

October 15, 2026 Glitterati

"All that is gold does not glitter, not all those who wander are lost." – J.R.R. Tolkien



Have you ever noticed the “glitter path” of the sun, moon, a bright star, or even earth-based lights such as a distant beacon, cityscape, or lighthouse on the water? Of course you have. They can’t help but draw your eye and imagination to those faraway sources of light. It’s the ripples and small waves on the water—small bulges on the surface—that create fluid lenses, reflecting and refracting light and scattering some of the colors aside in ways that are in constant motion. Sometimes a crosswind along the path causes little “cat’s paw” ripples on the surface that reshape the lenses in one area and can seemingly even put a bend in the glitter path.

What we perceive, even something as distant and out of our realm of control as the sun, is shaped by the lenses through which we look. It’s not just the lenses and filters of our environment and the physical world that present and distort our perceptions. We also have more funhouse lenses inside our brains that we unconsciously use to experience the world and beyond. And by flipping around the old expression, “all that glitters is not gold,” Tolkien reminds us that these lenses and filters sometimes hide the glitter, and we fail to see the gold. How often have I been surprised and delighted to realize the special nature and character of a friend or acquaintance simply because I didn’t expect to see it at our initial meeting? How many authors have I passed over based solely on someone else’s meh review? How many foods have I left untried because I’d never acquired a taste for them? How many places and adventures have I shunned because of some feared trait? How many ideas have I rejected without actual consideration because of who promotes them?

These internal filters, blind spots, and tinted lenses are rooted in prior experiences, expectations, training, and culture, all of which shape and color what we perceive—or fail to see—and, importantly, how we respond. It’s no one’s fault that we don’t all see things the same way, and it’s probably quite a blessing that we don’t. But it does make for some mischief and missed treasures. It makes taking a second look so wonderful...a look through someone else’s eyes if we can train ourselves to do so.

The ripples, the tide and temperature, the angle of the sun or moon, and the color of the sky are in a continuous state of change, and so our perceptions change too. We, too, are in constant change and growth, having new experiences, learning, retraining our biases and beliefs, questioning and gaining (and losing) insights into our culture, place and time, and our truths. We, too, are fluid. Unlike the physical properties of the earth, sea, and sky, we can choose how we will react and respond to the world we perceive. The glitter paths are ours to take or leave.

Happy Thinksday