jogs briefly along the shore. The wind is strong, but the man makes no move to get dressed. Passersby continue to comment and stare. "This is one of the reasons I prefer anonymity," he tells me in English. "You do something even slightly out of the ordinary and it causes a sensation."

Piotr Wozniak's quest for anonymity has been successful. Nobody along this string of little beach resorts recognizes him as the inventor of a technique to turn people into geniuses. A portion of this technique, embodied in a software program called [SuperMemo](#), has enthusiastic users around the world. They apply it mainly to learning

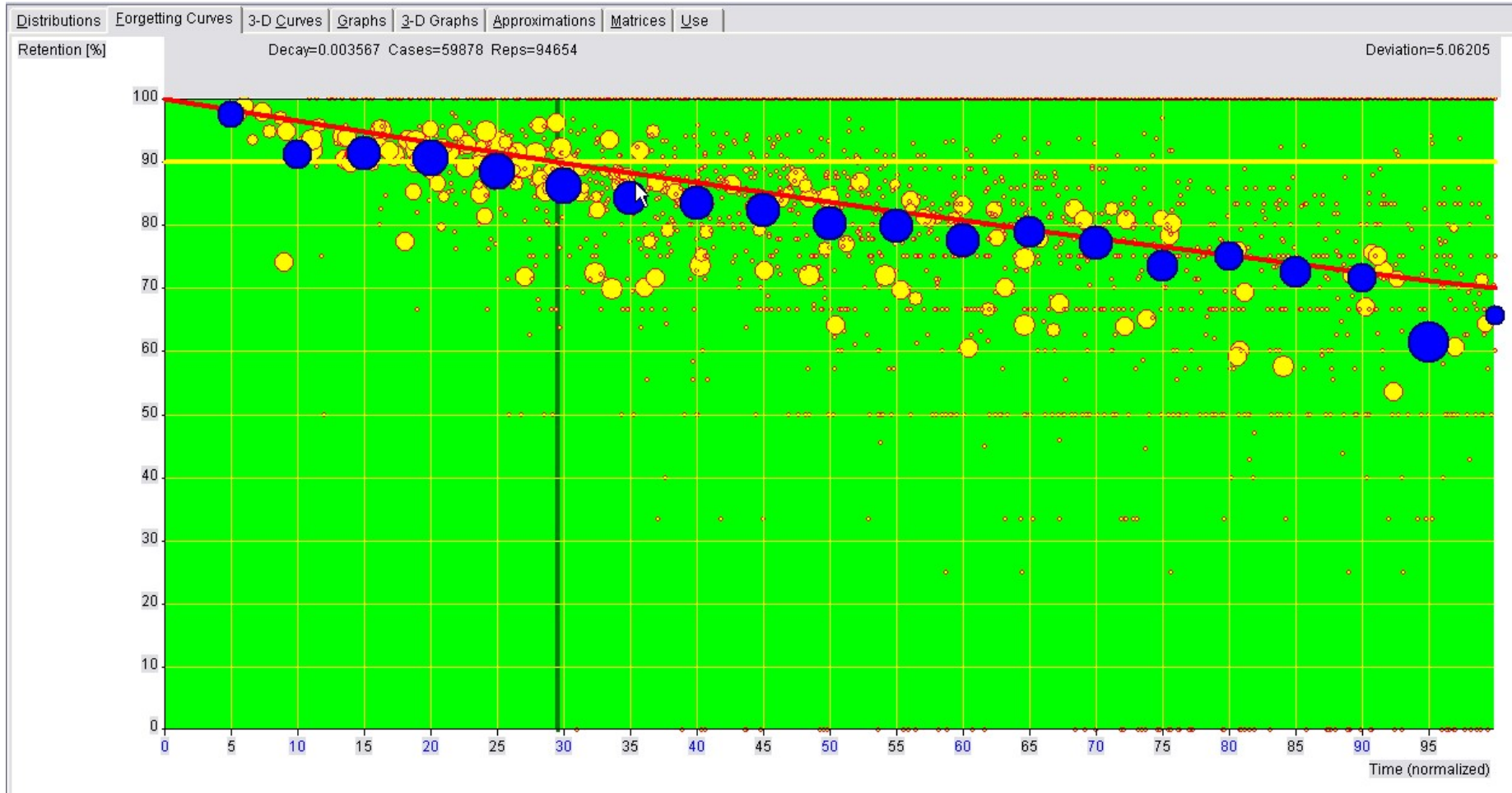
SuperMemo

- Developed in 1987 by Piotr Wozniak
- Currently in it's 15th version
- Name is short for “super-memory”
- Spaced-repetition software (SRS)
- Most commonly used for learning languages

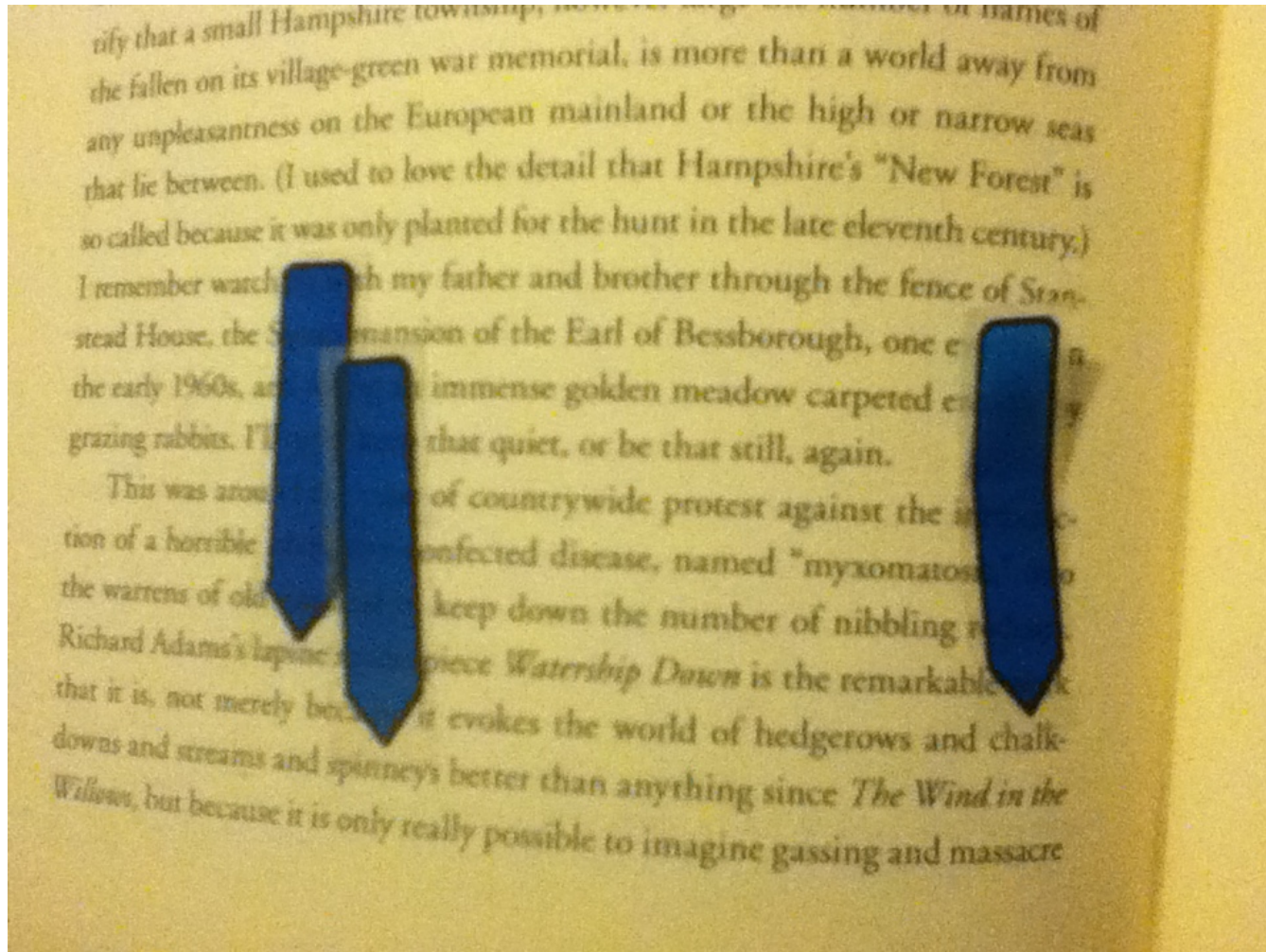
The Forgetting Curve & The Spacing Effect



A Graph of My Forgetting Curve



I mark words I don't know as I read.

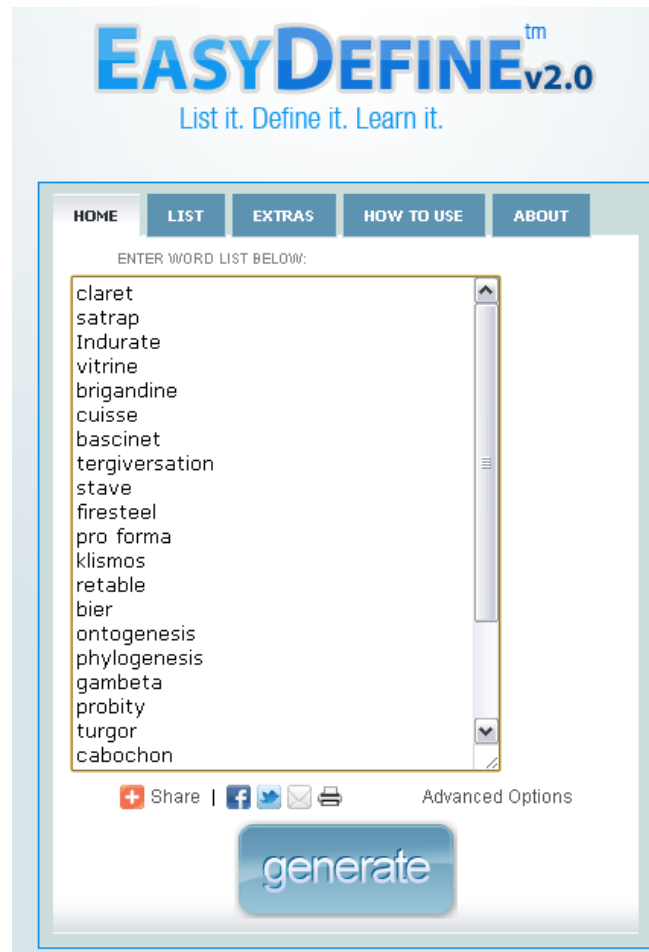


And scan the words, as well as, the sentences they appear in.

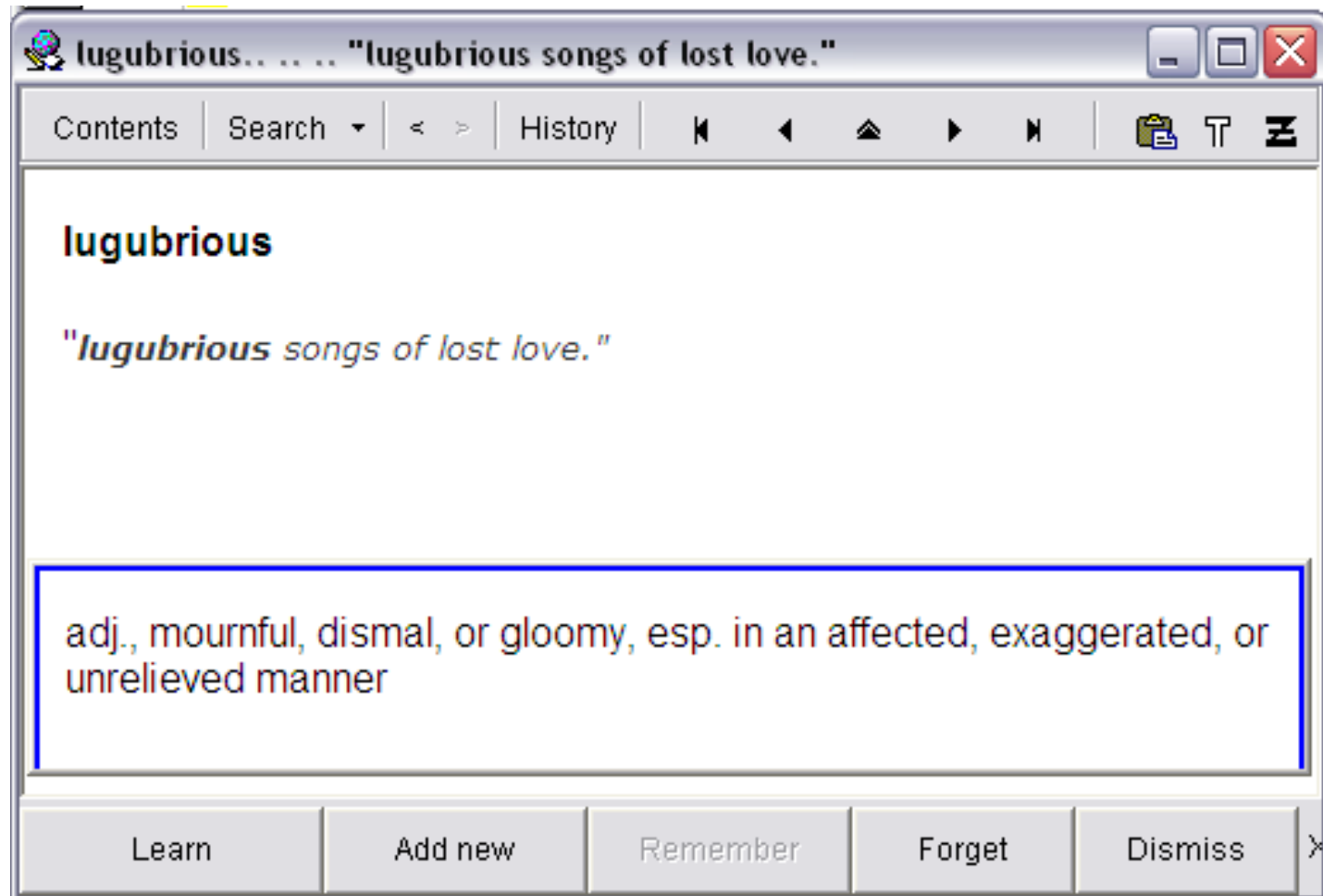


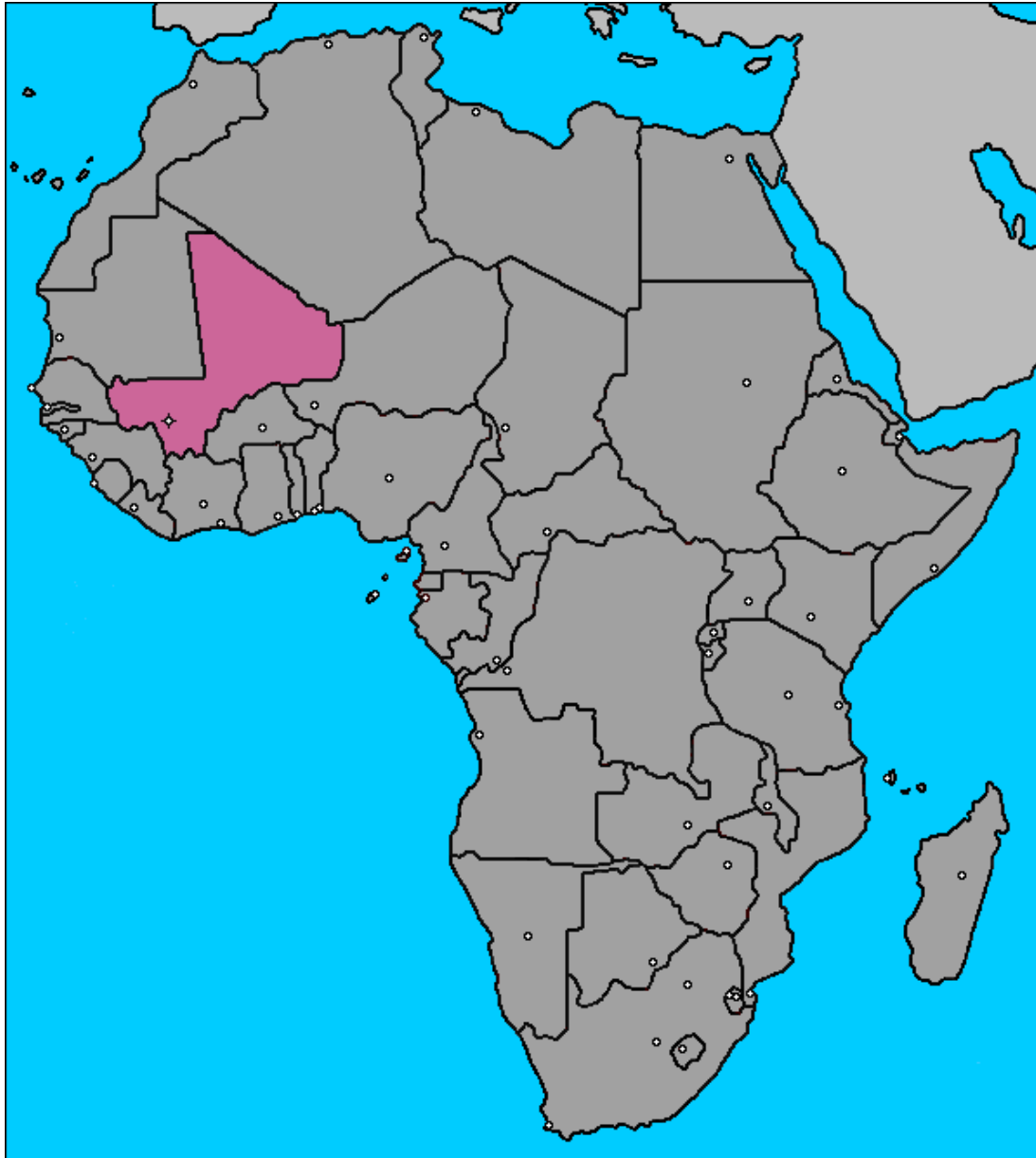
3 to 4 times faster than typing.

I use EasyDefine to batch-grab many definitions at once.



Finished Product





Source: luventicus.org

The Fearsome Tuareg Uprising in Mali: Less Monolithic than Meets the Eye

By JULIUS CAVEIDISH / BAMAKO Friday, Mar. 30, 2012



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Tuareg rebels stand near a truck in Mali on March 19, 2012. After the Libyan unrest the civil war in Mali between Tuareg rebels and government forces has escalated. The UN says that about 130,000 displaced persons are facing a human catastrophe due to the food shortage in the Sahel.

DPA / LANDOV



Somewhere close to the Algerian border a delegation of Tuareg notables hurried through the desert for a summit. It was mid-

Spring

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Source: Reuters

Familiarity Increases Interest

Memory Interference

Memory traces with similar wording or associations compete for retrieval.



Source: sitesatlas.com

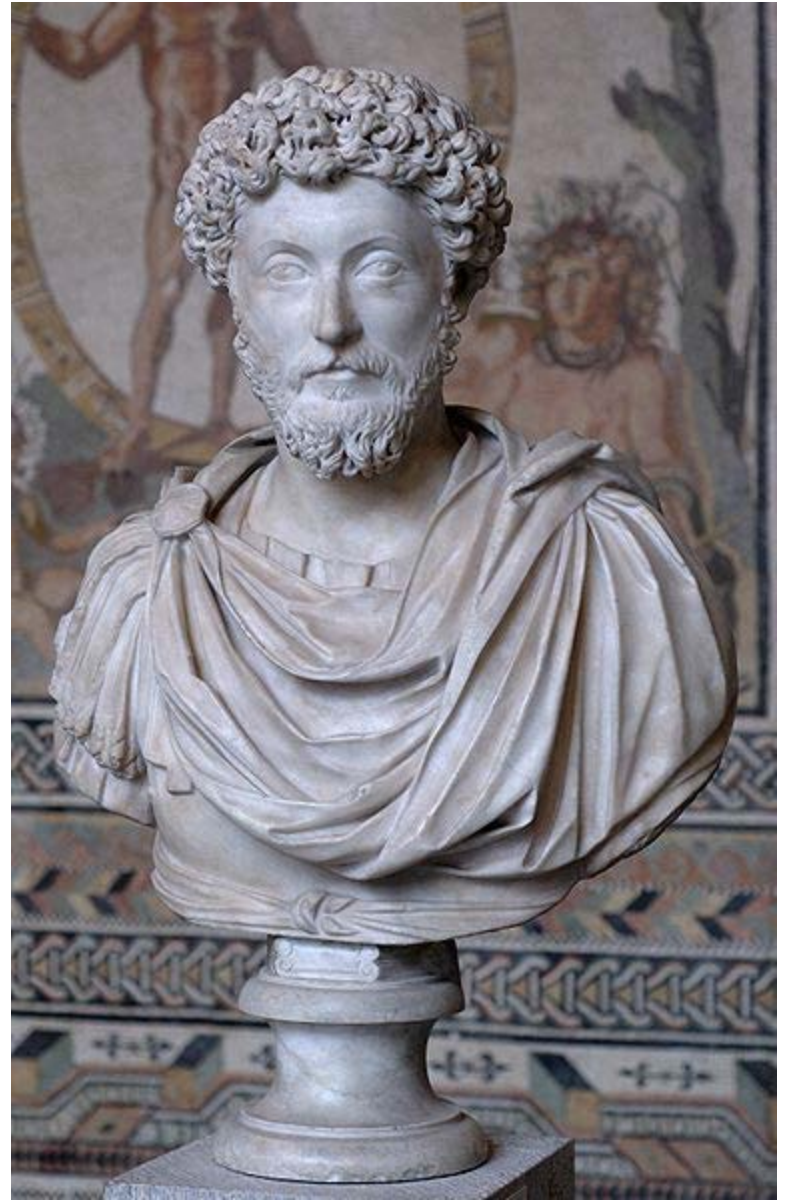


Source: yourgolftravel.com

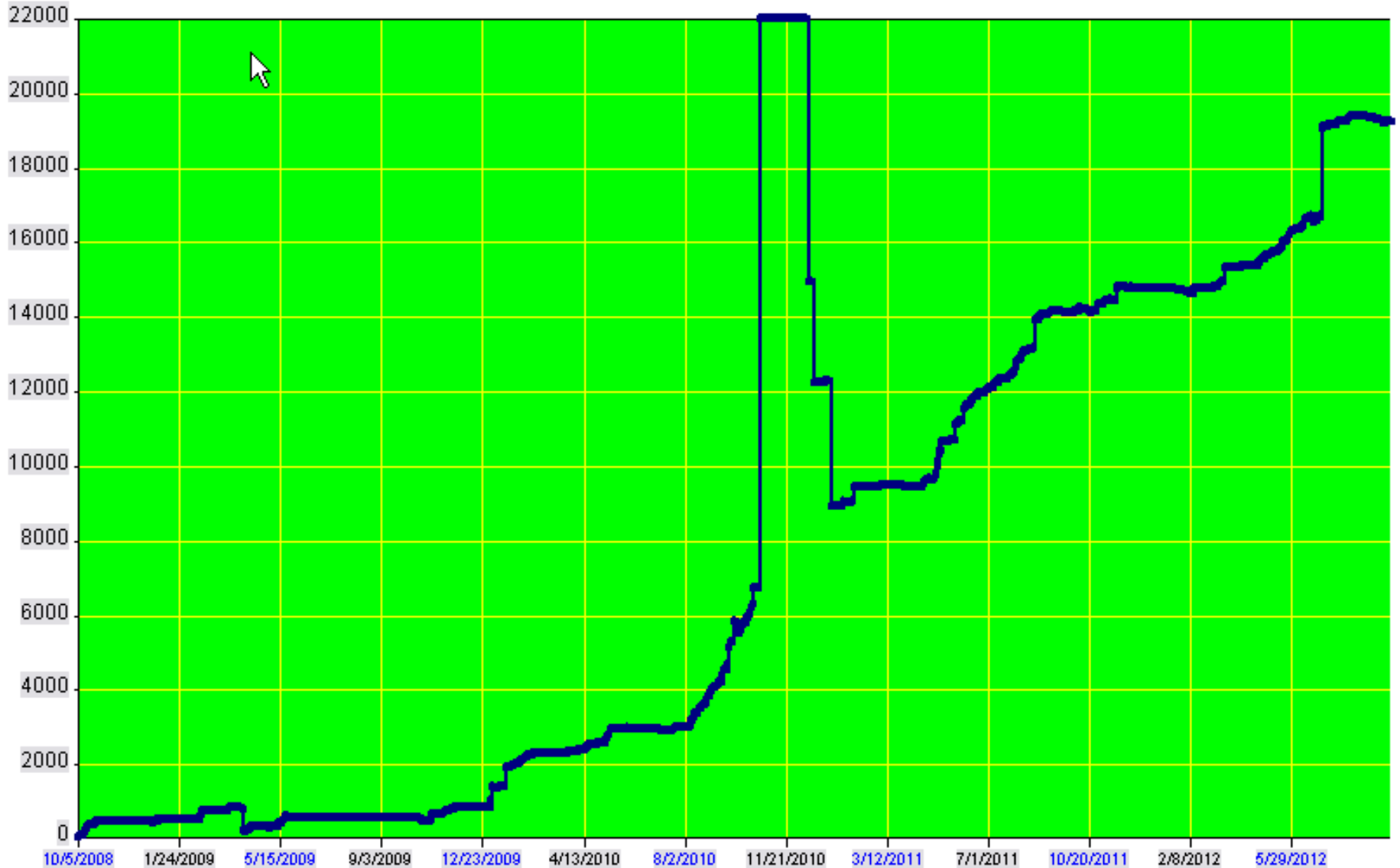


*The soul becomes dyed
with the color of its
thoughts.*

—Marcus Aurelius,
Roman emperor and
Stoic



Number of items I've added to my collection



My SuperMemo Collection

- Created 10/5/2008
- 12,500 flashcards
- 6,000 items that I review but am not tested on
- 7 flashcards added per day, on average
- Daily Workload: 100 flashcards; 100 Items to review
- Weekday use: 50 minutes (during bus commute)
- Weekend use: 90 minutes per day

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If you use spaced repetition, or
am interested in it, I would love
to talk to you.