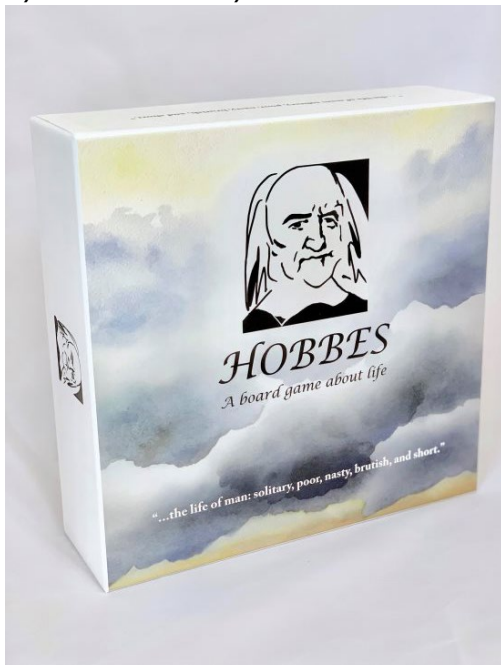


Published November 13th, 2019

The solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short life of man is now a board game

By Sora O'Doherty



"Hobbes, the Board Game," created by Orinda resident Evan Ho. Photo provided

Each player starts out with 100 points, but points are lost throughout the journey owing to stressful life situations such as, "Head buried in your phone, you just missed your child's first steps in life," which loses the player 4 points. But this card is also marked with an R, which means that the player who draws it can inflict it on another player. Players occasionally pick up points by drawing a "philosophy card." Philosophy cards bear nuggets of wisdom from the classic philosophers such as a card that reads: "Wishing to be friends is quick work, but friendship is a slow ripening fruit - Aristotle," which earns the player points back.

Ho selected a game manufacturer in Michigan. This cost more than using a company in China, but Ho, whose Chinese parents came to the United States through Hong Kong and Taiwan, wanted to maintain more quality control over his product. He commissioned Berkeley artist Susan McAllister to create the cover art. He sells the game online and at local book stores, including Orinda Books and Alexander Books in San Francisco. Ho admits that he sees the retail online giant Amazon as "the death star."

Ho is promoting his game through word of mouth advertising. He has donated some games to local fundraisers, for example. "This is a game for people with a sense of humor," Ho says. There is no other game out there that is based on philosophy, he says. "Philosophy is good for people," he maintains, adding, "the word 'philosophy' means 'love of knowledge.'" If Hobbes takes off, Ho has several other philosophers in mind for other games.

Ever esoteric, Ho has priced his game at \$28.26 online. If you wonder why, check out the Book of Proverbs.

Several years ago Orinda resident Evan Ho was discussing life, when he called to mind the board game, The Game of Life, the classic board game where the game pieces are little colored convertible cars and players drive around the board collecting spouses, children, college degrees and jobs. Ho's vision is a bit darker, a bit more sarcastic, and definitely a bit more adult. He decided to create his version of a board game, with a philosophical slant, aimed at a market of highly educated adults.

Ho is a stock analyst who works remotely for a company based in New Jersey. He has been living in Orinda for about five years, and has a son in Sleepy Hollow Elementary School. About a year ago, Ho decided to start working on the game he'd thought up. He sat down at his computer and started to write. It took him several months to gather the raw material for his game. After developing a prototype, he played the game with people he knew and with people he didn't know. They seemed to find it entertaining enough to convince Ho to move into production.

The game is called "Hobbes, the Board Game," after the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes, best known for describing the life of man as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Players move through some 70 squares on the game board, and collect cards based on different stages of life: from childhood, through adolescence and middle age, and finally to old age. Each

Reach the reporter at: sora@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA