Did You Know?

Thousands of Brilliant Facts from the Past

David Barrow

Red Dagger Press
30 Broad Street
ELY
Cambs CB7 4AH

First Published in Great Britain
in 2008 by Red Dagger Press

Did You Know?

Thousands of Brilliant Facts from the Past

David Barrow

Interesting Facts About The Byzantine Empire

The Byzantine Empire existed for nearly 1,125 years, and it's one of the greatest empires of all time. Yet many people know little about it, other than the word "byzantine" being synonymous for highly intricate, complex, and devious dealings. Beginning its adult life as the capital for the Eastern part of the Roman Empire, the city of Constantinople—later Byzantium, and Istanbul today—became the center of an extremely vibrant society that preserved Greek and Roman traditions while much of Western Europe slipped into the Dark Ages. The Byzantine Empire protected Western Europe's legacy until barbarism waned, when finally the preserved Greek and Roman masterworks opened the eyes of Europeans and stoked the fires of the Renaissance. Many historians have agreed that without Byzantium to protect it, Europe would have been overrun by the tide of Islamic invaders. The purpose of this list is for the readers to take an accurate historical journey—based on real facts—very much worth taking.

Origin of the Empire's Name

The origins of Byzantium are clouded by mystery, but for our list we will follow the generally accepted version. Around 660 B.C., a Greek citizen, Byzas, from the town of Megara near Athens, consulted the oracle of Apollo at Delphi. Byzas requested advice on where he should found a new colony, since the mainland of Greece was becoming overpopulated. The oracle simply whispered, "opposite the blind." Byzas didn't understand the message, but he sailed northeast across the Aegean Sea. When he came to the Bosphorus Strait, he realized what the oracle must have meant. Seeing the Greek city of Chalcedon, he thought that its founders must have been blind, because they had not seen the obviously superior site just half a mile away on the other side of the strait. So he founded his settlement on the better site, and called it Byzantium after himself.

Geopolitics Favored Byzantium

Byzantium had an excellent harbor and many good fishing spots in its vicinity. It occupied a strategic position between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, and therefore soon became a leading port and trade center, linking the continents of Europe and Asia. Occupation, destruction and regeneration became the rule for the city. In 590 B.C., Byzantium was destroyed by the Persians. It was later rebuilt by the Spartans, and then fought over by Athens and Sparta until 336 B.C. From 336 to 323 B.C., it was under the control of the famous Greek general, Alexander the Great. After the death of Alexander, Byzantium finally regained its independence. In the following years, right before the city became the capital of one of the greatest empires ever, it was attacked by various invaders such as the Scythians, the Celts, and of course the Romans.

The Byzantine Empire Is Born

In A.D. 324 the Emperor of the West, Constantine I, defeated the Emperors of the East, Maxentius and Licinius, in the civil wars of the Tetrarchy. Constantine became the first Christian emperor of the Roman Empire—though the complete conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity was not accomplished during his lifetime. There's no doubt that during the rule of Constantine, Christianity

became the dominant religion of the Empire—but it's very possible that Constantine's biggest regret was that he was never able to achieve a unified Christian Church. The construction of the city of Constantinople, however, was one of his absolute triumphs. While other Ancient Greek and Roman emperors built many fine cities during their reign, Constantinople exceeded them all in size and magnificence. It soon became the capital of the Byzantine Empire, and thus marked the dawn of a new era.

The Split of the Empire

Most historians today have trouble deciding exactly which event or date signifies the fall of the Roman Empire. One of the most common conclusions is that when the Empire was split in two, it would never be able to reach its former glory again. There's even more debate on the religions of the age, which were probably the decisive factor separating the Byzantine Empire from the spirit of Classical Rome. Theodosius I was the last emperor to rule over the whole Roman Empire. He was also the one who split it right down the middle, giving Rome (West) to his son Honorius and Constantinople (East) to his other son Arcadius. The more classical, Western part of the Roman Empire weakened significantly when the land was divided, while the Greek-influenced Eastern half continued to develop the oriental aspects of its culture. The Roman Empire, as the world had known it, no longer existed.

The Golden Era of Justinian I

One of the most widely known contributions of Justinian I was the reform of the laws of the Byzantine Empire, known as "The Justinian Code." Under his rule the Byzantine Empire flourished and prospered in many ways. Justinian gained power and fame for his buildings and architecture. One of his most famous buildings was the Hagia Sophia, which was completed in A.D. 538. It became the center of the Greek Orthodox Church for a number of centuries. This massive cathedral still stands today in Istanbul, and remains one of the largest and most impressive churches in the world. Justinian also encouraged music, arts, and drama. As a masterful builder himself, Justinian commissioned new roads, bridges, aqueducts, baths, and a variety of other public works. Justinian is considered a saint by the Eastern Orthodox Church nowadays, even though a good amount of Orthodox Christians don't agree with his sanctification.

The Greek Element Takes Over

Most historians agree that after the accession to the Byzantine throne of Heraclius in 610 A.D., the Byzantine Empire became essentially Greek in both culture and spirit. Heraclius made Greek the official language of the Empire, and it had already become the most widely spoken language of the Byzantine population. The Byzantine Empire, having had its origins in the Eastern Roman Empire, now evolved into something new—something different from its predecessor. By 650 A.D., only a very few lingering Roman elements remained alongside the pervasive Greek influence. According to various historical sources, a large majority of the Byzantine population from 650 A.D. onwards was of Greek cultural background. Additionally, the Byzantine army fought in a style, which was much closer to that of the Ancient Athenians and Spartans than that of the Roman Legions.

The Byzantine Navy Uses Greek Fire

The Byzantine Navy was the first to employ a terrifying liquid in naval battles. The liquid was pumped onto enemy ships and troops through large siphons mounted on the Byzantine ships' prows. It would ignite upon contact with seawater, and could only be extinguished with great difficulty. The ingredients of "Greek fire" were closely guarded, but historians think it was a mixture of naphtha, pitch, sulfur, lithium, potassium, metallic sodium, calcium phosphide and a petroleum base. Other nations eventually came up with similar version of the stuff, but the fact that it was dangerous for their own troops, too, made it go out of military fashion by the mid-to-late fifteenth century.

Byzantine Cuisine

When we hear the term "Greco-Roman," we automatically think of culture, architecture, philosophy, the Olympic sport of wrestling—but not of Byzantine cuisine. To learn about Byzantine cuisine properly, we need to go back to its roots. It involved a mix of Greek practices and Roman traditions. Byzantine culinary tastes focused on the regions where Hellenism flourished: cheese, figs, eggs, olive oil, walnuts, almonds, apples, and pears, were all staples of the Byzantine diet, indigenous to the lands of the empire and appreciated by aristocracy and common people alike. The Byzantines also loved honey, and often used it in cooking as a sweetener, since sugar was not available. Bread was an essential staple of the Byzantine table, and a guarantee of stability for the government in Constantinople. And it was a massive enterprise—the bakeries of Constantinople regularly producing over 80,000 loafs per day. The Byzantines could count on a steady diet of bread, cheese, meat, and fish, much of it cured and preserved in salt and olive oil. But just like in modern Greece, this diet was supplemented with vegetables that were produced in small gardens.

Despite the limited information we have today, our knowledge of Byzantine cuisine is like the restoration of a damaged mosaic; even though a lot of the pieces are still missing, the picture still has a beautiful quality to it. Today, the aromas and ingredients of Greek and other Mediterranean food gives us a little taste of what Byzantine food must have been like.

Byzantium's Economy Was The Most Powerful In Europe

The Byzantine Empire was mainly comprised of an array of small towns and seaports connected by a developed infrastructure. Production was very high, and there was a notable growth in land ownership. The Byzantines followed a Christian lifestyle, which revolved around the home, where women dedicated themselves to the upbringing of their children. There were also various public places where men sought relaxation in their leisure hours. From A.D. 500 to A.D. 1200, Byzantium was the wealthiest nation in Europe and western Asia. Its standard of living was unrivaled by other nations in Europe, and it led much of the world in art, science, trade, and architecture. We could even say that the "Byzantine Dream" existed long before the American one.

The Great Schism

Most historians of Byzantium agree that the Empire's greatest and most lasting legacy was the birth of Greek Orthodox Christianity. Eastern Orthodoxy arose as a distinct branch of Christianity after the "Great Schism" of the eleventh century between Eastern and Western Christendom. The separation was not sudden. For centuries, there had been significant religious, cultural, and political differences between the Eastern and Western churches. Many historians assure us today that religion was the main reason why Roman culture lost all its influence on the Byzantine Empire. There were major theological differences between Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox Christians, on topics such as the use of images, the nature of the Holy Spirit, and the role (and identity) of the Pope. Culturally, the Greek East has always tended to be more philosophical, abstract, and mystical in its thinking, whereas the Latin West tended towards a more pragmatic and legal-minded approach. All these factors finally came to a head in 1054 A.D., when Pope Leo IX excommunicated the Patriarch of Constantinople, who was the leader of the Greek Orthodox Church. In response, the Patriarch condemned the —and nearly one thousand years later, this division in the Christian church has still not been healed.

Terrible Famines In History

Famine is often considered one of the worst natural disasters on Earth. Its effects are widespread, and the damage caused by a famine can last for months, if not years. Often times caused by other natural disasters, it can destroy whole villages, and cause mass exodus. Death by starvation and malnutrition is slow and painful, and often hits the youngest and the elderly the hardest. Unfortunately, at times it is brought upon by political incompetency, and cruelty towards others can exacerbate the situation. Below are 10 terrible famines experienced throughout human history.

Great Famine Ireland
1.5 million dead, 2 million emigrated. One of the most famous famines in history, the Great Famine was caused by a devastating potato disease. 33% of the Irish population relied on the potato for sustenance, and the onset of the disease in 1845 triggered mass starvations that lasted until 1853. Ireland experienced a mass exodus, with upwards of 2 million people fleeing the country, many to the United States. At its conclusion in 1853, 1.5 million Irish were dead, and an additional 2 million had emigrated. In total, the population of Ireland shrunk by a resounding 25%.

Vietnamese Famine of 1945
As a protectorate under France, Vietnam was under colonial rule for much of World War II. As Japanese expansion began in Indochina, Vietnam was taken for the Japanese, and a collaborationist French government sided with the Japanese. Agricultural focus shifted from sustenance to war-materials, specifically rubber. The Japanese exploited what little crop farms remained, and the invading forces commandeered most of these crops. This, teamed with an unbearable drought followed by biblical flooding, caused mass starvation across much of Northern Vietnam. The resulting famine killed 2 million Vietnamese.

North Korean Famine
3 million dead. As the most recent famine on this list, North Korea suffered a tremendous famine from 1994 to 1998, brought about by a combination of misguided leadership and large scale flooding. Torrential rains in 1995 flooded the farming regions, and destroyed 1.5 million tons of grain reserves. Politically, Kim Jung Il implemented a “Military First” policy, which placed the needs of the military above the needs of the common people, food rations included. The isolated nation suffered from a stagnating economy, and was unable and unwilling to import food. As such, the childhood mortality rate rose to 93 out of 1000 children, and the mortality rate of pregnant women rose to 41 out of 1000 mothers. Over a 4-year span, an estimated 2.5-3 million people perished due to malnutrition and starvation.

Russian Famine of 1921
5 million dead. The early 20th century was a tumultuous time for Russians, as they lost millions in World War I, experienced a violent revolution in 1917, and suffered from multiple Civil Wars. Throughout the wars, the Bolshevik soldiers

often forced peasants to sacrifice their food, with little in return. As such, many peasants stopped growing crops, as they could not eat what they sowed. This resulted in a massive shortage of food and seed. Many peasants had taken to eating seeds, as they knew they could not eat any crops they grew. By 1921, 5 million Russians had perished.

Bengal Famine of 1943

7 million dead. The Bengal Famine of 1943 was set about by a whirlwind of catastrophic events. With World War II raging and Japanese imperialism growing, Bengal lost their largest trading partner in Burma. A majority of the food the Bengalis consumed was imported from Burma, but the Japanese suspended the trade. In 1942, Bengal was hit by a cyclone and three separate tidal waves. The ensuing floods destroyed 3200 square miles of viable farmland. An unpredictable fungus, destroying 90% of all rice crops in the region, then struck crops. Meanwhile, refugees fleeing the Japanese from Burma entered the region by the millions, increasing the need for food supplies. By December of 1943, 7 million Bengalis and Burmese refugees were dead due to starvation.

Bengal Famine of 1770

10 million dead. Yet another famine in Bengal, this horrific event killed a third of the population. Largely ruled by the English-owned East India Company, reports of severe drought and crop shortages were ignored, and the company continued to increase taxes on the region. Farmers were unable to grow crops, and any food that could be purchased was too expensive for the starving Bengalis. The company also forced farmers to grow indigo and opium, as they were much more profitable than inexpensive rice. Without large rice stocks, people were left with no food reserves, and the ensuing famine killed 10 million Bengalis.

Soviet Famine of 1932-1933

10 million dead. Incredibly, the severity of this famine was not fully known in the West until the collapse of the USSR in the 1990s. The main cause was the policy of collectivization administered by Josef Stalin. Under collectivization, large swaths of land would be converted into collective farms, all maintained by peasants. Stalin went about implementing this by destroying the peasants existing farms, crops, and live-stock, and forcibly taking their land. Reports of peasants hiding crops for individual consumption led to wide-scale search parties, and any hidden crops found were destroyed. In actuality, many of these crops were simply seeds that would be planted shortly. The destruction of these seeds and the forced collectivization of land caused mass starvation, killing an estimated 10 million people.

Chalisa famine

11 million dead. The Chalisa famine refers to the year in the Vikram Samvat calendar used in Northern India. Occurring in 1783, the region suffered from an unusually dry year, as a shift in the El Nino weather system brought significantly less rain to the region. Vast swaths of crops withered and died, and livestock perished due to lack of food and drinking water. The tumultuous year killed 11 million Indians.

Chinese Famine of 1907

25 million dead. Ranking second in terms of death toll, the Chinese Famine of 1907 was a short-lived event that took the lives of nearly 25 million people. East-Central China was reeling from a series of poor harvests when a massive storm flooded 40,000 square miles of lush agricultural territory, destroying 100% of the crops in the region. Food riots took place daily, and were often quelled through the use of deadly force. It is estimated that, on a good day, only 5,000 were dying due to starvation. Unfortunately for the Chinese, this would not be their last great famine.

Great Chinese Famine

43 million dead. Much like the Soviet Famine of 1932-1933, the Great Chinese Famine was caused by Communist leaders attempting to force change upon an unwilling population. As part of their "Great Leap Forward", the owning of private land was outlawed in China in 1958. Communal farming was implemented in an attempt to increase crop production. More relevant, however, was the importance the Communist Regime placed on iron and steel production. Millions of agricultural workers were forcibly removed from their fields and sent to factories to create metal. In addition to these fatal errors, Chinese officials mandated new methods of planting. Seeds were to be planted 3-5 feet under the soil, extremely close together, to maximize growth and efficiency. In practice, what little seeds that sprouted were severely stunted in growth due to overcrowding. These failed policies, teamed with a flood in 1959 and a drought in 1960, affected the entirety of the Chinese nation. By the time the Great Leap Forward had ended in 1962, 43 million Chinese had died from the famine.

Lesser-Known Events in Early American History

"History is a relentless master. It has no present, only the past rushing into the future."—John F. Kennedy. Some past incidents are swallowed by history's relentless march forward and are forgotten or become obscure footnotes, which doesn't mean they aren't interesting or important. Here are 10 events in early America that often go unmentioned in school. These items include scandal, sex, and violence—just the way we like our history.

First Barbary Coast War 1801-1805

"From the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli…" Sound familiar? The line about Tripoli in the U.S. Marine Corps hymn commemorates an action in 1805—the Battle of Derna—occurring during the First Barbary Coast War when the fledging American government had to take on the pirates of the Mediterranean. Tripoli, Algiers, Morocco, and Tunis were North African states on the infamous Barbary Coast, long considered a haven for pirates who preyed primarily on merchant ships. Prior to America achieving independence from Britain, the colonists' ships were protected by the Royal Navy.

During the war, a treaty with France ensured the safety of American merchants. After the war, French protection ceased. In 1784, the Continental Congress solved the problem of the pirates in the same way as every other independent nation: bribery. Basically, the Barbary pirates ran a global protection scheme and the American government had to pay to keep its citizens and their vessels safe. Some members of Congress like Thomas Jefferson believed paying the pirates would only lead to more demands, but an annual tribute and exorbitant ransoms for captured sailors continued since that was considered cheaper than all-out war until Jefferson became President. He refused to pay tribute directly to the Pasha of Tripoli in 1801, and the Pasha declared war on the United States. After 4 years of conflict with wins and losses on all sides, in 1805 the Battle of Derna in Tripoli—memorialized in the hymn mentioned above—settled matters to a certain degree, but America still had to pay ransom for hostages taken by the pirates. It wouldn't be until 1815 that all tribute ceased to be paid by the American government.

Yazoo Land Fraud Scandal 1795

Millions of acres of prime real estate. Millions of dollars at stake. Politics, greedy businesses, bribery and corruption. Sound like an episode of a TV drama? A modern political conspiracy? Nope, it's the late 18th century's Yazoo Land Fraud scandal. Right after the Revolutionary War, state boundaries weren't quite fixed. Georgia claimed land as far west as the Mississippi River, biting off a little more than they could metaphorically chew. The frontier territory, called the Yazoo lands after a river, was already home to Cherokee, Creek, and other tribes (and is now part of Alabama and Mississippi). The lands were untamed, difficult to develop or defend, and twice Georgia tried to cede the territory to the federal government to no avail. The Yazoo lands seemed like a big white elephant nobody wanted … except greedy land speculators. From the 1780s, companies

lobbied state legislators with proposal after proposal for establishing settlements in the Yazoo lands, few of which came to fruition.

Speculators continuing bombarding the state legislature, sweetening the pressure with bribes like company stock. Other influential men were bought. Finally, in 1795 a law was passed essentially allowing four land speculation companies to purchase 35 million acres of the territory for less than 2 cents an acre—even adjusted to modern prices, that's suspiciously cheap. The land was sold for huge profits to other speculators or pioneers looking for a homestead to settle. But all did not go smoothly. When news broke about the corruption surrounding the new law and the Yazoo lands, Georgians were furious. The anti-Yazooites gained political power and eventually oversaw the law rescinded and the sale overturned, even going so far as to arrange a public burning of the law and its records. In 1802, the lands were sold to the federal government for $1.25 million, but claims for compensation from losers in the land fraud continued to plague the court systems until 1814.8

First American Kidnapping 1605

George Weymouth, an Englishman and captain of the ship Archangel, sailed his vessel from England to America—specifically Maine, near Cape Cod—while searching for the mythical northwest passage to India in 1605. Or so he said, but it's also believed his voyage had more than one purpose: to spy on the French and their new colony in Nova Scotia, and try to settle English dissident (Catholic) colonists in prime locations in the New World. After some exploration, Weymouth and his crew made contact with local natives, who were friendly and offered them hospitality and gifts. However, the good neighborly treatment clearly wasn't enough for Weymouth, who decided that the perfect thing to take back to England would be some samples of indigenous life, namely the natives themselves—for the advancement of scientific knowledge, of course.

Through various deceptions, the treacherous Weymouth pretended to befriend several young native men, then lured or violently captured five of them and took them aboard his ship by force. He promptly sailed home to England with his prizes. Three of the kidnap victims were given to Sir Fernando Gorges, a sponsor of Weymouth's expedition. The other two were turned over to Sir John Popham, the Chief Justice of England. Unlike Weymouth, Popham and Gorges treated their native captives with kindness. Later, Gorges sent his three new English-speaking friends back to their American homeland. As an interesting side note, one of the natives who returned may have been the famous Squanto, who met the Pilgrims when they first arrived on America's shores—and while this was purportedly Squanto's first kidnapping, it wasn't his last. He'd suffer abduction and slavery three more times before the Pilgrims showed up.

Pelican Girls and Casket Girls 1704-1721

When the French controlled the Gulf of Mexico territory containing Louisiana, they had a problem—too many men. The male settlers included soldiers, farmers, and tradesmen. Valuable assets, of course, but as all governments of the time understood, a really successful and lucrative colony needed families, not just single men. To do that, the men needed wives. It comes as no surprise that

most men involved eagerly agreed with the idea. However, finding ladies willing to marry a stranger and endure the rough frontier with their husbands for the rest of their lives wasn't easy. Beginning in 1704, the *Compagnie des Indes* (Company of the Indies) which held the monopoly on trade in the area decided to send 20 young and virtuous French women aged 14-18 to Louisiana via the ship Le Pélican. These "Pelican girls" were snapped up by men desperate for marital bliss and/or the generous dowry and other benefits subsidized by the King.

Other shipments of volunteer brides occurred periodically. Many were orphans, some less than respectable from houses of correction. Perhaps the most famous were the seventy-eight upstanding "casket girls" or *filles à la cassette*, named after the small caskets (like suitcases) that carried their belongings. Upon arrival, they were popped into the newly built Ursuline convent in New Orleans and supervised by the nuns until they found husbands. Today, claiming a "casket girl" as an ancestress is a matter of pride for native Louisianans. Despite the pressure put on new arrivals, not all girls chose to marry. Some entered convents, received the education denied their secular sisters, and became nuns. But most women married, many were widowed, and if they survived the hardships of childbirth and frontier life, they often prospered due to generous inheritance laws.

The Notorious Joseph Bradish 1698-1699

Most people have heard of the Scotsman Captain William Kidd and his exploits along the eastern seaboard of America. Fewer people know about Joseph Bradish, a home-grown pirate born in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1672. His connection to Kidd came at the end of his life before facing the Execution Dock at Wapping in London. Bradish was a young man when he worked as a boatswain's mate aboard Adventure, a British 400-ton "interloper"—a ship interfering in trade monopolies—from London bound for the island of Borneo. During the voyage, he incited the crew to mutiny, marooned the captain and officers, and took over the roles of navigator and captain himself. With his newly formed pirate band, he enjoyed "some adventuring in Eastern seas." While details are sketchy, it's believed he seized valuable prizes of gold and jewels as well as Adventure's cargo of lead, Spanish gold, opium, and other goods. He sailed to Long Island in America in late 1698 or early 1699 and scuttled the ship. However, he was unable to buy a replacement vessel and settled on a small sloop.

After seeing the majority of his crew scattered along the coast (and according to legend, burying treasures at Montauk Point and Block Island), he entered Boston. Unfortunately, Dame Fortune wasn't on his side. Bradish was promptly arrested, but that isn't the end of his tale. The pirate captain's luck hadn't entirely run out. The local jailer, Caleb Ray, was a relation of Bradish's and helped him escape (although in later accounts, the serving girl got the blame). An enraged governor ordered a search. Bradish was recaptured and shipped to England with William Kidd as his cellmate. Both men were executed.

A Ghostly Lawsuit 1792-1797

In Queen Anne's County, Maryland, a prosperous farmer named Thomas Harris enjoyed a long-term relationship with Ann Goldsborough, though the lady wasn't his wife. They had four children out of wedlock. Harris' unexpected death not only shattered the life he'd built with his family, it provided the catalyst for one of America's strangest court cases. In his will, Thomas Harris instructed his brother James to act as executor, sell the property, and divide the proceeds between his four children. He also had a conversation with James about his wishes prior to his death, but James had other ideas. He cast doubt on the will, ignored his deceased brother, and kept the money for himself. A few months after Thomas Harris' death, William Briggs—his best friend since boyhood and a respected Revolutionary War veteran—happened to ride past the graveyard where Harris was buried. His horse (which once belonged to Harris) suddenly wheeled around. Briggs saw an apparition of Harris in a blue coat, the same he'd worn in life. The apparition vanished, but that wasn't the only time Briggs would be visited by his best friend's spirit. After several other sightings and some phenomena including being struck in the face by a mysterious force and having both his eyes blackened, Briggs finally learned what Thomas Harris wanted. The ghost told him about the will and James Harris' betrayal. To make sure James believed the message came from his dead brother, Briggs was given several details about the conversation no one but Thomas and James could have known. Briggs went to James with his story. The details were correct. James had a change of heart and promised to fulfill the terms of his brother's will, but before he could make the arrangements, he died. His widow, Mary, refused to acknowledge James' promise and claimed all her husband's property as her own. Years later, Thomas Harris' illegitimate children filed a lawsuit against Mary. The key witness and main evidence in the trial was William Briggs, who testified in detail about seeing and speaking to his friend's ghost. Although the defense attempted to refute Briggs' testimony, and the outcome of the case hasn't been discovered yet in Maryland's archives, the judge did officially acknowledge the existence of ghosts in court.

First American Executed For Bestiality 1642

Thomas Granger worked as a servant for Love Brewster in the Plymouth colony in Duxbury, Massachusetts. In 1642, at about 16 or 17 years of age, Granger was accused of violating statutes based in Biblical law, specifically Leviticus 20:15—"And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast." The Massachusetts area was experiencing something of a bestiality panic at the time, so was Granger a pervert, or was this just a prank that got out of hand due to hysteria? Either way, he lost his life. Granger was caught performing lewd acts with a mare (the chronicler, William Bradford, governor of the colony, protected the delicate sensibilities of future generations by refusing to detail the acts in question). When confronted, Granger at first denied the accusation. However, it wasn't long before he not only confessed to the magistrates to having done the deed with the mare numerous times, he also named a cow, 2 goats, 5 sheep, 2 calves, and a turkey as the objects of his past attentions. The confession was enough to earn him the death penalty from a jury. A parade of sheep was brought into the courtroom so Granger could identify which ones he'd abused. All the animals he'd named were killed while he

watched. The law required no part of the "unclean" animals be used, so a pit was dug and the carcasses buried. Following the slaughter, Granger was executed for committing "sodomy"—one of the death penalty crimes on the books. He became the youngest person in America to be hanged under these statutes. Despite his age, Granger was survived by a wife and two children. The poet Charles Olson wrote about Thomas Granger in 1947.

Final Blow Struck for the Revolution 1783

During the conflict, what did the British do with prisoners of war? Put them in prisons, of course, but these jails were soon overcrowded. Hulks—ships in too bad shape to see service—were anchored in harbors to serve as convenient places of confinement for POWs and regular criminals. These British prisons were infamous for the appalling conditions, which included starvation, poor sanitation, and disease. The man in charge of prisoners in New York City was the cruel and petty Provost Marshal, William Cunningham. Following surrender, British forces had to leave New York City during Evacuation Day in late September 1783. To signal the end of the occupation and indicate the last British solider had left aboard ship, it was agreed the British commander would fire a cannon at 1 o'clock. Jubilant, the newly independent Americans didn't wait—they celebrated by knocking over a statue of King George III and flying the American flag. One such patriot was Mrs. Day, who ran Day's Tavern located at 128th Street and St. Nicholas Avenue. The very unpopular Provost Marshal Cunningham, infuriated by the displays ahead of the official time, ended up in front of Day's Tavern where a rebel flag proudly flew. He tried to tear the flag from the pole, but Mrs. Day ran out of her drinking establishment toting a broom to defend her property. According to the story, she hit him with the broom with such force, powder flew off his wig and his nose was bloodied. True or wishful thinking? The jury's out, although Cunningham's existence and his mistreatment of prisoners is not disputed. If Mrs. Day did, indeed, assault one of the most hated men in NYC, she certainly struck the last blow in the Revolutionary War.

Ladies Had the Vote in New Jersey 1776

The framers of the U.S. Constitution left it up to the individual states to determine their own voter qualifications. Some states imposed religious requirements on their citizens (although this pretty much ended by 1790). Others decided who had the right to vote based on property ownership or tax payments. And then there was New Jersey. The men who drew up the state of New Jersey's Constitution didn't have a problem with women voters provided they met the rather low property ownership requirement. When every other new state deliberately left women out of the voting equation, New Jersey legislators embraced the radical idea that not only ladies should be members of the political community, but free blacks and aliens (non citizens), too. This led to an unusual circumstance. According to the laws of the time, when a woman married, all her property automatically became her husband's. Since a married woman owned nothing of her own in a legal sense, wives couldn't vote as they no longer met the property ownership requirement. However, no such bar existed for single women and widows. Did women cast ballots in New Jersey elections? From 1797, records clearly show the names of women on the polls. In fact, the female vote was courted in some cases by the Democratic-Republican and

Federalist parties. Did women vote in great numbers? Not really. And the enfranchisement of women remained controversial and a subject of great debate in the state. Women, it was argued, were too delicate to make political decisions, unfit by nature to involve themselves in men's business, and were too busy raising children anyway. Eventually, the naysayers got their way. New Jersey rescinded women's right to vote in 1807. Ladies wouldn't get it back until the state ratified the 19th Amendment in 1920.

Whaling Aids American Independence 1781

The connection may not seem obvious, but Nantucket whalers played a pivotal role in the American fight for independence, helping bring about American victory over the British, ultimately ending the Revolutionary War with General Cornwallis' surrender. One of the best kept secrets of the war was made earlier by curious New England whalers and merchants, who observed whale migrations in the Atlantic. They found the Gulf Stream, a strong ocean current first recorded by John White, governor of Virginia's Roanoke colony, in 1506. Through years of trial and error, the whalers gained a good working knowledge of the current. Their observations caught the attention of Benjamin Franklin, who undertook a scientific journey to verify the claims and satisfy his own curiosity.

Why wasn't the Gulf Stream generally known to all shipmasters? Because shipping routes were well established and had been determined by trained navigators, a conservative bunch who didn't tend to share their information. The Gulf Stream was important since using it shaved off time from the journey between North America and Europe. The secret charts made by Franklin gave the American rebels an advantage over the British. In 1781, the Continental Congress anticipated the arrival of their ally, Admiral Henri de Grasse, and a fleet of 173 French ships. So did British admiral Sir George Rodney in the Caribbean and his subordinate, Admiral Alexander Hood, who waited in the Leeward Islands. In France, British spies sent a report about De Grasse's armada and its destination to Rodney via a fast cutter, but the cutter's captain knew nothing about the Gulf Stream. By the time the message made it across the Atlantic, De Grasse's fleet had already defeated Hood. Had Rodney received the warning in time, he would probably have supported Hood and perhaps defeated De Grasse, which means the Battle of Yorktown—which gave America a decisive victory against the British thanks in part to the French troops brought by De Grasse—wouldn't have happened or may have had a different outcome.

Famous Gladiators From Ancient Rome

Gladiators were the athletic superstars of Ancient Rome. Their battles in the arena drew thousands of fans, often including the most important men of the day. Traditionally purchased as slaves, successful gladiators gained thousands of supporters, enjoyed lavish gifts, and could even be awarded freedom if they'd tallied up enough victories. Described below are ten gladiators who all experienced glory and fame—both in and out of the arena—in Ancient Rome.

Tetraites
Originally discovered through graffiti found in Pompeii in 1817, Tetraites was documented for his spirited victory over Prudes. Fighting in the murmillones style, he wielded a sword, a rectangle shield, a helmet, arm guards, and shin guards. The extent of his fame was not fully comprehended until the late Twentieth Century, when pottery was found as far away as France and England, which depicted Tetraites' victories.

Priscus & Verus
Not much is known about these two rivals, although their final fight was well-documented. The battle between Priscus and Verus in the First Century AD was the first gladiator fight in the famous Flavian Amphitheatre. After a spirited battle which dragged on for hours, the two gladiators conceded to each other at the same time, putting down their swords out of respect for one another. The crowd roared in approval, and the Emperor Titus awarded both combatants with the rudis, a small wooden sword given to gladiators upon their retirement. Both left the theater side by side as free men.

Spiculus
Spiculus, another renowned gladiator of the First Century AD, enjoyed a particularly close relationship with the (reportedly) evil Emperor Nero. Following Spiculus' numerous victories, Nero awarded him with palaces, slaves, and riches beyond imagination. When Nero was overthrown in AD 68, he urged his aides to find Spiculus, as he wanted to die at the hands of the famous gladiator. But Spiculus couldn't be found, and Nero was forced to take his own life.

Marcus Attilius
Though a Roman citizen by birth, Attilius chose to enter gladiator school in an attempt to absolve the heavy debts he had incurred during his life. In his first battle he defeated Hilarus, a gladiator owned by Nero, who had won thirteen times in a row. Attilius then went on to defeat Raecius Felix, who had won twelve battles in a row. His feats were narrated in mosaics and graffiti discovered in 2007.

Carpophorus
While other gladiators on this list are known for their hand-to-hand combat against other humans, Carpophores was a famed Bestiarius. These gladiators fought exclusively against wild animals, and as such had very short-lived careers.

Fighting at the initiation of the Flavian Amphitheatre, Carpophores famously defeated a bear, lion, and leopard in a single battle. In another battle that day, he slaughtered a rhinoceros with a spear. In total, it is said that he killed twenty wild animals that day alone, leading fans and fellow gladiators to compare Carpophorus to Hercules himself.

Crixus

Crixus, a Gallic gladiator, was the right-hand man of the number one entry on this list. He enjoyed notable success in the ring, but resented his Lanista—the leader of the gladiator school and his "owner." So after escaping from his gladiator school, he fought in a slave rebellion, helping to defeat large armies amassed by the Roman Senate with relative ease. After a dispute with the rebellion leader, however, Crixus and his men split off from the main group, seeking to destroy Southern Italy. This maneuver diverted enemy military forces from the main group, giving them valuable time to escape. Unfortunately, the Roman legions struck Crixus down before he could exact his revenge on the people who had oppressed him for so long.

Flamma

Flamma, a Syrian slave, died at the age of thirty—having fought thirty-four times and having won twenty-one of those bouts. Nine battles ended in a draw, and he was defeated just four times. Most notably, Flamma was awarded the rudis a total of four times. When the rudis was given to a gladiator, he was usually freed from his shackles, and allowed to live normally among the Roman citizens. But Flamma refused the rudis, opting instead to continue fighting.

Commodus

Famously played by Joaquin Phoenix in the 2000 film Gladiator, Commodus was an Emperor who enjoyed battling gladiators as often as possible. A narcissistic egomaniac, Commodus saw himself as the greatest and most important man in the world. He believed himself to be Hercules—even going so far as to don a leopard skin like that famously worn by the mythological hero. But in the arena, Commodus usually fought against gladiators who were armed with wooden swords, and slaughtered wild animals that were tethered or injured. As you could guess, most Romans therefore did not support Commodus. His antics in the arena were seen as disrespectful, and his predictable victories made for a poor show. In some instances, he captured disabled Roman citizens, and slaughtered them in the arena. As a testament to his narcissism, Commodus charged one million sesterces for every appearance—although he was never exactly "invited" to appear in the arena. Commodus was assassinated in AD 192, and it is believed that his actions as a "gladiator" encouraged his inner-circle to carry out the assassination.

Spartacus

By far the most famous gladiator in history, Spartacus was a Thracian soldier who had been captured and sold into slavery. Lentulus Batiatus of Capua must have recognized his potential, for he purchased him with the intention of turning him into a gladiator. But a warrior's fierce independence is not easily given up: in 73 BC, Spartacus persuaded seventy of his fellow gladiators—Crixus included—

to rebel against Batiatus. This revolt left their former owner murdered in the process, and the gladiators escaped to the slopes of nearby Mount Vesuvius. While in transit, the group set free many other slaves—thereby amassing a large and powerful following.The gladiators spent the winter of 72 BC training the newly freed slaves in preparation for what is now known as the Third Serville War, as their ranks swelled to as many as 70,000 individuals. Whole legions were sent to kill Spartacus, but these were easily defeated by the fighting spirit and experience of the gladiators. In 71 BC, Marcus Licinius Crassus amassed 50,000 well-trained Roman soldiers to pursue and defeat Spartacus. Crassus trapped Spartacus in Southern Italy, routing his forces, and killing Spartacus in the process. Six thousand of his followers were captured and crucified, their bodies made to line the road from Capua to Rome.

Most Famous People

Here are the 10 most famous, or infamous, well known people in human history, ranked according to Google searches and approximate number of books written about them. If you travel to Bouvet Island, the most remote landmass in the whole world, how likely is the first person you meet going to know of the following 10 people?

Sir Isaac Newton 1642–1727
Google searches: 1 million+ per month. Number of books written about this person: c. 400,000. The discoverer of the calculus just edged out Albert Einstein for the 10th spot. Google searches alone would have netted Einstein a place on the list, at 6.1 million searches per month, but many more books have been written about Newton. Einstein is on track to break his record in far fewer than 286 years, but even then, Einstein would have had no foundation on which to base his theories of Relativity had Newton not existed. 95% of all classical mechanics is built on Isaac Newton alone. He generalized the binomial theorem, invented the reflecting telescope, coined the word "gravity" and gave the Roman Catholic Church's self-important hegemony over geocentrism its final knockout blow. Copernicus and Galileo had to face inquisitions, but no one ever attempted to reproach Newton's *Principia Mathematica*. Perhaps arguing against someone else's observations is inane enough, but arguing against math itself was in Newton's case, impossible. He proved the former two's theories on heliocentrism, and explained why and how every single macroscopic object in the entire Universe moves as it does. He did all this by himself and still had time to investigate elements and principles of optics, and invent the pet door, although he was too busy ever to have sex. He died a virgin at 84.

Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci 1452–1519
Google searches: 4 million+ per month. Number of books: c. 600,000 Google searches can be inaccurate, which is why they are only half the criteria for judgment. If you search "leonardo," you'll get a lot of pages about ninja turtles and people who drowned on Titanic. But if you type da Vinci's full name, you'll quickly see why he is world renowned. He could do anything. He has possibly the greatest resume in history. Imagine if you could put the following on yours and then make good on all of it at an interview: Engineer, inventor, anatomist, architect, mathematician, geologist, musician, cartographer, botanist, writer, sculptor. You name it, da Vinci was into it. He invented the sniper rifle, although it was not rifled: he just bolted one of his refracting telescopes onto a wheellock musket and shot people from 1,000 yards. He probably invented the wheellock musket, too. He invented the parachute about 300 years before Louis-Sebastien Lenormand claimed the honor in the late 1700s. Da Vinci's design is not known to have been tested until 2000. It worked perfectly. He invented the hang glider about 400 years before it really took off. His design was based on a bird's wings. He gave the helicopter quite the college try, but couldn't figure out a sufficiently powerful method for getting it airborne. He was the first to understand the concept of spinning helical blades tilted at just the right angle pulling an object up into the air. He invented the tank, which was propelled via men turning a

crankshaft inside and fired cannon in all directions. He invented the mitrailleuse about 400 years before the French. It is a precursor to what we consider a machine gun, with multiple barrels firing all at once. Da Vinci invented the pivoting scissors by bolting two knives together for shearing cloth.His sculptures are not as well known as those of Michelangelo, but da Vinci envisioned a gigantic horse sculpted out of poured bronze, which was impossible to make with the technology of his day (the sculpture would have broken apart under its own weight). But it was completed in 1998 and there are three models of it around the world, one in Milan, Italy, one in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, and one based in Florence, Italy that is shipped around the world for display. They are 24 feet high and the largest horse statues ever constructed. Da Vinci was also a pretty good painter.

William Shakespeare 1564–1616

Google searches: 7.4 million+ per month. Number of books: c. 1 million. The man with the lion's share of the percentage of votes for greatest writer in English or any language in human history is sure to be the source for quite a few words and phrases now common in his native language. A good 50% of common English phrases come from the King James Bible, and possibly 30% of the rest come from the Bard. If you've ever said, "It's all Greek to me;" "food for the gods;" "all that glitters is not gold;" "a sorry sight;" "dead as a doornail;" "come what may;" "with one fell swoop;" or "all's well that ends well;" then "by Jove" you're quoting Shakespeare. Egil Aarvik, of the Committee for the Nobel Prize, once said that Shakespeare would have been the only person in history to win more than one prize for his literature. There is no rule against this, and had he lived into the 20th Century, his plays would have certainly deserved one, but his sonnets alone are worth the bodies of work for which other laureates have been honored. What is the most famous quote in all of English literature? Probably "to be or not to be." What's most impressive about his fame is that we know very little at all about Shakespeare himself, the man and his life. He only had a grammar school education and worked as an actor before becoming a playwright. What makes Shakespeare so great is his seamless blend of the finest poetry, profound, multifaceted philosophy, and a lively wit. Do it one time and you'll win quite a few awards and be thought a great writer. Shakespeare did it 37 times, and that doesn't account for his 154 sonnets, the bulk of the English repertory. Hamlet and King Lear are universally acclaimed masterpieces, benchmarks against which all other drama, before and after, is judged.

Adolf Hitler 1889–1945

Google searches: 6.1 million+ per month. Number of books: c. 175,000. We all know that he remains the primary cause of WWII. He instigated it to suit two profound desires: to become the most powerful person on Earth, preferably in history, if not to rule the whole world; and, for his own enjoyment, to cause as much pain as possible against all those he deemed responsible for Germany's humiliating and miserable defeat in WWI, and its squalid poverty between the wars. Germany was forced to pay every other nation's wartime expenses after the First World War, and this utterly destroyed Germany's economy. The Deutschmark became so worthless that children burned millions of them at once to keep warm in the streets. The Jews, meanwhile, largely kept their money in

gold and jewelry, safe in international banks. Gold and diamonds do not depreciate, and Hitler seized on his own hatred of the Jews' prosperity in the Interbellum to sway as many people to his side as possible. Add to this a supreme mastery of oratory, and history is about to suffer a severe catastrophe. WWII resulted in more deaths than any other war, up to 71 million, and Hitler is the most to blame. He knew and was not ashamed. He was despised and happy about it. He is routinely listed alongside the following names on lists of the most evil people, real or fictitious, in history, especially those of public polls: "the Devil;" "Satan;" "Lucifer;" "Stalin." The current US President (whoever it is) is usually next, although recently elected popes can unseat him. It can be argued that Hitler shaped the 20th Century more than any other person, except possibly Einstein, and Hitler is the only person of the 20th or 21st Century on this list. Quite an impressive ranking to have been dead for only 68 years.

Paul the Apostle of Tarsus c. 5–c. A.D. 67

Google searches: 3.35 million+ per month. Number of books: c. 7 million. Paul is quite possibly more responsible for the dissemination of Christianity, its ideals, theology, and principles, than anyone else. He is venerated in all branches, as a saint in many, or at least as a profoundly respected teacher, preacher, and the chief Christian apologist. And he did all this via 13 letters to various churches and people throughout Asia Minor. He was the first person to write anything that was later canonized into what we call the New Testament. He probably wrote his first epistle, to the churches in Galatia, in about A.D. 50, give or take 5 years. Mark wrote his Gospel 5 to 10 years later. Paul's theological thesis throughout his 13 or so Epistles is a more detailed statement of Jesus's philosophy of ethics and salvation given in the Gospels. Paul's central point is that all you have to do is believe that Jesus is the Son of God, Savior of the world, rose again from the dead and ascended into Heaven, and you will not die. Your transition may be painful, but you'll go to Heaven. If that's all you have to do, as most people have accepted his teaching, it's obvious why Paul's brand of evangelism caught on so quickly, firmly, and widely. He is far more immediately known than any of the Twelve Apostles, only rivaled, through the fame of the popes, by Peter. By his death, he permanently cemented his legacy for the ages: he was arrested in Rome for inciting political discord and beheaded south of the city center, at what is now San Paolo alle Tre Fontane, or the basilica of Saint Paul at the Three Fountains.

Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha) c. 563–c. 483 B.C.

Google searches: 4 million+ per month. Number of books: c. 7 million. You might be surprised to know that most of the people who Google Buddha are not Buddhists. In the Western Hemisphere and throughout Europe, Buddhism is not as well understood as the three major monotheisms. A few clarifications: Gautama was probably born in Kapilavastu or Lumbini, Nepal in about 563 B.C., about 24 years after Babylon sacked Jerusalem. Gautama was a mortal man who attained Nirvana, or spiritual awakening and peace of mind, at the age of 35, while seated under a Pipal tree, now referred to as the Bodhi tree, in Bodh Gaya, India. The tree growing there now was planted in 288 B.C. from a seed of the original. Buddha sat in meditation for 49 days until he attained the knowledge of how to thoroughly end suffering for all people on Earth. The people do have to

follow his teaching in order to free themselves from the various griefs of life. This is called the Noble Eightfold Path: right view, right intention, right concentration, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, and right mindfulness. If you hold to all these, you will be able to put away all worries and you will be truly happy and unaffected by anything. Buddha rejected the notion of any literature being infallible, and argued that truth must be experienced to be known. Gautama, the Supreme Buddha, is worshipped in Hinduism as well, as one of the ten representations of Vishnu, who is the god above all others. Baha'i also venerates Gautama as a mortal manifestation of God, who descended to teach mankind to love one another and how to be happy. Gautama is traditionally said to have died in about 411 B.C., at the age of 150 or so. Modern scholars place his death at about 483, at the age of 80.

Moses c. 1300–c. 1180 B.C.

Google searches: 2.7 million+ per month. Number of books: c. 8 million. Moses is revered but not worshipped by all three major monotheisms, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as well as Baha'i. He is regarded as the greatest prophet of the Old Testament; the liberator of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt; their leader into Canaan, the Promised Land; and their lawgiver, who relayed God's commandments to the Jews, and founded much of Jewish life and tradition. The Pharaoh's daughter, usually named Bithiah, found the infant Moses in a basket floating in the Nile and took him as her own son. She named him after the Hebrew verb "to draw," since she drew him out of the river. No information is given on Moses's life, except that he was raised in the Egyptian noble household, and that one day he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave and saved the Hebrew by killing the Egyptian. He then hid in the wilderness, and met Jethro, who was a follower of the precursor faith to Islam. Jethro gave him Zipporah, his daughter, to be his wife, and Moses met God for the first time, who showed himself in the form of a burning bush. Moses then bravely returned to Egypt and, with God's help, forced the Pharaoh to let his people go. Moses was about 80 years old when this Exodus began. They wandered the desert wilds for 40 more years, received God's law through Moses, built an ark into which the law was placed, and finally reached a land flowing with milk and honey, which God promised them. Moses, however, had acted arrogantly when he struck the stone from which water sprang for the Israelites, and so God refused to allow him entrance into Canaan. Moses died at 120 years and God buried him in the Moab valley opposite Mount Nebo. There is a memorial to him there today.

Abraham c. 1812–c. 1637 B.C.

Google searches: 9.1 million+ per month. Number of books: c. 2 million. The Google searches for Abraham the Old Testament prophet are not as reliable as those for Moses or Adolf Hitler, since quite a few famous historical or fictitious people have been named Abraham. The top three most famous are Abraham of the Bible, Abraham Lincoln, and Abraham van Helsing. But if you were to go, say, the Philippines, and ask the first passerby who Abraham Lincoln was, they might actually not know. Among well over 99% of the world's cultures and societies, you will not have that problem when asking about the prophet called Abraham.He is revered by all three monotheisms, as well as Baha'i, as a prophet, and one of the first, if not the first, persons of the Middle East to believe in a

single God. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are referred to as "the Abrahamic religions." In the Bible, God makes a covenant with Abraham because of his devout, unswerving faith in God, while everyone around him follows the newest god to take everyone's fancy. This covenant is marked by circumcision. God then tests the conviction of Abraham's faith in him by demanding that he kill his firstborn son, Isaac, to glorify God. Abraham does not hesitate, but takes Isaac up to the top of a mountain and is about to kill him when an angel arrives and tells him to stop. God is immensely impressed and blesses Abraham with fruitfulness: he will be the father of many nations. Today, Abraham is precisely that. Muslims believe that it was not Isaac, but Ishmael, his other son, whom God told Abraham to sacrifice, and Muslims believe that Ishmael's lineage led to the next entry. The site of the near sacrifice is traditionally deemed to be where the Dome of the Rock sits today. This shrine is sacred to all three Abrahamic religions.

Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh c. A.D. 570–632

Google searches: 13.6 million+ per month. Number of books: incalculable. To non-Muslims, Muhammad founded Islam. To Muslims, he did not found anything, because the religion, called Islam, was already there, and had to be restored to its proper maintenance. Muslims believe that Muhammad restored the religion and unified it under the philosophies God imparted to him in revelations he wrote down. These became the Q'uran. Islam is the Arabic noun for "a surrendering," or "a yielding," in this case to the will of Allah. Muhammad was born about A.D. 570 in Makkah (Mecca), Saudi Arabia. He had 13 wives, which is acceptable and encouraged in Muslim cultures. Muhammad's status as second most famous person in history is especially remarkable given that it is illegal according to Islamic law to depict Muhammad in any way (which is why you don't see him in the above picture). That law dictates that Muhammad is the last prophet to have been sent by God to teach mankind the ways of peace and righteousness, and that he is too holy to be viewed by our sinful eyes. For this reason, very few films have been made about him. The most notable was The Message (1977), the premiere of which incited suicide bombings throughout the Middle East and protests around the world, until everyone realized that Muhammad is not actually depicted; rather, the camera's point of view represents him: the film is seen through his eyes.

If you'd like to know, there is nothing in the Q'uran that states, "To kill Americans, both civil and military, is the duty of every Muslim who is able." That nonsense was concocted by various Middle Eastern leaders over the years, mostly in the last half of the 20th Century and beyond. These leaders know full well that knowledge is power and have done their level best to hoard literacy education from the public. The literacy rate in Yemen is currently about 70%, which is terrible compared to "more civilized" countries like the USA, England, Germany, and Japan. And because the Middle Eastern Muslim public largely cannot read the Q'uran, the governments disseminate anti-American, anti-Western lies to indoctrinate them into hatred. Muhammad died on 8 June A.D. 632 in Medina, Saudi Arabia, having united the whole of the Middle East under a single God, whose name is Allah. There are many spellings of Muhammad, including Mohammed, Moammar, Mehmet, Mahomet, and others. Because of him, Muhammad is the most common given name in the world, with about 200

million carriers. “Muhammad” means “praised.” If you anticipated Muhammad, you probably anticipated the next entry.

Jesus of Nazareth c. 5 B.C.–c. A.D. 28

Google searches: 24.9 million+ per month. Number of books: incalculable. There’s really no need to explain just what the four Gospels say Jesus did to become famous, but in the interest of fairness, here are the claims: he was born to a virgin, died at about the age of 33 sometime around the year A.D. 33 (plus or minus 5), the most famous victim of crucifixion, and rose from the dead on his own power 3 days later, ascended into Heaven and now sits at the right hand of God the Father as a manifestation of that God’s only offspring. You can look up the various miracles attributed to him. There are just over 7 billion people on Earth as of this list, and just about one-third precisely, 33.32%, of them, worship Jesus as “the Christ of God.” We may fairly say that these 2.33 billion people know very well who he was/is, and specifics about his life. It is also indisputable that those followers of Islam and Judaism both know perfectly well who he was. There are some 1.75 billion Muslims on Earth today, or 25% of the global population, and since Jesus is venerated as a very important prophet of their religion, to whom they say Muhammad spoke when he sprang to Heaven on a horse, Jesus is certainly not unknown to them. There are about 1.3 billion atheists the world over, and at least 98% of those people certainly know all about Jesus. It is highly possible that the only people on Earth who have no idea who he was, or anything about him, are those people who belong to the 100 or so primitive, uncontacted tribes remaining around the world, the most well known across the Internet of which are the Envira people of the Brazilian-Peruvian border area, deep in the Amazon Jungle. They have been photographed from helicopter. It is doubtful they know of Jesus, or Muhammad, or anyone else on this list, as they are 100% isolated from the rest of the world’s societies.

Google claims that 129,864,880 books have been written and bound throughout human history and which still survive in book form in some library in the world. That is not as high a number as you might have expected, but we are speaking of different volumes, so only one of the 25 million copies of the Bible printed every single year counts toward this total. Out of these c. 130 million books, it is estimated that 40% are about Jesus. This percentage includes books about Christianity in general, whether evangelical (or anti-evangelical) or historical. Richard Dawkins’s The God Delusion focuses on God in general, but pays special attention to Christianity, as any atheist apology must, since Christianity is the most popular religion, and thus Dawkins’s book counts as 1 book about Jesus, as it counts as 1 book about Muhammad. So there are some 52 million different books circulating the world right now that are in some way concerned with Jesus, the man who may have lived, who may have walked on water, and risen from the dead. The Gospel of John, one of the 52 million books written about Jesus, ends with this passage: “Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.” Just missed the cut (many): Confucius, Napoleon Bonaparte, Albert Einstein, Abraham Lincoln, Michael Jackson, Elvis Presley, Jack the Ripper, Josef Stalin, Mao Zedong, and more.

Interesting Facts About the Irish

St Patrick's Day is here, and it is celebrated in all corners of the world, by people of many different nationalities. While many people mainly use the day as an excuse to drink an untold amount of booze, it is still—first and foremost—a day to celebrate Irish heritage and culture. Considering this we thought it would be appropriate to regale you all with fascinating information about Irish culture and history. For those with Irish heritage, it is about more than drinking alcohol, it is about celebrating their roots, history and the impact they have had on the world.

Inventors Fact: The Earls of Rosse were great inventors
The Earls of Rosse, in Ireland were great inventors and in their castle studied things such as photography, engineering and other marvels. Their castle contained much photographic equipment and science of all sorts held great sway over many generations who lived there. Most famous, however, is the Rosse Telescope, which was built in the 1800s by one of the Earls and held the record for largest telescope in the entire world for the better part of a century. The telescope had a reflector that was 72 inches in diameter, which was incredibly impressive for its time. The telescope was known as the Leviathan, due to it's incredible size.

Dracula
Dracula may actually have been inspired by the Irish legend of Abhartach. This one may surprise many of you; it turns out that while many believe the legend of Dracula from Bram Stoker's famous novel was inspired by Vlad Tepes, that may not actually be the case at all. For those Romanians who want Vlad the Impaler's name to be cleared on this matter, you are in luck. Bram Stoker was actually born in Ireland and raised in Dublin, and had never even been to Eastern Europe in his life. Irish legends included stories of chieftains and other important figures drinking blood. But more specifically there is the legend of an Irish wizard and chieftain who was known by the name of Abhartach, and one historian believes that he was the true inspiration for Dracula. In the legends Abhartach basically was a vampire king, and in Irish folklore Dracula actually means something closer to "bad blood", than anything else.

Halloween
Halloween was derived from a Celtic festival celebrated in Ireland and parts of Britain. It originated from Pagan tradition. The Celtics saw it as a time when our world and the spirit world were most connected to each other, and it was called Samhain. When the Christians took over the holiday, they called it "All Hallows' Eve", and then later changed the name to "All Saints Day". Halloween is one of the most stubborn Holidays, however, in that no matter what Christian influence has been exerted, much of the practices of the day are still very much of pagan origin and not just on the surface. Halloween is still known as the day when the spirit world crosses over into our realm, and is practiced as such by many.

Feast Day
St. Patrick's Day is much more solemn in Ireland and less about drinking. In the United States of America, St. Patrick's Day has become an excuse to drink cheap green beer and get completely hammered. However, in Ireland where the holiday originated it, it is celebrated in a much more solemn manner. In fact, in Ireland it is celebrated much more as a holy day. Now, don't get the impression it is not celebrated at all. After observing St. Patrick's Day, it is quite common to go to the pub to socialize and have a few drinks, it is Ireland after all. However, many of the parades and festivities on St. Patrick's Day in Ireland were actually caused by American influence.

White House
Fact: An Irishman designed the White House. In 1792 George Washington and Thomas Jefferson organized a competition to decide who would build the domicile of the President, and the man who won was an Irishman named James Hoban. James Hoban was not only born in Ireland, but he also studied architecture in his homeland as well. Not only did he design it, but he also built it, and more than once. After the White House was destroyed in 1814, Hoban had to design and build it all over again. Only a true Irishman would be so stubborn. You can never keep us down.

Snakes
St. Patrick's clearing of the Emerald Isle of snakes isn't true. The legend says that St. Patrick cleared the Emerald isle of snakes; this has become such a widely popularized myth that it is believed by nearly everyone. It is also, completely untrue. The truth is that Ireland never had snakes in the first place. According to researchers, the last time Ireland had snakes was probably millions of years ago. The ice age would have killed all of the snakes, and by the time the ice melted Ireland was separated from other countries that still had the nasty buggers. The main point is that as far as scientists are able to deduce, snakes have not existed along with people during any time in Ireland's history.

Magic
A spell in Madeleine L'Engle's popular time quartet is derived from a prayer by St. Patrick. Madeleine L'Engle, despite being attacked for having magic in her series the Time Quartet, was a Christian and strongly influenced by her beliefs. In her novel A Swiftly Tilting Planet, Charles Wallace is taught a sort of rhyming prayer by his sister's mother in law that was taught to her by her grandmother, who was Irish. The rhyming prayer in A Swiftly Tilting Planet:
"At Tara in this fateful hour
I place all Heaven with its power
And the sun with its brightness,
And the snow with its whiteness,
And the fire with all the strength it hath,
And the lightning with its rapid wrath,
And the winds with their swiftness along their path,
And the sea with its deepness,
And the rocks with their steepness,
And the earth with its starkness:

All these I place
By God's almighty help and grace
Between myself and the powers of darkness!"
St. Patrick's rune goes by many names, and is a rather long prayer of protection that can be read here. The part that the prayer above is based on can be seen below:
"I arise today
Through the strength of heaven:
Light of sun
Brilliance of moon
Splendor of fire
Speed of lightning
Swiftness of wind
Depth of sea
Stability of earth
Firmness of rock."

Pirate Queen
Fact: The infamous Pirate Queen Grace O'Malley was Irish. The infamous Queen of the pirates, Grace O'Malley, was an Irishwoman, if it wasn't already clear by her name. She was said to be completely fearless, skilled both when it came to strategy in battle, and in politics as well. The woman was notorious, rebellious and a consummate pirate who none dared cross. She gained her reputation by fighting on the front lines as hard as anyone else, rallying her men against their enemies. Legend has it that in one battle; she gave birth at sea and then joined in a fierce battle the very next day, turning the tide against her enemies.

America
The Irish may have discovered America first. Some say Christopher Columbus was the first to discover America, as the poem goes "in 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue". Some suggest that the first to discover America were the Vikings, or perhaps the Chinese, but there is another legend in regards to which country first sailed to the America's. According to one legend, an Irish monk called St. Brendan set out on an expedition to find paradise and after seven years discovered an island that was so large that even after forty days they could not reach the far shore. The monks returned home with the news, this voyage was said to be undertaken in the sixth century, which is much earlier than many of the other first discoveries of America. It should be clear, of course, that this legend has not been proven.

St. Patrick
Fact: St. Patrick was not actually Irish. St. Patrick is well known for being the patron saint of Ireland and having a day named for him that most of the world uses as an excuse to get incredibly drunk. However, St. Patrick, despite popular belief, was not actually Irish. St. Patrick was the son of Romans who were living in Britain, legend says he was kidnapped and taken as a slave to the Emerald Isle where he helped herd sheep. However, even more interesting is a recent study performed by Cambridge University that suggests a completely different take on the popular legend. According to the study, he may actually have gone to Ireland

of his own accord and sold slaves himself so that he wouldn't have to be drafted into a job as a tax collector for the Romans.

War Crimes of the US Civil War

When we think of war crimes, we think of the Nazis and Stalin's henchmen. History classes tend to overlook the presence of genuine crimes against the understood rules of proper war-time conduct. Here are 10 of the most heinous examples.

Bee Creek Massacre
Silas Gordon's pro-slavery, anti-Union activities resulted in the Union burning down every town and farm in Platte County, Missouri twice. He appears to have been consumed by an intemperate fury against the North, and more than once killed people on mere suspicion, without any evidence of wrongdoing. He was probably responsible for the Platte Bridge Tragedy, in which a rail trestle was burned through, collapsing under the weight of a passenger train, killing at least 17 men, women, and children. In retaliation for his guerrilla tactics, Colonel James Morgan burned down platte City and apprehended three of Gordon's men, William Kuykendall, Black Triplett, and Gabriel Chase. They pled for a legitimate trial before a judge, but Morgan had them taken to Bee Creek Bridge, where Triplett was shot by 8 men with muskets. Chase fled with arms bound behind him, but sank to his waist in the muddy bank, where a soldier caught and bayoneted him through the throat with such force that he nearly decapitated him. Kuykendall had played dumb through all of this and his ruse worked. He was spared.

Champ Ferguson at Saltville
Ferguson was a Confederate guerrilla possessed of the same raging hatred of the Union as Silas Gordon, and led various posses of armed Confederate sympathizers, and sometimes soldiers, in ambushes and murderous raids throughout middle and eastern Tennessee. He is notorious for acting with marked cruelty and targeting anyone, even women and children, whom he felt crossed him or supported the North. He is said to have cut the heads off 80-year-old men and rolled them down hills into towns. He was arrested within 3 months of returning home to Nashville after hearing news of Lincoln's assassination, and was tried and hanged on 20 October 1865 for 53 counts of murder. He had personally knifed and shot unarmed civilians for their support of the abolitionist cause. His actions after the First Battle of Saltville, Virginia were specifically cited, in which he and his men invaded a Union field hospital and shot and stabbed to death over two dozen soldiers of the 5th U. S. Colored Cavalry regiment, including white officers.

Savannah Campaign
This campaign is more popularly known as Sherman's March to the Sea. It is dated from 15 November, in the aftermath of General John Bell Hood's accidental razing of much of Atlanta, Georgia, to 21 December 1864. Hood's intent was to burn military supplies lest they fall into General William Sherman's hands, but most of the city was made of wood and the winds were high. Sherman ordered his army of 62,000 men with 64 cannons to march from Atlanta 300 miles southeast to Savannah, Georgia and destroy absolutely everything in their path,

especially the railroads. They ripped apart the ties, heated and wrapped the rails around trees, dynamited factories, and burned down towns, farms, banks and courthouses.

Sherman had given orders that the civilian population was not to be harmed personally unless they resisted, and that his intent was to break the South's back, physically and psychologically, and put an end to its stubbornness. Whether the march itself constitutes a war crime is still a fiercely contended subject. It is effectively the same form of warfare as dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was understood in both cases that the civilians, not just the military, would suffer terribly, and civilian outcry would help put an end to the war. But Sherman had no intention of deliberately killing civilians and the march must be left open to debate because of this. Nevertheless, Sherman knew that civilian deaths would be unavoidable and explained himself in a speech after the war with the statement, "War is Hell." Uncorroborated reports exist of a massacre of 200 civilians north of Columbia, South Carolina a few months before the march commenced, so Sherman knew full well what his men would do whenever no responsible eyes watched them. Three days after Atlanta was fully evacuated, Sherman ordered the city's unburned sections shelled to ruins. One shell passed down through a house and blew off the legs of a man named Warner. The same shell cut his daughter in half.

Sherman personally saw his men rape and murder unyielding slaves throughout the march and gave no order to stop this. Those slaves who accepted the offer to enlist were given unarmed porter duties and treated comparatively well, but could only rely on food and water provisions when they were in surplus after the army was satisfied. Sherman also ordered the execution by firing squad of a 50-year-old man accused of espionage. He was most likely not guilty but was given no trial. All crops were either consumed or burned, as were all livestock slaughtered. It is surmised that 50,000 civilians were killed during the war, and possibly 1,000 of them died during the Savannah Campaign at the hands of soldiers unlawfully entering their houses to pillage. The 3rd and 4th Amendments to the Constitution prohibit this.

Shelton Laurel Massacre

In January of 1863, at the height of the war, Lieutenant Colonel James Keith was dispatched with the 64th North Carolina Regiment to the town of Marshall, in Madison County, on the border with Tennessee. A posse of pro-Union civilians had broken into the home of Colonel Lawrence Allen, looted and destroyed much of it, then broke into a storehouse for salt and stolen what they could carry, then blew it up with gunpowder kegs. Keith was enraged and, with the 64th, he searched the Shelton Laurel Valley, found and fought with them, shot down 12, and captured about 7. He then tracked down these men's family homes and tortured their mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters by breaking their fingers until they revealed the locations of about 8 more Union sympathizers. Keith arrested these men and marched the 15 of them for Tennessee, but two escaped into a steep ravine. Keith deliberately disobeyed the order of the North Carolina Governor, Zebulon Vance, to hold the prisoners until they could be tried, and had

them all executed by firing squad and thrown in a ditch. Keith was given 2 years in prison for this before escaping. He was never seen again.

Sacking of Osceola, Missouri

Few places throughout the United States saw quite the anarchic bloodshed as the Kansas Territory. Senator James Lane led a raid on Osceola on 23 September 1863, in pursuit of General Sterling Price's invading army, east of Harrisonville and Clinton, Missouri, near the present border with Kansas. Lane was a staunch abolitionist, Price just as staunchly pro-slavery. Lane had about 1,100 men at his disposal and skirmished with a much smaller Union detachment outside Osceola. When the Union soldiers were routed, they fled into the surrounding woods and cornfields, and Lane led his men into the town where they burned 797 of 800 buildings to the ground. They took care to kill none of the civilian population, but forced them from their homes and then searched every room of every building and stripped all belongings deemed of value, before torching everything, even the church. Lane stole a piano for himself. He then ordered 9 men of military age, one of them 16 years old and sobbing over his dead horse, to be tried on suspicion of aiding the Confederacy, and had them shot dead.

Centralia Massacre

At about 9:00 in the morning, on 27 September 1864, William "Bloody Bill" Anderson and a force of 80 guerrillas, including Jesse James, rode into Centralia, Missouri to rip up the North Nissouri Railroad. Anderson decided against this and instead, they stopped an arriving train and looted it and its 125 passengers, of whom 23 were Union soldiers. Anderson ordered the train evacuated, the 23 soldiers lined up and stripped, and then asked which of them were officers. Only one man stepped forth, but instead of killing him Anderson's men shot down the other 22, then scalped, skinned, and dismembered them. This officer, Sergeant Thomas Goodman, escaped around noon. Some three hours later, 155 Union mounted infantry armed with single-shot muzzle-loading muskets arrived in town, heard of Anderson's action, and attacked him from the rear. Anderson's men were armed with up to 4 revolvers each, most stolen over the years, and routed the infantry within 3 minutes of engaging them. Anderson survived to be killed in a battle in October of that year.

Battle of Fort Pillow

Fort Pillow was a Union stronghold on the Tennessee banks of the Mississippi River, near Henning, and on 12 April 1864, it was besieged by up to 2,500 cavalrymen under General Nathan Bedford Forrest, who would later become the first Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. Forrest easily took control of the high ground around the fort and demanded it be surrendered. The commander refused and Forrest's men assaulted and overwhelmed the defenders. Many of them were shot down as they fled into the river. Both sides of the war reported that after the fort's surviving garrison, most of it comprised of black soldiers and civilian workers, surrendered and was disarmed, the Confederates swarmed upon them and bayoneted, knifed, and clubbed some 250 men to death in an orgy of sadism. Over two dozen were castrated and lynched. Forrest always maintained that this massacre was a fair fight because the defenders were armed to the very end.

Lawrence Massacre

Captain William Clarke Quantrill led a raid into Lawrence, Kansas on 21 August 1863. Lawrence was a hotbed of anti-slavery sentiment and Quantrill was a fervent pro-slavery Confederate guerrilla, who had effectively enlisted into the Army under General Sterling Price, but deserted to form his own band of soldiers. There was little law in the Kansas Territory, and Quantrill's Raiders are known for more than one infraction of it. Quantrill was especially out to kill James Lane, but Lane escaped into a cornfield. The Raiders descended from Mount Oread into town at about 5:00 in the morning and burned down every business and municipal building. Homes were spared torching but the families were driven outside and the husbands, fathers, and son all shot dead on their porches, in the streets, even in their beds. The women were raped, some of them and some children shot down or trampled while they fled. At least 185 men and boys as young as 11 were executed merely for being able-bodied.

Camp Douglas

Douglas was the Northern counterpart to the next entry, a prison-of-war camp in Chicago, Illinois for Confederate soldiers. It was built as a training depot for Union recruits, but by March 1862 was refitted as a prison for the large numbers of captured Rebels. It operated in this capacity until the end of the war. Within the first month its use as a prison resulted in the death of 1 in 8 inmates from exposure to the harsh winter or pneumonia. The prisoners were poorly cared for in the way of medicine and proper diet. They received enough to eat to save them from starvation, but did not receive much fruit or onions, which allowed disease to suppress their immune systems. By the war's end, the Camp had gone through no less than 15 commands of 12 different wardens, none of whom was able to run the facility efficiently. Not only were the prisoners grossly neglected, they were not even properly supervised, and there were over 100 successful escapes. From June 1864 to the end of the war, inmates caught breaking any rule were tortured on the wooden horse, a sharply edged, wood pyramidal beam that rested between the buttocks against the tailbone. Prisoners were forced to sit on it with weights tied to their ankles for hours, even in snow or rain, until they passed out and fell off. From 1864 on, the inmates were no longer fed adequately, but given only enough to keep them alive and hungry, purely for the guards' amusement. They were forced to stand at attention in freezing rain and sleet for hours, during which time the guards robbed them of any valuables. The death toll by the war's end has been put at 4,454, but many went unreported, and the total figure may be as high as 6,000, most from exposure and disease brought on by malnutrition. This is at least 17% of the 26,000 prisoners sent to Douglas.

Camp Sumter

Camp Sumter was a Confederate Prisoner-of-War Camp for Union soldiers, today a historic site located in Andersonville, Georgia, from which the prison derives its more well known name. Its conditions were little known from its opening in February 1864 until it was liberated in May 1865, one month after Lincoln was assassinated. When the mistreatment of prisoners came to light, the entire nation and even Europe were disgusted and dumbfounded by the photographs of horrifically emaciated prisoners who somehow found the strength to survive.

The prison covered 25 and a half acres east of Andersonville, and was nothing but a bare patch of land surrounded by woods and fenced in twice. The outer fence was a log palisade 1,620 feet by 779 feet, with two entrances in the west wall leading into town. 19 feet in from this palisade stood an inner fence of chest-high posts topped with single crossbeams. This was nicknamed the dead line. Anyone who tried to cross it for the outer palisade, or even touched it, was shot without warning. Inside the camp, there were only eight small buildings that could house a total of about 100 men. The prison held 45,000 by the end of the war. Most were given tents in which to sit or sleep, but the Georgia summer was overwhelming. 13,000 of those men died within 7 months of summer incarceration from sunstroke, starvation, or disease.

The entire prison population suffered from a hookworm epidemic, causing most of them to defecate bloody diarrhea filled with worms. The prison was very poorly supplied with food and medical provisions, and when Dr. Joseph Jones was assigned to investigate, he vomited twice during the one hour he toured the camp, and contracted a severe case of the flu, which he warded off with oranges. He then asked the commandant, Henry Wirz, why Wirz was not suffering from scurvy, which was rampant throughout the camp. Wirz replied that he ate apples and oranges. “And the prisoners?” Jones asked. Wirz shrugged and said, “What about them?” Prisoners were able to pull out their own teeth with their fingers because of vitamin C deficiency. 3,000 died per month, or 100 per day. They had no clean drinking water, but were forced to drink from the same creek running through the camp’s center in which they bathed and which caught about half of all liquid and solid waste. Wirz was tried, court-martialed, and hanged for murder on 10 November 1865, the only Confederate officer to be so executed. His primary defense in court was that the prison’s food and water never arrived by train. When he was hanged, his neck did not break, and he strangled to death for 9 minutes.

Tragic Losses To Our Shared Human Heritage

Our human heritage is as much in danger today, as it was a thousand years ago. The notion of a shared human heritage is a doctrine of international law. It believes that certain regional areas and cultural elements should be protected from exploitation and destruction. To conserve our ancestry and customs, we have to start thinking of our cultures and precious monuments as part of a united world culture. Through the ages innumerable ancient sites and monuments were destroyed by wars, vandals or natural disasters. Apart from the 7 ancient wonders of the world (of which only the great pyramid is still left), here are ten of the most tragic losses.

The Desecration of Baghdad, Iraq
It is said that the desecration of Baghdad in 1258 by the Mongols ended the golden era of Islam. In this era, Iraq had developed canal systems that supported its agriculture. Baghdad had a refined culture, was a leading centre of education and was host to various mosques, palaces, hospitals and libraries. As the Mongols conquered and leveled the city, they also destroyed the House of Wisdom and the Grand Library—survivors claimed that the waters of the Tigris turned black from the vast amounts of books flung into it. Thousand were murdered, including the caliph. To this day, its former glory has never been restored.

The Parthenon, Athens, Greece
The Parthenon was completed in 438 B.C.. It's scarred and skeletal remains are the most important surviving remnants of Classical Greece. Through the ages, the temple served as a treasury, Christian church, mosque and a munitions dump. It was home to grandiose carvings, sculptures and decorative stonework—most notably the chryselephantine sculpture of Athena created by the famous sculptor Phidias, now lost and only known from descriptions, gems, coins and paintings. It was damaged beyond repair in 1687 when the munitions were ignited during a Venetian assault. The surviving works of art were saved for humanity when they were placed in the British Museum, save for which they would have been completely destroyed during World War II.

The downfall of Memphis, Egypt
Memphis was the Capital of Ancient Egypt for several centuries. It was also the seat of the cult of the god Ptah. During its golden age, Memphis was the primary royal residence and sources speak of immense palaces that were built underneath important royal pyramids. Invaded by the Hyksos in 1650 B.C., the astounding monuments, temples, palaces and statues were destroyed and looted. The city gradually became a quarry for new settlements being built in the area. Even the foundations of Cairo were laid with stones from the destroyed temples. Today, apart from its ruins, almost nothing remains of ancient Memphis.

Solomon's Temple, Jerusalem, Israel
The First Temple or Holy Temple was dedicated to the God of Israel and is believed to have been built by King Solomon in 832 B.C. on the Temple Mount. It was the first fixed temple structure of the Jewish people as previously tents or

tabernacles were used. It harbored the Ark of the Covenant that contained the two tablets Moses received from the Lord, as well as numerous sacred vessels and sculptures. Certain parts of the temple were even plated and glazed with gold. Though limited proof has been found to verify the temple's existence, the sensitive religious and political nature of the area makes archaeological excavations impossible. Its destruction is one of the most tragic events in Jewish history.

Imperial Gardens, Beijing, China

The Imperial Gardens, built in the 18th century, was the residence of the emperors of the Qing Dynasty (The Forbidden City played host to formal ceremonies). It was a combination of palaces, halls, pavilions, lakes and gardens that covered 860 acres, roughly 8 times the size of the Vatican City. It had one of the largest and most exquisite art collections in the world that included unique copies of manuscripts and compositions. It was destroyed in 1860 by British and French troops after two British envoys were murdered. Of the surviving relics most remain in private collections despite the Chinese government's efforts to retrieve them.

Imperial Library of Constantinople, Istanbul, Turkey

Constantinople was the biggest and most prosperous capital in the Eastern Roman Empire. The Imperial Library was the last of the great libraries. It conserved ancient Greek and Roman manuscripts and also had a Scriptorium to duplicate the ancient texts in a time when uncertainty and chaos brought about their mass destruction in Africa and Europe. In fact, most of the Greek classics known today are copies that came from the Imperial Library. The greater part of the library was destroyed during the 4th Crusade in 1204 with the last vestiges completely lost after the Ottomans captured Constantinople in 1453. Some manuscripts were said to have survived into the Ottoman era but none has ever been found.

Timbuktu's Ahmed Baba Institute, Mali

Timbuktu lies 620 miles northeast of Bamako. Its cultural treasures made it a hotspot for venturesome tourists and international academics. Home to priceless artifacts, thousands of ancient manuscripts and sacred tombs it is believed by many to be the academic and religious center of Africa. In April 2012 Timbuktu was captured by Islamist militants. In what has been called an "offense against the whole of Africa" the following months saw the destruction of several ancient tombs of Sufi saints because it "contravened Islam". As Timbuktu was liberated by French and Malian forces, the militants further outraged the international community by setting fire to the Ahmed Baba Institute, burning thousands of ancient manuscripts.

Aristotle's Lost Dialogues

Aristotle is one of the most influential people to have ever walked this earth. He contributed to nearly every area of human understanding and pioneered several new fields of study. His writings and dialogues (of which the majority are believed to be lost) covered a vast area of subjects. The remaining texts mostly consist of working drafts or notes that were used in Aristotle's school. It is

believed that the writings ended up in a cellar a few generations after his death where they were severely damaged. Rediscovered in the 1st century B.C., numerous errors were introduced into the writings when Apellicon of Teos tried to restore them.

Conquering of Tenochtitlan, Mexico

Tenochtitlan was the capital of the Mexica Empire. Located on an island on Lake Texcoco, it was the largest city in the New World. In comparison to Europe, only Constantinople, Venice and Paris were larger. It was connected to the mainland by causeways obstructed by bridges that could be retracted if the city came under attack. It was home to the palace of Montezuma, the Templo Mayor temple complex, zoos, an aquarium and botanical gardens. The glorious city was destroyed by the Spanish conquistador Cortés in 1519. The city was destroyed and its palace and temple dismantled whereupon the Spanish constructed a cathedral and colonial city on top of it.

Destruction of the Bamyan Buddhas, Afghanistan

Created in the 4th century A.D., the Bamyan Buddhas were the largest standing Buddha carvings in existence. Placed at a crucial waypoint next to the fabled Silk trading route, these cultural landmarks were a testimony to the exchanging of Indian, Roman, Hellenistic and Islamic ideas for hundreds of years. They were also important figures in the accession of Mahayana Buddhist tutelage, which accentuated the capacity of each and every person to obtain enlightenment. In March 2001, the Taliban regime declared the statues to be “against Islam” and had them demolished with anti-aircraft munitions and dynamite. The methodical eradication of Afghanistan’s Buddhist inheritance has been criticized internationally.

Forgotten Events That Shaped The Modern World

History is full of twists and turns that ultimately shaped the world we live in today. Sheer coincidences, forgotten heroics, and unforeseen consequences have—for better or for worse—created the modern world as we know it. Below are ten instances of "forgotten" events that would have altered our current society—and possibly our very existence—had they not occurred.

Norwegian Heavy Water Sabotage

When developing nuclear weapons, one must acquire a large quantity of "heavy water," or Deuterium Oxide. It is used to produce isotopes for nuclear weapons, namely Plutonium-239. A fertilizer production plant in Norway had been producing heavy water since 1934, at the rate of twelve tons per year. Recognizing that German scientists were trying to create a nuclear weapon, Allied special forces alerted Norwegian resistance groups in 1940, encouraging them to destroy the facilities. Despite a number of failures, saboteurs managed to destroy the German supply of heavy water in 1943. In 1944, a single Norwegian commando managed to sneak onto a ferry carrying heavy water and sink it, finally undermining Germany's plan to acquire nuclear weapons. Germany had the scientific ability to generate a nuclear weapon; they simply lacked the materials. Had it not been for the Norwegian resistance, Germany may well have been able to create an atomic bomb—altering the war, and changing world history.

The Spanish Flu

In 1918, the world rejoiced at the end of World War One. Unfortunately, a far more sinister form of death was beginning to take lives: Spanish Influenza. In two short years, the virus killed between fifty million and one hundred million people. It is said that the Spanish Flu killed more in twenty-five weeks than AIDS has in twenty-five years—and more in a single year than the Bubonic Plague killed in a century. The outbreak gave modern scientists the first true close look at an epidemic, paving the way for great advances in medicine. Furthermore, the massive influx of patients led to a boom in the medical field, increasing the pay for doctors and encouraging many to enter the profession, a trend that continues to this day. For better or for worse, the Spanish Flu introduced the idea of "medicine for profit" to the world.

Expulsion of Christians from Japan

In the early 1600s, Catholic Missionaries in Japan were successful in converting a number of powerful feudal lords to Catholicism—thereby garnering a surprising number of followers in the largely Confucian nation. In 1639, Shogun Tokugawa Lemitsu expelled all Christians from the island, in fear of the growing Catholic population and the rebellions that these groups were causing. Had Tokugawa not expelled the Christians, it is likely that, with time, a Catholic Shogun would have risen to power. An allegiance to the Pope may also have fostered an alliance with France and Spain; and had Japan been on the side of France and Spain during the Seven Years' War against England, it is likely that the British would

have been defeated. Such a defeat would have made the colonization of America by the British unlikely—reshaping the world as we know it.

The Haitian Revolution

Known by the French as Saint-Domingue, the Caribbean island nation of Haiti was founded following a violent slave revolt that lasted from 1791 until 1804. The island was prized by the French, as its sugar cane proved to be a lucrative crop among the wealthy in Europe. More importantly, Napoleon used the funds from these sugar cane plantations to establish a foothold in Louisiana. Unable to quell the rebellion, Napoleon was forced to abandon his hopes of establishing a new French Empire in the Americas, as he now lacked the funds to do so. In debt after thirteen years of fighting a war against the Haitians, Napoleon sold the American government its Louisiana territories at a remarkably low price, in what is now known as the Louisiana purchase. Not only did the Haitian Revolution help form the modern day United States; it also prevented France from building a new North American Empire.

The Bretton Woods Conference

In 1944, with World War Two beginning to wind down, 730 delegates from all forty-four Allied nations met at a large hotel in New Hampshire. The meeting was held in an attempt to "outlaw practices which are agreed to be harmful to world prosperity". In short, an international banking system was to be established. Following this meeting, the International Monetary Fund was founded, all currencies were required to be convertible for trade, and exchange rates were modified so that one nation would not be favored over another. The ideas founded at this conference led to the development of the World Bank. In short, the international economy we now reside in and (occasionally) enjoy can be traced back to a meeting in the backwaters of rural New Hampshire.

The Crimean War

The Crimean War pitted the Ottoman Empire, the French Empire, and the British Empire against the Russian Empire in 1854. Although the Allied forces won the war, the Ottoman Empire was forced to take out massive loans from France and England. Sixty years later, still heavily indebted to the French and English, the Ottomans chose to side with the Germans in World War One, in the hope that a victory would nullify their existing loans. Unfortunately for the Ottomans, they were defeated, and France and England were able to enact their revenge upon the failing Empire. They split the Empire into a number of nations, creating new borders and political entities. This, in essence, formed the Middle-East as we now know it—and it sowed the seed for many of the problems we find in that region today.

Admiral Matthew Perry Opens Trade With Japan

In 1854, following centuries of Japanese isolationism, American Admiral Matthew C. Perry successfully encouraged Japan to open up to foreign trade. Still essentially a feudal nation, Japanese leaders began to comprehend the massive technological abyss which lay between their own nation and the industrialized world. In their attempts to rapidly modernize, they needed to form an empire, since they required vast stockpiles of resources which could not be procured

from their home islands. This led to a Japanese invasion of Korea, which was at that time a vassal state to China. Japan sided with the Allies during World War I, and continued to expand its territories following the war. In 1931, Japan invaded Manchuria, outraging Western nations. In response, Japan withdrew from the League of Nations in 1933. In 1937, Japan went on to attack China, and than French Indochina in 1940. This led to the United States imposing an oil embargo on the Empire. Unable to continue their war efforts in China without oil, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor—setting the stage for the Pacific Theater of World War Two, and ultimately ushering in the atomic age.

The Sinking of the Titanic

The terrible tale of this notorious cruise liner has been told time and time again, but some good did come of it; the golden age of radio. Following the sinking of the Titanic, it was mandatory for ships to possess wireless telegraphs, and eventually a radio had to be installed and manned at all times. Working long shifts next to a quiet radio became quite boring, and the men eventually started playing instruments and songs to one another as a form of entertainment. The idea spread, and the radio quickly became used to spread news and entertain families around the globe. Although a terrible tragedy, the sinking of the Titanic allowed radio to become the first truly global form of entertainment.

The Boer War

The Boer War actually consisted of two separate wars fought between Dutch settlers and the British Empire in what is now South Africa. The first war lasted from 1880 until 1881, and the second took place between 1899 and 1902. The second installment proved to be the most costly, as the British captured civilian populations and placed them in concentration camps—the first time they had ever been used by a modern power. The German Empire viewed the British as weak, and openly supported the Boers and their allies. Insulted by the Germans and embarrassed by their inability to deal with the Boers, the British became more involved in world politics, strengthening ties with Russia and France while remaining hostile towards Germany. This animosity would continue to grow, ultimately coming to a head in World War One, which itself set the course of the twentieth century.

The Death of Ogedei Khan

In 1241, Ogedei Khan—the Emperor of the Mongol Empire and son of Genghis Khan—passed away. Shortly before his passing, he had approved of a plan to invade Western Europe, aiming initially for Vienna, Austria, and continuing towards Germany, Italy, France, and Spain. This operation was to be carried out by Batu Khan.Upon Ogadei's death, a number of Mongol princes held an election, and chose Guyuk Khan to lead the Empire—but not before five years had passed. By the time Guyuk was in power, Batu felt too old and weak to invade Western Europe, and the Mongol Empire would never again come close to conquering the region. At around the same time, the basic ideas of "modern" banking and the concepts of capitalism were being developed in Austria. A Mongol invasion at such a time could very well have ended these early forays into what is currently the most prominent economic system in the world.

Lesser-Known Events of the US Civil War

The American Civil War, that is. Call it what you will—the War Between the States, the War to End Slavery—the conflict between the northern Union and the southern Confederacy pitted brother against brother and tore the country apart. Almost everybody knows about the Battle of Gettysburg and Lee's surrender at Appomattox, but some things aren't as popularly known as others—except perhaps in trivia questions for military history buffs. Here are 10 Civil War (1861-1865) events, which you may not have run across.

Siamese Twin Gets Drafted 1865
Chang and Eng, the 19th century's conjoined "Siamese" twins, were once drafted . . . almost. Following the brothers' retirement from show business in 1839, they bought 700 acres of land near White Plains, North Carolina, married sisters, adopted an American surname, fathered children, and owned slaves. According to local legend, in 1865, Union General George Stoneman came to the neighborhood to draft area men into the US Army as conscripts whether they liked it or not. All the names of male residents over 18 were put into a lottery. Eng's name came up, but not Chang's. Of course, as soon as he realized "Eng Bunker" was one-half of the famous inseparable duo, Stoneman let him go. By the way, each brother had a son who joined the Confederate cause, and both ultimately survived the war.

Man Without a Country June 1863
Read Edward Everett Hale's classic, The Man Without a Country? The story was based on the life changing events suffered by a real gentleman, Clement Larid Vallandigham. He was an attorney and Congressman from Ohio, a states' rights advocate who opposed the federal government's support of the Civil War as he believed the South couldn't be forced into rejoining the Union. In 1863, Union Major General Ambrose Burnside issued General Order 38, making it illegal to publicly express sympathy for the enemy. Vallandigham gave a speech criticizing President Lincoln, was arrested under the order, and tried before a military court despite his civilian status—the legality of the trial was debatable. Vallandigham was sentenced to 2 years in prison, but Lincoln avoided a political hot potato by commuting the sentence to banishment to the Confederate states. He eventually returned to Ohio since he still espoused the Union cause (not their policies) and the Confederates didn't want him either.

First Emancipation Proclamation August 1861
Before President Lincoln issued his official Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863, Union General John Charles "Pathfinder" Frémont, who'd been put in charge of the Department of the West by the POTUS, issued a proclamation of his own in August 1861. After putting Missouri under martial law due to instances of guerrilla warfare, threat of a Confederate invasion, and general lawlessness, he proclaimed that any rebel sympathizers or Confederates in the state would forfeit all their property, including their slaves, and the slaves would be declared free men and be given deeds of manumission. Lincoln wasn't pleased. Believing the act unconstitutional, he ordered Frémont to amend his

proclamation, and in November, removed him from his position. Frémont was the first, but he wasn't the last—in May 1862, Union General David Hunter issued a similar emancipation proclamation for Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida. A furious Lincoln ordered the proclamation retracted.

Thaddeus S.C. Lowe, Chief Aeronaut June 1861

Not recognizing the usefulness of manned balloons for military aerial reconnaissance, the Union Army balked at creating a Balloon Corps, but America's most famous aeronaut, Thaddeus Lowe, performed an impressive demonstration of tethered flight for President Lincoln in 1861 and the Corps was born. On that occasion, Lowe also sent the first telegram from the air. Beginning in 1862, Lowe in the Intrepid and his fellow aeronauts in other balloons flew successful reconnaissance missions over battlefields in the Peninsula campaign, Seven Pines, Sharpsburg, Fredericksburg, Antietam, and others. Confederate attempts to emulate Lowe and his balloons failed. However, due to a pay dispute and continued strained relations with military commanders, most of whom had no appreciation for balloonists, Lowe resigned as Chief Aeronaut in 1863, which pretty much spelled the end of the Balloon Corps.

Old Abe 1861

Mascots are a long standing military tradition. Soldiers have adopted dogs, cats, goats, donkeys, monkeys, pigs, birds—but the 8th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Regiment topped them all with the emblem of America itself, a tame bald eagle. The eaglet was taken from the nest and eventually made her way to the 8th Regiment, where she was named Old Abe after President Abraham Lincoln. She became a very popular patriotic symbol of the Union cause. She had a special shield shaped perch, but would walk through the camp stealing food. Old Abe flew over battlefields—39 in total—and although the Confederates had orders to capture her if possible, the eagle got through the war unscathed. After 1865, she was retired from the Army and given a new home in Madison, Wisconsin, in the State Capital building. Unfortunately, in 1881 after suffering smoke inhalation during a fire, Old Abe died. Some controversy exists regarding the bird's sex, and whether "Old Abe" was one bird or several. That the eagle existed isn't in doubt due to ample photographic evidence.

Plot to Burn New York City November 1864

In March 1864, knowing they were on the cusp of losing the war, the Confederacy changed tactics, deciding to launch what we would consider terrorist attacks against New York City. The plan was for a group called the "fire brigade" to set off a series of fires in hotels across the city. These fires were both a diversion and a signal to other groups, who were to take over by force important targets such as the police and municipal buildings, and free the prisoners in Fort Lafayette. It was decided to use incendiary devices fueled by the chemical compound known as Greek Fire, formulated by a southern sympathizer chemist. Had the plan succeeded, it's possible NYC would have fallen into Confederate hands. But when the time came on November 25, 1864, most of the plotters had no idea how to use the Greek Fire and few fires were set alight. One conspirator managed to accidentally burn down Barnum's American Museum, but no one was hurt. The Rebel plot was exposed, and the chief

architect of the plan to burn New York City was eventually captured, tried, and hung in 1865.

Unsinkable Thomas Oliver Selfridge, Jr. 1862

A graduate of the US Naval Academy, Thomas O. Selfridge Jr. fought for the Union side and saw almost constant action during the war. He showed courage under fire as well as an uncanny ability to survive. In his first major battle—USS Cumberland v CSS Virginia on March 8, 1862—when crewmen lay mangled and killed by flying splinters and shells, he calmly moved from gun to gun, firing at the enemy while cannonballs sizzled around him. When his ship sank, he swam to shore unscathed. He swam away again when he lost his first command, USS Cairo, to Confederate torpedoes. His next ship collided with another Union vessel and sank. He swam away without a scratch. When the USS Heron went down in 1865 during the naval bombardment of Fort Fischer, North Carolina, Selfridge ended the battle unharmed. The unsinkable officer was eventually given the rank of rear admiral. He retired in 1898. Death finally caught up with Selfridge in 1924. He died at age 88, in bed, on land.

Women of Roswell July 1864

Roswell, Georgia, became the site of a little-known mass deportation of innocent victims of the war between North and South. In the midst of General Sherman's march to Atlanta, Union Brigadier General Kenner Garrard came to the small town of Roswell, where the local cotton and woolen mills employed 400+ female workers producing "Roswell gray" uniform cloth for the Confederacy. Noting Garrard's approach, the cotton mill's owner hoisted a French flag, hoping to avoid his mill being destroyed. The subterfuge backfired. Garrard ordered both mills burned. On Sherman's direct orders, he took a further step—all the woman workers, black and white, and their children, approximately 700 people in all, were taken under guard to the railyard in Marietta, 10 miles away, where they were herded into boxcars and shipped to Indiana with nothing more than their clothes and 9 days of rations. Sherman ordered a second similar deportation of female textile workers in New Manchester. The women and children were simply dumped in a new city and left to fend for themselves. Most disappeared from history. A few managed to return home after the war.

Cruel and Unusual Punishment November 1863

To be clear, becoming a doctor in the mid 19th century required merely attending lectures at a medical school. There were no official standards. So when war was declared, every physician capable of wielding a scalpel and bone saw was needed—no matter how incompetent, drunk, or just plain sadistic. Dr. Charles Briggs was assigned to the 54th Massachusetts Colored Infantry (remember the movie Glory?). On November 6, 1863, Briggs examined Private James Reilly, a black soldier who'd been accused of having sex with a mare. Although he found no evidence, and the private was found not guilty based on Briggs' testimony, the doctor wasn't done. For reasons of his own, he had Reilly brought to his tent, stripped naked, bound, and gagged. He circumcised Reilly without anesthetic and cauterized the wound with a hot iron. Briggs was charged with using circumcision as punishment, but never court-martialed for his

brutality. A few weeks after the torture of Private Reilly, Briggs was promoted to full surgeon of the unit and served to the end of the war.

Leg That Served the North and the South June 1863

When Confederate Captain John Newton Ballard of Mosby's Rangers lost his leg in battle in 1863, like many of his fellow officers, he didn't waste time fretting over his amputated limb. Instead, he acquired a second hand artificial leg and got back to war. Unfortunately, he was left literally without a leg to stand on near Halltown, Virginia, when his horse collided with a Union cavalry soldier's mount and his prosthetic was crushed, making him the only Civil War soldier to lose the same leg twice. However, he was about to have a stroke of luck. In March 1864, Union Colonel Ulric Dahlgren was killed near Richmond, Virginia, during a cavalry raid. He, too, had lost a leg in 1863 (in fact, the severed leg was given a military funeral and is still sealed within the wall of Building 28 in the Washington Navy Yard). Dahlgren's body was found by Confederates, one of whom took his wooden artificial limb as a souvenir. The Yankee prosthetic made its way to John Ballard, who wore it in active service to the end of the war.

Lesser-Known Disasters of the 20th Century

Disasters, whether natural or manmade, leave scars on the landscape and the victims. Time passes, the wounds heal, and the event slowly fades from public consciousness. Here are 10 disasters which happened in the 20th century that may not be so very well known today.

The Paris Métro Fire August 10, 1903

The Paris Métropolitain—the city's underground mass transit system—opened for business in 1900. By 1903, certain problems were well known: the train carriages were made of wood and posed a fire hazard, the tunnels had no ventilation, and exits at the stations hadn't been designed to accommodate the increasing number of passengers. In August of that year, these factors combined to create a deadly chain of events ending in the deaths of 84 victims. It began when a train bound for Ménilmontant suffered an engine breakdown. Another train hooked up to act as a pusher. Passengers from both trains were stuffed into the carriages of a third, which was already crowded. As the first train was being pushed toward Les Couronnes station, faulty wiring in the electric motor began to spark, creating a small fire. However, rather than stop, the driver of the second train accelerated, hoping to reach Ménilmontant station to take care of the fire. The increased flow of air fanned the flames. When the trains almost reached Ménilmontant, the first train's engine exploded in a fireball that quickly engulfed the wooden carriages of both trains. The crews fled into the darkened tunnel as the lights blew. About thirty yards behind, the third train's passengers were warned by guards to evacuate. They were left to grope their own way in the dark, choking on smoke, either forward to Ménilmontant or back through the tunnel to Les Couronnes. Unfortunately for passengers who chose the latter, the station hadn't been closed to the public. A rush hour crowd coming into Les Couronnes blocked any hope of escape. Panic set in. By the time fire fighters reached the scene, bodies were piled as high as the ceiling on the Les Couronnes platform. Most victims succumbed to smoke inhalation. Bricks had been scratched and torn off the walls by dying victims desperate to claw their way out. More bizarrely, eleven more victims were discovered at the ticket office, where they had smashed the windows in an attempt to get a refund for their one penny fare. In the aftermath, four trainmen were convicted.

The Sinking of the USS Squalus May 23, 1939

SS-192, also known as the USS Squalus, was a Navy submarine on testing maneuvers in the North Atlantic, 15 miles from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, when disaster struck. While subsequent events led to about half the crewmen losing their lives, including two civilians, the survivors' fate would hang on a historic rescue. During a test dive to the southeast of the Isle of Shoals, a valve failure at the fifty foot mark, causing catastrophic flooding in the Squalus's engine compartment. The submarine sank quickly, coming to rest on the bottom of the ocean, 243 feet down. Apart from both engine rooms, the forward battery also flooded. The 33 crewmen located in the control room and the forward torpedo room were the only survivors. After deploying a telephone buoy (the cord broke) and firing rockets, the survivors settled down to conserve the scanty

air supply in the dark, with only handheld lanterns for illumination. Meanwhile, slow leaks continued to plague the downed sub. The crew had no choice except to wait for rescue. At such depth, their emergency escape gear—individual re-breathers called Momsen Lungs—might not work. Once naval authorities in Portsmouth realized Squalus had stopped responding over the radio, ships were sent to investigate. A rescue operation began using divers and a rescue bell. The 5×7 chamber was equipped with oxygen lines, a phone, and two operators, and was attached to one of the submarine's hatches by divers. Survivors were taken off the Squalus in small groups of no more than nine men. Just after midnight on May 25, the crew's 29-hour ordeal ended with the last survivors taken to the surface. Months later, in a second operation, U.S. Navy divers attached pontoons to Squalus to raise the submarine off the ocean floor. After much difficulty, 113 days after the disaster, the submarine was towed into Portsmouth Navy Yard. In May 1940, the repaired sub was re-commissioned as USS Sailfish and served during WWII until decommissioned in 1945.

The Mitsui Miike Mine Explosion November 9, 1963

On the southern island of Kyushu, in the Mitsui Miike underground coal mine, a horrific explosion tore through the tunnels. The blast killed some miners instantly and left others to suffocate in the dark in the worst postwar disaster suffered by Japan. More than 1,300 workers were underground during a shift change when an accumulation of coal dust in the air ignited, causing a tremendously powerful explosion about 500 yards from the entrance. While the mine had some safety procedures in place to prevent such accidents, labor disputes, mass layoffs, and other management decisions meant to reduce production costs, including fewer safety personnel, resulted in these procedures being neglected. The work areas also lacked proper ventilation systems. The explosion caused several tunnels to collapse. Worse, carbon monoxide began to build up to highly toxic levels. Some workers managed to escape to other nearby mines through connecting tunnels. Others attempted to help injured men find a way outside, but many were too ill or weak from breathing carbon monoxide to save themselves. Due to management delays and blunders, rescue operations didn't begin until 6:30 P.M., more than three hours after the accident. Rescuers found at least a hundred bodies next to the personnel carrier at the entrance. In total, 458 people lost their lives and more than 800 suffered the effects of carbon monoxide poisoning. The company's bad safety track record didn't improve much—a mine fire in 1984 took the lives of 84 workers. After the incident, 19 officials were charged with negligence.

The Los Angeles Flood February 27, 1938

Weather can be mystifying, variable, unpredictable. At the end of February and early March 1938, a storm began that would result in the worst flooding in Southern California in nearly a century. The continuous, five-day deluge saturated Los Angeles, Riverside, and Orange Counties and caused rivers to swell over their banks from the San Fernando Valley to Long Beach, causing massive property damages, injuries, and deaths. In the San Gabriel Mountains, gates opened to save the Big Tujunga Dam released more flood waters. Movie studios became islands in the middle of lakes, and stars were trapped in their ranches in the valleys, forcing a delay in the Academy Awards ceremony. In Universal City,

the raging flood washed away the Lankershim Boulevard Bridge, killing five people. Railway lines, other bridges, and roads were washed out. Telegraph and telephone lines went down. Towns and farms in low-lying areas were underwater. In downtown Los Angeles, people claimed to find perch swimming in the gutters. Radio broadcasters reporting on the flooding exaggerated their claims, causing panic to worsen. Eleven inches of rain fell in five days and the rivers continued to rise. Victims continued to be swept away by the floods. By the time the flooding ended, approximately 115 people were dead, thousands were left homeless, and damages ran into the multi-millions.

The SS Morro Castle Fire September 8, 1934

A new, fast, and modern turbo-electric liner operated by the Ward Line, the SS Morro Castle—nicknamed the "millionaire's yacht" and considered one of the safest ships at sea—shockingly went down in flames in one of the worst peacetime disasters in U.S. history. Several factors contributed to the accident. To ensure maximum profits during the Depression, the Morro Castle had to make its run between New York City and Havana, Cuba as often as possible, with very little to no down time allowed for maintenance. High crew turnover meant many were unfamiliar with safety procedures. And due to a lawsuit filed by a passenger against the Ward Line, Captain Wilmott ordered emergency drills discontinued. The captain also showed signs of paranoia and growing illness during the ill-fated trip. The night before docking in New York, Wilmott was found dead in his cabin, victim of an apparent heart attack according to the ship's doctor. First Officer William Warms—not known by passengers or respected by the crew—assumed command and attempted to navigate Morro Castle through a terrible storm in near hurricane strength gusts. Around 3 A.M. a crewman reported smoke coming from a small passenger lounge. An officer investigated and found a fully-fledged blaze.

After a delay, untrained crew members attempted to put out the fire, but didn't know how to properly work the equipment. By the time Warms, distracted by the storm, ordered passengers into the lifeboats, many were too terrified or intoxicated to evacuate, and the fire continued spreading. Sending an SOS was delayed by nearly a half hour while the radio operators waited to hear from Warms. The fire burned out of control. Warms steered Morro Castle closer to the New Jersey shore, to a position five miles off the coast of Manasquan. Panicked passengers blackened by smoke and flames leaped off the deck into the cold, storm tossed water. Only six of the ship's lifeboats were deployed, most of them carrying mainly fleeing crew members. Eventually, the flaming ship ran around. In total, 86 passengers and 49 crewmen were killed. Victims' bodies continued floating onto the New Jersey shore for some time.

The Meuse Valley's Killer Fog December 1-5, 1930

The low-lying Meuse Valley in Belgium became the scene of tragedy when a strange "illness" struck residents on farms and villages within a 15-mile stretch from Huy to Liege. A perfect combination of factors came together in just the right way to create a modern era disaster—the first of its kind, but certainly not the last. Meuse Valley was the site of many factories including chemical plants, zinc smelters, and coke ovens, all of which belched a constant stream of

pollutants into the air. On December 1, residents noticed a strange, dense, cold fog had settled over the valley (due to temperature inversion). Visibility was poor, barely a few feet. Residents continued their business as usual, although the fog irritated their eyes and made it difficult to breathe. By the second day, infants, and older and some middle-aged people showed signs of respiratory distress. Doctors couldn't figure out the cause of the sudden "disease" manifesting in their patients—and then those patients began to die. A total of 30 people died on December 3rd alone.

The death toll rose. Suspecting the cause due to chemical fumes from the factories—which continued operating despite the emergency—many residents tried sealing themselves into their houses, stopping up chinks with paper or rags to keep out the fog. To prevent their valuable cattle dying, some farmers drove their cows inside the kitchen. Although the term "smog" was coined by a British doctor in 1905 as a combination of smoke and fog, the phenomena was very little understood. Some residents believed the fog over the Meuse Valley had a supernatural origin. Others thought the deadly fumes came from caches of poison gas canisters secreted by the Germans during WWI. As news of the disaster was reported in newspapers worldwide, speculation ran rife. By the time the fog lifted five days after it began, between 60-75 people were dead. Thousands were ill or suffered permanent injury. Two years later, Belgian authorities investigating the mystery officially reported that the fog had been trapped over the valley due to freak weather conditions, and that toxic gasses from the factories caused the deaths.

Sinking of the Ferry Heraklion December 7, 1966

The 498-foot Greek steamship SS Heraklion, with Captain Vernikos at the helm, regularly worked a ferry route on the Aegean Sea from Crete to the Greek mainland until a night in December, when the weather, inexperienced officers and crew, and a rogue refrigerator truck combined to capsize the ship, killing many of the passengers and crew. At the dock in Chania, Crete, the captain of the Heraklion waited for the arrival of a refrigerated trailer truck carrying oranges, which came late and threw the ship off schedule by two hours. It's been speculated that the crew, flustered and rushed by the delay, improperly secured the truck in its position in front of the ferry's loading doors. By that point, the crowded ship was heavily laden with cargo and passengers. During the trip to Piraeus, Port of Athens, a severe gale began to blow with wind gusts up to 63 mph. After midnight, the storm reached a critical point. Deadly waves continued battering the ferry's hull, causing it to pitch back and forth. In the hold, vehicles including the trailer truck, tore loose from their ties. Each roll the ship made sent the truck crashing over and over into the loading doors. At last, the doors gave way, allowing the sea to pour in. The ship took a mere 20 minutes to sink. Untrained officers and crew who had no idea how to conduct an emergency evacuation panicked, as did the passengers struggling to find an exit from their cabins to the decks. The exact number of victims is unknown since accurate records weren't kept, but it's estimated 268 passengers and crew perished, including the captain, who went down with the ship. The 46 survivors clung to life jackets and debris, trying to stay afloat in the dark, oily water while bizarrely, oranges bobbed in the waves around them. Video of a newsreel briefly showing

search and rescue operations can be seen here. The Heraklion's owners, Typaldos Line, were charged with negligence.

Martinique Volcano Eruption May 8, 1902

When ominous rumblings and minor explosions came from the volcano Mt. Pelée on the French Caribbean island Martinique, citizens of St. Pierre, a waterfront town overlooked by the mountain, weren't too concerned. Volcanoes meant lava, and lava flowed slowly, leaving plenty of time to get out of the way … right? Unfortunately, they were wrong. Signs pointed to a disaster in the making, beginning with ash showers, tremors, and clouds of rotten egg stinking gas. Fleeing red ants, centipedes, and other insects invaded villages, as well as poisonous snakes, which caused the deaths of at least 50 children and 200 domesticated animals and pets. Water in the Etang Sec crater boiled, overflowed into River Blanche, and the resulting flood killed 23 workmen at a rum distillery near St. Pierre. Some people, unconcerned by the activity, even came to St. Pierre from nearby cities to view the spectacular sight—a very bad decision since on May 8th, just before 8 A.M., Mt. Pelée exploded in an eruption of superheated ash, rocks, and gas that flowed so quickly downhill, residents of St. Pierre had only a minute before the avalanche hit. Warehoused barrels of rum exploded. Hundreds of fires burned. Ships in the harbor were destroyed. And 2,500+ people died almost instantly, most of them as a result of breathing in the searing air, heated to more than 3,000 degrees Fahrenheit. The majority of the bodies were badly charred, and the city was completely buried under volcanic ash. Out of St. Pierre's entire population, there were two known survivors.

The Modane Train Derailment December 12, 1917

In the midst of the Great War, one of the worst railway accidents in French history occurred, largely because of official impatience, arrogance, and incompetence, and in the aftermath, the government tried to cover it up. As a consequence of wartime manpower, equipment, and supplies shortages, railways were understaffed and the lines considerably overloaded. In December 1917, an estimated 1,000 French troops who had been fighting in Italy waited in Turin for transportation across the Alps to Lyon, France. Two trains had been reserved for the Army's use, but there was a problem: due to the lack of equipment and maintenance, only one locomotive was available. Although officials were warned by experts that their preferred solution was too dangerous, they ignored advice and went their own way, hooking up the wooden carriages—19 in all—to the single locomotive and cramming the soldiers inside.

The driver knew the situation was set for disaster and at first refused to set out from the station in Turin. The locomotive might be able to pull the carriages, he argued, but in the mountains, the excess weight would put too great a strain on the brakes, creating an unsafe situation. However, an Army officer drew a pistol and threatened to shoot him if he didn't comply. As France was at war, the officer had the right to make the demand and the threat, but later events showed he should have listened to the driver's concerns. The train set out on the main line to Lyon and after a little while, passed through the Mount Cern tunnel into France, close to the town of Modane, and began its descent. The driver's worst fears were realized. Although he tried applying the brakes, the sheer weight of

the carriages behind the locomotive hurtled the train faster and faster down the steep, four mile grade. Friction ignited the brakes on the carriages, setting them on fire. At the bottom, going at a speed of about 75 mph, the train derailed when the first carriage jumped the track. Altogether, 800 people died. The wreckage burned so fiercely, almost half the bodies couldn't be identified. Regardless of the horrific tragedy, since the Army was involved in making the decision that had led to so many deaths, the French government kept the accident a secret until more than a decade later, when the driver—who survived—spilled the beans.

Naples Building Collapse April 11, 1906

When it comes to the damage done by volcanoes, we think about deadly red hot lava, but there are other hazards that take lives just as easily. One of these dangers is ash, a lesson learned in Naples after the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. In early April 1906, Vesuvius erupted violently, spewing tons of ash and debris for miles. An estimated 315,000 tons fell on Naples alone. On the morning of April 11th, due to an accumulation ash and cinders, the roof of the 600 square foot Monte Oliveto marketplace collapsed, trapping more than 200 people in the ruins. Monte Oliveto was a very popular and busy market in the city, always full of stall holders and customers buying flowers, fruit, and vegetables. Trade was especially brisk in the mornings. Built with a sturdy iron framework and topped by a wooden roof, the building was designed to withstand every day weather—not the tons of ash thrown by Vesuvius that covered the city to a depth of three or more feet in some places.

Shortly after a religious procession passed through the street, the participants thanking God they were spared from worse during the eruption, the market's roof caved in without warning. Those inside were buried alive. Rescue efforts began immediately, although hope seemed lost when the first bodies were taken out. Crowds of friends, relatives, and passers-by formed groups around the scene, praying, weeping, and pleading. Rescuers used their bare hands to clear away the debris. By the time the last victim was rescued from the rubble, the toll was high: at least 178 injured and 14 dead. These weren't the last victims of a collapsed building caused by the eruption of Vesuvius—when a church's roof in San Giuseppe fell in due to the weight of the ash, an estimated 90 parishioners were injured and 105 killed.

Infamous Women of Pleasure

Here is a list of ten truly intriguing women, all of whom have one thing in common: at some point in their lives, they gave their bodies over to the enjoyment of men in exchange for money. I have tried to find a wide array of fascinating women to introduce to you; some of them you may already be familiar with, others you may never have heard of and one or two you will probably find despicable.

La Cicciolina The Italian Porn-Star Politician

Anna Ilona Staller AKA La Cicciolina (born 1951) began acting as a porn star in the early 1970s, though she didn't go "hard-core" until 1983. So, what's she famous for aside from having hard-core sex with multiple men on camera? In 1987, she was elected as a member of the Italian parliament. She remained in office as a member of the Radical Party until 1991, during which time she continued to make hard-core pornos and offered to have sex with Saddam Hussein in exchange for the release of foreign hostages and peace in the Middle East. She also enjoyed making political speeches with one large silicone filled breast exposed. In 2002, she renewed her offer to Hussein, and in 2006 she—wait for it—offered to have sex with Osama Bin Laden. "He can have me in exchange for an end to his tyranny. My breasts have only ever helped people while Bin Laden has killed thousands of innocent victims." Neither Osama Bin Laden nor Saddam Hussein took up her offer.

Laura Bell From Whore to Preacher

Laura Bell (1829-1894) became famous for her radiant beauty, wit and intelligence when working as a high-class prostitute in Dublin in her teens. She eventually moved to London, where she would spend her days riding around Hyde Park in a gilded carriage drawn by two white horses and "entertaining" rich dukes and wealthy noblemen. When Laura was twenty-one, the Nepalese Prince Jung Bahadur Rana fell in love with her. It is said that over a period of ninety days Jung lavished Bell with gifts totaling £250,000, before he returned home to Nepal. In 1853, Laura married Captain August Frederick Thistlethwayte, and during their marriage she underwent a dramatic religious conversion, transforming from "The Queen of London Whoredom" into an Evangelist Preacher. She set out to enlighten the poor as to the ways of Jesus Christ, and held high-class evangelical tea parties in her home. Many flocked to hear her speak. Laura's husband, being a bit eccentric, accidentally shot himself while attempting to summon his valet one morning in 1887. Laura never remarried, though she became great friends with William Ewart Gladstone, Prime Minister of Britain. They remained close until her death in 1894.

Saint Mary of Egypt

From Lowey Street Prostitute to Delirious Desert Dwelling Hermit. Mary (A.D. 344–421) began working as a prostitute on the streets of Alexandria at age twelve. She is said, apparently by her own admission, to have had an insatiable sexual lust and to have derived great pleasure from her work, though she lived the life of a beggar. One day, after seventeen years of harlotry, Mary learned that

hundreds of pilgrims were traveling to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. Mary saw an opportunity to make many potential customers in Jerusalem, so paid for food and passage to the city with her body. She can't have had a lot of exposure to the teachings of the Lord during her life of vice, for when she reached Jerusalem she suddenly decided that Jesus was the only man for her and underwent a dramatic religious conversion. During this time she is said to have been visited by the Virgin Mary, who told her she would find peace across the River Jordan. Mary crossed the great river and wandered off into the desert where she continued to live a life of solitary prayer for forty-eight years. She had many visions during this time, probably as a result of dehydration. A priest named Zosimus eventually encountered the old woman—naked, with skin like blackened leather, and delirious from years alone in the desert. She fled from him, terrified, but he took up hot pursuit and when he caught her he wouldn't let her be until she reluctantly relayed her entire story to him: prostitution, visions, and all. She died a few years later and is now known as "Saint Mary of Egypt, the Patron Saint of Penitence."

Mata Hari Exotic Dancer and Executed Courtesan

At eighteen years old, the beautiful and unusually tall Margaretha Zelle (1876-1917) married a man twenty-two years her senior, whom she met through a "lonely hearts" advertisement. The marriage quickly deteriorated into infidelity, abuse, and alcoholism on the part of her husband who apparently wasn't quite ready to give up the life of a bachelor. They had two children, both of whom contracted syphilis from their father. The elder boy died when both children suddenly became violently ill, possibly from mercury poisoning. Margaretha separated from her husband in 1902 but he slandered her name so vehemently that she lost custody of her daughter and was left penniless. With no qualifications to speak of, Margaretha briefly turned to prostitution to get together enough money to make her way to Paris, where she began her career as an exotic dancer. She became a sensation, dancing almost completely naked except for a tiny gilded bra. Her beauty—coupled with her elaborate fabricated tales of her past—gave her an almost sacred air, and men flocked from all over Paris to see her. She quickly branched out to Spain, Monte Carlo and Germany. As her dancing career waned due to younger, more talented competition, she became a high-class courtesan. She was one of the highest paid in Europe at the time, entertaining many rich dukes, lords, and marquises. Sadly, through an unclear set of circumstances, she was convicted of espionage, imprisoned, and executed by firing squad on 14 October 1917. It is still not known whether she really was a spy or was just the victim of overzealousness on the part of the British and French intelligence services—or even used as a scapegoat by her then-lover, who actually was a double-agent. Thirty years later, one of her prosecutors admitted that "we didn't have enough evidence against her to flog a cat."

Yu Xuanji The Courtesan Poetess Executed for Murder

Yu Xuanji (roughly A.D. 844-868) grew up in the Tang Dynasty capital of Chang'an, where she lived and worked in the Pleasure District from an early age. Yu Xuanji adopted poetry as a personal art form and throughout her lifetime she wrote vivid, intensely emotional poems, around fifty of which survive today. She

also had a book of poetry published during her lifetime but the works it contained have long since been lost. Around the age of sixteen, Yu Xuanji became a concubine to Censor Li Yi. Li Yi's wife became increasingly jealous though, and Li Yi eventually abandoned Yu Xuanji in the south of China, where she dwelt alone in the mountains for a while before returning penniless to Chang'an. She continued to work as a courtesan before entering the Xianyi Convent and training as a Taoist "priestess." Amongst her duties as a priestess, she probably would have had to "entertain" gentlemen clients. While living at the convent, she is believed to have become suspicious that a maidservant was having intimate relations with Yu Xuanji's lover. This apparently caused her to fly into such a rage that she beat the maid to death and buried her in the garden, where her body was later discovered by the foul smell emanating from the earth. Yu Xuanji was arrested, tried for the maid's murder, and executed by beheading. It is very possible that Yu Xuanji was falsely accused of the crime, though we will probably never know for certain. She was only around twenty-eight years old when she died.

Sally Salisbury The Beautiful Celebrity Nightwalker Who Died in Prison

At age nine, Sarah Priddon (around 1692-1724) was employed as an apprentice seamstress but was fired after she lost an expensive piece of lace. She returned home, and soon after began to take advantage of her new skills as a seamstress by stealing one of her mother's petticoats and cutting it down to size for herself. Her father, enraged at the destruction of her mother's garment, stripped Sarah naked, tied her to the cellar stairs, and beat her mercilessly with a horsewhip. He left his daughter there for the night, telling her he would return in the morning to finish the job. She "vigorously made use of tooth and nail" and escaped her bonds, after which she fled. With no other way to survive, she began working as a prostitute in the slum district of St Giles. By fourteen she was famous for her wit and beauty and many wealthy men sought the services of "Sally Salisbury," as she came to be known. She had a quick temper, which, coupled with a tendency to get into debt, saw her landed in jail multiple times throughout her life. She is said at one point to have escaped a hefty jail sentence because the judge was infatuated with her. In 1723, during an argument with a customer called John Finch she picked up a bread knife and stabbed him in the chest. She was immediately remorseful and rushed to get help. Though Finch amiably forgave her, Salisbury was sentenced to a year in the notorious Newgate Prison for violent assault. While imprisoned, she succumbed to serious illness and, a few months before her scheduled release, Salisbury died of what was described by one journalist as "brain fever brought on by debauch" (very probably syphilis).

Barbara Payton From Screen Siren to Street Hooker

Beautiful, blue-eyed, platinum-blonde Barbara Payton (1927-1967) began her career as a model, gracing the pages of glossy fashion magazines. She began acting in Hollywood in 1949 and soon shot to stardom in the 1950s film Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye; by this time she was earning $10,000 a week. She continued to grace the silver screen until 1963, but during this time her reputation was destroyed on account of her many love affairs with married men, reckless partying and heavy drinking. She also attempted suicide by overdosing on sleeping pills. She had a violent, four-year-long relationship with the actor

Tom Neil, who had previously beaten one of Payton's lovers almost to death, putting him in a coma and breaking multiple bones in his body. Neil ended up being imprisoned after shooting his third wife in the back of the head. Payton's last years consisted of a string of arrests for prostitution, public drunkenness, petty thefts and drugs. She lived in filthy, rat-infested apartments and was often homeless. She ended up selling herself for five dollars a trick on Sunset Boulevard. She gained large amounts of weight, was stabbed, and lost teeth during the regular beatings she received at the hands of her tricks. When offered a chance to go to rehab, she said "I would rather drink and die." Payton moved back to her parents' house in 1967, and later that same year died of heart and liver failure on the bathroom floor.

Sada Abe From Low-Class Geisha to Murderer and Necrophile

Sada Abe was born into an upper middle-class family in Tokyo in 1905. When she was fifteen years old, Sada Abe was raped by an acquaintance, and her behavior began to deteriorate until her father sold her to a Geisha house when she was seventeen. Sadly, Sada Abe didn't have what it took to be a "high-class" Geisha, and ended up performing cheap sex favors for clients for five years until she contracted syphilis. At this point, she decided to leave the Geisha house and become a licensed prostitute, which paid better. After a few flings with married men and a run-in with the law, she eventually met Kichizo Ishida who was the first man who could fully satisfy her insatiable sexual needs. She fell madly in love with him, but, when she realized he would always belong to another woman (as he was married) she decided that she had to kill him. Around 2 a.m. on the eighteenth of May, 1936, she used her sash to strangle Kichizo Ishida to death as he slept. She then carved her name into his left arm, cut off his genitals which she put in her handbag, and swiftly left the hotel room they were staying in. During the three days before she was arrested, she practiced necrophilia with her dead lover's member. When she was arrested, Sada Abe told police that she took his penis because it was the part of him that reminded her most vividly of their time together. She served only five years in prison, for second-degree murder and mutilation of a corpse, and after her term she eventually disappeared.

Theodora From Lowly Harlot to Byzantine Empress

Theodora (A.D. 500-548) began working in a brothel in Constantinople as a child prostitute, having sex with sleazy low-class customers. By the age of fourteen she had upgraded to "acting" in the hippodrome, where she would perform sex acts and nude antics on stage (this would also have included providing sexual services for customers after the show). At age twenty, after being abandoned by her abusive lover, she experienced a dramatic religious conversion to Miaphysite Christianity. She then took up the humble art of wool spinning, and it was during this time that she caught the eye of Justinian, heir to the Byzantine throne. They married in A.D. 525, and two years later Justinian became Emperor and Theodora the Empress of Rome. Theodora became the most powerful woman in Byzantine history, imposing the death penalty for rape, giving women the rights to initiate divorce and own property, abolishing sex slavery and the exposure of unwanted infants, and opening convents where ex-prostitutes could go to make an honest living. Though she did a lot of good, according to some writers she could be pretty ruthless and malevolent when threatened, employing torture and

poisoning to exact retribution against those who spoke ill of her or her husband. The famous historian Procopius even went so far as to describe Theodora as a bloodthirsty demon. She died at age of forty-nine, of what most people presume to be some form of cancer.

Ching Shih From Brothel Slave to Truly Formidable Pirate Commodore

In 1801, Ching Shih (c. 1775-1844) was working as a brothel slave on a floating Cantonese pleasure house when she was taken captive by the Pirate admiral Zheng Yi. Captivated by the prostitute's beauty and unusual height, Zheng Yi asked her to marry him. The cunning Ching Shih agreed to the marriage on the condition that she be entitled to fifty percent of all profits that Zheng Yi made, and that she be allowed to command one of his pirate fleets. The smitten captain eagerly agreed. The pair became a formidable force, and within three years of the marriage they were in command of one of the most powerful pirate fleets in China, named the Red Flag Fleet, which comprised more than 1,500 ships. In 1807, Zheng Yi was killed and Ching Shih took his place at the head of the pirate armada. Ching Shih was as formidable as she was ruthless, and within a year the Red Flag Fleet was one of the largest navies in the world. She extorted taxes and levies from coastal townships in exchange for sparing them, and began to impose her own laws. Retribution was swift and punishment severe for any man or woman who attempted to defy her. Ching Shih defeated multiple fleets sent by the hostile Chinese government, as well as the British and Portuguese navies. In 1810 the Chinese government had no choice but to admit defeat. They offered amnesty to Ching Shih and all other pirates who would give up their ships and arms. Ching Shih accepted the offer on the condition that she be able to keep the extensive amount of loot she had obtained during her racketeering years. The Chinese government agreed, and Ching Shih, at thirty-four years old, retired a very wealthy woman. She opened a combined gambling house and brothel, and lived to the ripe old age of sixty-nine.

Terrible Things Done To POWs

War, as they say, is hell. It's a constant, violent struggle for survival, in which men kill each other for reasons their government or leaders assure them are very good. Being a prisoner of war is no better either: here are ten of the worst things done to POWs throughout history.

The Selarang Barracks Incident
In 1942, four Australian POWs did the unthinkable, and tried to escape from their Japanese prisoner of war camp. The Japanese became so incensed that they ordered every POW in the Changi peninsula to sign an agreement promising not to escape. These prisoners—being Australian—promptly told the Japanese to do one.In retaliation, the Japanese ordered every single one of them to assemble in the Selarang barracks without food or water—all fifteen thousand of them. For four days, the men were forced to stand shoulder-to-shoulder in a space only constructed to hold as few as one thousand people. After four days suffering from dysentery, malnutrition, and dehydration, the Australians relented and signed the agreement.

Soviet POWs Punished By Their Own Comrades
During WW2 the Soviet's had a fairly simple motto: "no surrender and screw the Nazis" [citation needed]. But although it was uncommon for Soviets to be taken prisoner, it could—and did—happen.Many Soviet POWs were invariably used as forced labour for the Germans, which is fairly standard and in no way warrants them a place on this list. But what happened after the war makes it clear why they should be included. The Soviets didn't look kindly on POWs, and many were accused of collaborating with the Nazis. Their punishment, upon returning home from their POW camps? Forced labour camps.

Soviet POWs Couldn't Catch A Break
If double forced labour wasn't bad enough, during their time as POWs Soviet soldiers were among the worst treated in WW2. For example, when the food available for use in camps became incredibly scarce, Colonel Eduard Wagner issued an order to let prisoners starve to death. Soviets again somehow got the worst out of this deal when German officials barred Allied soldiers from sharing their Red Cross care packages with them. When the Red Cross offered to vaccinate prisoners, the Germans declined the offer and instead left them in the cold to freeze to death.

The Tiger Cages of Vietnam
The Vietnamese were infamous for their treatment of POWs—but nothing sums up their sheer brutality more than the so-called "Tiger Cages." Despite the name, they weren't cages that contained tigers. But after reading the next sentence you'll quickly realize that tigers would have been a more human option. The tiger cages were small cages where prisoners were literally left to die; they were given neither numbers nor names, but were merely left there. Some prisoners were hung on metal hooks, others were beaten with clubs. Open sores from metal shackles quickly became infected by the layer of human waste left on the floor.

But worse that what actually happened to the prisoners, is why it was done to them. It was wartime after all, and there must have been a good reason?

POWs In Vietnam Tortured Without Good Reason

Horror stories about the treatment of POWs by the Vietnamese are all too common. But a fact that's commonly left out is why the Vietnamese actually did it. The reason was simply to break the will of the soldiers they'd captured. It wasn't to obtain information or even punish disobedience, it was simply a cold methodical way of ensuring that every prisoner hated Vietnam forever. Which explains why the systematic torture inflicted on victims was the same, whether a POW had been captured in combat, or found with broken legs after a bailout from his plane.

Homosexuals in Concentration Camps Were Never Liberated

When the Nazi concentration camps were liberated by the Allies, it was a time of great jubilation for the tens of thousands of people incarcerated in them. But an often forgotten fact of this time is that prisoners who happened to be wearing the pink triangle (the Nazis' way of marking and identifying homosexuals) were forced to serve out the rest of their sentence. This was due to a part of German law simply known as "Paragraph 175" which criminalized homosexuality. The law wasn't repealed until 1969.

The Aztecs Were As Harsh As You'd Expect

The Aztecs have a reputation as one of the most barbaric civilizations of all time: their society revolved around sacrifice and war. If you were unlucky enough to face the Aztecs in combat and be taken prisoner, your options for negotiation were pretty much limited to "having your heart cut out". That is—unless you were captured while the Aztecs were paying tribute to Tezcatlipoca, their most powerful god. In which case you'd be

The Hell Ships

"Hell ship" is a colloquial term used to describe the ships used to transport POWs during war. The inhuman and often deadly conditions onboard are the reasons for the title. Though the conditions on such ships were awful, that's not why they have a place on this list. You see, hell ships were normally just reconstituted transport ships; outside observers often had no clue that they contained hundreds of their own imprisoned men. This problem led to

Two Head Football

During the Japanese attempt to conquer China in 1937, a lot of blood was spilled—and the Chinese were anything but kind to the Japanese soldiers they captured. Japanese prisoners of war could expect brutal torture at the hands of the Chinese. The most poignant example of the sheer disregard for human life reaches us via Tom Simmen, a photographer who managed to document the brutality, and show that it wasn't limited to one side. According to Simmen, Chinese soldiers gleefully watched the execution of a Japanese soldier, hoping that they might be able to play soccer with his head.

Reasons the 18th Century was Awesome

When we think of the past, we tend to either romanticize it or flat-out abhor it. Apparently none of us could feel comfortable living in a time when the internet was a type of fishing tool. Also, the old days featured a touch of misogyny and a good dose of slavery, as well as completely lacking electricity—but there were plenty of awesome things back then which definitely made up for the downsides. Things like:

Great Safeguards for the Poor

"Socialism," which features a strong welfare system, is looked upon poorly in some countries today. But this was not always the case: during the eighteenth century, the English Parliament passed three different laws allowing for welfare for the unemployed. And these weren't "handouts," either. The Workhouse Test Act allowed people who were poor to receive aid, provided they would try to find a job. The law even gave churches the ability to get federal aid so that they could feed and house the poor. But this leads to a problem: what if there weren't any jobs to get? The Government had your back on this too. Building projects were commissioned purely to provide jobs for unskilled laborers who were out of work. These building, called "follies" were mainly aesthetic and some of them are still around today.

Education Was Easy

Let's say you wanted to become educated, or at least aware of the world, in eighteenth century Europe. The only problem is that you're flat-out broke. Well, in London and all over Europe, "coffeehouses" were on the rise. Unlike the hipster dens of today, these coffeehouses drew intellectuals like professors or students from universities like Oxford and Cambridge. For a penny, people could buy a cup of coffee and listen to these great minds discuss the state of the world or whatever field they were an expert in. Essentially, you could get free lectures in all sorts of topics. Historians say that these coffeehouses eventually led to a massive literacy spike that also resulted in hundreds of new newspapers all over Europe.

The Frankist Movement

Around 1750, in Poland, a man named Jacob Frank started gaining notoriety for claiming to be the messiah of both the Jewish and Christian religions (had he chosen to be the messiah of the Muslim faith as well, he would have had to fight himself in a death match—he knew when to stop). Not only was he not declared legally insane, but he actually started accumulating a large following. The new Frankist movement wasn't welcomed by everyone, however, and many of its members were excommunicated by the Polish church. But why is this featuring on our list? Well, it so happened that Frank believed the closest way to get to God was through ritualistic orgies, which he performed regularly. The Frankists held so many orgies that it's what they're now known for. So yeah, if you lived back in the eighteenth century, you could've joined an Orgy Cult.

The Coolest Best-Selling Books

Most popular books today are reasonably well-written. That's why they're best-selling. But best-selling books in the 1700s were nothing like those of today. Just like the books popular today, popular eighteenth century books reflected the society's culture. But unlike that of today, culture in eighteenth century London was chock-full of prostitutes. Seriously, they were everywhere. Naturally, one of the most popular books of the 1700s was called "Harris's List of Covent Garden Ladies". For those of you not acquainted with old English innuendo, it was essentially a guide for picking out the best prostitute. Kind of like Yelp for brothels.

The Coolest Animal Attractions

If you lived in the 1700s, London was the place to be. The city would get a number of circus attractions every year—and while some of them were the usual "bearded lady", sometimes they got insane animals. The Learned Pig, for example, was an attraction that debuted sometime around 1760. It had been trained using classical conditioning to do math, tell the time, play cards, and even read your future. The pig was a huge success, and inspired a number of imitations—including one pig in the States that was eventually accused of witchcraft and had to go on the run. That's not a joke.

People Wore Sunglasses

You can pretty safely assume that people hundreds of years ago didn't exactly dress in denim and leather jackets. That fashion style is reserved purely for the world in which Mad Max exists. But one thing they did wear, oddly enough, was sunglasses. James Ayscough initially thought his invention could be used for corrective purposes, as actual glasses. But when he realized that tinting the lenses didn't exactly fix your eyesight, he gave them out anyway. These early sunglasses were usually tinted blue or green, making them 100% cooler than the ones we have today.

People Drank Soda

Speaking of cool things people did back in the 1800s that you wouldn't expect, the first soda water was being handed around too. Joseph Priestly was the first person to invent soda water by mixing oxygen and water. Since he was primarily an academic chemist and a philosopher, he didn't capitalize on it. But J.J. Schweppe—whose name you may recognize from Schweppes' ginger ale—did exactly that. His business exploded, and people have been drinking fake bubbly ever since.

Amusement Parks Were a Thing

Okay, that title is technically incorrect. The eighteenth century didn't exactly have roller coasters or bungee jumping (well, they sort of did—read on), but they did have parks set aside for entertainment purposes. Known as "Pleasure Gardens" these public parks were initially constructed for the very rich—but over time, people from every class and race started visiting them, making them some of the only places where the rich and poor could mingle without friction. Despite sounding like the title of a bad adult film, pleasure gardens usually hosted outdoor stages for concerts and plays, as well as gazebos, shops, and zoos.

And yes, some pleasure gardens in Russia even had actual roller coasters while others had the first carousels. Some pleasure gardens even lived up to their names and hosted harems for public enjoyment. How thoughtful.

Christmas Was Awesome

Unlike today, which sees Christmas associated with shopping and confined to a single day, eighteenth century Christmas took the whole "twelve days of Christmas" thing rather seriously. Feasts, parties, presents, games, and other festivities were celebrated for twelve consecutive nights with no decrease in the fervidity. Sure, businesses could only close on the 25th—but the whole period was still considered an official holiday. As if that wasn't enough, when all of it was done, the party started right back up in mid-January on a holiday known as "Twelfth Night." Some say that the twelfth night was actually a larger holiday than Christmas. Interestingly, on this holiday, people were supposed to reverse the normal order, making it a kind of glorified, government-sanctioned Opposite Day.

Beer Was Abundant

In order to curb public intoxication, eighteenth century English Parliament passed the Beerhouse Act, which allowed anyone to get their hands on a dirt-cheap alcohol license that only permitted the sale of beer, as opposed to the more dangerous spirits. This led to the rise of "beerhouses," which often simply involved people selling beer from their front porches. Unsurprisingly, you can't fight an epidemic of drunkenness by making it easy for people to get drunk, so England eventually passed stricter laws.

Lessons We Can Learn from the Nazis

Decades after it lost all relevance on the world stage, the Third Reich continues to fascinate us. Adolf Hitler remains a exhaustively studied and caricatured figure. Historians still pick over every detail of the Nazis' greatest crimes. And while it might seem morbid, pointless, and just plain stuck-in-the-past, there are some useful lessons that can be learned from both their failures and their unfortunate successes.

If You're Going to Try and Conquer the World, Commit to It!

It has long become normal to think of the Third Reich as an empire either fanatically loyal to the will of a single man and ideal, or cowed through fear into letting him have his way. But the fact is that through a key portion of the war, Germany's military-industrial complex was ridiculously inefficient and still overwhelmingly devoted to civilian interests. In fact, even before America and the Soviet Union entered the war in 1941, Britain on its own had better adjusted its economy for wartime expenditures and produced more war material than the Third Reich's economy. It was only in 1942 when Albert Speer began reorganizing the economy that it became something we today might consider a wartime economy—and by that stage too many enemies had aligned against Germany for it to hope of success.

A Weak Friend When You Are Strong is Better Than A Weak Enemy When You Are Vulnerable

History has shown that the 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union was, if anything, an even greater blunder than the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, but it should be stated that the Wehrmacht came within ten miles of capturing Moscow, which would have devestated morale and communications. The problem was that the Wehrmacht spread itself extremely thin by invading such a vast country, and an even bigger problem was their nonsensical sense of racial superiority meant that many, many people that could have become part of an anti-Soviet army (inspired by the numerous atrocities the USSR committed in the 1930s that killed millions) were instead starved or imprisoned just when a large troop surge was needed to knock the enemy out of the war. So instead of recruiting fresh soldiers from these oppressed civilians, the Nazis came to face a resistance movement that would grow to hundreds of thousands operating in the rear of the Eastern Front.

Resources Come Before Ideology

Historians agree that a war between the Soviet Union and the Third Reich was inevitable (tellingly, when the invasion started on June 22, 1941, the Wehrmacht was outnumbered even though they were launching a surprise attack) But two points about it stand out, one of which was a huge missed opportunity and the other a waste of time and energy. First, consider that throughout the war, the Reich had a huge problem finding enough oil and gas to keep its industry and military going, at some points even relying on experimental alternatives. When the invasion of the Soviet Union began, in fact, the Middle East with its vast oil supplies lay wide open. Had Germany captured the Midle East, it would have meant that vast oil supplies vital to the USSR in the Caucasus Mountains would

have been in a position to be conquered quickly as well. But that didn't really shape up with what had been written in *Mein Kampf,* which focused more on conquering the Ukraine and other parts of Eastern Europe—so the idea was not pursued.

Today's Ridiculous Malcontent Could Be Tomorrow's Dictator

While Hitler's rise to power is generally viewed as an inevitable result of the times in which he lived, it was a very near-run thing, and during much of his rise he seemed absurd. Before sound recording was widely adopted for film, Hitler looked like a comedian. It was only when sound film came in, and well into his rise to power, that he seemed credible. During his absurdly undersized revolution attempt in November 9, 1923—the Munich Beer Hall Putsch—one hundred soldiers stopped his group of thousands. So his ability to rise from humiliated failed revolutionary to chancellor was about on par with a leader of one of America's controversial, much-derided militia groups rising to power.

The Military is a Bad Economic Stimulant

It's often said that part of the reason the Third Reich was able to rise to power was because an economic stimulus rose the standards of living for citizens. In fact, the economic policies had been a disaster before the war started. They left the Reich painfully reliant on exports, introduced enormous economic disparity, and generated enormous debt of a type that would likely have triggered more hyperinflation of the type that had already struck in the 1920s. If there had not been any of the early military success, then the Reich would have been in deep trouble financially and its awful economy would have soon caught up with it.

Don't Condemn Individuals for the Groups They Join

It was very big and exciting news when it was revealed that Pope Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger) was a member of the Hitler Youth. It feeds prejudices against the Catholic Church and implies a scandalous secret. Until you realize that at the time, being a member of the Hitler Youth was essentially compulsory. He was not an active member of the group and did not even attend meetings. And rather than reaping the short term benefits of membership, he was first drafted into manual labor during the war before being drafted into the armed services in 1943, which he deserted in April 1945. It serves to illustrate that we shouldn't judge individuals based on labels.

Never Let One Man's Whims Dictate National Policy

When the Invasion of Poland was begun in September 1939, it was conducted by a military which seemed half-baked, and not yet ready for the undertaking. The German Command noted the economic troubles mentioned above, and thought that the Germany Navy and Air Force would be insufficient for a world war. In fact, Hitler and his command began the invasion under the impression that it would not escalate beyond war with Poland. Hitler's reported statement on the matter was that "my time is short" (in reference to the fact that he was already fifty years old and was allegedly already suffering the ravages of syphilis). So the critical invasion of Poland—which began the war that destroyed the short-lived Third Reich—was carried out to accommodate one man's self-projected lifespan. The same personal whims also resulted in decisions like the Nero Decree in

March 1945, which saw Hitler order the destruction of Germany's infrastructure. Fortunately for Germany, Albert Speer had by then learned the lesson well enough to disobey.

Sometimes, You Just Have to Rely on Luck

There's a prevailing notion that France was taken out of the war so quickly in 1940 because they stupidly sat in defenses called the Maginot Line while the Wehrmacht went around them via Belgium. In fact, the success of the Nazi invasion of France was actually due to the majority of the Allies being farther north in Belgium while the Germans' main attack would be through an extremely dense forest called the Ardennes. This attack plan was the military equivalent of putting everything on one corner in roulette. If the Allies had moved even a token force against them, the Wehrmacht would have been stopped. Because moving through the Ardennes meant using such cramped, unreliable roads over such bad terrain "the worst traffic jam known to Europe at that date" would have happened. The Allied forces would have been able to pick them off easily as they slithered out of the Ardennes, and even retreating would have been ridiculously difficult. But then, the Germans had luck on their side when they needed it most.

Forced Labour is Terrible For Those In Power As Well

People subject to forced labor often worked elaborately against the Nazis' interests. Taking away people's freedom will generally drain their will to live, and therefore their fear of death—so they'll try to get revenge any way they can. The Jewish Virtual Library states that there are numerous examples of slaves deliberately making defective products. The punishment for this was hanging. Even the desperate 1944 V-2 missile bombardment of Great Britain was so badly assisted by its forced labor that this punishment was inflicted two hundred times out of every ten thousand works, and as many as a third of rockets that actually hit the targets did not explode due to sabotage. Obviously the evil dehumanization of slavery is the worst part, but anyone inclined to use or condone slavery (directly or otherwise) probably would be more concerned with the bottom lines than the ethics.

Even the Founder of the "Master Race" Concept Didn't Really Believe It

Of course the most significant act of the Third Reich was the mass murder of "undesirables" in the Final Solution. But there was always the issue of quantifying what exactly a "Jew" was in the 1935 Nuremberg Laws that dictated Nazi racial policy. Ultimately it was decided that personal religion or parental religion wasn't as important as your grandparents' religion. So even Catholic priests and Protestant ministers were listed as "racially" Jews because they had at least three Jewish grandparents. It effectively could not have made less sense, but as Hitler said, if Jews had not existed, they would have needed to have been invented. So even back then, people were aware that these views were nonsense.

Fascinating Facts About the Aztecs

The Aztecs are best known for eating chocolate, killing boatloads of people in sacrifice to their heathen gods and eventually getting beaten by the Spaniards. They are known by most as a warlike, barbaric race, mostly due to the incredible amount of people they killed. However, contrary to popular belief, they were not without culture. The Aztecs had an incredibly complex system social structure and believed strongly in education, family and art. Even their system of slavery was very detailed and not at all like what you would expect slavery to be. In short, while they may have been extremely psychopathic, there is much more to the Aztecs than first meets the eye. Listed below are ten interesting facts about the Aztecs, many of which will challenge the popular ideas in regards to their history.

Artistic
The Aztecs played sports and were a very artistic people. Despite the idea in the popular mind of Aztecs being savages, they were a very artistic people. Aztecs were into pottery and sculpting and created many different artistic drawings as well. They designed art for their warriors that were then often applied as tattoo's to honor them for their accomplishments; they also had a love for poetry. The Aztecs also played team sports, specifically a game very popular among them called Ullamaliztli. The game utilized a rubber ball, which was a fairly advanced concept for their time and was played on a court called a Tlachtli. The object of the game was to get the ball through a small stone ring; however, it was an extremely difficult game to play. The ball was not supposed to hit the ground, and players could only touch it with their head, elbows, knees and hips

Mandatory Schooling
The Aztecs had mandatory schools separated between boys and girls. While the Aztecs put strong emphasis on parents teaching their children properly, they also had mandatory public schooling for all children. Those of a noble class had different schools to attend and schools were also separated by gender. Boys of nobility would be sent to the Calmecac School where they learned from the priests about history, astronomy, art, and how to govern and lead. Boys of lower caste were sent to the Cuicacalli School, which was much more focused on preparing them for possible service in the military as warriors. Girls were sent to separate schools and much more of their education was focused at home where they were taught domestic duties such as cooking and weaving.

Defeated by Disease
Most Aztecs were actually defeated by disease, not war. While many may attempt to claim that the Spaniards beat the Aztecs through military brilliance, this could not be further from the truth. In fact, the original attacks of the Spanish were thoroughly rebuffed and they had to beat a hasty retreat. The Aztecs actually had a fairly good chance at beating the Spanish and the overall war was a fairly close one. It can be easily said that if not for the smallpox contracted from the Europeans that wiped out so many of them, especially their leaders, that it is extremely unlikely they would have fallen to the Spanish. The amount of harm

caused by European diseases was tremendous, it is estimated that over twenty million Mexicans died in a period of just five years due to the diseases brought over by the Spanish.

Wrong Name

The name Aztecs was given to them after the fact. We all know the Aztecs by that name, but it was not actually a name that they ever called themselves. The Westerners who came up with the name Aztecs likely took it from one of the original places that the Aztecs lived around the twelve century, called Aztlan, which was in the Northern part of Mexico. However, the Aztecs themselves actually referred to themselves as Mexica, which is actually where the name for the country of Mexico originally came from.

Advanced Record Keeping

They had an advanced system for writing and keeping records. The Aztecs had their own language and it was called N'ahuatl, the alphabet for this language was a form of picture writing. Knowledge on how to write things down was very specialized and was mostly performed by learned scribes and priests, who had the needed training. Records were kept on paper made of bark, or deer skin. The writing was usually performed using charcoal and then colored with vegetables and other substances. They kept tax records, historical records, kept information written down in regards to the religious sacrifices and other ceremonies and even wrote poetry. Sometimes they put their writings together in a sort of makeshift book that they called a codice.

Burial Customs

The Aztecs had very strange burial customs. We have all heard the legends in regards to building on top of an Indian graveyard, but the Aztecs cared little about having things built on top of their graves. In fact, the Aztecs made a habit of burying their ancestor's right under and around their houses. If an Aztec was of very high stature, then they were generally cremated instead. The Aztecs believed that the cremation would change the soul of the dead warrior or ruler and send them straight to their version of heaven. Sometimes the Aztecs would also kill a dog and bury or cremate it with the person so that it could guide them on their journey through the afterlife.

Sell Children

They would often sell their own children into slavery. It was not at all uncommon in Aztec society for someone who was poor to sell their own children into slavery. Not only that, but many Aztecs would also sell themselves into slavery. In many cases someone would go bankrupt and feel that they had no way out, selling themselves or their children into slavery would give them some income and if they worked hard they might eventually be able to buy their way back out again. Some remained slaves most of their lives, which isn't surprising because being a slave among the Aztecs was not that bad. You could get married, have children and own your own land.

Polygamy

Fact: Aztec men were allowed to practice polygamy. Aztec men were allowed to have more than one wife, however, there were certain strict rules governing these relationships. The first wife the man took was considered his “principal” wife, and was the only one he went through marriage ceremonies with. The other wives were only secondary but still recognized in the official records. While the first wife was considered the most important, the man was still expected to treat all of his wives with equal respect. While the man was the head of the household, women still had a lot of power in the relationship and were well treated in Aztec society. Extra wives contributed to the wealth of the family and were considered a mark of great status, this afforded them a high position in the culture. The Aztecs allowed divorce in some situations, but adultery by either party was punishable by death.

Slavery

The Aztecs had a unique system for slavery. Slavery among the Aztecs was much different than that of the Europeans and followed much different rules. Slaves children were not automatically property, and slaves could own possessions and even own other slaves. If a slave could present themselves in a temple, they would be freed, or if they could break away from their master and step on human excretion outside the market. If a slave tried to run away, only the master or his relatives were allowed to chase after them. Slaves were even able to buy their own freedom. The system for slavery among the Aztecs was quite unique, and much more like indentured servitude than most modern ideas of slavery.

Human Sacrifice

Some historians believe the sacrifices and cannibalism may have been due to a protein deficiency. While the most popular theory in regards to Aztec sacrifices is that they were simply performing rituals to their heathen gods and keeping people under control, an anthropologist named Michael Harner has a completely different idea. Harner estimated that roughly 20,000 people were ritually sacrificed by the Aztecs every year. The people who were sacrificed were often eaten, as part of the sacrificial ritual. Harner proposed the theory that the whole thing was cannibalism disguised as sacrifice because the Aztecs did not have enough meat in their diet. While it is not certain that the Aztecs ate each other due to a protein deficiency as Harner proposes, the evidence of cannibalism is very hard to ignore.

Crazy Truths About the Wild West

It's said that truth is stranger than fiction. What gets left out is that it's often a whole lot more disappointing. Take the Wild West: we like to think we have a pretty good idea of what the frontier was like—punching cows and shooting cheats in places with names like Drunkman's Creek and Dead Squaw's Buttocks. But it turns out the reality of cowboy life was way less romantic and way more prone to stuff like STDs. It seems our mental picture of the Old West is missing important little details like:

Camels
At no point in his cinematic career did John Wayne ride a camel. But guess what? If he had, it would've been totally legit. See, the Southwest United States used to home to hundreds of feral camels—and it was all thanks to our meddling government. In 1855 congress assigned $30,000 for the buying and shipping of camels from Egypt. The idea was that a bunch of grumpy dromedaries would fare better in the scorching Southwest than horses, making long survey missions easy. By 1857, the army had seventy camels and early experiments were looking good—and then civil war broke out. In the chaos that followed, a number of camels managed to escape into the wild where they did what any other wild animal does and bred like crazy. For nearly 100 years, feral camels were a part of Texas' wildlife, with the last sighting reported in 1941. That's right: in your grandparents' lifetime, the United States was home to wild camels.

Multiculturalism
The classic Hollywood picture of the West involves white, all-American tough guys teaming up with or fighting other American white guys. Sure, you'll get a few black people in there, maybe a handful of Mexicans and the odd Irishman for 'comic' effect—but it was predominantly true-blooded Americans, right? Nope. Like late 19th century New York, the Wild West was a hotbed of multiculturalism, with people of all nationalities vying for some room. Rock Springs in Wyoming counted as many as 56 nationalities in a population of under 10,000. Slovakians, Finns, Norwegians, Germans, Ottomans, Swedes and Chinese all poured into the South and Midwest; an influx that only increased with the Californian Gold Rush. The image of the old West as a bedrock of American values is a Hollywood holdover from a time when casting non-American voices and faces was pretty much a no go.

Gun Control
If Back to the Future III taught us anything, it's that everyone in the Old West carried a gun. After all, if you're visiting somewhere like Deadwood or Dodge City, you better be ready for trouble. Except carrying a gun in Dodge was more likely to land you in trouble. When the local government was formed, the first law passed was to prohibit the carrying of firearms. The gunfight at the OK Corral kicked off because Wyatt Earp was trying to enforce that law. Nor was Dodge a one-off: Wichita and Tombstone both enacted similar laws, and enforced them hard. According to that link back there, the second most common cause of arrest in the Old West was illegally carrying a firearm—meaning sheriffs weren't

messing around when it came to gun control. Somehow, we've gotten to the point that modern-day Tombstone actually has less-restrictive gun laws than its supposedly lawless Old West equivalent.

Violence

Shootouts, bank robberies, highly-choreographed bar brawls—if we know anything about the frontier, it's that it was one hell of a violent place. Or was it? Turns out the popular image of the Old West as a place where manly men solved their differences by shooting those differences in the face simply isn't true. People were more likely to cooperate than fight—in a harsh and lawless world, it was better to side with your neighbor for mutual benefit than start shooting. Bank robberies, too, were virtually unheard of. One estimate places the number at about a dozen for the entire frontier period. Then you have the low-homicide rates. The highest annual body count Tombstone ever experienced? Five. From 1870 to 1885, Dodge City and Wichita had murder rates of 0.6 per year. However you cut it, daily cowboy life was nowhere near as violent as we think.

The Gunfight at the OK Corral

It's the most iconic gunfight in history, the sort of thing Sam Peckinpah used to dream about on lonely nights—and it's mostly crap. For starters, it didn't take place at the OK Corral, but in a nearby back alley. The only reason we associate it with the Corral is because that's a hell of a snappier title. Second, the body count was low—as in three. Third, it lasted 30 seconds, some of which were taken up by two of the participants running away like little girls. Nor was the aftermath any more heroic. Wyatt and Holliday were arrested for murder, Earp lost his job as sheriff and evidence surfaced that not only was one of the dead men unarmed, but Holliday probably pulled a Han Solo and fired first. While the charges were eventually dropped, many local people were pushing for conviction—at the funeral of the three men killed, 300 mourners turned out, while nearly two thousand citizens lined the route. It wasn't until 1931 that a book came out portraying Earp as a modern saint, and by then everyone involved was too old or dead to care.

Outlaws

If there's one thing the Old West was known for, it's outlaws. Billy the Kid, Wild Bill Hickok, Jesse James . . . these guys were so badass that their names still conjure images of macho men striking matches off their stubble, instead of lying egomaniacs with girly voices. Yeah, turns out not all of them were as tough as they said. When Buffalo Bill started his Wild West touring plays, Wild Bill joined only to get fired for sounding like a girl. Still, that's probably how he got his moniker—killing people who trash talked his sissy lisp, right? Not exactly. The whole 'Bill' part was a reference to his gravity-defying monster-nose; as in it stood for 'Duck Bill'. Other outlaws suffered similar manliness-deficits: Jesse James was so vain he left press releases at the scene of robberies telling everyone how awesome he was. But the king of talking crap has to be Billy the Kid. In his lifetime, the Kid was known for killing over 20 people. In reality it was more like four. Basically, he was the old west equivalent of that guy you always meet at parties who won't stop talking about the fights he's been in, only somehow sadder.

Prostitutes

A staple of Westerns is the hooker with a heart of gold. Honestly, TV Tropes has an entire page dedicated to it. But guess what? Prostitution in the Old West was just as exploitative, degrading and traumatic as it is today—with the added bonus that local newspapers would name, shame and hound you to suicide. That's not an exaggeration. In her book 'Daughters of Joy, Sisters of Misery', Anne Butler notes the high levels of suicide, addiction, violence and rape among frontier prostitutes—a depressing thought made even more depressing by the callous reporting of it in local papers. Annie Proulx claimed the brothels acted as poverty traps, forcing the girls into never ending competition with one another for enough scraps to eat, with no hope of escape. Put simply, it was a profession for people with no other options—and about as glamorous as a week in a ditch.

Native American Culture

Before the Europeans came to do some farming, we're told America was a great big empty land. Sure, there was an indigenous culture, but it mostly amounted to a handful of isolated tribes tripping on peace pipes and taking advice from Kevin Costner. The continent was basically a blank canvas. Except it wasn't. Far from being just a bunch of ragtag tribes, Native Americans may have numbered as many as 100 million when Columbus first missed India by a few thousand miles. Although a devastating plague wiped out about 90% of the population before the pilgrims arrived, at least a million still remained. And they were damn sophisticated. Far from just giving each other cool names and sporting funky headgear, Native culture was all about extensive agriculture, opening up new trade routes across the continent and building America's first city. Then we showed up, and any chance of recovering from that super-plague was swept away on a tide of smallpox, STDs and genocide.

Cowboys

The cowboy is the absolute embodiment of everything frontier-related: a Stetson-rocking gunslinger with an absolute (if murky) moral code, a tough exterior and a tougher interior, facing down the empty American wilderness with a steely gaze and rugged jaw. Only they were nothing like that. See, the job of 'Cowpuncher' (as they called themselves) was tough, dirty working class work. Most of these guys were surly illiterates who got drunk on the weekends, started a fight and spent a month or two in jail. None of them dressed like Clint Eastwood or John Wayne or any Hollywood cowboy: they wore practical clothes for getting mucked up in and mostly looked like homeless people. Far from being moral, they were known to be obnoxious, and most of them had a terminal case of STD. Oh, and things had a tendency to get pretty Brokeback. In 1949, a study of rural sexuality concluded that there was "a fair amount of sexual contact among the older males in rural Western areas"—while old poems from the frontier era are full of references to men being super-gay for one another. So Butch and Sundance's epic bromance may have just been, y'know, a standard epic romance.

Unusual Events in World War II

In school, we're given the bare bones facts about WWII, which tend to concentrate on the important stories: major battles and turning points like D-Day. For those of us with a casual familiarity of the Big One, here are ten lesser known events which occurred during the war (aficionados will be familiar, we're sure). Some of these entries may seem stranger than fiction, but all of them are true.

The Nazi Spy in Manhattan Who Got Away – October 1935
At Pier 86 in New York City, an Abwehr (German military intelligence) agent with the alias William Lonkowski attempted to pass to his contact a violin case containing airplane blueprints and specifications, film negatives, photographs of a top secret US bomber and fighter plane, and written evidence that more secrets were being stolen by Nazi spies at Langley Field in Virginia and other places. However, he acted a little too suspiciously during the exchange and caught the attention of a US Customs official, Morris Josephs. Suspecting Lonkowski might be smuggling merchandise with intent not to pay the proper duty, Josephs stopped him and searched the case. When the documents were discovered, Lonkowski was detained at the port by Customs supervisor John Roberts, who called in a US military intelligence officer, Major Stanley Grogan. After examining the case's contents, Grogan and Roberts discussed what to do with Lonkowski. They ultimately chose to let him go because they couldn't decide what, if anything, to charge him with since America wasn't at war with Germany at that point. Lonkowski was set free and returned to his native country a hero.

Allied Diamond Heist – May 1940
Lt. Colonel Montagu "Monty" Reaney Chidson, officially a military attaché during the war, was actually an operative for Britain's Secret Intelligence Service, otherwise known as MI-6 (you know, like James Bond). He was stationed in Den Hague—The Hague—when Germany invaded the country. Fortunately, the well informed Chidson had been expecting Hitler's move. He immediately put his top secret operation in motion: to prevent the Nazis from getting their hands on the huge, valuable cache of diamonds held in Amsterdam, he'd have to steal them himself. Several weeks prior, he'd acquired a key to the main entrance of the Amsterdam diamond market. Now he traveled to the city wearing civilian clothes—which would have gotten him shot as a spy if caught by the enemy—and entered the empty, unguarded building. Although he didn't have the vault combination, his intelligence gathering had netted a few clues so he set to work. Twenty-four hours later, the door still wasn't open. Worse, he heard German soldiers in the building, very likely coming to take the diamonds themselves. Chidson persisted despite the danger. Finally, when it seemed capture was imminent, the vault yielded. He grabbed the entire stock of diamonds and escaped. Despite the invading German army, he managed to flee to England, where he turned the diamonds over to the exiled Queen Wilhelmina and the Dutch government.

Bat-Man Paratroopers – 1942

On the United States home front, particularly on the Pacific coast where the threat of a Japanese invasion seemed imminent, even a military expert's creative juices could take a curious turn. Such was the case for the California State Guard and Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson, who dreamed up the idea of "bat-man" paratroopers. The major's concept of paratroopers using jump suits modified with bat-like "diving wings" was inspired by the trick parachuting stunts of American entertainers. Nicholson had observed that in free fall, sky divers using these wings were able to better control their speed and descent as well as their maneuverability before opening the their parachutes. Nicholson envisioned winged paratroopers evading enemy fire by swooping through the air like their namesakes. In 1942, the California State Guard found the notion so intriguing, they asked famed jumper Mickey Morgan—whose career often included testing wingsuits—to head a bat-man paratrooper unit of their own.

Assault with a Deadly Streetcar – May 1940

In Rotterdam, early in the morning on the first day of the Nazi invasion of the Netherlands, without warning twelve pontoon planes landed on the New Maas River near the Willemsbrug (now known as the Maas Brug or Maas Bridge) at the city's center. These planes carried a group of German engineers and infantry soldiers, who paddled across the river using inflatable rubber boats. Their objective? Seize and control the bridge. Once Dutch forces arrived from the nearby garrison, a firefight began. Soon the German infantrymen were pinned down at the bridge and surrounding structures awaiting rescue or death. In what seemed like a stroke of good luck, a company of Fallschirmjaeger—paratroopers—which had landed earlier south of the river now came to their aid. The fighting was so fierce, the heavily armed paratroopers couldn't come near their comrades. The commander's audacious idea was to load his men into and on top of a streetcar hooked to other cars, which was sent rolling at speed through the Dutch line and toward the bridge's south end. Clang, clang, clang went the trolley. Bang, bang, bang went the guns (with apologies to everyone, including Judy Garland). The paratroopers reached the trapped infantrymen and helped them hold their position. Five days later, the Dutch capitulated in the face of the overwhelming German force.

It's Raining Sheep – 1936

During Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) when Italian troops desperately needed supplies during their march across the Danakil desert, a unique solution saved them from death in a region considered the "cruelest place on earth"—a flying supply column that provided the men with everything they needed, including fresh meat. The need for speed meant the troops carried minimal baggage, so water, ammunition, and other supplies were dropped by the Italian Air Force utilizing twenty-five planes. Army issue meat rations, however, would have spoiled in the deadly heat. Some genius at military headquarters came up with the idea of strapping sheep and a few bulls into modified harnesses and parachuting them to the soldiers, who could do their own butchering. The plan worked like a charm. Perhaps the Italians were inspired by Soviet Army experiments in 1935 with dogs strapped into "cylindrical coops"—basically

metal tubes—sporting an automatic parachutes that deployed when the coops were dropped from planes..

Parachute Drop Inside a Boat – July or August 1945

During the war, the Italians came up with clever ideas such as the "human" or manned torpedo and the EMB, or explosive motorboat. Essentially a boat filled with high explosives, the Italian weapon would be driven at high speed toward a target and the pilot bail out shortly before impact. The British developed their own version, but decided to up the ante: they'd drop their "boom patrol boat" from an aircraft—pilot, explosive payload, and all—to parachute into an enemy harbor. But first, someone had to test the new device. That intrepid volunteer was Captain David Cox. While the test boat wasn't filled with explosives, just the equivalent weight of the intended load, the mission was still dangerous. No one had ever done such a thing before. When the time came, Cox was strapped into the device, which was loaded into an RAF Lancaster. The plane flew over Devon to the testing area, the bomb bay doors opened, and the prototype launched successfully. The parachutes deployed. Cox became the only man during the war to splash down from an airplane while inside a boat. Ultimately, the British War Department decided not to employ the device in battle, but they did capture the test on film.

The Dump That Sunk a U-Boat – April 1945

Relieving oneself aboard a submerged submarine doesn't differ from the usual dry land procedure, but getting rid of the resulting waste is much, much more complicated, requiring advanced technology and the training of personnel to operate the equipment. Unfortunately for the crew of German U-1206, a systems failure was the beginning of unlucky events that would lead to four deaths. The original toilet or "head" developed for U-boats was a two-valve system that only worked during shallow dives. The newest VIIC U-boats like U-1206 were outfitted with new toilets with a high pressure valve rigged for deep water dives. On April 14, 1945, while patrolling at 200 feet, 10 miles off Scotland's coast under the command of Karl-Adolph Schlitt, an improperly flushed toilet aboard U-1206 malfunctioned and began flooding the compartment with sewage and salt water. The water leaked into the batteries, creating deadly chlorine gas. The captain was forced to surface the submarine. While repairs were being made, U-1206 was spotted by British patrols and fired upon. The captain burned his orders and scuttled the boat. One crewman died in the attack, and three others drowned. Forty-six other crewmen were captured. While it's not known exactly whose "movement" caused the initial problem, some have speculated the captain himself was responsible. The lost submarine was rediscovered in 2012.

Adolph Hitler's Free Love Program – 1933-1945

Germany's Nazi regime was focused primarily on conquest through its policy of Lebensraum—"living space." But in order to populate the newly invaded lands with loyal Aryan citizens, Hitler knew his country's birthrate needed to dramatically increase. To that end, he ordered propaganda and programs to encourage German women to become mothers. Not just married German woman, either. Before Hitler's rise to power, unwed mothers were socially stigmatized. Under the Third Reich, women (and girls as young as fifteen and

sixteen years old) were told it was their duty to give birth to as many children as possible, whether a guy put a ring on it or not. All contraception was verboten. Free love was the order of the day. Mother's Cross medals and incentives were handed out. Laws were passed levying penalties on childless couples. Joseph Goebbels, the Propaganda Minister, produced magazines, posters, and nudie flicks promoting "healthy eroticism." The policy worked to a degree, but in the end, began to backfire. As the fighting dragged on and more resources went into war production, fewer doctors and medical supplies and less food were available, leading to increased infant and mother mortality. More Germen women, worn out from factory work and too many children at home, sought illegal abortions. In his haste to increase the German population, Hitler virtually destroyed the German family.

Mr. Guess Who, Traitor of the Airwaves – April-July 1942

With our modern emphasis on television and the Internet, it can be difficult for us to envision a world where one of the most important factors in obtaining news and entertainment inside the home was the radio, which became a new tool utilized by the Allied and Axis powers to demoralize citizens and soldiers alike. As the Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels used the airwaves and a specially selected group of foreign broadcasters to sow doubt and confusion among Allied forces and in enemy countries. For example, Lord Haw Haw (William Joyce) encouraged British soldiers to desert. Tokyo Rose tried to One of the American recruits for German State Radio was Mr. Guess Who, the on-air alias of journalist Robert Henry Best, who called himself the "self appointed correspondent for the New World Order." He didn't keep his alias long. His program, Best's Berlin Broadcasts sent Nazi socialist propaganda from Berlin to the United States and to American soldiers in the field twice a day. Though he didn't consider himself a Nazi, he was viciously anti-Semitic, anti-Communist, anti-government, and hated President Roosevelt. He attempted to incite class hatred. Best's broadcasts were so abusive and vitriolic (he coined the phrase, the "Jewnited States") that even his Nazi supervisors couldn't stomach him, and he was taken off the air. In the United States, Best was convicted of treason in absentia. After the war in 1948, he was arrested and sentenced to life in prison. He served only four years before suffering a cerebral hemorrhage in 1951 and dying in 1952.

That's Why the Lady Is a Sniper – 1944

Some of the deadliest snipers of WWII included Russian women like Lyudmila Pavlichenko. This item on the list doesn't include them as they're quite well known. In Normandy, France, Allied troops found themselves under fire on several fronts—the most notable being hidden snipers. However, not all the snipers were men. Surprisingly for the time and place, some of the shooters were German and pro-Axis French women. It's reported that British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery saw fit to issue warnings to his troops regarding these troublesome and dangerous female snipers. In one case, a French widow known as a collaborator to the locals sat in her bedroom window, sniping at Allied forces who occupied her village. Ignorant of the sniper's sex, a Canadian assault team attacked the barricaded house. The woman continued firing with her German made gun, inflicting several casualties. Finally, she was shot and

wounded. In another case in northern France, a young woman identified only as “Myra” used a different technique. She lured Allied soldiers close with a friendly smile, then shot them. After being captured by American troops, she claimed she’d been coerced by the Germans. Reports suggested that rather than be executed as a spy—she wore civilian clothes—she was sent to an enemy internment camp on the Isle of Man.

Little-Known Facts About the Ancient Romans

We love history, especially anything that has to do with the ancient Romans. We've already had a few lists about this unique civilization, but there's just so much fascinating information about them that here are ten more incredible things you probably never knew about ancient Rome.

They Wore Phalluses As Good Luck Charms
Romans were many things—influential, civilized, powerful—but they were also downright superstitious about certain things. One of the good luck charms of ancient Rome was the phallus—a very Latin way to say erect penis. There's evidence that the phallic symbolism was a very integral part of Roman life. They wore phallus charms as necklaces, hung them in their doorways, and even made wind chimes to ward off evil spirits. Sometimes the phallus was embellished as well—those wind chimes have been found with the feet of a lion, the wings of a bird, and the head of, well, a penis. If someone hung that up in their house today, they'd probably be arrested as a sex offender.

They Invented The Shopping Center
Trajan's market was a massive open building in ancient Rome that is probably one of the world's first examples of something we usually associate with the 20th century—a shopping center. And while today's malls probably wouldn't stand up against even a mediocre hurricane, the Roman building is still standing more than 2,000 years later. The two level building was located in the center of what used to be the main city of Rome, and is large enough to hold roughly 150 different shops. The reason it has weathered so well is because of the innovative way Romans made concrete for their structures—they were one of the first to start mixing lime in with concrete to protect it from corrosion.

Drinking Gladiator Blood
Medically speaking, the ancient Romans were simultaneously well ahead of their time and utterly insane. Here's one of the more insane examples: it was believed that the blood of a gladiator could cure epilepsy. It got so out of hand that after a gladiator was killed and his body removed from the arena, vendors would sell the still-warm blood to the crowd. And for some reason, the fact that it came from a gladiator wasn't even the most important thing. Around A.D. 400, gladiatorial combat was outlawed, so people began turning to the blood of executed criminals for their cure.

Sinister Left-Handed People
Left-handed people have gotten a bad rap all throughout history. Early Europeans used the term left-handed to refer to homosexuals. In Ghana if you point with your left hand it's considered an offense, and in ancient Rome left-handed people were considered unlucky and untrustworthy. The word sinister actually comes from the original Latin meaning for left, and over time the negativity associated with left-handed people pushed the meaning more towards evil. Interestingly enough, left-handed gladiators were treated like special

bonuses—left-handed people used different fighting styles, so it made the combat more interesting and varied.

Urine Tax

One of the great things about ancient Rome, as compared to other civilizations, is that many records still exist from the time, giving us some insight into the way they worked. And man, were they weird. In the first century A.D., Emperor Vespasian enacted what came to be known as the urine tax. At the time, urine was something of a commodity. Most commonly it was used for laundry (although it was a medicine for them too) because the ammonia in the urine bleached their clothes. So urine was collected from the public bathhouses and given a special tax, sort of like a liquor tax or a tobacco tax—if you were able to produce those things with your own body.

Spiderweb Bandages

At the time, Rome was at the forefront of modern medicine, almost head-to-head with the Greeks. And while they got plenty of things wrong, they also displayed some incredible intuition when it came to healing. For example, the book Military Medicine: From Ancient Times to the 21st Century discusses how medics in the Roman army would often bandage wounds by using a mixture of cobwebs, honey, and vinegar. It's only very recently that we've even begun to look into using spider silk as a medical aid—and Romans were doing it thousands of years ago. By weight and tensile strength, spider silk is stronger than steel and could possess antibacterial properties. These guys were geniuses.

Emperor Caligula The Cross-dresser

Emperor Gaius, better known as Caligula, might have been one of the most depraved emperors in the history of Rome—at least, based on what we know about him. But what we do know is that he was a few bricks short of an aqueduct, if you know what we mean. For starters, he was one of the first emperors with truly unlimited power, and he often referred to himself as a god—he even appointed his horse as a priest. Caligula also appeared in public dressed in women's clothing, and reportedly told his guards to use call-signs that were blatantly feminine, such as "Kiss me quick."

Romans Had Flushing Toilets

It's well-known that Romans were responsible for pioneering the sewer system. They were one of the first examples in history to use underground flowing water to wash away waste. But slightly less well-known is the extent to which they took advantage of this. Romans actually had modern conveniences like indoor plumbing and toilets. Reserved only for the very rich, the plumbing allowed for hot and cold water on demand, as well as toilets that flushed away waste. A lot of the technology still depended on slaves, granted, but it was a huge step forward from what many other people were doing at the time. In the Middle Ages, after the fall of Rome, people still commonly used bedpans that had to be emptied every day.

Crucifixion Wasn't Used On Citizens

Everybody knows what a crucifixion is all because of one story, but it was actually a common punishment in the days of ancient Rome—as long as you committed treason or weren't a citizen. Those were practically the only two offenses for which Romans would crucify anybody. If a Roman citizen committed a crime, no matter what it was, he was usually exiled or given a fine. However, if a non-citizen was caught in a criminal act, even just petty robbery, there's a good chance they would have been crucified.

Romans Recorded Some Of The First UFOs

One of the first recorded examples of a UFO actually came from Rome, although most people tend to think of them as a modern phenomena. In 218 B.C., a written account reports that a fleet of gleaming ships appeared to be floating in the sky of Rome. That wasn't the only one, either—in A.D. 150 a report from an area right outside of Rome described "a beast like a piece of pottery about one hundred feet in size, multicolored on top and shooting out fiery rays, landed in a dust cloud." What was it really? These accounts come from the publication Unidentified Flying Objects in Classical Antiquity. How valid are they? It's hard to be sure, but you can't deny that it's a pretty weird coincidence. Maybe Elron was right . . . nah, just kidding.

Mysterious Lost Treasures of the World

As a kid, everyone, at some point or another, dreams of being Indiana Jones. Wouldn't it be great to go on adventures and find lost treasures? Unfortunately, for starters, that's not how archaeology works. And in addition, there are probably not many hidden treasures left, especially in this day and age when so much of the world has been explored and populated. But what if there are hidden treasures out there, just waiting to be found? Here's a list of some long lost treasures that you could go out and find today.

The Alamo Treasure

The Alamo is remembered for many things, including the famous battle cry reminding Texans they should remember it. The old Franciscan mission is located in San Antonio, and was the sight of one of the most famous battles in American history, when 188 men, including Jim Bowie and Davey Crockett, tried to fight off the powerful Mexican army of Santa Ana. What most people probably do not know is the legend of a massive treasure of gold and silver said to be buried somewhere on the grounds of the Alamo. Many people, such as historical researcher and fortune hunter Frank Buschbacher, believe that in an effort to wage a revolution against Mexico and declare Texas independence, men like Bowie and Crockett had actually brought millions of dollars worth of treasure to the Alamo. The money was meant to raise an army and pay for their oncoming war. The treasure was called the San Saba treasure and it was lost when all 188 men lost their lives in that famous battle. Those who believe the treasure exists think the men buried it beneath the compound. Buschbacher has actually excavated areas around the Alamo, but not a trace of gold or silver has ever been found.

Dutch Schultz Treasure

Dutch Schultz is one of the most famous mobsters in American history. He was a prohibition era gangster who ran in the same circles as guys like Lucky Luciano and Meyer Lansky. He was said to have amassed a massive fortune from his wicked deeds. His fortune vanished without a trace after he began to feel the heat of federal prosecution. It is believed that he decided to hide away his treasure somewhere in the Catskill Mountain range. When Schultz was gunned down in 1935, the location of his vast fortune died with him. There are different opinions about what happened to his treasure, or even how much there actually was. Most estimates put his fortune anywhere between five to ten million dollars, which he stashed away in an iron box somewhere in the heavily forested area of Phoenicia, New York. Some believe his treasure was hidden close to Esopus Creek, which could explain why it has never been found. Over the decades since Schultz hid away his fortune, the area has had numerous floods, which in all likelihood would have washed away the treasure. Still, it's interesting to think that a leisurely hike through that area of the Catskills could make you a millionaire.

Victorio Peak Treasure

Victorio Peak is a part of the southern Rocky Mountains, located in New Mexico. Over the years, it has been used extensively by the United States government as it lies within the White Sands Missile Range where the government once tested nuclear weapons. Before it was taken over by the government, however, the area was open to the public. That is when—in 1937—Doc and Babe Noss entered the scene. As the story goes, they were with friends deer hunting when Doc discovered an old shaft in the side of Victorio Peak. He and Babe returned later and explored the shaft finding skeletons, gold, jewels, and historical artifacts awaiting them. In 1938 the Noss's established legal ownership of the find, and stories began to float that Doc had found either Casa del Cueva de Oro or the treasure of Don Juan de Onate, the man who founded New Mexico as a Spanish colony. In 1939, in an attempt to expand the passageway, Doc was advised to use dynamite, which went about as poorly as it could have, collapsing the shaft altogether. Noss was never able to regain entry into the mine, and was killed in 1949 by a would-be partner after he and Babe had divorced. To this day the Noss family continues to try to regain entrance to the shaft, but no gold has ever been found. There are some rumors that the government expanded the missile range to include Victorio Peak and took the gold to Fort Knox, but there is no documentation supporting this claim.

Montezuma's Treasure

Apparently if you want to find a lost treasure in the United States, your best bet is to check out the Rocky Mountains and the southwest, as this next treasure brings us to the town of Kanab, Utah, which is said to be the home of the Montezuma Treasure. Montezuma, the legendary leader of the Aztecs, was a man in possession of an incredible fortune. It was taken after he was killed during a battle with the Spanish led by Cortez. Millions of dollars worth of jewels and gold were removed from Montezuma's treasure room by his own people in order to keep it away from Cortez. So why do people think the massive treasure of an Aztec leader wound up in Utah? It turns out in 1914, a prospector found an etching made on the side of a cliff that matched a marking on an old treasure map that was said to lead to Montezuma's treasure. The prospector—a man named Freddy Crystal—tracked down a descendent of Montezuma to interpret the map, and it was determined the topography did in fact match Kanab. Crystal actually convinced the townspeople to help him secretly search for the gold with the promise of sharing any findings, and eventually they did manage to find a system of caves and tunnels running through the mountain. It was laced with booby traps, but no gold was ever found, leading to the common belief that if the treasure had ever been there to begin with, it had either been moved by the Aztecs or discovered by some absurdly fortunate spelunker.

The Lufthansa Heist

Anyone who has seen the movie Goodfellas is familiar with the Lufthansa heist, which is believed to have been the biggest cash robbery in United States history. It happened on December 11, 1978 at JFK International Airport, where an estimated five million in cash and $875,000 in jewels were taken. To put that in perspective, adjusting for inflation that's a robbery worth over twenty million dollars today. The heist was carried out by mobsters including Henry Hill, who

would later be portrayed by Ray Liotta, and to this day no jewels or currency have ever been recovered. One of the reasons it has never been recovered, of course, is due to the very violent ends many of the men who participated in the heist met. These deaths were ordered by Jimmy Burke, who orchestrated the crime and realized the theft would generate a massive federal investigation. As part of his plan to clean up, he had almost every member of his crew murdered to keep them quiet. Some of the money from the heist was believed to have been spent and used in drug deals, but the vast majority was never found.

The Amber Room

At first you might think something called the Amber Room is a high class gentleman's club. It's actually one of the most sought after lost treasures in history. The room, which is a small space created entirely out of amber panels with gold leaf and mirrors, was built in the 18th century for Friedrich I, the first king of Prussia. It was eventually gifted to Peter the Great, and remained in the possession of Russia until World War II. People who saw the Amber Room often referred to it as the Eighth Wonder of the World. And then, it vanished. As it turns out, the curators in charge of protecting the Amber Room during the war attempted to hide it under wallpaper due to its fragile state, but that did not stop the Nazis from looting this nearly priceless treasure. It was then brought to Konigsberg Castle in Germany, but in 1944 Allied forces destroyed the city and left the castle in ruin—the Amber Room was lost forever. To this day, no one is entirely sure what happened to the room, though utter destruction seems the likeliest explanation. Still, it has become the subject of popular mythology. It also carries with it a supposed curse, as several people who either possessed or hunted for the Amber Room have met with untimely and very curious deaths.

Flor do Mar

In 1502, a Portuguese ship called the Flor do Mar, or Flower of the Sea, was constructed. Commanded by Vasco de Gamma's brother Estavao, the ship was part of a Portuguese voyage to India in 1505. The ship took part in several sea battles over the next six years until, in 1511, it was lost in a storm. Now, the idea of a warship with such a storied history alone would make for this being an intriguing lost treasure, but of course there is more to the story. Most notably the fact that the Flor do Mar was carrying a boatload of spoils from a recent victory. The fortune on board was said to be enormous, making the Flor do Mar the most sought after lost shipwreck in history. The ship is said to have carried the treasure of the Melaka kingdom, located in modern day Malaysia, which reportedly included more than sixty tons of gold.

Leon Trabuco's Gold

Back in the early 1930s, a Mexican millionaire named Leon Trabuco arranged several secret and mysterious flights in the desert of New Mexico. At the time, the United States was in the midst of the Great Depression, and with the value of the dollar about to plunge, the price of gold was about to explode. So Trabuco and a few business partners were said to have secretly bought up as much gold as they could and smuggled it into the US, waiting for the gold prices to soar so that they could sell it and make an insanely large profit. All told, it's believed they accumulated more than sixteen tons of gold and hid it in that New Mexico desert.

Rather than taking advantage and selling their gold, Trabuco and his partners held onto their bounty with the hopes the prices would continue to go up. However, they gravely miscalculated the impact of the Gold Act, as it carried with it the stipulation that private ownership of gold would be illegal, leaving Trabuco stuck. Like so many other treasures, this one supposedly carried with it a curse. Three of Trabuco's partners were dead within five years, and when Trabuco himself died, the knowledge of the location of the giant stash of gold died with him.

Blackbeard's Treasure

In 1996, archaeologists discovered a shipwreck off the coast of North Carolina, less than a mile and a half from the shore and sitting a mere twenty-five feet (7.6 meters) below sea level. It is not particularly uncommon to find a shipwreck, but this is possibly one of the biggest nautical finds in the history of treasure hunting. That's because many people believe the ship was the Queen Anne's Revenge, also known as the flagship of the infamous pirate Blackbeard. In 1718, the Queen Anne's Revenge blockaded the port of Charleston and soon after it ran aground on a sandbar. So what's the big deal? Well, for starters, Blackbeard was a wildly successful and rich pirate, and the location of his largest and most prized ship, some believe, means his vast fortune must have been located nearby on the North Carolina coast. Since the wreck was found—and it should be noted, it has not yet been confirmed to have been the Queen Anne's Revenge—not an ounce of gold has been found near or on the ship. Before he died, Blackbeard was questioned about the location of his gold, leading him to say, "Only I and the devil know."

Treasure of the Knights Templar

In recent years, the Knights Templar and its treasure has been made famous in both Hollywood and in numerous books. It is one of the most famous and mysterious treasures in history. The Knights Templar formed in A.D. 1114, and over the following years accumulated a massive fortune, which has never been found. In the early 14th century, the Templars were ordered to be arrested, and those who escaped this capture and torture reportedly gathered the remaining treasure and loaded it onto ships to unknown destinations. A common belief is that the remaining Templars took their treasure to Scotland, and from there, it eventually found its way to Nova Scotia. Rumors persist of a vast money pit on Oak Island in that province of Canada, where it is believed by some that the Templars hid their money amidst booby traps. The search has continued on Oak Island over the years, and in fact originally the treasure in the Money Pit was apparently believed to have belonged to the infamous Captain Kidd. But as more of Kidd's treasure has been found, it is now believed that the Pit contains the Templar riches.

Lesser-Known Events in American History

Many historic events that are common knowledge at the time they occurred might be forgotten by some citizens of the twenty-first century—except history geeks like us and the occasional Jeopardy contestant. Here are ten lesser known incidents which happened in pre-twentieth century American history that you probably weren't taught in school.

New Germany in Texas
Nope, this isn't a speculative history scenario and Nazis don't come into it. In 1842, a society was established in Germany, the Verein zum Schutze deutscher Einwanderer in Texas—the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas, or the Adelsverein. The goal was to organize a mass immigration movement to colonize the Republic of Texas, thereby creating a new German state in the heart of America. By 1847, over 5,000 German immigrants had made their way to Texas and established five settlements. Another 2,000 immigrants arrived by 1853. However, the New Germany didn't happen, mainly through a lack of business sense, mistrust among the members, and losses through land speculation.

New Albion The British Possession We Call California
Sir Francis Drake, the English sea captain and explorer under Queen Elizabeth I, claimed an area of land on the west coast of North America in 1579. His claim was valid by sixteenth century standards. He had obtained consent from local natives, and he was the first European to discover the place, but as it turned out, the Crown wasn't much interested in the Pacific side of the New World. By the time the twentieth century rolled around, the event had been mainly forgotten and achieved legendary status among historians until 1936, when the discovery of an artifact in San Francisco Bay proved Drake's visit and the British claim on California, or New Albion. By the way, in October 2012, the US government designated a site on the Point Reyes Peninsula as Drake's landing place and a historic landmark.

Englishman's Star Spangled Banner
Francis Scott Key penned the lyrics to America's favorite theme song, there's no doubt about that, but the music—that impossible to sing, soaring, bombastic anthem that has made generations of baseball games hideous with off-key renderings—was written by John Stafford Smith, an Englishman. Around 1780, he composed the melody of a drinking song, To Anacreon in Heaven, with lyrics by Ralph Tomlinson. Not exactly Party Rock, the song contains classical references to Venus and Bacchus. While pretty hot stuff back then, it isn't all that racy to modern ears. Doing what everybody did at the time, Key recycled the music in 1814 to go along with his famous verses about the bombardment of Fort McHenry.

Free State of Van Zandt
Van Zandt County in east Texas was once called the Free State of Van Zandt, an independent state once in conflict with the United States. Following the Civil

War, federal troops were stationed in many Texas towns. Fed up with martial law, the citizens of Van Zandt voted to secede not just from Texas, but from the United States as well. The government wasn't going to stand for any shenanigans, so US Army soldiers led by General Sheridan were sent to put down the uprising. Fortunately, the Van Zandt army had celebrated their new freedom a little too heartily and the drunks were rounded up without too much fuss. Later, many of the men escaped custody. Seceding from the US was no longer in the cards, though the resolution made by the county to separate was never formally withdrawn.

A Woman Almost Started the Revolution

Heard of the famous "Shot Heard Round the World?" Well, the Revolutionary War nearly started early thanks to Sarah Tarrant, a nurse with a fiery temper who lived in Salem, Massachusetts in 1775. British commander Alexander Leslie came to Salem in search of cannons he believed were hidden there by rebels. Upon his arrival, some of the younger citizens taunted him, refused to let his troops cross the bridge into town, and scuttled his boat. Worse, the Salem militia gathered, armed and ready. Nevertheless, Leslie persisted. To save face, he eventually marched his men into Salem and turned them around to return to Boston. On their way out, Sarah Tarrant hurled insults at the retreating redcoats, one of whom stopped and aimed his musket at her despite Leslie's order to stand down. Fortunately, the soldier didn't fire, otherwise it's possible the Revolutionary War would have started then and there.

Thanks a Lot, Longfellow: The Midnight Ride of Sybil Ludington

Do you know why every school kid in America knows about Paul Revere's famous midnight ride? Because Revere rhymes with a lot more words than Ludington. Not to say Revere didn't ride to warn his fellow Americans that British troops were on the way, but so did other little known heroes like Sybil Ludington, the sixteen year old daughter of a captain in the New York militia. In 1777, when British troops attacked Danbury, Captain Ludington began putting his militia in order. He sent Sybil to rouse the countryside and sound an alarm. She rode forty miles through the dark, rainy night, stopping at farmhouses along the way to wake up the sleeping inhabitants. Not only did she have to elude British troops in the area, but also loyalists to the Crown, and robbers. She succeeded and returned home a local heroine.

State of Franklin v North Carolina

To the thirteen states existing after the Revolutionary War, we must add a fourteenth: the state of Franklin, named in honor of Benjamin Franklin. In 1784, the citizens of the region decided they'd have better luck living on their own rather than as part of North Carolina or as territory of the federal government. They subsequently voted to secede from North Carolina, but Congress refused to let Franklin join the Union. The independent republic kept chugging along for four years, writing its own constitution, making deals with Native American tribes, and even attempting to negotiate a treaty with Spain. The last act proved too hard to swallow. North Carolina swiftly arrested the governor, John Sevier. Franklin gradually lost its purpose and became part of the newly formed state of Tennessee in 1796.

Charles Gates Dawes Vice President and Hit Song Maker
Many US vice presidents have to take a back seat to the POTUS in the public's consciousness, but here's a V.P. who stands out for his unusual accomplishment. Before he got into banking, politics, and ultimately became Calvin Coolidge's vice president in 1925, Dawes liked to play the piano and compose music. He co-wrote a classical ditty for violin and orchestra in 1911, Melody in A Majoror Dawes Melody. In 1951, songwriter Carl Sigman added lyrics and changed the name to It's All in the Game. Performed by Tommy Edwards in 1958, the song spent six weeks at number one on the pop chart and has since been covered by Cliff Richard, Nat "King" Cole, Isaac Hayes, Barry Manilow, and other artists.

America's First Victim of Homophobia?
In 1647, when Manhattan was a Dutch colony called New Amsterdam, a married barber-surgeon, commissary of stores, and respected explorer named Harmen Meyndertsz van den Bogaert was caught in flagrante with another man—a black slave. Sodomy was a capital offense according the strict Calvinist faith practiced by the Dutch at the time. Pursued by the authorities, Van den Bogaert broke out of custody in Fort Orange and fled with his lover to an Iroquois village, but was tracked down. In the ensuing struggle to capture him, a shoot-out occurred and a longhouse was set on fire. He was literally dragged away by the posse and returned to Fort Orange. He got out a second time, but drowned in the second escape attempt, possibly making him the first victim of homophobia in North America.

Shays Rebellion
Not very long after the end of the Revolutionary War, some citizens of Massachusetts once again took up arms to defy an oppressive force—this time, the newly formed state government in Boston. In 1786, because of a severe economic crisis, farmers in Massachusetts began losing their farms. Some were jailed for debt. Petitions became mass protests by farmers and other citizens, which led to jail breaks, and finally a short-lived revolt under Daniel Shays. Their main acts of civil disobedience were blocking courts to prevent other debt laden farmers from being imprisoned By 1787, Governor Bowdoin's forces put an end to the rebellion, but voters sympathetic to the rebels' situation didn't reelect him.

Medieval Scientists Smarter Than Einstein

Einstein is easily regarded as one of the most intelligent scientists of our time. Funnily enough, most of us wouldn't be able to succinctly say why he was deemed so intelligent – especially after history has showcased dozens of intelligent men who could cream Einstein at a chess match. Interestingly, a lot of them are from medieval times. Here are ten of them . . .

Avicenna, or Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Sīnā, was a Muslim scholar who revolutionized the field of medicine during Islam's Golden Age in the 11th century. Of the some 200 academic texts he wrote, by far his most influential was The Canon of Medicine. This was basically a comprehensive encyclopedia on the field of medicine with many annotations that were ahead of their time. For example, Avicenna proposed a completely new set of protocols to test new medicines that included modern measures such as testing different strains and testing a large sample size. It also included never before translated Greek ideas in medicine, such as the idea that disease spread through the air. His book was so valued, every major medical college used it as their standard textbook until the mid-1700s.

Ibn Khaldun is regarded by modern historians as the father of historiography. He is the first recorded historian to record the various accounts of any particular event in history. However his work goes way beyond that. Despite being a theologian, philosopher, and logician, Ibn Khaldun viewed himself primarily as a historian. As such, he placed most of his effort into writing his magnum opus, al-Kitābu l-ʿibār, his history of the world. Khaldun originally meant for it to cover the history of the Berbers, but later expanded it to include the rest of the world as well as his insights into Arabic syntax and morphology. It has been hailed as "a philosophy of history which is undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has ever yet been created by any mind in any time or place."

Paul of Aegina was a traveling Byzantine physician from the 7th century who wrote a massive encyclopedia called Medical Compendium in Seven Books. Paul wasn't actually very well known by Europeans; however he was very well praised by Arab physicians. So whatever we know about him, we know from them, and it isn't much. We do know he had some sort of procedure in place for c-sections and that midwives consulted him frequently. His works inspired and influenced many of the top physicians in the arab world.

St. Albertus Magnus was a Catholic saint who was also an academic in multiple fields including philosophy, chemistry, zoology, and physiology. Magnus is mostly known for preserving the ideas of Aristotle, which he commented on frequently. His entire works were compiled into a massive thirty-eight volume encyclopedia. Magnus also provided insight and commentary into the fields of psychology, where he debated whether the body was rooted in the soul and how essential the intellect is in humans. His teachings became extremely popular amongst other scholars in the time period as well as with scholars who came

later in the Renaissance. His ideas would survive in the form of his student, St. Thomas Aquinas, but more on him later.

Al Khwarizmi is known for single-handedly inventing algebra, which he named after al-jabr, one of the operations he used to solve quadratic equations. The word algorithm actually comes from the latin translation of his name, Al-Gorithmi. From that sentence alone you can probably deduce that he was big fan of mathematics. His book on mathematics—Al-Kitāb al-mukhtaṣar—contains procedures on how to calculate numbers in areas from law to businesses making it one of the earliest forms of a textbook with practical applications. It contains the first known directions on solving polynomial equations as well as balancing both sides of an equation. His works are responsible for introducing Arabic numerals into the European world as well as the first trigonometric functions of sine and cosine. One other non-math thing he established, was the location of the Prime- Meridian, which he did using geometry.

Averroes or Ibn Rushd was a 12th century Spanish academic who specialized in everything from law to music theory. He specialized especially in philosophy and is known in western academic circles as "the father of secular theory in the western Europe." In his time he provided insightful commentary on Plato's Republic as well as translating many of Aristotle's works into Arabic. Averroes became popular amongst Christian academics when he wrote a highly criticized refutation (actually called The Refutation of the Refutation) to Ghazali's (who we'll talk about later) The Refutation of Philosophy. Ghazali was arguing that Aristotelian philosophy was fundamentally flawed and didn't fit in with Islamic theology. Averroes argued that Ghazali was incorrect and that he was misinterpreting Aristotle. In addition, he wrote a commentary on Avicenna's Canon of Medicine and wrote his own follow up encyclopedia on medicine as well as another text on physics and one on psychology. He was so popular with western scholars that Thomas Aquinas would call him simply "The Commentator" as Aristotle was simply "the Philosopher".

Al Zahrawi, sometimes known as Abulcasis, was a Moorish Andalusian known today for founding and designing the techniques for the first ever surgeries, as well as creating some of the first surgical tools. His greatest contribution is Kitab al Tasrif, a thirty-eight volume guide that explained in detail the various techniques he used in medicine. His other major work was Liber Servitoris, a Latin work in which he details how to create medicine using distillation and sublimation. In addition, he is the first to record how to ligate a blood vessel for pain relief, 600 years before the next Western scholar claimed credit. His also gave the first description of an ectopic pregnancy and taught methods for dealing with a dislocated shoulder that are still taught today.

Parcelsus was a 14th century European chemist who made great advances in the periodic table of elements as well as in botany and medicine. His name is actually an extension of the name of the Roman chemist Celsus, Parcelsus meaning "greater than Celsus." He is sometimes referred to as the father of toxicology because of his assertions (which would later be proven as fact and make up the basics of the field) that poison was safe in short doses, and anything

in large doses was harmful. In addition, he was the first to propose the concept of the unconscious. He was the first to use chemicals in medicine instead of herbs. In the process he gave zinc its name after the distinct crystals it formed.

Al-Ghazali, or Algazel to other medieval theologians, was an 11th century Muslim philosopher, jurist, and theologian. He is considered by other Muslims as the single greatest Muslim after Muhammad. Ghazali's contribution that launched him to fame in the academic world was the previously mentioned Refutation of Philosophy in which he argued against the views of Aristotle as translated by Avicenna for being self-contradictory. His criticism started a new age in Islamic Philosophy where Muslim philosophers began to criticize the works of Greek scholars. Ghazali's surviving works number somewhere in the 400s and covers a range of topics. He had an everlasting effect on both the Muslim and Western academic communities.

St. Thomas Aquinas was a student of St. Albertus Magnus and an influential theologian and philosopher. As mentioned earlier, he too has great respect for Aristotle but looked down upon other philosophers whom he saw as not fully able to grasp the concept of God. As such, he never identified himself as being a philosopher. He wrote about the four cardinal virtues and published the Summa Theologica, which was a comprehensive five-volume encyclopedia of his theological ideas. Thomas Aquinas viewed theology as a science just as medicine is a science, and treated it accordingly. In addition to this he wrote volume after volume of commentaries on Aristotle's works as well as commentaries on the Gospels. He was one of the most prolific and highly regarded minds in the Middle Ages. His work still forms the foundation of Catholic seminary studies.

Medieval Outcasts

The Middle Ages in Europe was a pretty fascinating time in human history. Everybody wanted to invade everybody else. Cities were growing larger and more populous, while irrigation, plumbing, and sewer systems still hadn't progressed past "the nearest river." Diseases were rampant, and the Roman Catholic Church ruled its kingdom with an iron fist. And even though people in the Middle Ages weren't as ignorant as we "civilized" modern folk like to believe—they still had more than their fair share of superstitions and social stigmas, as you can see by the way the following ten groups of medieval outcasts were treated.

Lepers
Leprosy is caused by a bacteria, and it leads to skin lesions, muscular weakness, and nerve damage. One of the most unusual symptoms of untreated leprosy is the slow decay of your nose as the cartilage breaks down—so yeah, people were pretty freaked out, especially when they noticed that the disease could spread just by contact with a leper. In the Early Middle Ages, lepers were pitied; in the later period, they were hated and feared. Lepers were usually banished to enclosed colonies and hospitals where they could be separated from the rest of the population. If they stayed in public, they were required to wear special clothing to warn other people to stay away from them. In the 1400s, the civil leaders declared lepers legally dead, stripping their rights and allowing their possessions to be confiscated. Even the Church held funeral Masses for lepers who were, in fact, not dead. In the meantime, an outcast in his own religion, Saint Francis of Assisi caused medieval scandal by not only working among the lepers, but kissing them in greeting. Incredibly, right now there are thousands of leper colonies around the world; over 1,000 exist in India alone. Despite having a cure, modern society still ostracises the diseased.

Cripples
Here's an awesome video of a crippled guy breakdancing. In the Middle Ages, that same man would have been beaten, rejected, and left to beg on the streets. According to the book Other Middle Ages: Witnesses at the Margins of Medieval Society, cripples were usually placed into two categories: "regular" cripples, with the same social status as criminals and the poor, and "untreatables"—the blind, one-armed, or completely lame. That second category also included lepers—showing that medieval society had a pretty limited view of why certain afflictions came about. More often than not they were blamed on demons or sinful behaviour.

Moslems
Muslims (spelled Moslems at the time) had a dual role in the Middle Ages. On the one hand, the Islamic Golden Age led to incredible innovations in art and science. On the other hand, Muslim invasions of Catholic territory followed by the Crusades, ensured that relations between Muslims and Christians were strained, to say the least. Crusaders were blessed by Pope Urban II and granted a plenary indulgence—lifting of the punishment for minor sins—so that they wouldn't

have to spend time in purgatory. In fact, the Pope sparked the first Crusade after spending an eight-month-long campaign preaching about the evils of the Muslims, and firing up the Christian community in favor of an invasion of Jerusalem.

Excommunicated

In the Middle Ages, excommunication was one of the most serious punishments—even worse than immediate execution. It basically meant that you were completely cut off from the Church. In a time when the Church was the head of both religion and politics, that meant a complete severing of social ties. Remember, this isn't the kind of exile where you're sent away from everybody; you're actually forced to live inside a city full of people who aren't even allowed to greet you on the street. And if you died while excommunicated, you were guaranteed to find yourself with a one-way ticket to hell. Your former friends would even neglect to bury your body in a church graveyard, because it would defile the consecrated ground. The Catholic Church continues to excommunicate certain members of the Church publicly and has never ceased in doing so.

Heretics

According to dictionaries, heresy is "any belief contrary to the authorized teachings of a church." The punishment was death or imprisonment. Again, this was a time when the government was the church—so heresy was often seen as a form of treason. As religious power grew, the definition of heresy became increasingly broad, and those who met the definition were punished more and more severely. In the thirteenth century, Pope Innocent IV sanctioned the use of torture against supposed heretics. But contrary to common belief, most heretics weren't actually burned at the stake. In fact, people who hunted down heretics felt that executing them was a form of defeat, since it would prove them unable to force the heretic to repent. One famous Inquisitor, Bernard Gui, only had forty-two heretics executed in roughly fifteen years. While the Church no longer hands heretics over to the state for punishment, it does continue to punish people in its own way for heresy, as in the recent case of six nuns who were excommunicated for an obstinate belief in reincarnation.

Prostitutes

Prostitutes in the Middle Ages were at different times loved and hated. Prostitution in general was reluctantly tolerated by the Church and state, because it prevented other evils like rape and masturbation. Basically, the official stance on prostitution was that it was a necessary evil—so you were free to go for it as long as you didn't talk about it with too much gusto. The prostitutes themselves, on the other hand, were often looked down on by society because they were usually associated with disease. They also tended to come from lower class families, some of which sold their daughters into prostitution because they needed the money.

Jews

If the Muslims were considered outcasts, Jews in the Middle Ages must have been fire-breathing hell-beasts. No single group of people underwent so much persecution at that time. One of many the widespread myths at the time was that

Jews in England used the blood from Christian children in their religious ceremonies. When the Black Death ravaged Europe, many people believed that Jews had poisoned all the wells—because that was the kind of thing Jews supposedly did.Jews also had to wear badges that publicly declared their status as outcasts, and they were often attacked by mobs, sometimes leading to the deaths of thousands. It all culminated in Jews being exiled from England, France, Italy, and Germany in the early fourteenth century.

Entertainers

There were two types of entertainers in the Middle Ages: the first group was made up of court jesters and minstrels that performed for the pleasure of the nobility, and the second group of wandering vagrants who entertained on the street. Vagrants were dirty, poor, and usually considered to be criminals—even if they were never actually accused of a specific crime. By the end of the 1400s, a vagrant could be arrested on the charge of nothing more than "suspicious wandering."

Witches

No matter what period of history you look at, one thing is certain: people really hate the idea of witches. Surprisingly, though—despite all its hatred of Jews, Muslims, and cripples—the medieval Catholic church was pretty lenient on the subject of witchcraft. They defined it as a superstition, stating that witches didn't exist. But that didn't stop the common people from blaming everything from disease to flooding on witches. Mobs were known to attack witches, torture them, and burn them at the stake. Towards the increasingly violent end of the Middle Ages, the Church pulled up its sleeves a little more often and began handing witches over to the state for execution along with heretics. Because they were concerned about the witches' souls, they would purify them first—Old English for "make sure they're still alive when we burn them." Witch hunts and execution by burning continue to this day in nations that still strongly believe in the power of evil. In India an average of 200 witches are killed each year and the numbers may be significantly higher in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Saints

Saints were possibly the most condemned and mistreated people during the Middle Ages. It's actually one of the reasons they're considered saints today—they were put through such hell that it often seems a miracle they survived so long. For example, Joan of Arc was burned alive, and then her body was burned two more times, just to make sure she was dead. Saint Francis of Assisi was also disliked, because he demanded that all the monks in his order take a vow of poverty and reject worldly goods. Now he's one of the most famous saints in the world, and there's a good chance that the Franciscan monks are the only order of monks that most of us could name off the top of our heads.

Heroes Screwed Over By The Countries They Bled For

History has a funny way of reminding us that life just sometimes isn't fair. And it's not so much a case of, "why do the good die young," as it is countless cases of, "why do the good get royally screwed over?" Here are ten heroes who had to find that out the hard way . . . and as you will see, it doesn't matter what government system you live under to be royally screwed.

Odysseus, Ithaca
While it's likely that Odysseus lived only in the imagination of the poet Homer, there is at least a slight possibility that the Greek hero may have been real. And archeological discoveries like the site of Wilusa (Troy)—and possibly Ancient Ithaca—suggest to many modern scholars that the Homeric epics are actually the preserved memories of a very real war. If there's even a shred of truth to the legend of Odysseus, then our boy sure got screwed. The King of Ithaca supposedly spent a decade fighting with the Greeks to (most likely) lift a Trojan blockade of Greek trade along the Hellespont. After the Greek victory and sack of Troy, it took Odysseus—who had incurred the wrath of the sea god Poseidon—another decade to find his way home. When Odysseus finally returned to Ithaca—ready to hang up his penis tie and relax—he wasn't exactly congratulated on his hard work. Instead he found the nobles hanging out in his house and doing their very best to sleep with his wife. So the travel-weary Odysseus had to kill a roomful of his ungrateful aristocrats before he could finally kick back and (presumably) enjoy his favorite chair.

Themistocles, Athens
Despite what The 300 may have led you to believe, the Persian invasion was turned back, not at the mountain pass of Thermopylae, but at the naval battle of Salamis. In the narrow straits of Salamis a small Greek navy led by Admiral Themistocles inflicted a crushing defeat on the enormous Persian navy. With their nautical supply-line destroyed, the Persians could scarcely maintain the offensive on land. Unfortunately for Themistocles, many Athenians possessed a rather short memory and the great leader—a little like Winston Churchill—struggled to fit into life post-invasion. Themistocles was blamed for the growing rivalry with Sparta, was accused of treason, and then sentenced to death by his own people. He managed to escape from Athens, but while he was on the run the Athenians made him a scapegoat for all sorts of problems. Athenians questioned everything from Themistocles' sexual practices (with one person referring to him as "Themistocles son of Neocles, a——hole"), to his loyalty. In the end, few choices existed for the exiled admiral. Themistocles sought refuge among his former enemies in Persia, where he lived out the remainder of his days.

Scipio, Rome
Before Scipio took over, Hannibal Barca was mowing down Roman armies like crabgrass—and so it's thanks to him that Rome did not become "New Carthage." He brilliantly attacked the Carthaginian capital, forcing Hannibal to leave Rome alone and defend his own lands for once. His monumental victory earned him the moniker "Africanus" and the adoration of average Romans. But anyone familiar

with Roman history should already know that a combination of genius and popularity always inspired hatred in the Roman elites. Scipio's public life was therefore brief. An insecure senate accused him of embezzling funds from the treasury. He aptly retorted that his victories had actually filled that same treasury, but only a public demonstration could save him from retribution. Much of the Scipio family's wealth was confiscated, at which point he voluntarily exiled himself. Supposedly, he wished to be buried in rural Italy away from his family tomb in Rome—the city he once loved, which screwed him over in return.

Crispus, Rome

By all accounts, Crispus was one of history's most dutiful sons. As the son of Constantine I, emperor of the Western half of the Roman Empire, Crispus served his father's interests admirably during the early fourth century A.D. Crispus led Roman armies that defeated both Frankish and Germanic invasions. And when Constantine decided he wanted all of the Roman Empire, Crispus commanded the fleet that helped to win the civil war, cementing his father's position as the sole and undisputed Emperor. Clearly, Crispus was the kind of son that emperors often wish for but never have—talented, humble, and well-liked. All of which makes Crispus' untimely demise at the hands of his father just that little bit more distressing. We can't be sure exactly why Constantine did it, since the terrible father struck nearly every reference to Crispus from the public record. But we do know that in A.D. 326 Crispus was executed (or at least exiled—upon which he committed suicide) by order of his father. It's possible that Crispus was the victim of conspiracy. Constantine's second wife Fausta wanted Crispus' dynastic position for her children, and accused Crispus of seducing her. Curiously though, even Fausta wasn't safe from the emperor: after having his son killed he ordered the execution of his wife by suffocation in an over-heated bath. Given how many horrific methods of execution were used in ancient times, Fausta should probably have considered herself lucky!

Tariq Ibn Ziyad, The Umayyad Caliphate

Tariq—a former slave—continued the Muslim expansion from North Africa to the Iberian peninsula. Along the way, he lent his name—Jabal-Tariq—to the rocky outcrop of Gibraltar, on the coast of southern Spain where he and his men landed in 711 (about 100 years after Muhammad started his religion of peace). Tariq spent the next year subduing the last pockets of resistance and establishing Muslim rule in what is now Spain. Just one problem: Tariq's lightning conquest hadn't been authorized by anyone other than the North African governor Musa Ibn Nusayr. Both Tariq and Musa were recalled to the Umayyad capital, Damascus, to account for their actions. The pair spent a leisurely two years journeying back east, no doubt making the most of the time before their reckoning. Despite the enormous wealth the conquest of Spain brought the empire, both men were accused of insubordination. Musa died in prison, while Tariq Ibn Ziyad, stripped of his rank and position, perished a poor commoner in obscurity.

Yue Fei, China

In the early 1100s, a group of Manchurian peoples called the Jurchens swept down from northern China and violently displaced the Song Dynasty. The Song

emperor was captured, and the remainder of the Song court fled southwards. Thankfully, the Song had an officer capable of turning the tide: Yue Fei. Fei did such a good job waging war on the Jurchens and retaking Song lands that it seemed only a matter time before Fei rescued the imprisoned Song emperor. This, of course, did not sit well with the interim Song ruler, Gaozong, who had discovered that acting as emperor was a rather enjoyable affair. Before Fei could retake the former Song holdings in the north, the brilliant officer was recalled to Gaozong's court. One of Fei's men was forced to testify against his general, and Fei was imprisoned on charges of plotting a coup. To avoid creating a martyr, the Southern Song court executed Yue Fei in his prison cell and negotiated a peace with their northern Jurchen neighbours. The dead officer's back bore a tattoo: "repay the nation with utmost loyalty."

Robert Rogers, Britain/America/Britain

Rogers, an American, founded his colonial Ranger corps in 1755 with the aim of serving alongside the British against the French during the Seven Years' War. Despite his unit's success, the irregular and independent nature of Rogers' Rangers meant that the British felt comfortable paying Rogers—well, irregularly. After the war, Rogers traveled to England where he wrote two books cashing in on his minor celebrity status and the British fascination with the American wilderness. When the American Revolution broke out, Rogers traveled to America and offered his services to George Washington, but was rebuffed and imprisoned as a spy due to the time he had spent in England. Rogers managed to escape, and formed a new ranger corps, which fought for the British during the Revolution. Rogers' best years were behind him, though, and he failed to repeat the success he'd had during the Seven Years War. Rogers fled to England after the Revolution, but mired himself in debt and had to struggle to avoid the poorhouse.

The Comte de Rochambeau, France

Jean-Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, the Comte de Rochambeau, led the French forces that turned the tide of the American Revolution, granting the colonies their freedom from British rule. He didn't stop there, though. After reluctantly accepting a position as a Marshal of France, Rochambeau fell ill and had to resign. Ironically, the man who had embraced the revolutionary spirit in America came under fire during the French Revolution for his "questionable loyalties." Despite the fact that Rochambeau was loyal to the ideals and aims of the French Revolution, Robespierre's Reign of Terror saw fault with the aging retiree, and imprisoned him.

Rochambeau—the hero and dutiful public servant—languished in prison for almost an entire year while his fate was being decided. While Rochambeau was in prison, the revolutionary spirit turned on Robespierre, whose execution meant the end of the Terror. During his subsequent trial, the Comte de Rochambeau successfully defended himself, citing his military service with that great symbol of revolutionary spirit and freedom (and full-time slave-owner) George Washington. The invocation of the American Revolution earned Rochambeau his freedom, and the rise of Napoleon allowed Rochambeau to regain some of his former respectability.

Lazarre Carnot, France

The story of the French Revolutionary Army is one of the most incredible triumphs over insurmountable odds in history. Everything from gunpowder to experienced officers (most fled the country) was in short supply following the regicide, and almost every country in Europe had turned against France. Enter the greatest technocrat of all time—Lazarre Carnot. The academic and engineer won an election and took charge of France's military affairs. Under Carnot: the army's strength was doubled (to 1.5 million), unseasoned troops were trained into effective soldiers, and most importantly, France won a series of victories that defeated the pan-European alliance. Also, it was Carnot who made Napoleon Bonaparte a general. Carnot served periodically in Napoleon's government. Carnot's republican ideals were often at odds with Bonaparte's imperial aims, yet the Corsican held Carnot in good esteem. No matter his political beliefs, whenever France faced duress and Napoleon called upon the masterful tactician, Carnot answered the call. The whims of a nation are a fickle thing, however. After the restoration of the French monarchy, Carnot's status as a "regicide" made him a pariah among the people, most of whom had forgotten the barbarous excesses of the Ancien Regime and welcomed the new king. Carnot lived out his resulting exile first in Poland and finally in Germany, where he died in 1816.

Georgy Zhukov, Soviet Union

Imagine Eisenhower, Patton, and Roosevelt rolled into one man and you're just beginning to grasp the importance of Zhukov to the Soviet Union and the Allied victory in WWII. At nearly every major battle between Russia and Nazi Germany, Zhukov led the Soviet defense. Zhukov's Fabian tactics buoyed the Red Army, and bled the Nazi war effort dry. But when WWII ended, Zhukov's real troubles began. In 1945, Zhukov refused to arrest members of his staff who had looted German valuables. From then on, USSR State Security took a keen interest in him. An increasingly paranoid Stalin—fed rumors by his State Security—decided to dismiss the war hero from his post. After that little piece of ingratitude, Stalin exiled Russia's greatest general to command the Ural Mountain district—the equivalent to having Patton guard a garbage dump. In Iowa. Zhukov fought his way back to become Minister of Defense in 1955, only to be unjustly implicated in a plot against Premiere Khrushchev. He spent his last years under quasi-house arrest, while Soviet leadership gradually went about wiping Zhukov's name from Soviet history. Sadly, just as the USSR recognized him again following Khrushchev's death, Zhukov suffered a stroke. Today Russians—unlike Krushchev—actually celebrate his memory.

Crazy Cures for the Black Death

The Black Death is thought to have wiped out about one third of Europe's population between 1328 and 1351. Victims of the plague would often die within a few days—and the horrific symptoms would make these final days absolutely terrible. High fever, severe vomiting, and bleeding from the lungs were all very common, and victims' bodies would usually be covered with gruesome boils. The awful nature of the disease—together with its shocking fatality rate—inspired its desperate victims to come up with a range of crazy cures. Some of them are nearly as horrendous as the disease itself. Here are some of the worst pieces of advice plague victims would have received on their sickbeds:

Aromatherapy
One popular treatment method that has actually survived until today was aromatherapy. That is, the treatment of the body using different smells. Back during the Black Death, people were instructed to carry sweet smelling flowers with them wherever they went. If they couldn't get flowers, they were told to carry around packets of herbs. It was in this time that the French pomander—balls of perfume—became popular with the upper class. Others closed their windows so that the bad smell in the winds wouldn't enter their homes. Note to aromatherapists: it didn't work then; it doesn't work now.

Religion
In an even more religious world than today, it comes as no surprise that most people turned to religion. Some people believed that the dreaded disease was a punishment from God, and others thought that God was testing them. When the plague spread to the Middle East, Muslims were told to sit back and suck it up because it was God's will. Not that the European response was any less extreme. Devout Catholics took to the highways and whipped themselves while crying out for God's mercy. Because when God is punishing you, the only obvious thing to do is punish yourself . . . a lot.

Rotten Treacle
Treacle—a by-product of sugar production—would often be given to sick patients. Unfortunately, it had to be at least ten years old to be considered effective. The old, smelly, sticky substance was believed to combat not only the horrific effects of the disease, but to rid the body of it for good. This remedy actually has a touch of sense to it: potentially disease-fighting moulds, yeasts and other cultures would have thrived in the syrup and matured over time. But we can only wonder who thought of this in the first place, and how on earth the victims managed to swallow.

Live In a Sewer
When people figured out that the Black Death was airborne, they began to visit—or even live—in foul-smelling sewers. It was thought that the sharp stench of rotting human waste would discourage the cleaner (but disease-ridden) air from coming near and infecting them. This didn't work, of course—and as well as being susceptible to the plague, they often died of other diseases.

Let Leeches Suck You Dry
Bloodletting was popular all over Europe during this time, and it was used to cure everything from gout to goiter. If you were lucky, you could afford to have leeches do all the hard work for you. Leeches were actually a fairly painless method of blood-letting. But most people could not afford them, and had to go with the age-old method of cutting the skin open. A blade would be pushed into a vein, and blood would be drained into a bowl. Without painkillers this procedure would have been agony—and with sanitation levels leaving much to be desired, gruesome infections were common. Just what you need when you have a life-threatening disease.

Eat a Spoon of Crushed Emeralds
Another edible cure was the powder of crushed emeralds. The precious stones would be ground down to a fine powder in a mortal and pestle, then either mixed with a liquid and drunk like a potion, mixed with food or in bread and eaten, or swallowed on its own as a powder. This would have been terrible to eat, with a taste and texture vaguely resembling that of crushed glass. Incidentally, the desperate remedies of disease-ridden victims aren't too far removed from the fashionable meals of today's billionaires.

Wash Yourself With Urine
Urine enjoyed a good reputation in medieval Europe, and this was one case in which supply could happily meet demand. Victims of the Black Death would often be bathed in urine several times a day to relieve the symptoms of the plague. Even more highly recommended was a glass of the stuff. Pee would be collected by non-infected members of the public, and given or sold to the diseased as naturally as we might offer a sick person a glass of orange juice today. Speaking of which, urine is still used today as a treatment for many issues, from acne to multiple sclerosis—and some people also wash their faces with urine during a solar eclipse.

Smear Yourself With Human Poop
Here's another solution that plague victims wouldn't have wanted to hear. The buboes (sores) were cut open, and a paste was applied. The paste was made from a mixture of tree resins, flower roots, and poo. Doctors loved the stuff. Unfortunately for the weak-stomached, this smelly paste was pushed inside their open wounds, which would then be tightly wrapped to keep the disgusting concoction inside. I'm starting to wonder whether the plague itself was really responsible for the massive death-rate after all. . . .

Rub Your Wounds With a Live Chicken
Just like Yahoo Answers, the Middle Ages had plenty of crazy people offering up insane advice. Far and away one of the most bizarre was the Vicary Method—named after Thomas Vicary, an English doctor who invented the technique. People would shave a hen's butt and strap it to their swollen lymph nodes . . . while the chicken was still alive. Then, when the chicken got sick, they would wash it and repeat the process until only the chicken or victim was healthy. Vicary's technique spread far and wide, with crazy people everywhere turning themselves into the hosts of plague-ridden chicken parasites. This Vicary guy

was so popular that to this very day a special lecture is held annually in his honor by the Royal College of Surgeons in England. But then again, science is a religion after all.

Kill Jews

This list wouldn't be complete without talking about perhaps the most severe method of treating the plague. Some people took the religious thing a little far and decided that the best cure for the plague was to purge the earth of Jews. Governors of cities across Europe rounded up Jews, boarded them up in their homes, and then set them alight. Unfortunately this was because a group of Jews were captured and tortured into admitting that they were behind the disease—Abu Grhaib style. Thousands were killed when they were rounded up and summarily executed to put a stop to the disease. The severity of these attacks prompted Pope Clement VI to publish two papal letters condemning those who killed the Jews and requiring all clergy to protect them wherever possible. He also declared that all people who died of the plague were forgiven all their sins so they could enter Heaven.

Miscellaneous

When things got really bad, people decided to just throw whatever they could think of at the disease. This included—but was not limited to: drinking arsenic or mercury, not having thoughts about death in general, not having thoughts about the plague, not having sad thoughts, not eating figs, not eating meat, not running or walking outside, not exercising at all, not bathing, not sleeping in the day, and finally for good measure, not having sex. Effectively the worst possible kind of celibacy—the kind that leaves you covered in dripping sores and dead.

Reasons 19th Century Paris Was As Miserable As Les Mis

By now you've probably either seen the movie, watched the play or read the book Les Miserables, Victor Hugo's classic tale of life in nineteenth century Paris. But have you ever wondered if life in Paris at that time really was as miserable as the movie depicts? Here are ten reasons why it was even worse:

Women Had It Really Rough
Opportunities for lower class women to move ahead were few and far between, to say the least. The world was most certainly not their oyster: among their few career options were the roles of domestic servant, seamstress, laundress—and when all else failed, prostitute. And each occupation brought with it a distinct set of challenges. Prostitutes were of course viewed as the lowest of all, and they often suffered from police persecution. But even more shocking than that was the fact that many women were actually falsely accused of prostitution. Many such women were domestic servants, accused by the wives of the families they worked for after being seduced by the husbands. Women were also regularly charged with slander and public drunkenness. Neither crime is gender-specific—but only in women was the behavior deemed criminal.

Children Were Regularly Abandoned
Children were abandoned on a fairly regular basis. The lucky ones were dropped off at state-run hospices, where they usually remained until they turned twenty-five. At the hospices the children were given the basic necessities: food, clothing and shelter. No education was provided—and due to severe overcrowding, very little attention was paid to each child. The even unluckier children were forced to live on the streets and fend for themselves. In these cases, children turned to begging and thievery in order to survive. If they were (arguably) a little luckier, they would be taken in by strangers—much like Cosette in Les Mis— in which case they would often be forced to perform heavy labor. They were usually given minimal food and shelter, and would be mistreated or neglected on a regular basis. But the unluckiest children of all were forced to turn to:

Child Prostitution
Child prostitution was rampant in nineteenth century Paris. The young girls—usually pre-pubescent—were forced into sexual encounters by men of the upper classes, and were usually paid as little as a single franc. Usually the act was consummated in a back alley or under a bridge. Sometimes a room in the girl's own house might suffice. Some legitimate businesses served as fronts for prostitution; they would send children to wealthy homes as "deliveries." If a girl was old enough to be impregnated by the client, her family would in many cases throw her onto the streets for bringing shame upon the family. Left destitute and alone, the girl would then become a full-time streetwalker.

Lower Classes Were Despised By Upper Classes
They might have been the most hard-working, God-fearing people in Paris—but according to the upper classes, the poor and huddled masses were dangerous and despicable. Crime was admittedly everywhere in nineteenth century Paris,

and real criminals were certainly dangerous. This caused grave problems for the many poor people who were not criminals, since the upper class viewed them all—innocent workmen like Jean Valjean included—as the "dangerous class," to be held in contempt and ridicule.

Men Had It Just As Bad

Even though women were pretty much stuck where they were, it seems that men had it no better. Parisian men—especially unskilled laborers—suffered high rates of mortality due to accidents on shipping docks, in workshops and on construction sites. Along with these dangerous work conditions, men had to contend with dangerous rivalries between workers from different regions in France. If for example a worker from Saint Georges happened to find himself working on the same construction site as a worker from Montparnasse, the result could be a deadly. Many men were also forced into military service. Those few who survived for long would be prevented from marrying while they served by poor pay and strict army regulations.

Living Conditions Were Terrible

The poor of nineteenth century Paris were concentrated in the ancient center of the city, where the buildings were in a state of disrepair and families of six to ten people lived in one-room apartments. These apartments had no running water and no indoor plumbing—and the nearest restroom was often on the streets outside. In the outskirts of Paris, families would often share huts with their livestock. The family and livestock used the same entrance to the hut, but were divided by a partition that separated the animals from a room that served as both the kitchen and bedroom. A loft that hung above the kitchen was used to dry out the animal feed. The feed would be spread across a plank floor, meaning that bits of seed and straw would frequently drop down onto the kitchen table where the family ate their meals.

Life Stunk

Since there was no indoor plumbing in many of the homes, the smell of raw sewage was absolutely everywhere: whether you were rich or poor, you'd struggle to escape the foul stench. The sewage smell was made spicier by inescapable body odors, for it was often too cold or too inconvenient to bathe. On the rare occasions when people did bathe, they used low tubs filled with only a few inches of water—which wasn't exactly the best remedy for the thick layers of slime clogging their pores.

Cholera Epidemic

With all the raw sewage that Paris had to contend with, it was only a matter of time before cholera hit the city hard. Doctors found it difficult to diagnose the disease. The symptoms included everything from high fevers to chest pains and vomiting to headaches, and the disease could leave its victims bedridden in a matter of hours. The cholera epidemic of 1832 lasted six months, and resulted in 19,000 deaths.

The Morgue Became A Place of Entertainment

Death was everywhere—and for many Parisians, death was something to be embraced rather than feared. In fact, what would be considered morbid today merely piqued the curiosity of many Parisians, who relished the most frightening tales of slaughter as much as they enjoyed the gruesome spectacle. In no instance is this more apparent than the popularity of the Paris Morgue. Built in 1864, the Paris Morgue was the place where the bodies of the unidentified dead—many of them suicide cases—were displayed on marble slabs for friends or family to identify. The morgue soon became a fixture for Parisians, with tens or even hundreds of people shuffling into the room to gawk at the dead and gossip over their cause of death.

The Reign of Terror

This entry may not strictly apply to the nineteenth century, but its repercussions were certainly felt throughout that period (and in Les Mis), and it seemed too gruesome to leave off the list. The Reign of Terror took place between June 1793 and July 1794, as French revolutionaries struggled to secure their power after the overthrow of the monarchy. Paris was thrown into chaos, and the new government into a state of utter paranoia. After King Louis XVI and his wife Marie Antoinette were executed in 1793, Maximilien Robespierre rose to become one of the most powerful and feared men in the country. Under his dreadful rule, thousands of citizens' heads were chopped off at the guillotine—many of them without trials, or even explanations. Commoners, intellectuals, politicians and prostitutes—nobody was safe from the Terror. A mere suspicion of "crimes against liberty" was enough to earn one an appointment with Madame Guillotine, also called The National Razor. The final death toll for this most miserable of periods is thought to have been between 16,000 and 40,000.

Embarrassing Blunders in US Military History

As impressive as popular portrayals of American military might and triumph may be, the non-airbrushed version of United States' military history is actually even more remarkable. Specifically, that the US managed to survive its own blunders, boners, gaffes, and general bungling. Here are the highlights . . . or lowlights, depending on your perspective.

The Jumonville Affair 1754
Technically, the Jumonville incident occurred before the United States even existed, but considering the main player was future president and all-American gangster George Washington, we think it deserves a place on this list. The young colonel served in the Virginia militia and his first assignment was to strengthen the British claim to the Ohio Valley. Because it was 1754, that meant building forts at critical river junctions. That was all fine and good, but the French wanted the Ohio Valley just as badly so they sent their own errand boy, Joseph Coulon de Jumonville, on a diplomatic mission to build forts and stake claims. So what did Washington do when his native allies found Jumonville's camp? Naturally, Washington ambushed Jumonville's party. Keep in mind, Britain and France weren't at war. However, they sure had plenty to fight about after Washington took Jumonville prisoner and allowed his native guide to kill the French officer. Washington's blunder kicked off the Seven Years' War and led to his first real battle and defeat at Fort Necessity. If only there'd been a rule; something along the lines of "don't shoot the messenger . . . ."

The Shooting of Stonewall Jackson 1863
In an era that believed the rise of trench warfare to be an advancement, Stonewall Jackson was a rare beacon of tactical talent. Sure he fought for "slavery" or "states" depending on who you ask, but Jackson was the most reliably victorious general the Confederacy had. So much so that many people contend that Stonewall's presence would have turned the tide at Gettysburg.Jackson never made it to Gettysburg, though, thanks to his greatest victory, the Battle of Chancellorsville. During the battle, Jackson deftly moved around the battlefield to launch a surprise attack on the Union flank. Jackson and his 28,000 troops charged into Union soldiers who were playing cards. When Jackson and his staff tried to return to their own lines, they were met by a nervous Confederate sentry. Jackson could scarcely answer the sentry's call of, "who goes there?" before he and his party were hit by a volley from Confederate rifles. One of the South's ablest leaders was shot by fellow rebels mistakenly convinced he was leading Union cavalry.

The Taiwan Expedition 1867
In March of 1867, two dozen American sailors washed up on Taiwan's beaches. The native Paiwan people who found the sailors greeted the Americans in the traditional manner: beheadings for everyone. It was nothing personal—the Paiwan warriors greeted mariners of all nationalities in much the same way. Three months later, the United States summoned up enough righteous indignation to address the "East Indies" situation. Local custom or not, those

beheadings needed to be punished, and 181 US sailors and marines landed at Taiwan, June 13, 1867.The US force marched into the jungle, planning to take any Paiwan villages—that is, if they could find them. All the Americans found was a series of ambushes. The Paiwans never allowed the Americans to close in, and few Americans even glimpsed the enemy. The day-long game of cat and mouse saw just a single casualty: Lieutenant Commander Mackenzie. At this point the Americans fired one last volley in the general direction of the natives, and high-tailed it back to the ship.

Fort Ontario 1783

Like a clingy girlfriend, Britain just couldn't accept its Revolutionary break-up with its former colonies. The British surrendered in 1781, but they sure as hell weren't leaving New York anytime soon. Almost a full year after the treaty was signed the British army was still in New York City. But George Washington's main concern wasn't getting the British out of New York City. He really wanted the British out of their Great Lakes forts, especially Fort Ontario, so Washington ordered a surprise attack to take the upstate New York fort. Five hundred Americans under Colonel Marinus Willett reached Oswego Falls, just four miles from Fort Ontario in February of 1783. Willet's men marched the rest of the way through the woods to conceal their late night advance. There was just one problem—the Americans couldn't find Fort Ontario. By dawn the next day, Willet and his men had been walking in circles for over four hours and were still nearly a mile away when they spotted the fort from a small overlook. The element of surprise lost, Willet and his men retreated without firing a shot. And as for the British? They decided to keep Fort Ontario for thirteen more years.

The Invasion of Canada 1812

When the US went to war with Great Britain in 1812, the UK was also contending with the looming spectre of a completely Napoleon-dominated Europe. The US army pretty much assumed taking Canada from Great Britain would be about as taxing as a brisk march. The invasion took the form of a large American militia under William Hull, who attempted to invade Canada via Ontario. While on the march, rumours of large native forces on the warpath spread, and panic infected the American militia. The invasion of Canada turned into a full-on retreat back to the warm confines of Fort Detroit. The British then laid siege to the fort with less than half the number of its defenders. The British told the garrison that the native warriors would show no mercy if Fort Detroit did not surrender; the defenders immediately surrendered to the tiny British force and headed home.

The Siege of Charleston 1780

In 1780, the Revolutionary War was not going well for the rebels in the south. The Continental Army's strength was rapidly dwindling due to an amazing ability to find defeat whether attacking or defending. Faced with a British army 11,000 strong and twice the size of his own, American commander Benjamin Lincoln moved his 5,500 men behind the reassuring walls of Charleston, South Carolina. With that one decision, Lincoln effectively ended all American resistance in the state. The city of Charleston lies between two rivers on what is essentially a peninsula. General Lincoln chose to make his stand at the point of said peninsula, allowing British land forces to cut off any possible chance of escape inland and

exposing his army on one side to bombardment from the greatest navy in the history of guns-on-ships. Predictably, Lincoln surrendered. This wasn't just any old surrender, though. Until the Battle of Corregidor in 1942, it stood as the single largest surrender in the American Army's history.

The Second Battle of Lacolle Mill 1814

One hundred and eighty. That's how many British soldiers and marines held off over 4,000 American attackers in 1814, forcing their retreat. The Second Battle of Lacolle Mill almost makes other American efforts during the War of 1812 seem laudable. To be fair, the mill-house near Champlain, New York where the British forces were garrisoned was of stout stone construction. On the afternoon of March 30, American artillery fired upon the garrison at Lacolle Mill, but failed to do anything besides make a lot of noise. British sorties forced the Americans to abandon their artillery multiple times. Somehow, the defenders managed to repulse all the infantry charges. The only trouble for the British was a dwindling supply of ammunition. By six o'clock that same evening the American army had hastily retreated eastward. While the defenders suffered sixty-one wounded or killed, the British had managed to reduce the American strength by some 264 casualties. Not surprisingly, Lacolle Mill was the last battle American General James Wilkinson directed, as he was mercifully relieved of command thereafter. Standards were pretty low during the War of 1812. Merely having a pulse may have been enough to qualify you to lead Americans to their deaths.

The Pancho Villa Expedition 1916

How many Americans does it take to catch a Mexican bandit? At least 5,000, because John Pershing and his 4,800 American troops spent the better part of 1916 chasing Pancho Villa around Northern Mexico with almost nothing to show for the effort. Pershing spent eleven months trying to capture Villa who had been raiding American border towns. Despite failing to complete his sole objective, Pershing was undeterred and in an enormously ballsy PR move declared the mission a great learning experience (and thus actually a success). Apparently, Texans ate that "learning experience" garbage up, since Pershing's expedition was greeted by large crowds and applause upon their rather un-victorious return to El Paso.

Battle of the Crater 1864

The Civil War was at a grind in 1864. In Petersburg, Virginia, both the Union and Confederate armies were entrenched amidst a stand-off. Union leaders had a somewhat brilliant idea: dig a long tunnel underneath the Confederate position, blow it up, then attack while the Confederate lines are in disarray. The first two thirds of the above plan went off without a hitch, until the Union tried to press its advantage and attack. First, it took almost fifteen minutes for the Union to mount its attack. Then the scaling ladders needed to climb out of their own trenches failed to materialise. But the real kicker was the attack itself. Instead of charging around the massive smoking crater, inexperienced Union troops jumped into it under the mistaken belief the crater offered good cover. By doing this, the union had graciously abandoned any advantage they might have had for a lower position than the enemy (generally a bad idea). The Confederates rallied and aimed their artillery at the massive hole in which the Union troops had put

themselves. Shooting fish in a barrel makes it sound more difficult than it was, and it was made even easier when the Union counter-attack failed to flank the Confederates . . . and took cover in the crater. Only about half of the 8,000 Union troops involved survived the battle unscathed. When all was said and done, both sides returned to their trenches and sat there for another eight months.

Bladensburg 1814

By now it should be obvious that the War of 1812 was comedy at its finest (minus all the deaths). The Battle of Bladensburg is the cherry on top of the American embarrassment sundae. In 1814, the British were looking to end this farce of a war and naturally laid eyes on the American capital of Washington, DC. As many recently-arrived British reinforcements were veterans of the Napoleonic Wars, Britain definitely possessed a significant troop-quality advantage. The Americans would have to beat them with numbers. American militia numbering 6,000 met 4,000 British veterans at Bladensburg just eight miles from DC, the British fired Congreve rockets—glorified fireworks—which scared the American troops who held firm just long enough to fire a couple of volleys before taking off running. And run they did. The US lost just ten or twelve men, but almost all of its pride. That night Washington burned, thanks to the American inability to delay the British advance by even a few hours. The hasty, disorganised American retreat has been called “the most humiliating episode in American history.”

Modern Weapons of War That Are Older Than You Think

Modern warfare grows more sophisticated by the day—we used to use swords and spears, now we use unmanned planes and robots. So, just in case you think all the deadliest weapons were created in the last 100 years or so, here are ten from the ancient world that I think you'll find a little familiar (even if the closest you've ever gotten to a battle is playing Call of Duty or Halo).

Land Mine

Land mines are explosive devices planted in the ground, and have been used in conflicts all over the world. During the Mongol invasion of China in the 13th century, Chinese inventors came up with the "Underground Sky Soaring Thunder", a land mine so terrifyingly titled, it's name alone should've been enough to force armies into retreat. Gunpowder mines were buried in the earth with banners, pikes, and lances stuck on top as bait. When enemies grabbed the weapons, they triggered a slow burning chemical mixture that fell over and ignited the fuses, creating a devastating explosion.

Naval Mine

Sure, Queen Elizabeth I had the opportunity to blow up ships when she received plans for a naval mine from Ralph Rabbards in the 16th century, but once again we must look to the trend-setting Chinese for the earliest use. In the Huolongjing, a Chinese military manual, the "Submarine Dragon King" is described in detail. The gunpowder mine was secured in an inflated ox bladder and the fuse laid inside a length of goat's intestine to keep it dry. At night, a soldier lit a stick of incense inside the intestine, and sent the mine floating downstream toward an enemy ship. If the timing was right, and the enemy didn't notice the floating pile of animal guts suspiciously heading in their direction, the incense ignited the fuse and caused an explosion just as the mine reached the ship's hull.

Hand Gun

Following the land and naval mines above, it should be no surprise that the Chinese were amongst the first to take advantage of gunpowder's explosive capabilities.

Fire Lance

The tenth century fire lance (or lightweight hand cannon) fired shrapnel at the enemy from a long bronze or iron tube small enough to be carried by a soldier. Though it could be argued this is more of a field artillery piece.

Poisonous Gas

Chemical weapons aren't a new idea, with arsenic and human feces laced incendiary bombs being deployed by the medieval Chinese. However, in the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta in the fifth century B.C., the Spartans besieging Plataea were the first to employ poison gas by soaking wood in a mixture of sulfur and pitch, lighting the wood on fire, and blowing the choking smoke under the city walls to either kill the defenders or force them to flee.

Tank
The Assyrians had armored siege engines in the ninth century B.C., and several ancient generals like Hannibal deployed war elephants on the battlefield, but leave it to the medieval Czech Republic—formerly known as Bohemia—to bring the tank into play. During his conflicts with the Imperial German Army and Pope Martin V, Jan Zizka, the famous 15th century general who appears on another list—bizarre uses for human skin—ordered his engineers to cover wagons with iron sheets. Crews in the horse drawn armored vehicles fired weapons through small holes in the sides. These tanks gave Ziska a tactical advantage, allowing his relatively small army of 25,000 to defeat much larger forces of 200,000 attackers.

Rocket
Self-propelled rockets predate WWII by a several centuries, beginning with the "Magic Fire Flying Crow." The Chinese ancestor of the rocket was invented in the 14th century: an incendiary device propelled through the air by four gunpowder-fueled rocket tubes attached to the feathered wings. Various warheads could be attached, including poisoned arrow tips, explosives or, if used at contemporary high schools, notes behind the teacher's back.

Hand Grenade
Grenades are a destructive weapon of war, but aren't a modern concept. Some of the earliest hand grenades were produced around the eighth century in Byzantium, and were made of ceramic, terra-cotta, or glass, and filled with highly flammable substances like the famous Greek fire. To use these hand held incendiary bombs—light the fuse, throw, then take cover while your foes scream and explode. This concept was echoed by Islamic engineers in the Middle East. By the thirteenth century, an egg shaped hand grenade fashioned from pottery was being produced in workshops in Syria.

Machine Gun
Before gunpowder and bullets, the closest the ancients came to guns were crossbows. Despite the usefulness of being able to kill your foe from a distance, crossbows had one drawback—they only fired one bolt at a time. The Chinese came up with the machine gun crossbow in the twelfth century, which could be aimed in any direction and fired approximately one bolt per second.

Torpedo
The self-propelled Whitehead or "automobile" torpedo, created in 1866 by American engineer Roger Whitehead, was an improvement on a model by Johannes Luppis in Austria, which used a compressed air system for propulsion. An even earlier example of the torpedo comes from a 13th century military manual by an Islamic engineer describing the "egg which moves itself and burns", which thankfully is not found in modern day kitchens. This was an incendiary torpedo, propelled by gunpowder rockets over the top of the water toward an enemy ship's hull.

Flamethrower

In the eighth century, the Byzantine Empire created a hand pumped hose that spewed Greek fire—a highly flammable liquid. The Chinese kicked it up a notch in the tenth century with a portable version that hurled a steady stream of naphtha-based flame (called fierce fiery oil) at the enemy. These were used most effectively in naval combat, but could also be used as offensive weapons by infantry soldiers or defensively against an advancing force. However, according to Thucydides, the Greeks did it first in the Peloponnesian War in 424 B.C. when they put a metal tube inside a hollow log with pitch, sulfur, naphtha, lit coals, and blew the flaming mixture at a city's wooden defensive walls in an effort to destroy them.

Sex Toys With Ridiculously Ancient Origins

Going strictly by popular culture, you'd be forgiven for thinking sex was invented sometime in the 1960s. Obviously our ancestors were getting it on long before that; Socrates invented Western thought while diddling little boys. But the '60s were when sex became fun, right? Wrong. Turns out historical men (and women) were light-years ahead of us in the pleasure department, thanks to inventions like:

Blow-up Dolls 1904

Lady substitutes are recorded as far back as the seventeenth century, when French sailors devised the Dame de Voyage: a collection of curvaceous rags that could only ever resemble a woman to a homesick Frenchman. But it wasn't until vulcanised rubber was patented that the more familiar model came about: in 1904, alchemist Rene Schwaeble recorded meeting a 'Dr. P.' in Paris, who built inflatable dolls for discerning gentlemen. Less than four years later, German sexologist Iwan Bloch was marvelling over mass-manufactured versions that could 'imitate ejaculation' on sale in Parisian catalogues. Creepiest of all though has to be the firm offering a custom doll resembling "any actual person, living or dead" – which has to be the single most disturbing tagline in the history of advertising.

Butt Plugs 1892

Frank E. Young was a man with a vision, and that vision involved things being inserted up other people's rectums. Developed in 1892 but not marketed until the turn of the century, his 'Rectal Dilator' was a terrifying 4 1/2-inches of pain designed to go where the stars never shine. Billed as a cure for piles, the devices were hawked to doctors and even advertised in respected journals. People might well have gone on believing they were medical devices too, were it not for the ridiculously suggestive instruction manual included with each order. For 40 years these Victorian butt plugs were sold across the United States, before falling foul of the 1938 Federal Food, Drugs and Cosmetics Act, which banned them for "false advertising".

The Vibrator 1869

The Victorian period was a different time. Britain ruled the world, robots were steam-powered, and doctors treated hysterical women by masturbating them. Wait, what? It's true: 'female hysteria' was a recognised illness, and its treatment involved a qualified medical professional rubbing the patient's private parts until orgasm was achieved. Because nothing about this practice could be logical, doctors often complained of boredom and wrist-ache; leading George Taylor to invent the first steam-powered vibrator. Although this version failed to catch on, the same can't be said of J. Granville's 1880 'electrochemical' design. Housewives went mad for them; even Good Housekeeping started running monthly reviews. So what happened? Well, society accepted the 'massager' so long as we could tell ourselves it was a medical, rather than sexual aid. When they began appearing in early porn films, husbands soon realised what their wives were up to and put a

stop to it. Because – as every man knows – the last thing you want is a sexually satisfied wife…

Condoms Around 1560

Did the ancients use condoms? Maybe: there's evidence to suggest people were wearing something, but whether or not it was for contraception, we'll never know. Going by a strictly modern definition, the first reliable record of their use doesn't appear until 1564.After the Black Death, Late Medieval man was walloped with an epidemic of syphilis. Not unreasonably, people began to yearn for a way of having sex again without the threat of death. Enter Gabriele Falloppio. His invention – a linen sheath soaked in chemicals and left to dry – may not sound like much, but boy did it work. In a trial that encompassed 1,100 volunteers, Falloppio reported not a single case of the 'French Disease'. What did Europe do to thank him for his life-saving invention? Named part of our reproductive organs after him.

The Penis Ring A.D. 1200

It wasn't easy being ancient Chinese nobility. Not only did you have to put up with assassination plots and Mongol invaders, you were also expected to service your wife, mistresses and concubines on a regular basis. It may sound like fun (and probably was), but there was an urgent reason behind it: if you didn't produce an heir, you could be pretty sure some obscure prince was going to step up. In such stressful circumstances, performing can become – well, difficult. Hence the penis ring. Made from the eyelids of a goat, with the eyelashes still intact, it helped the wearer get on with the business of impregnation for hours on end – even if he was secretly crying inside.

Geisha Balls A.D. 500

The origins of Geisha Balls are uncertain: all we know is that they appeared in the Orient sometime around A.D. 500 and were originally used to pleasure men. Women soon cottoned on to the benefits of the device, and the balls' popularity went supernova. Recorded across most Asian cultures, Geisha Balls (also known as Ben Wa Balls, Rin No Tama or Burmese Balls) were the Rampant Rabbit of their day; a toy that could heighten pleasure during sex, or simply facilitate some good old-fashioned self-pleasure.

Penis Enlargement Third Century A.D.

An 'Apadravyas' made of gold, ivory, silver or wood to "supplement (the penis's) length or its thickness". That's right: before the invention of porcelain (seventh century), the number zero (ninth century) or the fall of Rome, our ancestors had discovered the strap-on.

Lube, Ancient Greece

Given their reputation for enjoying orifices that don't naturally lubricate, it should come as no surprise that the Greeks were into their lube. While no record exists of its early use, we do know that by 350 B.C., olive oil was big business. In Aristotle's History of the Animals he makes passing reference to it, implying that smoother sex made pregnancy less likely. Two centuries later physician Soranus echoed his views; while Herodotus, Plutarch and Ovid all maintained that Athens

got its name when Athena gifted the founders an olive tree – because that's how much they loved olive oil.

The Dildo 23,000 B.C.

The dildo may well be humanity's most durable invention. Only fire, weapons, clothing and beads seem to have been around longer. Even agriculture is an infant compared to crafted lumps of stone and wood modelled on our junk; 13,000 years younger, to be precise. And that's only taking into account the ones we've found: the oldest known dildo (an eight inch stone behemoth discovered in Germany) dates back 26,000 years, but there's no reason to assume there aren't other, older models out there. Archaeologists find them all the time; it's almost as if people in the prehistoric era found sex a natural, enjoyable thing they didn't have to be ashamed of. Speaking of which…

Pornography 33,000 B.C.

A few years back, archaeologists uncovered a pervy prehistoric statue. Carved from mammoth tusk, it featured a female torso with, how shall I put this, 'exaggerated' sexual parts. Although its age is uncertain, the best guess places it at over 35,000 years old; which means it may even pre-date religion. Now, obviously the history of religion is largely guesswork and some argue it's much older than that, but still… the implication that we only sat down to figure out the meaning of life after we'd first solved "doing-it-yourself" may be the single most jaw-dropping case of prioritisation the universe will ever see.

Amazing Great Escapes That Really Happened

Fictional great escapes can rarely compete with those that happen in real life. Many lists have already covered escapes from prisons – and even though this list has one or two that corresponds with that sort, I decided to focus on other – perhaps more fascinating – true escape stories. Escapes from death, oppression and hunger – some are very well known, others less so, but they all have one thing in common: bravery. The bravery of men, women and sometimes even children has provided us with eloquent proof of man's passion for freedom, righteousness and the will to survive.

Crawling Towards Freedom

The Becker house stood directly on the border that separated East from West Berlin. Clara Becker, a widow, raised her six children to be hardworking and industrious. Their house was always overflowing with all the young people from the neighborhood. As the Berlin wall came up, their world closed in. Extra police were brought in from all over East Germany to man the border after some people managed to escape. Amid acute food-shortages and horrendous rumors, the Beckers knew they had to get out before it became too late. After an almost fatal escape-attempt, the Beckers and some of their friends decided to dig a tunnel to West Germany from the their own house. It took the diggers (working in shifts; teams of two with only hammers, shovels and pickaxes) three days just to get through the basement wall. Getting rid of the dirt in an old well, the teams faced daily uncertainty as they battled cave-ins and certain death if caught. On January 24th 1962, a band of 28 refugees finally managed to crawl into West Berlin and to freedom.

Saved By Wallpaper

Martin Kaylor was going home after serving as a gunner in the Korean War. After failing to understand the Korean villagers' warnings, his convoy was ambushed and Kaylor, wounded, was captured. It was snowing heavily when they were forced marched, limping, over icy mountain trails for 11 days. The Chinese indoctrination began. "Imperialism is bad", "We are treating you well", "Who is the aggressor in Korea?", "Why is the US the aggressor in Korea?" became staple parts of their daily lectures. The weeks turned into months, and many died of malnutrition and dysentery. After being moved again, the POW's finally realized that they were never going to be released. All 19 marines in the group sneaked off, and waded across the Imjin River – running for miles until a Korean man found them and hid them in a deserted house. They marveled at the wallpaper inside the house, as it was the first wallpaper they had seen in ages. It turned out that the wallpaper was to be their saving grace. They used strips of it to spell out "POW 19 RESCUE" in the nearby rice paddy; these words were spotted by an observer plane, and the men were rescued.

A Lifeline Called Comet

Countess Andrée de Jongh was a member of the Belgian Resistance during the Second World War. As a young girl, her heroine had been Edith Cavell, a nurse who was shot for helping troops cross from occupied Belgium to the

Netherlands. At the age of 21, de Jongh arrived in Bilbao, Spain, having travelled over the Pyrenees on foot. Upon arrival she requested British support for her escape network, The Comet Line, which helped Allied soldiers to return to Britain – her request was granted by M19. Starting in Brussels, the men would be given false documents before being hidden in safe-houses. A network of people then guided them via Spain and Gibraltar. Numbers vary, but we do know for a fact that the Countess helped more than 500 soldiers escape. She escorted 118 airmen over the Pyrenees herself!

Escape From Slavery

Harriet Tubman grew up in Maryland as a slave. As a young girl, she was severely beaten by her masters and at one point suffered a serious head wound which led to her having seizures, headaches and very powerful visions. A devout Christian, she believed her visions to be revelations from God. In 1849, after her master died, she was sent to work on a neighboring farm. Management was slack, and it took almost two weeks before it was realized that she never showed up for work. After being convinced to return to work, she escaped again shortly thereafter via the Underground Network (a network of safe-houses, run by anti-slavery activists).Harriet went to Philadelphia, but quickly returned to free her family. Traveling by night, she eventually guided dozens of other slaves to freedom. She became fondly known as "Moses", and it was said she never lost any of the charges under her wing. When the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was passed, she simply guided fugitives further up north to Canada where slavery was illegal.

Second Time's the Charm

Henri Honoré Giraud joined the French Army in 1900. During WW1 he was captured at the Battle of Guise and seriously wounded. After he recuperated, he escaped via the Netherlands and returned to France. Continuing his career, he served in Constantinople and Morocco, receiving the Legion d'Honneur. He was again taken prisoner on May 19, 1940 at Wassigny and transferred to Königstein Castle near Dresden, which was used as a high-security POW prison. It might seem impossible that he should escape again – he was already 61 – but he carefully planned his escape over the next two years. He perfected his German and memorized maps of the surrounding area. As he received many packages during his incarceration, friends were able to sneak him copper wire and material to make a rope. In April 1942, he lowered himself down the face of the mountain fortress and eventually made it back to France.

Airborne Stowaway

In June 1969, a young man made a mad dash for freedom from his homeland, Cuba. He ran towards a DC-8 plane headed to the US as it took off, got onto the landing gear and managed to make it into the compartment without being crushed. Statistics say that 50–70% of stowaways never make it, but 18 year old Armando Socarras Ramirez was one of the lucky few. After 8 hours at 30 000 feet, crew members were shocked to discover his comatose body – he was raced to hospital, where everyone assumed he would die. But after 24 hours, he recovered completely. Ramirez survived due to the fact that he was young and fit; that he had placed cotton in his ears to reduce the noise; and that he had tied

himself to the landing gear with a rope so that he wouldn't fall. Experts believe his body went into a type of hibernation which enabled him to survive the odds.

The Empty Mass Grave

After the bombing of Differdange, Luxembourg, 18 firemen and one woman stayed behind as the rest of the town fled. After two days of fighting, the French pulled back and the German tanks rolled in. At first, the Germans were civil towards the firefighters – after all, they came in quite handy by cleaning the debris, burying dead animals and even putting out a few fires. Two weeks later everything changed. The Germans were bombed by the French; in retaliation, the firemen were marched outside the building towards a mass grave. The Lieutenant felt sure that one of the firemen had sent a signal to the French. He asked his Corporal, Johan Punzel, to take over their custody until their execution. The prisoners pleaded with the Corporal, persuading him to re-investigate the claim against them. When he realized that they were innocent, he arranged for their escape via a truck. The departing prisoners wanted to give him their jewelry, but he wouldn't accept it. Luckily for Johan Punzel, the regiment were ordered to move again. In the chaos, it appears that the firemen were forgotten.

Napoleon's Escape from Elba

Napoleon Bonaparte is best remembered as a French political and military leader – actually, as one of the best military commanders of all time. Becoming First Consul in 1799 after a successful coup, he later crowned himself Emperor of the French. Some say he was so eager to be Emperor that he grabbed the crown from the pope at his inauguration – but this is heavily contested. His good fortune eventually came to an end, and after several failed military campaigns he was exiled to the island of Elba. In his 9 months on Elba, Napoleon was allowed to receive letters and newspapers; he also had several of his most loyal men with him. He watched with interest how disappointed the French people became as the great empire shrank – and he rightly concluded that his return would be met with enthusiasm. In February 1815, he sailed away from Elba under the cover of darkness. Since Elba is very close to France, he was back home in a matter of hours – landing at the Southern cast of France with roughly 1000 soldiers.

The PT-109 Incident

Blackett Strait – near the Solomon Islands – was extremely dark on the night of August 1, 1943. PT-109 was one of 15 "Patrol Torpedo" boats looking for Japanese vessels. After an unsuccessful skirmish earlier in the evening with Japanese Destroyers, Lieutenant Kennedy met up with two other PT-boats. Spreading out to form a line, they set up a patrol in case the enemy ships came back. Sailing into the path of a Destroyer with too little time to evade, the Kennedy's PT-109 was cut in half. With Japanese bases all around them, they decided to swim to Plum Pudding Island. The young Kennedy towed his badly burned mate by using a life-jacket strap. The island was very small, with no food or drinking water. Kennedy swam another 4km in search of help and food – later leading his men to Olasana island, where they found drinkable water and coconut trees. The other Americans, who had seen the explosion, assumed that all the men had died. The navy held a memorial service for them. But after six more days, the men were finally saved after being spotted by scouts – and the

strapping young Lieutenant Kennedy went on to become the 35th President of the United States.

Chilean Mining Accident

On the 5th of August in Chile, 33 miners were trapped 2300 ft (700m) underground after a huge cave-in. The miners tried to escape via the ventilation shafts, but there were no ladders; rescuers tried every entrance but all were blocked by rocks and debris. During their time in the mine, the miners lived in a tunnel with very limited food supplies. After 14 days, rescuers started sending supplies and letters from their loved ones via 5-foot-long plastic capsules. Steel rescue capsules were constructed by the Chilean Navy, incorporating NASA's designs and suggestions. These were eventually used to rescue the miners, 69 days after they were first trapped by the cave-in.

Deadliest World Events In Human History

Throughout human history, there have been many world events that have seen a multitude of deaths and widespread destruction. The ten entries on this list are ranked according to the number of deaths. While some of the events spanned just a few years, others occurred over centuries. Since these death toll estimates are always highly disputed, I have made it a rule to use the highest respectable estimate in every case. I have also chosen to focus this list on 'man-made' events – natural disasters have not been included.

American Slave Trade
Death Toll Estimate: 15 Million. The Trans-Atlantic slave trade began roughly in the 16th century, reaching its peak in the 17th century until finally being all but abolished in the 19th Century. The main driving force behind this trade was the need for Americans to establish themselves in the New World. American settlers therefore began to use mainly West African slaves to fill the vast labor needs on plantations. Estimates vary on the amount of slaves who died, but it is said that for every ten slaves taken on a ship, four would perish from causes related to mistreatment.

Late Yuan Warfare & Transition to Ming Dynasty
Death Toll Estimate: 30 Million. The Yuan dynasty was founded by Kublai Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan, around 1260. Yuan literally translates as 'Great is the Heavenly and Primal', though there proved to be nothing either great or heavenly about it. The dynasty turned out to be one of the shortest-lived in the history of China, covering just a century until it fell in 1368. Chaos reigned during the twilight years of the Yuan Dynasty, and the lands were marked by warring tribes, outlaws, political struggle, famine, and bitterness among the populace. After all this carnage, the Ming Dynasty took control. Their reign is described by some as "one of the greatest eras of orderly government and social stability in human history."

An Lushan Rebellion
Death Toll Estimate: 36 Million. Around 500 years before Yuan, the Tang Dynasty was in control of China. An Lushan – a general in the north of China – sought to take control, and declared himself emperor (creating the Yan Dynasty). The An Lushan rebellion lasted from 755 until 763, when the Yan Dynasty was finally defeated by the Tang empire. Medieval warfare was always a bloody affair – and this rebellion was no exception. Millions died and the Tang Dynasty never fully recovered.

Taiping Rebellion
Death Toll Estimate: 40 Million. Jump forward a thousand years and the Chinese are at it again – this time with some help from the French, the British, and some American mercenaries. In 1850, the Qing Dynasty is now in charge of China. They had suffered some major problems before the rebellion, with natural and economic disasters causing havoc – not to mention the Europeans bringing opium addiction to China. So up stepped Hong Xiuquan, who amongst other

things claimed to be the younger brother of Jesus Christ. Hong established the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom – and the carnage began. The Taiping Rebellion happened at roughly the same time as the American civil war, though the latter conflict proved to be far less bloody.

Great Chinese Famine

Death Toll Estimate: 43 Million. Another century later and we're now in a Communist-led China. The period 1958 to 1961 is also know as 'the great leap forward' – and it's a sombre lesson in what can happen when a government attempts to change a country too quickly. Although droughts and poor weather conditions led to the famine, the disaster can quite easily be seen as a consequence of the government's attempts to rapidly transform the country from an agrarian economy into a modern communist society. Chinese peasants describe this period as the 'three bitter years', which is something of an understatement. Several decades later the Chinese economy became the largest in the world – but at quite a price.

Soviet Crimes

Death Toll Estimate: 49 Million. Here is another example of a disaster caused by a country with a vast population trying to change its economic and social landscape in a very short period. Under the Soviet Union, from 1917 to 1953, millions of Russians died at the hands of revolution, civil war, famine, forced resettlement and other crimes. One man can take most of the blame: Joseph Stalin. His desire to build a new and better country at any cost – and to keep hold of the power he had gained – was a direct cause of the majority of casualties under Soviet rule. It is hard to fathom how, in 1948, he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Mongol Conquests

Death Toll Estimate: 60 Million. If there is one man who could be said to have more blood on his hands than anyone else in history, it is Genghis Khan. Under the leadership of Khan (and successors after his death), the Mongol empire grew into the largest land empire the world has ever seen – at its peak covering 16% of the Earth. The Mongol army swept across Asia, killing its rivals with great ferocity for the best part of two centuries. The death toll would certainly have been much higher if the Mongols had continued to progress west and into Europe. Aside from all the killing, it wasn't all bad under Mongol rule – with religious tolerance given to most faiths, as well as tax breaks for the poor.

World War 1

Death Toll Estimate: 65 Million. Although other wars had come close quite a few times, this was the first truly global war. The causes of the 'great war' are varied and rather complicated, but suffice it to say that in 1914 when the various European empires began to get too big for each other, they decided to form two vast alliances and fight it out for dominance. Europe became divided, and dragged the rest of the world into its rapidly widening sinkhole. Outdated warfare tactics were deadly to the soldiers involved: these young men would often be ordered to walk very slowly towards the opponent's machine-gun fire.

When the war finished in 1918, Europe and the world began to count the cost of so many lost lives. Most agreed that this madness could never happen again…

World War 2

Death Toll Estimate: 72 Million. Having taken a break from fighting for a few years, 'total war' broke out again in 1939. The two teams divided again into vast forces, and called themselves the Allies and the Axis. During the short break before the war, each country had decided to build some new killing machines – taking to the skies and to the sea, and developing more efficient land-based vehicles as well as automatic weapons their soldiers could now carry. And as if this wasn't enough, a certain country decided to build a very big bomb. The Allies eventually 'won' the war, though 85% of the death toll came from their side, with the Soviet Union and China seeing the greatest casualties. The majority of deaths also came outside of the combat zone, and can therefore be attributed to war crimes.

Colonization of the Americas

Death Toll Estimate: 100 Million. When Christopher Columbus, John Cabot and other explorers in the 15th century found a new continent, it must've seemed like the dawn of a new age. Here was a new paradise that adventurous Europeans could call their new home. There was, however, one problem: this land already had an indigenous population. Over the following centuries, the seafaring Europeans brought vast death tolls to what is now referred to as North and South America. Although war and invasion can account for a hefty chunk of these casualties, it was the natives' lack of immunity to European diseases that caused the most deaths. Some estimates state that 80% of the Native American population died as a result of contact with Europeans.

Cringeworthy Mistakes of American Presidents

One wrong step and you're on a slippery slope; everyone knows how it feels to make a mistake, but for US Presidents, instead of a few people staring at you, the whole world is looking on. Here are the top ten mistakes that US presidents have committed, together with the fallout of these mistakes:

The Lewinsky Affair: Bill Clinton
Charming and suave, Clinton met his Waterloo thanks to alleged sexual shenanigans with White House intern Monica Lewinsky. The scandal that followed allegations of sexual misconduct drew major reactions from the world over. His repeated denials of any misconduct only added to the outrage. It resulted in a vote to impeach him by the House of Representatives in 1998. The Senate did not vote to oust him from office but this incident left an indelible mark on his presidency.

Iran-Contra Scandal: Ronald Reagan
He broke international agreements and helped fund a revolution. He supplied weapons to Iran, breaking an arms embargo. Then he used the gains to fund a revolutionary group called Contras in Nicaragua on the sly, which was in violation of Borland Agreement. The uproar that followed this incident ended in major Congressional hearings. Reagan is a beloved former President but many still point to these events as a marker of a man willing to break the rules when it suited him.

Watergate: Richard Nixon
The Watergate scandal is one of the all-time biggest involving a serving US President. Watergate 'broke' when five men were caught while breaking into the Democratic National Headquarters located at the Watergate business complex, in 1972. An investigation into this break in – and the one at Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office (Ellsberg had published the secret Pentagon Papers) – revealed the cover up that Richard Nixon and his advisors had attempted. Nixon resigned on 9th August 1974, before he could be impeached.

Lyndon Johnson
LBJ's mistake lay in underestimating the Vietcong's tenacity and endurance, and also the lack of a firm, clear and suitable Vietnam War strategy. While US forces used more traditional tactics and were often ill-equipped for the terrain, the Viet Cong wreaked havoc by refusing to hold permanent positions; hiding, attacking then vanishing once again. Using this rather daring but effective tactic, a Third World nation was able to gain a substantial advantage over a leading military superpower.

Bay of Pigs Invasion: John F. Kennedy
The Bay of Pigs Invasion was a futile exercise by United States-backed Cuban exiles to overthrow the government of the Cuban dictator Fidel Castro. After the increased conflict between U.S. government and Castro's leftist regime led President Dwight D. Eisenhower to break off diplomatic relations with Cuba in

January 1961, the invasion plan was approved by Eisenhower's successor, John F. Kennedy. The US-backed forces suffered a decisive and clear defeat, causing strong embarrassment for the Kennedy Administration.

Teapot Dome Scandal: Warren. G. Harding

Rather than having to do directly with the President, this scandal merely occurred during his reign. Secretary of the Interior Albert B. Fall abused his power to give drilling rights for the Teapot Dome Reserve to the Mammoth Oil Company in return for bribes. When the scandal came to light in 1924, he had collected over $100,000 in kickbacks from the Mammoth Oil Company, among others. Although Harding had passed away in office before the scandal came to life, it became a topic of much discussion for years after his death and continues to haunt his now infamous legacy.

President Cleveland's Sex Scandal: Grover Cleveland

This was a juicy scandal that hit Grover Cleveland when he was running for the presidency in 1884. A woman named Maria C. Halpin, a widow with whom he had had a relationship, named him as the father to her son. On receiving the claim, he agreed to support the child and even agreed to place him in an orphanage when she was no longer in a position to raise him. He was open and honest about the entire episode, which surprisingly helped him in his election. The revelation of the issue gave birth to the chant "Ma, Ma, where's my Pa? Gone to the White House, ha, ha, ha!,"

The Eaton Affair: Andrew Jackson

Andrew Jackson served his term under plenty of scrutiny after it turned out his wife was still married. He had married her under the assumption that she was divorced. Another oft-forgotten episode is the scandal that occurred during his term as president. It began with the marriage of Jackson's secretary of war, John Henry Eaton, to recently widowed Margaret Timberlake, whose husband had committed suicide. The marriage had been the topic of much debate as it was rumored that Eaton's affair with Margaret had resulted in her husband's death. Though most of Jackson's cabinet turned against Eaton, Jackson supported him, and this issue led to such strife with almost the entire cabinet resigning.

Star Route Scandal: James Garfield

While it didn't implicate the president himself, James Garfield had to deal with the Star Route Scandal in 1881 during his six months as president before being assassinated. This scandal dealt with corruption in the postal service. Private organizations at the time were handling postal routes in the West of the US; they would give postal officials a low bid but when the officials would present these bids to Congress, the companies would ask for higher payments. Obviously, they were profiting from this state of affairs. Garfield dealt with this head on – despite many members of his own party benefiting from the corruption.

Jefferson's Slave Lover: Thomas Jefferson

In 1802, Jefferson was accused of having an intimate relationship with his slave, Sally Hemings. To top it off, he was also rumored to have had a child with her. He vehemently denied the allegations, and remained president for the next 7 years.

In the later years, DNA evidence pointed to the likelihood of Jefferson having fathered Hemings' children.

Ancient Inventions

I wanted to make a list that tells us about the history of some of the things in life that we take for granted. We all know who invented things like the telephone and the television, but we don't know when or how the staples of life were invented or discovered. So, here is a list of 10 things we take for granted and the history of their use. With the exception of one item (the wheel) the rest come to us from the Paleolithic era. This list is ordered from most recent to oldest.

The Wheel 5,000 BC
The Sumerian "Battle Standard of Ur" – Ca. 2600 BC. The wheel probably originated in ancient Sumer (modern Iraq) in the 5th millennium BC, originally in the function of potter's wheels. The wheel reached India and Pakistan with the Indus Valley Civilization in the 3rd millennium BCE. Near the northern side of the Caucasus several graves were found, in which since 3700 BC people had been buried on wagons or carts (both types). The earliest depiction of what may be a wheeled vehicle (here a wagon—four wheels, two axles), is on the Bronocice pot, a circa 3500 BC clay pot excavated in southern Poland. What is particularly interesting about the wheel, is that wheels only occur in nature in the microscopic form, so man's use of the wheel could not have been in mimicry of nature. It is worth noting, however, that the rolling motion of the wheel is seen in certain animals that manipulate their bodies into the shape of a ball and roll. The wheel reached Europe and India (the Indus Valley civilization) in the 4th millennium BC. In China, the wheel is certainly present with the adoption of the chariot in ca. 1200 BC.9. Twisted Rope 17,000 BC

Ancient Egyptian's Making Rope
The use of ropes for hunting, pulling, fastening, attaching, carrying, lifting, and climbing dates back to prehistoric times and has always been essential to mankind's technological progress. It is likely that the earliest "ropes" were naturally occurring lengths of plant fiber, such as vines, followed soon by the first attempts at twisting and braiding these strands together to form the first proper ropes in the modern sense of the word. Fossilised fragments of "probably two-ply laid rope of about 7 mm diameter" were found in Lascaux cave, dating to approximately 15,000 BC. The ancient Egyptians were probably the first civilization to develop special tools to make rope. Egyptian rope dates back to 4000 to 3500 B.C. and was generally made of water reed fibers. Other rope in antiquity was made from the fibers of date palms, flax, grass, papyrus, leather, or animal hair.

Musical Instruments 50,000 BC
Prehistoric Bone Flute. The first known music instruments were flutes. The flute appeared in different forms and locations around the world. A three-hole flute made from a mammoth tusk, (from the Geißenklösterle cave in the German Swabian Alb and dated to 30,000 to 37,000 years ago), and two flutes made from swans' bones excavated a decade earlier (from the same cave in Germany, dated to circa 36,000 years ago) are among the oldest known musical instruments. The flute has been dated to prehistoric times. A fragment of the femur of a juvenile cave bear, with two to four holes, found at Divje Babe in Slovenia and dated to

about 43,100 years ago, may also be an early flute. Some early flutes were made out of tibias (shin bones). Playable 9000-year-old Gudi (literally, "bone flute"), made from the wing bones of red-crowned cranes, with five to eight holes each, were excavated from a tomb in Jiahu in the Central Chinese province of Henan.

The Boat 60,000 BC

Fragments of a Log Boat. Archaeological evidence indicates that humans arrived on New Guinea at least 60,000 years ago, probably by sea from Southeast Asia during an ice age period when the sea was lower and distances between islands shorter. The ancestors of Australian Aborigines and New Guineans went across the Lombok Strait to Sahul by boat over 50,000 years ago. Evidence from ancient Egypt shows that the early Egyptians already knew how to assemble planks of wood into a watertight hull, using treenails to fasten them together, and pitch for caulking the seams. The "Khufu ship", a 43.6 m long vessel sealed into a pit in the Giza pyramid complex at the foot of the Great Pyramid of Giza in the Fourth Dynasty around 2,500 BC, is a full-size surviving example which may have fulfilled the symbolic function of a solar barque.

Pigments 400,000 BC

Cave Paintings in Zimbabwe. Naturally occurring pigments such as ochres and iron oxides have been used as colorants since prehistoric times. Archaeologists have uncovered evidence that early humans used paint for aesthetic purposes such as body decoration. Pigments and paint grinding equipment believed to be between 350,000 and 400,000 years old have been reported in a cave at Twin Rivers, near Lusaka, Zambia. Before the Industrial Revolution, the range of color available for art and decorative uses was technically limited. Most of the pigments in use were earth and mineral pigments, or pigments of biological origin. Pigments from unusual sources such as botanical materials, animal waste, insects, and mollusks were harvested and traded over long distances. Some colors were costly or impossible to mix with the range of pigments that were available. Blue and purple came to be associated with royalty because of their expense.

Spears 400,000 BC

Hunting Spear and Knife. Spear manufacture and use is also practiced by the Pan troglodytes verus subspecies of the Common Chimpanzee. This is the only known example of animals besides humans crafting and using deadly weapons. Chimpanzees near Kédougou, Senegal were observed to create spears by breaking straight limbs off of trees, stripping them of their bark and side branches, and sharpening one end with their teeth. They then used the weapons to hunt galagos sleeping in hollows. Archeological evidence documents that wooden spears were used for hunting 400,000 years ago. However, wood does not preserve well. Craig Stanford, a primatologist and professor of anthropology at the University of Southern California, has suggested that the discovery of spear use by chimpanzees probably means that early humans used wooden spears as well, perhaps five million years ago. By 250,000 years ago wooden spears were made with fire-hardened points. From 280,000 years ago humans began to make complex stone blades, which were used as spear points. By

50,000 years ago there was a revolution in human culture, leading to more complex hunting techniques.

Clothing 500,000 – 100,000 BC

Prehistoric Clothing. According to archaeologists and anthropologists, the earliest clothing probably consisted of fur, leather, leaves or grass, draped, wrapped or tied about the body for protection from the elements. Knowledge of such clothing remains inferential, since clothing materials deteriorate quickly compared to stone, bone, shell and metal artifacts. Archeologists have identified very early sewing needles of bone and ivory from about 30,000 BC, found near Kostenki, Russia, in 1988. Ralf Kittler, Manfred Kayser and Mark Stoneking, anthropologists at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, have conducted a genetic analysis of human body lice that indicates that they originated about 107,000 years ago. Since most humans have very sparse body hair, body lice require clothing to survive, so this suggests a surprisingly recent date for the invention of clothing. However, a second group of researchers used similar genetic methods to estimate that body lice originated about 540,000 years ago. Most information in this area has come from Neanderthal remains.

Housing 500,000 BC

Mockup of a Prehistoric Dwelling. Throughout history, primitive peoples have made use of caves for shelter, burial, or as religious sites. However, a recent find by archaeologists in Japan gives evidence of the building of huts dating back as far as 500,000 BC. The site (on a hillside at Chichibu, north of Tokyo,) has been dated to a time when Homo erectus lived in the region. It consists of what seem to be 10 post holes, which form two irregular pentagons thought to be the remains of two huts. Thirty stone tools were found scattered around the site.2. Fire 1,000,000 BC. The ability to control fire is one of humankind's great achievements. Fire making to generate heat and light made it possible for people to migrate to colder climates and enabled people to cook food — a key step in the fight against disease. Archaeology indicates that ancestors or relatives of modern humans might have controlled fire as early as 790,000 years ago. Some recent evidence may exist to demonstrate that man controlled fire from 1 to 1.8 million years ago (which would make it older than the knife below). By the Neolithic Revolution, during the introduction of grain based agriculture, people all over the world used fire as a tool in landscape management. These fires were typically controlled burns or "cool fires", as opposed to uncontrolled "hot fires" that damage the soil.

Knife 2,500,000 – 1,400,000

Olduwan Tool. The earliest knives were shaped by percussion flaking from rock, particularly water-worn creek cobbles made out of volcanic rock. During the Paleolithic era *Homo habilis* likely made similar tools out of wood, bone, and similar highly perishable material that has not survived. As recent as five thousand years ago, as advances in metallurgy progressed, stone, wood, and bone blades were gradually succeeded by copper, bronze, iron, and eventually steel. The very first stone tool assemblage in prehistory is called the Olduwan by anthropologists. Olduwan tool use is estimated to have begun about 2.5 million years ago, lasting to as late as 1.5 million years ago. It is suggested that its users

comprised a number of species of hominina ranging from Australopithecus to early Homo, and passing its loosely categorized tool tradition between more than one genus.