

Arnold And Mediocre

Arnold was very wealthy, proud of himself—but had come to accept he was mediocre. He did not want to be mediocre. He wanted to be known for creating original things (whatever they might be.) Yet he had no original ideas—neither, he reasoned, did anyone else. Over five thousand years civilizations had plowed through all the original ideas. Eventually they settled for sequels. The printing press enshrined classics, cinema was even worse, making anything new still more difficult.

Arnold took creativity courses. The course books were years old, the videos apparently made on VHS. Arnold listened to great music, watched great films—and was inspired—yet depressed, as he could create nothing remotely their equal. He wrote this story. It was mediocre. No new insights, nothing inspiring. Where to go from there?

Gold. Gold was *never* mediocre.

Arnold was very wealthy, having developed an AI students loved as it wrote passing (if mediocre) term papers. He now devoted his wealth to demonstrating he was not mediocre, using gold. He purchased a large downtown building, renamed it The Arnold Building and installed a big gold statue of himself in front. And on the roof, overlooking the city.

He dyed his brown hair gold. He had gold coins printed with his face on one side, / *Am Great* on the other. Gold hot air balloons hovered over the city, dropping the cold coins. Arnold thought his plan worked wonders in people's image of him. But then subordinates quietly informed him that while gold was never mediocre, how he used it was. They noted his well publicized gold toilets, with gold toilet paper.

Arnold struggled to understand. Gold was shiny. It meant wealth. Wealth and the power it brought were everything. But no. Arnold came to realize that not everything gold is golden.

One day he sat on one of his gold toilets, eating a cheeseburger, wondering whether he had hit a dead end when, as he had the runs, he decided to run for office. He would never be considered mediocre if he was President!