

# Nil Desperandum

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Never Alone



Picture Credit: [Recoloured] "Two old men eating their lunch" by Black Scratchy Lines is licensed under CC BY-ND 2.0

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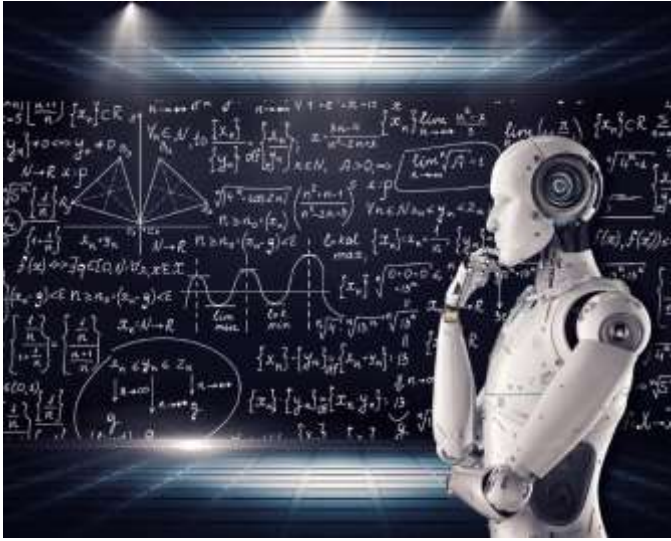
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## Appearing more intelligent than other people



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You don't have to know the entire works of Shakespeare or the square root of Pi to seem highly intelligent, said **Rebecca Burn-Callander**, Enterprise Editor of the Telegraph, in an article in February 2015. There is no fast-track route to wisdom but intelligence, defined as how we comprehend, analyse and respond to the world, is a far more malleable concept.

Scientists once claimed that intelligence quotient (IQ) levels were hereditary. It meant that human beings had no control over their brainpower; their genes decided it. However, scientific studies have shown that IQ scores are barely linked to genes at all. They can also be extremely volatile, changing significantly – by up to 20 points – over time.

The Telegraph scoured the writings of neuroscience experts, business leaders, technologists, and psychiatrists to find out how ordinary people can instantly boost their IQ levels by making small tweaks to the way that they comprehend the world.

The article has seven techniques but cannot make anyone appear well-read or replace life experience. They are:

- Distrust everything you hear
- Practice the modesty bias
- Look people in the eye
- Use your middle initial
- Become a night owl
- Surround yourself with smart people
- Keep schtum

Read more on the seven techniques [here](#).

**Michael Ealey** on Quora.com (in March 2021) set out a few characteristics he identified among those he considers to be highly intelligent. Here's a selection of some of them:

- **Qualifying language:** When an intelligent individual says something or makes a statement, it is unlikely to be expressed definitively.
- **Listening:** Within the dynamic of conversation, intelligence is often expressed in active listening rather than sharing information. Intelligence is highly correlated with the capacity for introspection.

- **Efficiency:** Intelligence allows for pre-planning and directing activity in an efficient manner. An emphasis on efficiency accomplishes the goal of the activity in a way that doesn't waste the time or resources of the intelligent person. Small talk or conversation about 'superficial' topics is avoided.
- **Humility:** The philosopher Socrates once said, 'I know that I know nothing'. This is the cornerstone of humility and a necessary characteristic of intelligent and wise people, although arguably, it is impossible to be truly intelligent without a complementary degree of wisdom.
- **The Thousand Yard Stare:** Many highly intelligent people are afflicted with what is known as 'low latent inhibition'; this describes the individual's relationship to the information their brain must process second-by-second.
- **Peripheral:** There's no getting away from it that highly intelligent people do not represent the majority of the wider population; they are often at the periphery of social groups not only due to a difference in their manner of communication, which may be confusing in its complexity for less intelligent individuals.
- **Incrementalism:** When the highly intelligent are looking to reify\* a particular goal or set of circumstances that may be to the detriment of others, they will be aware of the necessity of managing adverse reactions, via small, incremental steps.

\* Meaning of **Reify**: to convert into or regard as a concrete thing.

## A couple in their nineties...

A married couple in their nineties are both having problems in trying to remember things.

During a checkup, the doctor tells them that they're physically okay, but they might want to start writing things down to help them to remember things.

Later that night, while watching TV, the old man gets up from his chair. 'Want anything while I'm in the kitchen?' he asks.

'Will you get me a bowl of ice cream?'

'Sure..'

'Don't you think you should write it down so you can remember it?' she asks.

'No, I can remember it..'

'Well, I'd like some strawberries on top, too. Maybe you should really write it down, so as not to forget it?'

He says, 'I can remember that. You want a bowl of ice cream with strawberries.'

'I'd also like whipped cream. I'm certain you'll forget that, write it down?' she asks.

Irritated, he says, 'I don't need to write it down, I can remember it! Ice cream with strawberries and whipped cream - I got it, for goodness sake!'

Then he toddles off to the kitchen. After about 20 minutes, he returns from the kitchen and hands his wife a plate of bacon and eggs... She stares at the plate for a moment, then says,

'Where's my toast?'

## Serial Killers from Ancient History

Sources: • <https://www.ancient-origins.net/history-famous-people/10-ancient-serial-killers-foreshadowed-jack-ripper-009095> • <https://listverse.com/2017/06/21/top-10-horrifying-serial-killers-in-early-history/> • <https://medium.com/lessons-from-history/7-horrifying-serial-killers-from-ancient-history-4b63c2fc5d8e> • <https://www.britannica.com/list/7-of-historys-most-notorious-serial-killers> • [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_serial\\_killers\\_by\\_number\\_of\\_victims](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_serial_killers_by_number_of_victims)



Forgive the pun but let's kill a myth straight away - serial killers are not new. Before Jack the Ripper began his legendary killing spree in London in the 1800s, there is a long list of infamous serial killers. Nevertheless, let's start with **Jack the Ripper**: he made his first appearance in the Whitechapel district of London in 1888 and murdered five prostitutes and mutilated their corpses. Police suspected he was either a surgeon or butcher or someone skilled with a scalpel, but while many suspects have been named over the years, the killer was never identified.

Picture Credit: "Jack The Ripper I" by Boogeyman13 is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

A serial killer is typically a person who murders three or more people, in two or more separate events over a period of time for psychological reasons. The following are just a few of the nastiest and most prolific serial killers:

**Procrustes:** Procrustes ("the stretcher [who hammers out the metal]") is mentioned in Greek Mythology and is said to be the first serial killer. He was a rogue smith and bandit from Attica. Also known as Prokoptas or Damastes, he attacked people by stretching them or cutting off their legs, so that whether they were tall or short, they were forced to fit the size of an iron bed. So, you see where the word "Procrustean" came from - to describe situations where an arbitrary standard is used to measure success, while completely disregarding obvious harm that results from the effort.

**Liu Pengli:** Liu Pengli, a son of King Xiao of Liang in China, is probably the first recorded serial killer in history. It was widely known throughout the kingdom that Liu Pengli was a cruel and arrogant man. Also known as the Prince of Jidong, Liu Pengli was a 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC Han prince who thought that he had a license to kill (not 007). For more than two decades, the blood-thirsty Pengli would go on marauding expeditions with tens of slaves or young men who were in hiding from the law. Liu Pengli murdered over a hundred people in total, seizing their possessions for sheer sport, as recorded by Sima Qian in *Records of the Great Historian* (see [here](#)).

**Queen Anula of Anuradhapura:** Known as one of the biggest misandrists (man-hater) in Asian history, Queen Anula reigned from 47 to 42 BC and was the first queen in Sri Lankan history to have wielded so much power. Her reign was filled with secret love affairs, a series of murders, plenty of poison, and a very tragic end for the queen herself. Queen Anula of Sri Lanka poisoned her son and four husbands in her quest to become queen regnant, which she did for five years. But, her luck was to run out and end her gruesome reign. She was eventually overthrown and burned alive.

**Luis Garavito:** Child murderer, torture-killer, and rapist known as "La Bestia" ("The Beast"). He confessed to killing 140 boys between 8 and 16 years old over a seven-year period in Colombia and neighbouring countries. He is suspected of murdering over 300 victims, mostly street children. Originally sentenced to 1,853 years in prison, but later reduced to 22 years after he led police to many of the bodies of his victims, he is scheduled to be released in 2023.

**Locusta of Gaul:** She had the not-so-flattering title of the "first female serial killer in Western History" and lived in Rome more than 1,900 years ago. Described as being inventive, coldblooded, and extremely intelligent, Locusta was a knowledgeable botanist who used chemistry to give people heart attacks for fun and profit. It's said that she was behind the assassinations of Claudius and Britannicus. Following Nero's death, Locusta was executed by his successor, Galba.

**Alice Kyteler:** Medieval Europe was a time when more than 300,000 so-called witches were tortured, burnt, or hanged, but most were nothing but poor, innocent women, although that was definitely not the case for Alice Kyteler. A Norman noblewoman, Kyteler was prosecuted in the first modern witch trial in Britain in 1324 for the alleged poisoning of her four husbands, heresy, and witchcraft. Kyteler (aka "Sorceress of Kilkenny") was the first to be prosecuted in a modern witch trial for supposedly murdering her first three husbands by poisoning them and was in the process of slowly killing her last husband, Sir John le Poer. She was also accused of having a personal demon named Son of Art.

**Gilles de Rais:** Gilles de Rais was a knight and lord from Brittany, Anjou and Poitou, a leader in the French army, and a companion-in-arms of Joan of Arc. He had a very despicable and dark side that made him one of the very worst serial killers of all time. This serial killer confessed to torturing, raping, and murdering over 140 children from 1432 to 1440. He and several of his accomplices in the murders were hanged on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1440.

**Peter Stumpp:** In the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, Peter Stumpp, aka the Werewolf of Bedburg, was a wealthy farmer born in the village of Epprath near Cologne, who reportedly murdered and ate 14 children, including his son (whose brain he devoured) and two pregnant women. He was also accused of having a repulsive sexual relationship with his daughter. Proud to confess his crimes, Stumpp claimed that he had been given a magic belt by the Devil, which allowed him to transform into "the likeness of a greedy, strong and devouring wolf." In this form, he confessed to having gorged on the flesh of goats, sheep and men, women, and children. The execution of Stumpp on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1589 and of his daughter and mistress is one of the most brutal in history. Too gory to mention here.

**Peter Niers: Serial Killer and Cannibal from Nuremberg:** Peter Niers was a German serial killer and cannibal executed on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1581 in Neumarkt, a few miles outside Nuremberg. It was also believed that he was a powerful black magician with many supernatural abilities and his fame alone terrorised entire villages. Based on confessions extracted from him and his accomplices under torture, he was convicted of 544 murders, including 24 fetuses cut out of pregnant women—allegedly, the foetal remains were to be used in magic and for acts of cannibalism.

**Christman Genipperteinga:** Widely considered as the deadliest and worst serial killer in recorded history, this hideous monster is by far the sickest bandit of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. He was so proud of his crimes that he even kept a diary in which he detailed all the murders of not one, not two, but 964 individuals. In addition to this evidence he willingly admitted to the murders with a sense of superiority, adding that if he had reached his goal of a thousand victims, he would have been even happier. On 17<sup>th</sup> June 1581, he was condemned to death by the breaking wheel\*.

\* The breaking wheel (aka the execution wheel, the Catherine wheel or simply the Wheel) was a torture method used for public execution primarily in Europe from antiquity through the Middle Ages into the early modern period by breaking the bones of a criminal or bludgeoning them to death. Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Breaking\\_wheel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Breaking_wheel)



## Broadway: The American Musical

This selection is from a book with that title (pages: 91-92), by Laurence Maslon & Michael Kantor, published by Applause Theatre & Cinema Books, Copyright 2004, 2010, 2019.



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Fred Astaire and George Gershwin were seemingly made for each other's talent, and Fred's sister was a dynamic part of the equation:

*"The dancing partner who made Fred Astaire famous isn't the one most people remember. Fred, born in 1899, and his sister, Adele, a year his senior, were the children of an Austrian immigrant named Austerlitz who had settled in Omaha, Nebraska.*

*"Their mother had a notion that they should learn to dance, and so they journeyed east to New York in 1903 and began a long vaudeville career as a boy-and-girl specialty duo. The transition to adulthood was an awkward one for the Astaires; it was not until 1917 that their charm and dancing specialties reached a Broadway audience. They were featured in several revues from then on, and it was the gamine Adele, not her more serious and disciplined brother, who usually got the better notices. He didn't care; he'd rather spend his time crafting new numbers or innovative steps for them to master.*

*"One of the steps, incorporated into most of their shows, was the 'oompah trot,' or the runaround, where Adele and Fred, side by side, would ape riding in huge circles on an imaginary bicycle. Audiences went wild for this particular antic, especially in London, where the bright-eyed, exuberant Americans were welcomed even more enthusiastically than in their own country.*

*"Fred had known George Gershwin since 1916, when he went to the composer looking for a vaudeville number. They had vowed they'd work together someday; that day came on December 1, 1924, when the Astaires headlined George and Ira's first full-length New York musical, Lady, Be Good! Playing a brother-and-sister dance team down on their luck, the Astaires had found the perfect vehicle for their talents. George not only provided them with some of their best tunes, he suggested a couple of dance steps to help Fred with the ending for 'The Half of It, Dearie, Blues.' Fred got his first solo, while the romantic end of things was held down by his sister and the leading man. It proved to be such a felicitous match that critic Alexander Woollcott later wrote, 'I do not know whether Gershwin was born into this world to write rhythms for Fred Astaire's feet or whether Fred Astaire was born into this world to show how the Gershwin music should really be danced.'*

*"The Astaires followed up that success with another Gershwin smash, Funny Face (1927), where Adele got to introduce 'S Wonderful.' When the show made its inevitable visit to London, Adele met a stage-door Johnnie from the B-list of the British aristocracy and was soon engaged to be married. Mindful of her incipient retirement from the stage, the duo made sure their 1931 appearance in The Band Wagon would be an appropriate finale to their partnership."*

### Comment from Martin Pollins

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## HM Airship R101

Source: • <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/building/palace/westminsterhall/contemporary-context/lyings-in-state/what-was-r101/>

• <https://www.airships.net/blog/british-airship-r101-crashes-killing-48-day-1930/>

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### The Launch

In the 1920s, the answer to long-distance air travel was seen to be the rigid airship rather than the aeroplane as, at that time, the latter could only carry a few passengers over relatively short distances in daylight.

The British Government launched the Imperial Airship Scheme in 1924 and commissioned two prototype airships to carry out trial flights to Canada and India as the precursor to the establishment of regular airship services across the British Empire.

The R100 was built by a subsidiary of Vickers Ltd at Howden, in Yorkshire, and was designed by Dr (later Sir) Barnes Wallis. The R101 was designed and built at the state-owned Royal Airship Works at Cardington, Bedfordshire. The R100 first flew on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1929 when it transferred to Cardington. The R101 had flown two months earlier on 14<sup>th</sup> October 1929.

Passenger accommodation was provided inside the hull of the R101 with two-berth cabins, a lounge, dining room, smoking room and promenade decks. However, neither airship could achieve the original requirement to carry 100 passengers and this was soon reduced to 50. Both airships were inflated with hydrogen, as helium was not then available in Britain.

### The Crash

On 5<sup>th</sup> October 1930, the British airship R 101 crashed on a hill in Beauvais, France. The impact was gentle and survivable but the ship was inflated with hydrogen, and the resulting fire killed 46 of the passengers and crew. Two additional crew members died of their injuries soon after.

### The Disaster\*

The crash of R.101 was predictable and — more tragically — probably avoidable; the ship was doomed by mechanical problems that could have been repaired and operational mistakes that could have been avoided. R.101 was paid for by Parliament, built by a government agency, and controlled by the Air Ministry, and in an attempt to compete with the privately-built R.100 (which had just successfully crossed the Atlantic) and the German Graf Zeppelin (which had just successfully flown around the world), and to fulfil personal ambitions of the Air Minister (Lord Thomson), the government dispatched R.101 on a flight to India for which the ship was simply not prepared.

\* Source acknowledged: <https://www.airships.net/blog/british-airship-r101-crashes-killing-48-day-1930/>

### Top Job: Prime Minister of Britain

Sources: • <https://www.gov.uk/government/ministers/prime-minister> • <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/Prime-Ministers-of-Britain/>  
• [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_prime\\_ministers\\_of\\_the\\_United\\_Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_prime_ministers_of_the_United_Kingdom)  
• <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmbills/060/2002060.pdf>  
• [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prime\\_Minister\\_of\\_the\\_United\\_Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_the_United_Kingdom)  
• [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whigs\\_\(British\\_political\\_party\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whigs_(British_political_party))



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The Prime Minister is the leader of HM Government and is ultimately responsible for the policy and decisions of the government. The Prime Minister also oversees the operation of the Civil Service and government agencies,

chooses ministers and is the principal government figure in the House of Commons. The origins of the position are found in constitutional changes that occurred during the *Revolutionary Settlement* (1688–1720) and the resulting shift of political power from the Sovereign to Parliament. Although the sovereign was not stripped of the ancient prerogative powers and legally remained the head of government, politically, it gradually became necessary for them to govern through a Prime Minister who could command a majority in Parliament.

Sir Robert Walpole led the government of Great Britain for over twenty years from 1721 as the first Prime Minister, although that title was not used until much later (1905). He is also the longest-serving British Prime Minister. The holders of the office of Prime Minister since 1721 are listed below with a short note about their premiership:

- ❖ **1721-42:** Sir Robert Walpole – restored confidence in the country after the 1720 South Sea Bubble financial crash and dominated the political scene during the reigns of George I/George II. Walpole resigned due to his perceived mishandling in dealing with the *War of Jenkins' Ear*.
- ❖ **1742-43:** Earl of Wilmington – unwell for most of the time, he died in office.
- ❖ **1743-54:** Henry Pelham – also died in office, but after overseeing the British involvement in the War of the Austrian Succession in 1744-48, the 1745 Jacobite Rising and the adoption of the Gregorian calendar.
- ❖ **1754-56:** Thomas Pelham-Holles, Duke of Newcastle – became Prime Minister just ten days after the death of his brother Henry Pelham. While in office, he was blamed for losing Minorca.
- ❖ **1756-57:** William Cavendish, Duke of Devonshire – the government was effectively controlled by Pitt the Elder, Devonshire's administration was ended after Pitt was dismissed by the king.
- ❖ **1757-62:** Thomas Pelham-Holles, Duke of Newcastle – in his second term (with Pitt the Elder as Southern Secretary), his government helped steer Britain to ultimate victory over France and Spain in the Seven Years' War.
- ❖ **1762-63:** John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute – the first Scot to hold the top office, he was not popular (e.g. his cider tax) and resigned from office.
- ❖ **1763-65:** George Grenville – the Stamp Act of 1765 imposed a direct tax on British colonies and plantations in America, igniting the American War of Independence.
- ❖ **1765-66:** Charles Watson-Wentworth, 2nd Marquess of Rockingham – the unenforceable Stamp Act was repealed, and Bute's cider tax was scrapped.
- ❖ **1766-68:** William Pitt 'The Elder', 1st Earl of Chatham (aka the 'Great Commoner') – credited with creating the British Empire. Although only Prime Minister for two years, he dominated British politics in the mid-18th century.
- ❖ **1768-70:** Augustus Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Grafton – gained office after Pitt fell ill, he attempted to restore friendly relations with the American colonies.
- ❖ **1770-82:** Lord Fredrick North – he led Great Britain into the American War of Independence (1775) and was blamed for Britain's subsequent defeat.
- ❖ **1782:** Charles Watson-Wentworth, 2nd Marquess of Rockingham – in his short second term in office (he died after three months), Britain acknowledged the independence of the United States.
- ❖ **1782-83:** William Petty, 2nd Earl of Shelburne – he was Britain's first Irish-born Prime Minister, a former general he was in office at the time of the Treaty of Paris, which officially ended the American War of Independence.
- ❖ **1783:** William Cavendish-Bentinck, 3rd Duke of Portland – headed the coalition government of Lord North's Tories and Charles James Fox's opposition Whigs.
- ❖ **1783-1801:** William Pitt 'The Younger' (the son of Pitt the Elder – at 24, he became the youngest ever Prime Minister. His achievements helped define the modern role of the office, including introducing the first income tax.
- ❖ **1801-04:** Henry Addington, 1st Viscount Sidmouth – the Treaty of Amiens in 1802 temporarily halted the hostilities between the French Republic and Great Britain, but the fragile truce ended in May 1803 when Britain again declared war on France.

- ❖ **1804-06:** William Pitt the Younger – following the outbreak of war with France, Pitt was returned to govern for a second term but died in office aged 46.
- ❖ **1806-07:** William Wyndham Grenville, 1st Baron Grenville – he abolished the slave trade in the British Empire but, unable to control the coalition, he resigned.
- ❖ **1807-09:** William Cavendish-Bentinck, 3rd Duke of Portland – despite his age and poor health, he served for the second time amidst disputes and died after only 23 days.
- ❖ **1809-12:** Spencer Perceval – faced with economic depression at home and the threat of Napoleon in Europe, his administration was divided and repressive. He was the only British Prime Minister to be assassinated (he was shot in the lobby of the House of Commons by a bankrupt who blamed the government for his misfortune).
- ❖ **1812-27:** Robert Banks Jenkinson, 2nd Earl of Liverpool – after Perceval's assassination, he formed a new government. Following victory in the Napoleonic Wars, he helped guide the country through radicalism and unrest, including the *Peterloo Massacre*.
- ❖ **1827:** George Canning – to date, he was the shortest-serving Prime Minister. Canning died from pneumonia, barely five months after assuming office.
- ❖ **1827-28:** Fredrick John Robinson, Viscount Goderich – lacking support to maintain the frail coalition of Canningite Tories and aristocratic Whigs, he resigned after less than five months in office.
- ❖ **1828-30:** Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington – he was the second Irish-born Prime Minister and second veteran general, perhaps more famous as a soldier of the Napoleonic Wars than a politician. He introduced the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829, but resigned after a vote of no confidence.
- ❖ **1830-34:** Charles Grey, 2nd Earl Grey – the only Prime Minister with a blend of tea named after him. Credited with the 1832 Great Reform Act (the process of electoral change we have today). He resigned after disagreements over his Irish policies.
- ❖ **1834:** William Lamb, 2nd Viscount Melbourne – 'famous' for being the last Prime Minister to be dismissed by a Sovereign, King William IV.
- ❖ **1834-35:** Sir Robert Peel 2nd Baronet – At the second time of asking, Peel accepted King William IV's invitation to form a government, albeit a minority government, but resigned following a number of defeats in Parliament.
- ❖ **1835-41:** William Lamb, 2nd Viscount Melbourne – returning to office for the second time, Melbourne found the new Queen Victoria much more agreeable than William IV. He resigned after a series of parliamentary defeats.
- ❖ **1841-46:** Sir Robert Peel, 2nd Baronet – Returning to office for the second time, Peel introduced important employment laws banning women and children from working underground in mines. In addition, The Factory Act of 1844 limited the hours of work for children and women. Unable to feed a starving Ireland, he finally succeeded in repealing the Corn Laws.
- ❖ **1846-52:** Lord John Russell, 1st Earl Russell – he was the last Whig Prime Minister. His Public Health Act of 1848 improved the sanitary conditions of towns and cities.
- ❖ **1852:** Edward Smith Stanley, 14th Earl of Derby – considered by many to be the father of the modern Conservative party, his government collapsed when the budget of his Chancellor, Benjamin Disraeli, was rejected by the House.
- ❖ **1852-55:** George Hamilton Gordon, Earl of Aberdeen – his government was dominated by a war with Russia. He resigned after losing a vote of confidence into his handling of the Crimean War.
- ❖ **1855-58:** Henry John Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston – an Irish peer, his India Bill of 1858 transferred control of the East India Company to the Crown.
- ❖ **1858-59:** Edward Smith Stanley, 14th Earl of Derby – returning to office for the second time, his Jews Relief Act of 1858, removed barriers to Jews entering Parliament.
- ❖ **1859-65:** Henry John Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston – returning to office for the second time, his premiership was dominated by the American Civil War and the resulting suffering caused by the *Lancashire Cotton Famine*. He died in office.
- ❖ **1865-66:** Lord John Russell, 1st Earl Russell – Returned to office for the second time, after the untimely death of the previous incumbent.
- ❖ **1866-68:** Edward Smith Stanley, 14th Earl of Derby – back again for the third and final time, his 1867 Reform Act doubled the number of adult males that could vote.
- ❖ **1868:** Benjamin Disraeli – only ten years after the barriers to Jews entering Parliament had been removed, Britain had its first, and so far only, Jewish leader.
- ❖ **1868-74:** William Ewart Gladstone – Gladstone led the greatest reforming administrations of the 19th century with policies intended to improve individual liberty. His defeat at the 1874 general election allowed Disraeli to succeed him.
- ❖ **1874-80:** Benjamin Disraeli, the Earl of Beaconsfield – returned to office for the second time at the age of 70. His policies introduced a large amount of social legislation, including providing housing for the poor and improved sanitation.
- ❖ **1880-85:** William Ewart Gladstone – Gladstone's second administration suffered several setbacks in foreign policy, including a humiliating defeat in the First Boer War and failure to rescue General Gordon in Sudan.
- ❖ **1885-86:** Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, 3rd Marquess of Salisbury – Salisbury became leader of the Conservative party following the death of Disraeli in 1881, he reluctantly became Prime Minister and formed a minority government.
- ❖ **1886:** William Ewart Gladstone – back again, now aged 76, Gladstone's Home Rule Bill for Ireland split the Liberal Party.
- ❖ **1886-92:** Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, 3rd Marquess of Salisbury – With the split in the Liberal Party, Salisbury attempted to contain the Irish problem by a combination of firm government and reform.

- ❖ **1892-94:** William Ewart Gladstone – he returned to office for a fourth term and once again introduced the Irish Home Rule Bill. Although passed by the House of Commons, the bill was rejected by the Lords. Gladstone resigned for the fourth and last time.
- ❖ **1894-95:** Archibald Primrose, 5th Earl of Rosebery – after a short administration plagued by Cabinet disputes, he resigned having achieved his life's three ambitions: to marry an heiress, own a Derby winning horse and to be Prime Minister.
- ❖ **1895-1902:** Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, 3rd Marquess of Salisbury – returned to office for the third and final time. During his tenure, the Boer War broke out in 1899, ending in 1902. He retired in favour of his nephew Balfour.
- ❖ **1902-05:** Arthur James Balfour – his Education Act of 1902 standardised the educational system of England and Wales, handing powers from school boards to Local Education Authorities (LEAs). His cabinet split over free trade policies.
- ❖ **1905-08:** Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman – Glasgow born Bannerman was the first in the top job to be given the official title of '*Prime Minister*'. Outspoken about the 'barbarities' of the Boer War, he restored independence to the Transvaal and Orange Free State in South Africa.
- ❖ **1908-15:** Herbert Henry Asquith – was appointed after Bannerman resigned. The 1908 Old Age Pension Act laid the foundation of the modern welfare state, followed by the National Insurance Act of 1911, providing an income for working people suffering illness or unemployment. He also led Britain into the First World War.
- ❖ **1915-16:** Herbert Henry Asquith – to gain maximum support for the war, Asquith formed a coalition government. The conflict however, was not going well, and with deadlock in the trenches, Asquith resigned.
- ❖ **1916-22:** David Lloyd George – The only Prime Minister to have spoken Welsh as his first language, Lloyd George formed a government following the resignation of fellow Liberal, Asquith. He was widely touted as the man who had won the war. The Anglo-Irish Treaty led to the establishment of the Irish Free State. The public outcry that followed his 'cash for honours' scandal saw him ousted from power.
- ❖ **1922-23:** Andrew Bonar Law – After Lloyd George had been removed from office by the Conservative members of his cabinet, the king invited the Canadian-born Bonar Law to form a new government. He lasted just 209 days in office before resigning due to ill health and died just six months later.
- ❖ **1923-24:** Stanley Baldwin – just a few months into office, and much to the surprise of all around him, Baldwin called an early general election over protectionist trade tariffs. The policy attempted to resolve Britain's economic problems, but it let the Labour party into power for the first time.
- ❖ **1924:** James Ramsay MacDonald – he was the first Labour Prime Minister and came from a Scottish working-class background. As head of a minority government, he was reliant on the support of the Liberals, in frustration over which, he called an early election.
- ❖ **1924-29:** Stanley Baldwin – In his second term in office, Baldwin was responsible for the right to vote for women aged over 21. He invited Winston Churchill, who at that time was a Liberal MP, to be his Chancellor of the Exchequer. He successfully steered the country through the difficulties of the 1926 General Strike.
- ❖ **1929-31:** Ramsey MacDonald – in his second minority government, MacDonald appointed the first female minister, Margaret Bondfield. Just a few months into his term, however, the world was shaken by the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the Great Depression that followed.
- ❖ **1931-35:** Ramsey MacDonald – with his Labour government divided on how to resolve an economic crisis, MacDonald resigned but was reappointed at the head of a national coalition government (with support from the Conservative and Liberal parties), but he lost the support of his own party and he once again resigned.
- ❖ **1935-37:** Stanley Baldwin – he returned to office for the third time and steered the country through the abdication of King Edward VIII in 1936. Recognising the threat of Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany, Baldwin started a rearmament programme but was later criticised for not doing more to prepare for war.
- ❖ **1937-40:** Neville Chamberlain – when Baldwin retired after George VI's coronation, Chamberlain became party leader. Famously returning from a 1938 meeting with Adolf Hitler, he declared, "*I believe it is peace for our time*", but after Germany invaded Poland on 1st September 1939, Chamberlain declared war on Germany two days later.
- ❖ **1940-45:** Sir Winston Churchill – following Chamberlain's resignation, Churchill was appointed as Prime Minister of an all-party coalition government. The speeches he made and the subsequent military alliances he formed with the USA and Soviet Union steered the Allies to victory in World War II. But Churchill was surprisingly defeated in the 1945 General Election.
- ❖ **1945-51:** Clement Attlee – after leading Labour to a landslide victory against Churchill, Attlee quickly implemented his party's manifesto pledges. Despite Britain's near bankruptcy after the war, he managed the creation of the National Health Service in 1946. Many of Britain's largest industries, such as coal mining (1946), electricity (1947) and the railways (1947), were brought under state control.
- ❖ **1951-55:** Sir Winston Churchill – his failing health greatly influenced Churchill's second term in office. In matters abroad, the developing Cold War led him to authorise the manufacture of the British hydrogen bomb in 1955, but later that year, his deteriorating health forced him to resign, making way for Anthony Eden.
- ❖ **1955-57:** Sir Anthony Eden – as Prime Minister, Eden immediately called a general election and increased the Conservative majority. His success was to be short-lived - Eden is best known for his controversial handling of the Suez crisis in 1956, over which he eventually resigned.
- ❖ **1957-63:** Harold Macmillan – following Eden's resignation, Macmillan emerged from the wreckage of the Suez crisis to lead the Conservative party and the country. Macmillan quickly restored the nation's confidence/fortunes and claimed that the British public had "never had it so good". He helped to negotiate the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and speeded up the decolonisation of the British Empire. By the end of his term, Britain's economy was faltering, and he resigned after a series of scandals.
- ❖ **1963-64:** Sir Alec Douglas-Home – after Macmillan's sudden resignation, Douglas-Home emerged as the new leader of the Conservative party. As Prime Minister for just 363 days, he holds the record of serving the second shortest premiership of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- ❖ **1964-70:** Harold Wilson – winning the October 1964 election with a majority of just four, he planned to modernise the country, aided by the "white heat of the technological revolution". His government introduced liberalising laws in the fields of capital punishment, abortion, homosexuality and divorce. But the powerful trade unions refused to be controlled, resulting in a rise in unemployment and inflation.
- ❖ **1970-74:** Edward Heath – Heath's premiership was one of the most problematic and controversial in recent history. It was a period of great industrial upheaval and economic decline. He led Britain into the European Common Market, but his attempts to weaken the power of the trade unions failed.
- ❖ **1974-76:** Harold Wilson - in his second term in office, income tax and surtax on top earners increased to 98% and unemployment reached 1 million. By early 1976, Britain's economic situation needed a loan from the International Monetary Fund. Just five days after his 60th birthday, Wilson resigned.
- ❖ **1976-79:** James Callaghan – with inflation running at 17% and 1.5 million unemployed, Callaghan made the controversial decision to ask the IMF for an emergency loan. In return for \$3.9 billion of credits, he attempted to impose tighter monetary control through wage restrictions for public sector workers. The unions' reaction to this was a wave of strikes - the winter of 1978-9 became known as the 'Winter of Discontent'. Callaghan failed to win a vote of 'no confidence'.
- ❖ **1979-90:** Margaret Thatcher – The industrial unrest brought about by the 'Winter of Discontent' saw Mrs Thatcher elected the first female British Prime Minister. Branded the 'Iron Lady', the defining moment of her premiership came in April 1982, when she led the country to war against Argentina in the Falkland Islands. The successful outcome of the campaign transformed her standing in the opinion polls.
- ❖ **1990-97:** John Major – After spending billions trying to protect membership of the Exchange Rate Mechanism, his premiership would go on to see the UK's longest period of continuous economic growth. His government started talks with the IRA, seeking a peaceful end to the Troubles in Northern Ireland.
- ❖ **1997-2007:** Tony Blair – as Labour's longest-serving Prime Minister, his government oversaw the Northern Ireland peace process. The Good Friday Agreement (10<sup>th</sup> April 1998) helped to end a period of conflict in the region known as the Troubles. His legacy on foreign affairs is more controversial.
- ❖ **2007-10:** Gordon Brown – became Prime Minister after Tony Blair left office. He was called upon to steer the country through the worldwide financial crisis of 2008. At the G20 Summit in 2009, he persuaded world leaders to make available \$1.1 trillion to help the world economy through the crisis.
- ❖ **2010-15:** David Cameron – he headed Britain's first coalition government since World War II, with the Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg as his deputy prime minister. He is the youngest Prime Minister since Lord Liverpool in 1812. During his time as Prime Minister, he would oversee three national referendums. The first, in 2011, asked whether the traditional method of electing MPs should be changed. The second, in 2014, asked whether Scotland should be an independent country. Cameron campaigned for Scotland to remain part of the UK, which he won.
- ❖ **2015-16:** David Cameron – the third referendum under David Cameron's premiership concerned Britain's continuing membership of the European Union (EU). He led the campaign to remain in the EU, but in June 2016, Britons voted to leave. Following this defeat, he resigned as prime minister and leader of the Conservative Party.
- ❖ **2016-19:** Theresa May – after David Cameron resigned, May was elected leader of the Conservative Party and became the UK's second female Prime Minister. In March 2017, she started the process of withdrawing the UK from the EU. Just one month later, she called a snap election, resulting in a hung parliament. During her premiership, unemployment in the UK fell to record lows. After draft versions of her EU withdrawal agreement were rejected on three occasions, she resigned.
- ❖ **2019-19:** (Alexander) Boris Johnson – Following the resignation of Theresa May, Johnson was elected leader of the Conservative Party and appointed prime minister. With no working majority in parliament and with many members of his own party opposing his hardline Brexit stance, Johnson was forced to call a general election.
- ❖ **2019 to date:** Boris Johnson – in apparent approval of Johnson's firm stance on Brexit, the Conservative Party won the December 2019 election with a parliamentary majority of 80 seats. After 47 years of membership, the UK left the EU on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020. Still in office in 2022, *Partygate* may yet cause his downfall.

**Recommended Reading:** *The Impossible Office: The History of the British Prime Minister*, by Anthony Seldon, Jonathan Meakin, et al, published by Cambridge University Press (1<sup>st</sup> April 2021)



## 24<sup>th</sup> March 1603: the passing of Queen Elizabeth 1



John Manningham was an English lawyer and diarist who wrote an especially moving entry in his diary\* on the passing at age 69 of Queen Elizabeth I.

The daughter of King Henry VIII and the last of the Tudor monarchs, Elizabeth had ruled England and Ireland from 1558.

\* Manninham's diary is at the British Museum.

Picture Credit: "Tate Britain-Queen Elizabeth I" by Context Travel is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

"March 24, 1603. This morning about three at clocke hir Majestie departed this lyfe, mildly like a lambe, easily like a ripe apple from the tree. Dr Parry told me that he was present, and sent his prayers before hir soule; and I doubt not but she is amongst the royall saintz in Heaven in eternall joyes.

"About ten at clocke the Counsel and diverse noblemen having bin a while in consultacion, proclaymed James the 6, King of Scots, the King of England, Fraunce, and Irland, beginning at Whitehall gates; where Sir Robert Cecile reade the proclamacion and after reade againe in Cheapside.

"The proclamacion was heard with greate expectacion and silent joye, noe greate shouting. I thinke the sorrowe for hir Majesties departure was soe deep in many hearts they could not soe suddenly shewe anie greate joy, though it could not be lesse than exceeding greate for the succession of soe worthy a king. And at night they shewed it by bonefires, and ringing. Noe tumult, noe contradicion, noe disorder in the city; every man went about his business, as readylie, as peaceably, as securely, as though there had bin noe change, nor any newes ever heard of competitors. God be thanked, our king hath his right!"

Source: <https://www.onthisday.com/articles/john-manningham-notes-the-passing-of-queen-elizabeth-i>

## From Sex to Sardines: supercharging your midlife brain

Excerpted from: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/health-fitness/mind/sex-sardines-six-ways-supercharge-midlife-brain-according-science/>



Unlaid Stock

Picture Credit: "turn your brain on" by khalid Albaih is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

According to James Goodwin, a professor of physiology at Loughborough University, the former chief scientist at Age UK, and a director of the Brain Network, the scientific dogma that our brain cells decline with age, resulting in those moments where you can't remember what you went upstairs for, is now being challenged by experts.\*

Science now shows us that not only are we able to protect our brains from the ageing process, but we can continue to grow new brain cells throughout our entire life. According to Prof Goodwin you can do all this with a few easy lifestyle tweaks, which he explains in his book, *Supercharge Your Brain*. While the brain is our most vital organ, few of us understand how to keep it healthy in the way we know how to anti-age our bones or hearts.

\* As reported by Maria Lally in the Telegraph on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Here are six ways to supercharge your brain:

1. Watch less TV – and move every day.
2. Talk to people as much as possible: Belonging to and investing in a social support network rejuvenates your brain and provides you with more energy and inspiration, increasing your security, self-worth, sense of belonging, and even reducing your stress levels\*\*.
3. Vary your diet - Eat more omega 3 with grass- (not grain) fed beef, and cold-water fatty fish like sardine and salmon. Or a teaspoon of cod liver oil every day. Almonds are good for you too.
4. Practise hara hachi bu (a Japanese term meaning "Eat until you're 80% full").
5. Have regular, loving, sex: it's been proven to cure headaches, reduce stress levels, help you sleep better, increase blood flow to your brain, and increase your brainpower in general.
6. Learn a new skill: taking up a creative hobby (such as DIY, writing, painting, or woodworking) with no pressures, deadlines, or rules provides your brain with a chance to recharge\*\*.

\*\* Source: <https://www.lifehack.org/articles/productivity/15-simple-ways-supercharge-your-brain.html>

The book, *Supercharge Your Brain* is available on Amazon at: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Supercharge-Your-Brain-Maximising-Nutrition/dp/1787633187>

## The Whigs and Tories on one page

Sources: • <https://schoolhistory.co.uk/notes/the-tory-party/>  
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 • <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/parliamentaryauthority/revolution/overview/whig-stories/> • <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/who-were-the-whigs>  
 • <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/whigs-and-tories>



### Introduction

In January 1679, King Charles II dissolved what was known as the Cavalier Parliament, which he had first summoned in May 1661, and summoned another one for May 1679. For the last years of the Cavalier Parliament, a loose grouping of Members known as the *Country Party* had opposed the Court's influence in Parliament, particularly its attempts to secure votes through bribes and patronage. From 1679, in the wake of the *Popish Plot* allegations, a section of this opposition took on a more obviously religious dimension: those who fought most vigorously against the Court's corruption and its foreign policy also strongly opposed the Church's persecution of Protestant Non-conformists and the possibility of the Catholic Duke of York's succession to the throne. This group became known as the *Whigs*, and they showed their flair for organisation and propaganda through their overwhelming victories in the elections for the three 'Exclusion Parliaments' of 1679-81. In reaction to this emergent opposition, a 'Tory' ideology developed by 1681 with the strong support of the monarchy and the Church.

### Politics

As a political faction and then a political party in the parliaments of England, Scotland, Great Britain, Ireland and the United Kingdom, between the 1680s and 1850s, the *Whigs* contested power with their rivals, the *Tories*. The *Whigs* played a central role in the *Glorious Revolution of 1688* and were the long-standing enemies of the Stuart kings and pretenders, who were Roman Catholic. The *Whigs* took full control of the government in 1715 and remained totally dominant until King George III, coming to the throne in 1760, allowed the *Tories* back in. The *Whigs* had purged the *Tories* from all major positions in government, the army, the Church, the legal profession and local offices. The party's hold on power was so strong that historians call the period from about 1714 to 1783 'the age of the *Whig oligarchy*'.

Politics during the reigns of George I and II (1714-1760) were largely a contest about wielding power. Whilst issues of principle were still hotly debated, the main fight was for preferment within an established system of politics based on the supremacy of the king-in-Parliament, which some called mixed government. With the accession of George III, some groups of *Whigs* supported the right of the king to be more assertive in choosing and controlling his ministers, provided he had the support of a majority in the

House of Commons. Other *Whigs* contended that Parliament alone, which they intended to dominate, should select and control the ministers.

### The Whigs

- The *Whig Party* was one of the main political parties active between the late 17<sup>th</sup> and mid-19<sup>th</sup> centuries in England.
- Because of its social and religious tolerance, the *Whig Party* was considered directly opposite to the *Tory Party*.
- The formal name of the *Whig Party* was originally called the *Country Party* (whereas the *Tory Party* was originally called the *Court Party*).
- The *Whig Party* slowly took shape during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In general, the *Whigs* supported great aristocratic families and the non-Anglicans (dissenters like the Presbyterians), whereas the *Tories* gave their support to the Anglican Church and the small nobility. Later, the *Whigs* met the interests of the emerging industrial class and wealthier merchants. The *Tories*, on the other hand, gathered the support of landowners and members of the British Crown.
- There was no cohesive *Whig Party* policy, at least until 1784, the year of the rise of Charles James Fox as leader of the reconstituted *Whigs*.
- During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the *Whigs* supported the abolition of slavery and the extension of suffrage. In 1859, the *Whigs* formed the Liberal Party under the leadership of Lord Aberdeen and William Gladstone.

### The Tories

- The *Tory Party* is one of the main parties in the British government and was created in the 17th century following the end of the Republic of Cromwell during the reign of Charles II.
- The *Tories* argued that parliamentary power should be less strong than royal power. They were also absolutely opposed to religious tolerance, claiming that the only viable religion was Anglicanism.
- After the *Glorious Revolution of 1688*, the *Tory Party* suffered a rapid decline and finally dissolved in 1760. However, some political writers continued to use the term, and a few decades later, a new party was formed between 1783 and 1830, which then dissolved definitively in 1834.
- In 1834, the Conservative Party was founded: it was formed through the union of the *Tories* with the Liberal Unionist Party.
- The term 'Tory' is still used to refer to members of the modern Conservative Party.

### Terms of Abuse

The names *Whigs* and *Tories* were born from religious differences. "Whig" and "Tory" were terms of abuse introduced in 1679 during the heated struggle over the bill to exclude James, Duke of York (afterwards James II), from the succession to the throne:

- The term *Whig* was originally short for whiggamor[e], a word meaning "cattle driver" was a term applied to horse thieves and, later, to Scottish Presbyterians; it connoted nonconformity and rebellion and was used to those who wished to exclude James as monarch because he was a Roman Catholic.
- The *Tories* were Catholic highwaymen and robbers in Ireland.

### The Whigs against the Tories

The first great leader of the *Whigs* was Robert Walpole, who maintained control of the government for over 20 years (1721-1742) and whose protégé Henry Pelham also led the party (1743-1754).

While the *Whigs* and *Tories* began as loose groupings or tendencies, both became quite formal by 1784 with the ascension of Charles James Fox as the leader of a reconstituted *Whig* party, arrayed against the governing party of the new *Tories* under William Pitt the Younger. Both parties were founded on rich politicians more than on popular votes.

Although there were elections to the House of Commons, only a few men controlled most of the voters. The *Whig Party* slowly evolved during the 18<sup>th</sup> century: they tended to support the aristocratic families, generally the continued disenfranchisement of Catholics and toleration of non-conformist Protestants (the dissenters such as the Presbyterians). The *Tories* favoured the relative smallholders or minor gentry, with the High *Tories* preferring high church elements or even the exiled Stuarts' claim to the throne (Jacobitism), and virtually all maintained the legitimacy of a strongly established Church of England.

Later, the *Whigs* drew support from the emerging industrial reformists and mercantile class while the *Tories* drew support from farmers, landowners, imperial military spending and related royalists. By the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the *Whig* programme came to encompass the supremacy of parliament, free trade and acceleration of the completion of Catholic equal rights, the abolition of slavery and expansion of the franchise (suffrage). The 19<sup>th</sup> century *Whig* support for Catholic emancipation was a complete reversal of the party's historic extreme anti-Catholic position in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Picture Credit: "Lord Melbourne and Lord John Russell are matched against the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel in a game of cards; Whigs against Tories. Coloured lithograph by H.B. (John Doyle), 1841." is licensed under CC BY 4.0



## Dupont's worse nightmare

Sources/Reading Material: • <https://time.com/5737451/dark-waters-true-story-rob-bilott/>  
 • <https://www.levinlaw.com/dupont-c8-litigation> • <https://slate.com/culture/2019/11/dark-waters-accuracy-fact-vs-fiction-teflon-dupont.html> • [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\\_Bilott](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Bilott)  
 • <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/10/magazine/the-lawyer-who-became-duponts-worst-nightmare.html> • <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/usa-new-jersey-town-sues-dupont-for-11-billion-alleging-toxic-waste-pollution-causes-cancer/>  
 • <https://www.ewg.org/news-insights/news-release/dupont-chemours-and-corteva-reach-4-billion-settlement-forever-chemicals>



Picture Credit: Screenshot from Official Trailer to the Film at: <https://youtu.be/RvAOuhyhY>

### The Lawyer

"The Lawyer who became DuPont's worst nightmare" is the headline of a New York Times article by Nathaniel Rich – you can read it [here](#). The lawyer, Robert Bilott, was a corporate defense attorney for eight years until he took on an environmental action that would upend his entire career at Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP and expose a brazen, decades-long history of chemical pollution.

Bilott (born 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1965) is an American environmental attorney from Cincinnati, Ohio, known for the lawsuits he initiated against DuPont on behalf of plaintiffs from West Virginia. He has spent more than twenty years litigating hazardous dumping of the chemicals perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS).

### The Film

The feature film "Dark Waters" is a 2019 American legal thriller that documents the real-life story of Robert Bilott's 20-year fight against the U.S. chemical giant DuPont's contamination of the drinking water around Parkersburg, West Virginia with a PFAS chemical used to make Teflon. Bilott also published "Exposure: Poisoned Water, Corporate Greed, and One Lawyer's Twenty-Year Battle Against Dupont," a riveting first-person account of how he revealed DuPont's dumping of PFOA and the decades-long coverup of the health hazards of PFAS.

The film was directed by Todd Haynes and written by Mario Correa and Matthew Michael Carnahan. It stars Mark Ruffalo as Bilott, along with Anne Hathaway (Bilott's wife), Tim Robbins (as Bilott's senior partner), Bill Camp, Victor Garber, Mare Winningham, William Jackson Harper, and Bill Pullman. The film is based on the 2016 New York Times Magazine article "The Lawyer Who Became DuPont's Worst Nightmare", a story first told in the 2007 book "Stain-Resistant, Nonstick, Waterproof and Lethal: The Hidden Dangers of C8" by Callie Lyons, a Mid-Ohio Valley journalist who covered the controversy as it was unfolding.

A November 2019 article on Slate.com ([here](#)) sets out to separate what is fact and what is fiction. It seems as if the conclusion is that the film largely portrays fact.

### The Contaminant\*

The Levin Law website (noted in April 2021) said:

"C8 (also known as Perfluorooctanoic (PFOA)) is a man-made chemical known as a "surfactant" because it is very slippery and reduces the surface tension of water. It is used in the manufacturing of Teflon, fast food wrappers, waterproof clothing, pizza boxes, microwave popcorn bags, carpet, dental floss, cosmetics, and hundreds of other products. DuPont began using the chemical in 1951 as a means to smooth out the lumps in Teflon, even though its chief toxicologist at the time warned that it was toxic. By 2003, DuPont had dumped almost 2.5 million pounds of C8 from its Washington Works plant into the mid-Ohio River Valley area. To date, the chemical has been found in drinking water in 27 states."

\* Source: Levin Papantonio Rafferty at: <https://www.levinlaw.com/dupont-c8-litigation>

Time Magazine reported:

PFAS chemicals are used in products ranging from waterproof jackets to shaving cream, and they can leach into water supplies in areas where they are disposed of or used in fire suppression (in particular on military bases, where they have been used for years). According to Bilott's complaint, studies currently suggest that PFAS is present in the blood of around 99% of Americans. The class of chemicals has broadly been linked to immune system disruption, while PFOA specifically has been found to be associated with cancers and other diseases. Bilott's newest lawsuit, as with his prior cases, alleges that these companies knew for decades that PFAS chemicals, specifically PFOA, could be linked to serious health problems, and that they still assured the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other U.S. government regulators that PFAS exposures were harmless.\*\*

\*\* Source: <https://time.com/5737451/dark-waters-true-story-rob-bilott/>

### Separate Action\*\*\*

A small town in New Jersey has sued DuPont for \$1.1 billion, claiming it dumped more than 100 million lbs. of toxic waste into soil and water near the Delaware River, calling it "a disaster worse than Exxon Valdez" that will take 1,000 years to clean up. The site has been linked to cancer clusters in the area. Thousands of New Jersey residents have sued DuPont for contaminating their drinking water at the site. One such case was settled in 1993 for almost \$40 million, although DuPont did not admit liability. DuPont agreed related two class actions in 2011 that reportedly boiled down to paying \$800 per household or an in-home water filtration system.

\*\*\* Source: Business-Human Rights.Org at: <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/usa-new-jersey-town-sues-dupont-for-11-billion-alleging-toxic-waste-pollution-causes-cancer/>

### Is the end in sight?

On 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2021, DuPont and two spin-off companies - Chemours and Corteva - announced a cost-sharing agreement worth \$4 billion to settle lawsuits involving the historic use of the highly toxic "forever chemicals" known as PFAS. The Environmental Working Group (EWG) has documented (read [here](#)) what it calls "the decades-long deception of chemical companies like DuPont burying the truth that PFAS build up in our blood and present risks to human health. EWG created a timeline that shows by the 1960s, animal studies conducted by DuPont revealed that PFAS chemicals could pose health risks."

Scott Faber, EWG's senior vice president for government affairs, says: "For decades, these corporations have knowingly contaminated our drinking water, food supplies and the blood of virtually every person on the planet with these highly toxic chemicals. It's long past time that the polluters pay for their malicious drive toward profits over public health."

Separately, DuPont, Corteva and Chemours agreed to settle ongoing matters in the multidistrict PFOA litigation in Ohio for \$83 million. DuPont will contribute \$27 million, Corteva \$27 million and Chemours \$29 million to the settlement. The agreement resolves approximately 95 pending cases as well as unfilled matters.

The two most notorious PFAS chemicals, PFOA and PFOS have been phased out in the US under pressure from the Environmental Protection Agency. But they've been replaced by a new generation of hundreds of chemicals that many companies continue to produce and release to this day. The result, says EWG, is a full-scale contamination crisis.

Picture Credit: "File: Robert Bilott.jpg" by Taft Law is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)



### It can't be true, can it?

Sources: • <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/72892/9-false-rumors-real-life-consequences>  
• <https://bestlifeonline.com/famous-rumors-we-wish-true/>



Picture Credit: "IMG\_0671" by annulla is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

Sometimes we want to believe things that can't possibly be true. Sometimes, we do it collectively. And that's how rumours are born.

Donald Trump was an expert on news. He had an antipathy for what he called 'fake news'. You can't blame him - fake news has become so popular that there's even software available for you to create your own tall stories nowadays.

Some reported news seems so surprising that it must be true. Take, for example, what happens on April Fool's Day every year. All you need is a grain of truth and a gullible person. The term *April Fool*, the victim of a prank on *April Fools' Day*, dates back to the 1600s. Early records of the holiday from the 1700s name it *April Fool Day*, with an apostrophised *April Fools' Day* recorded by the 1800s. And don't forget to shout "April Fool!" when the prank is revealed.

Here are some news items you may have thought were true, but they aren't.

#### Three Wise Men

Nowhere in the Bible does it specify that there were three kings. Many Christmas carols make mention of the three kings, who follow a star and come to pay homage to the baby Jesus in Bethlehem. They are not called kings in the Bible, and their number is not specified – instead, they are "wise men from the East."

#### The Great Wall of China is the only man-made object visible from space

Despite what you may have read or been told, *The Great Wall of China* cannot actually be seen from Space – see NASA [here](#).

#### Alligators lived in New York's sewers

Dating back to the 1920s or 1930s, a rumour did the rounds suggesting that alligators live in the sewers of New York City. Legend has it that tourists on holiday in Florida would buy baby alligators as souvenirs, bring them home, and then flush them down the toilet once they got too big, leading to a city with sewers swarming with alligators. It's not true. Alligators live in warm climates and likely wouldn't survive the cold New York winters. Also, as you can imagine, no creature would last long if they had to spend all their time swimming around in sewage.

#### George Washington had wooden teeth

It has been suggested that George Washington's false teeth were made out of wood. It's not true, but the actual truth is much less pleasant. Washington wore dentures, yes, but they weren't wooden. They were made from elephant ivory, cow teeth, and the teeth of slaves.

#### Lady Godiva rode naked on horseback through Coventry

The story that Lady Godiva rode naked on horseback through Coventry to keep her husband from raising taxes, seems plausible. But it probably never happened. The story first appeared approximately one to two hundred years after her death, and the monk, Roger of Wendover, who recorded it, was known for stretching the truth in his writings.

#### William Shakespeare didn't write his Plays

There's a popular conspiracy story that Shakespeare didn't actually write his plays. The people who think this believe that Shakespeare wasn't educated enough to write his works. Instead, some think Francis Bacon was the man behind this voluminous body of work, while others believe Christopher Marlowe wrote them, or even Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford. The lack of manuscripts in Shakespeare's own hand, coupled with an extremely limited amount of tangible information about his life, fuel such rumours. Everyone who's anyone in academia steadfastly believes that Shakespeare did write his own plays.

#### King Louis XV of France kidnapped children

In 1750, children began disappearing from the streets of Paris, and worried parents started rioting in the streets. A rumour broke out that King Louis XV had become a leper and was kidnapping children so that he could bathe in their blood (at the time, bathing in the blood of children was thought by some to be an effective leprosy cure). None of this was true.

#### Jews poisoned wells

Well poisoning was one of the three gravest antisemitic accusations made against Jews during the middle ages (the other two being host desecration (a form of sacrilege - see [here](#)) and blood libel (see [here](#))). Reports that Jews ritually sacrificed Christian children were not uncommon during the Middle Ages, but things took a particularly terrible turn during the spread of the Black Plague. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, thousands of Jews were killed in response to rumours that Satan was protecting them from the plague in exchange for poisoning the wells of Christians. It was all untrue.

### Add to your Vocabulary: Gasconade

Here's another unusual word: **Gasconade**. It means: *extravagant boasting; boastful talk*.

#### ORIGIN

*Gasconade* comes straight from the French *gasconnade* "bragging, boasting, a boastful story," from the noun *Gascon*, denoting an inhabitant of Gascony in southwest France. *Gascon* ultimately comes from Latin *Vasco*, *Vascō* (inflectional stem *Vascon-*, *Vascōn-*), originally denoting the inhabitants of Vasconia, the territory on either side of the Pyrenees. *Vascones* becomes *Guascones* in Medieval Latin: *Vasco* is the source of *Basque*, and *Guascon* the source of *Gascon*.

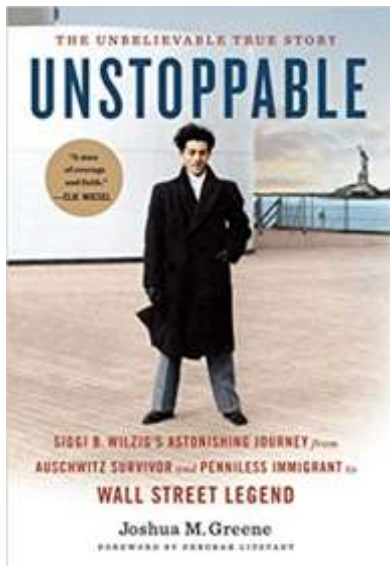
The word *Gasconade* entered English in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century.

Source: Dictionary.com



## Unstoppable: A Life of Survival, Fortitude, and Heroism

Sources: • <https://unstoppablesiggi.com/gallery/> • [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siggi\\_Wilzig](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siggi_Wilzig)  
• <https://observer.com/1999/02/from-auschwitz-to-a-castle-in-the-hamptons-the-wilzig-story/>



Picture Credit: Rights of Author and Publisher and Amazon.com ©, duly acknowledged

Siegbert (changed to Siggi Bert upon immigration to the US in 1947) Wilzig was born in 1926 in Krojanke, West Prussia. He was the second youngest of eight children. Although he didn't know it at the time when he was forced into the Auschwitz concentration camp at 16 years old, he was destined to be a survivor and to win and succeed against all odds. Shortly after reaching Auschwitz, his brother was beaten to death. His

mother was murdered immediately upon her arrival at the death camp. He calculated that over a three-year period, 59 members of his family were murdered by the Nazis, one of whom was his father, who died in Siggi's arms. The victim of repeated beatings by Nazi guards. Siggi's father told him: *Don't be bitter and stick to your principles.*

After two death marches and near starvation, Wilzig was rescued by the U.S. Army from the Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp (on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1945). He expressed his gratitude by spending the next two years as a volunteer helping the U.S. Counter-Intelligence Corps track down former SS and other operators of Hitler's camps. In 1947, this service earned him a visa to America.

Miraculously, Wilzig was the only survivor of his Jewish grade school class of 1,500. Aged only 21, near-penniless, arriving in the U.S. on the SS *Marine Fletcher* in 1947, amid the worst blizzard in living memory and with no job or contacts in his new homeland, and having only a grade school education, he accepted whatever jobs he could find, including bow-tie presser, travelling salesman, and eventually general manager of a furniture store. Over the following 50 years, he became one of the most successful businessmen in post-war America, rising to the very top of the predominantly Protestant industries of oil and banking. The engine that drove him forward was a determination to preserve Holocaust memory and to follow his father's advice – not to be bitter and to stick to his principles.

In the early 1960s, Siggi began spending his sales commissions to purchase stock in Wilshire Oil Company of Texas. Together with a more experienced investor, Siggi spearheaded a takeover of Wilshire. Despite his ignorance of the oil and gas industry, he demonstrated to Wilshire's board of directors possession of extraordinary insight when it came to business decisions. Six months later, in 1965, at the age of 39, he was elected President and Chief Executive of the company. Under his leadership, Wilshire Oil acquired a large interest in the Trust Company of New Jersey. He became a director of the Trust Company of New Jersey in 1969 and was elected chairman and president two years later. In 2002 cancer forced him to step down from his duties as president.

Wilzig frequently lectured on the importance of Holocaust memory and was an outspoken opponent of Holocaust denial. He was instrumental in building the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

### The Book

*Unstoppable*, written by Joshua M. Greene\*, is the biographical story of Siggi B. Wilzig's astonishing journey from an Auschwitz survivor and a near-penniless immigrant to the US to becoming a Wall Street Legend:

*"While American teens were socializing in ice cream parlours, Siggi was suffering beatings by Nazi hoodlums for being a Jew and was soon deported along with his family to the darkest place the world has ever known: Auschwitz. Siggi used his wits to stay alive, pretending to have trade skills the Nazis could exploit to run the camp. After two death marches and near starvation, he was liberated from camp Mauthausen and went to work for the US Army hunting Nazis, a service that earned him a visa to America.*

*On arrival, he made three vows: never to go hungry again, to support the Jewish people, and to speak out against injustice. He earned his first dollar shovelling snow after a fierce blizzard. His next job was labouring in toxic sweatshops. From these humble beginnings, he became president, chairman and CEO of a New York Stock Exchange-listed oil company and grew a full-service commercial bank to more than \$4 billion in assets.'*

\* Joshua M. Greene is a renowned Holocaust scholar and filmmaker whose biographies have sold more than a half-million copies worldwide.



Picture Credit: "Entrada a Auschwitz - Auschwitz" by [ReservasdeCoches.com](https://www.reservasdecoches.com) is licensed under CC BY 2.0

In 2003, at age 76, Siggi Wilzig died after a long struggle with multiple blood cancer.

### Last Words

Above a fireplace in one of his offices at the bank Wilzig ran were the words: *"Free men who forget their bitter past do not deserve a bright future."*



## Unbroken: Louis Zamperini's life

Sources: • <https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/unbroken-where-the-rest-of-louis-zamperinis-story> • [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unbroken\\_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unbroken_(film)) • [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis\\_Zamperini](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Zamperini) • <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/sports/olympics/2014/07/03/louis-zamperini-olympic-runner-world-war-ii-veteran-dies/12132699/> • <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-28149957>



Picture Credit: "File: Louis Zamperini at the announcement of 2015 Tournament of Roses Grand Marshal.JPG" by Floatjon is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0

### The Zamperini Story\*

The story starts in Torrance, California. Louis Silvie Zamperini is a young Italian-American boy who, to put it mildly, is rebellious and incorrigible. He is often picked on by others due to his Italian ethnicity. His brother Peter sees how fast Louis can run and decides to train him to be a runner. Louis begins to learn discipline and transforms from child delinquent to prodigious athlete. He becomes a distance runner, earning the nickname "The Torrance Tornado".

Louis finishes eighth in the 5,000-metre race at the 1936 Berlin Summer Olympics and sets a record in the final lap, after which he was congratulated by Adolf Hitler, who shook his hand. Louis grabbed the headlines by stealing a Nazi flag.

Fast forward to a May afternoon in 1943. Louis is a bombardier on a United States Army Air Forces B-24 Liberator bomber and crew who are sent on a search-and-rescue mission with a plane previously used for spare parts. One engine fails, and the aircraft ultimately crashes in the ocean. Louis survives alongside two other crew members, floating on two inflatable rafts. After twenty-seven days adrift, they attract the attention of a Japanese plane, which strafes and damages the rafts but misses them. Japanese sailors capture Louis and one other crew member (Phil) on the forty-seventh day. Now prisoners of war, Louis and Phil are imprisoned on Kwajalein Atoll. The two American airmen are interrogated for information about newer bombers and the Norden bombsight. Louis states that they flew older models and drew a rendition of a Philco radio. They are dragged out to disrobe and kneel on planks. Instead of being executed, they are crudely washed and shipped to Japan. Upon arrival, the two are separated and sent to different POW camps.

Driven to the limits of endurance, Zamperini's destiny, whether triumph or tragedy, depends on the strength of his will and his determination to survive. At camp Ōmori, in Tokyo, Louis and his fellow POWs are the responsibility of Japanese corporal Mutsuhiro Watanabe who is especially tough on Louis, beating him often. Louis is given a chance to broadcast a message home saying he is alive after learning that the US government classified him as being killed in action.

When he refuses to broadcast another message laden with anti-American propaganda, he is sent back to camp, where Watanabe orders each prisoner to punch Louis. At the end of the war, Louis and the other prisoners in the camp are liberated when the Americans occupy Japan just as a bomber flew over them and confirmed that the war was over. Louis tried to find Watanabe in his quarters but realises he has already fled. Louis sits down and stares at a picture of Watanabe as a child alongside his father. He is returned home to America, where Louis kisses the ground on arriving home to his family.

\* Excerpted from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unbroken\\_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unbroken_(film))

### The Film: 'Unbroken - A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption'

Unbroken is a 2014 American war film produced and directed by Angelina Jolie and written by the Coen brothers, Richard LaGravenese, and William Nicholson. It is based on the 2010 non-fiction book authored by Laura Hillenbrand.

The film was followed by a sequel, *Unbroken: Path to Redemption*, in 2018. This sequel chronicles Louis Zamperini following his return from World War II, his personal struggles to adjust back to civilian life and his eventual conversion to evangelical Christianity after attending one of Billy Graham's church revivals.

Louis Zamperini survived 47 days on a life raft in shark-infested waters and then endured two years as a Japanese prisoner of war. He was liberated in time to attend the second running of the invitational mile race that had been named in his memory when everyone thought he had been killed in action.

The film stars Jack O'Connell as USA Olympian, army officer Louis "Louis" Zamperini and Miyavi as IJA corporal Mutsuhiro Watanabe. The picture below is a screenshot from the trailer to the film – you can watch it [here](#).



At the end of the film, there is a slideshow of the real Louis and the events in his life following the war. Louis married and had two children. Phil also survived and married. Mutsuhiro "The Bird" Watanabe went into hiding and evaded prosecution despite being placed on the top 40 most wanted Japanese war criminals list by General Douglas MacArthur. Louis lived out his promise to convert to Christianity, devote his life to God and forgive his war-time captors, meeting with many of them. Many years later, however, Watanabe still refused to meet with Louis. Louis had an opportunity to relive his time as an Olympian when he ran a leg of the Olympic Torch relay for the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan. He was four days short of his 81<sup>st</sup> birthday.

The closing titles reveal Louis Zamperini died on 2nd July 2014, at the age of 97, after a 40-day battle with pneumonia.

### The Book: 'Unbroken'

Laura Hillenbrand, the book's author, said:

*"In a life of almost unimaginable drama, [Louis Zamperini] experienced supreme triumphs, but also brutal hardship, incomprehensible suffering, and the cruelty of his fellow man. But Louis greeted every challenge of his long journey with singular resilience, determination and ingenuity, with a ferocious will to survive and prevail, and with the hope that knew no master."*

Read about the book at: <https://laurahillenbrandbooks.com/> or buy a copy from Amazon.co.uk [here](#).

## The Guantánamo Diary

Sources: • [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohamedou\\_Ould\\_Slahi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohamedou_Ould_Slahi)  
 • <https://www.esquire.com/uk/culture/film/a35988928/the-mauritanian-true-story-mohamedou-ould-slahi/>  
 • <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/mar/01/guantanamo-diary-author-blocked-from-travelling-for-medical-treatment>  
 • <https://canongate.co.uk/contributors/10140-mohamedou-ould-slahi/>  
 • <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/the-tortuous-tale-of-a-prized-guantanamo-captive/article962912/>  
 • <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB117529704337355155>

The story that unfolds below is about Mohamedou Ould Slahi. He was born in Mauritania in 1970. He earned a scholarship to study engineering in Germany when he was 18 and lived and worked there and briefly in Canada before returning to Mauritania in 2000. He was detained for 14 years at Guantánamo Bay detention camp from 2002 until his release on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2016, without ever being charged with a crime.

### Guantánamo Bay Military Prison

As reported in the Guardian ([here](#)), Slahi had fought alongside men who would join al-Qaida in the Afghanistan insurrection but says he renounced the group in the 1990s. He turned himself in for questioning in Mauritania after the 9/11 attacks and was subsequently rendered to Jordan, Afghanistan and then to Guantánamo Bay.

Languishing in Guantánamo, Slahi was never charged with any crime and was never given a day in court. In 2004, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that detainees in prison could file habeas corpus proceedings to challenge their detention. Slahi did so, and quietly, in 2010, the US government dropped its previous allegations that Slahi had participated in the Millennium Plot and that he knew about the 9/11 attacks before they happened. However, he was still not released.

Guantánamo Bay is a United States military prison located within Guantánamo Bay Naval Base, also referred to as Guantánamo, GTMO, and "Gitmo", which is on the coast of Guantánamo Bay in Cuba. It was established in the aftermath of the 2001 twin-towers atrocity and was used to incarcerate 'extraordinarily dangerous criminals' and quickly became used as 'a dumping ground for anybody considered to be associated with terrorists'.\* Its location – outside US jurisdiction – meant suspects who were considered too dangerous to be free, but who couldn't be tried either for lack of evidence or because they might expose state secrets, could be locked up indefinitely. The prison camp also used torture practices that went against human rights. This glaring miscarriage of justice has been turned into a Hollywood film, *The Mauritanian*.

\* Source: Esquire: *The Mauritanian: The True Story of Mohamedou Ould Slahi*, see [here](#).

Amnesty International say\*\* that:

*"Guantánamo Bay was established by the United States in January 2002 as a place for the U.S. authorities to hold people perceived to be 'enemy combatants' in this war on terror. The first detainees were transferred to the prison camp based in Cuba on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2002. At Guantánamo, the US government sought to hold detainees in a place where neither US nor international law applied. The facilities at Guantánamo have become emblematic of the gross human rights abuses perpetrated by the US government in the name of terrorism."*

\*\* \* Source: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/guantanamo-bay-human-rights>

### Slahi's Books

While imprisoned, Slahi wrote a memoir in 2005, which the U.S. government declassified in 2012 but with numerous redactions. The memoir was published as *Guantánamo Diary* in January 2015 and became an international bestseller.

Slahi is the first detainee to publish a memoir while imprisoned. He was prohibited from receiving a copy of his published book while incarcerated. He wrote four other books whilst in detention, one of which he describes as being "about finding happiness in a hopeless place", but he has not been allowed to access these books since being removed from Guantánamo.

### Incarceration and Release

Slahi was held at Guantánamo Bay under the authority of the *Authorization for Use of Military Force* (AUMF), enacted in September 2001. The U.S. government alleged he was part of al Qaeda at the time of his arrest in November 2001.

Slahi was subjected to sleep deprivation, isolation, temperature extremes, beatings and sexual humiliation at Guantánamo. In one documented incident, he was blindfolded and taken out to sea in a boat for a mock execution. Lt. Col Stuart Couch refused to prosecute Slahi in a Military Commission in 2003. He said that "*Slahi's incriminating statements—the core of the government's case—had been taken through torture, rendering them inadmissible under U.S. and international law.*"

On 14<sup>th</sup> July 2016, Slahi was approved by a *Periodic Review Board* for release from detention. Slahi was freed and returned to Mauritania on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2016, having been imprisoned at Guantánamo for over 14 years.

### Prosecutor's Withdrawal

In 2003, Lieutenant Colonel Couch withdrew from Slahi's prosecution team because he believed he was asked to use evidence obtained through means of coercive interrogation that violated the Uniform Code of Military Justice, U.S. laws, and the United States' treaty obligations.

Couch said he believed that Slahi was guilty but felt that evidence derived from torture was inadmissible in court. On 19<sup>th</sup> July 2007, the Globe and Mail quoted an email from Couch: "*I would not characterize my decision re: Slahi as 'comfortable' but in retrospect would still make the same decision.*" See [here](#).

Couch's resignation received national media coverage, including a long article in 2007 in the *Wall Street Journal*. It said that he had argued with Robert L. Swann, the Chief Prosecutor.

### Film: 'The Mauritanian'



*The Mauritanian* is a 2021 film, based on the book *Guantánamo Diary* by Mohamedou Ould Slahi, was directed by Kevin Macdonald and starred Tahar Rahim as Mohamedou Ould Slahi, Jodie Foster as Nancy Hollander (Slahi's lawyer) and Benedict Cumberbatch (as Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Couch, a prosecutor at Guantánamo Bay against Mohamedou Ould Slahi).

You can view the trailer at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7tmxxzZXLEM>



## Playing cards captured at sea: Prize Papers of L'Aimable Julie

Excerpted from Blog dated 24/3/21 by [Katherine Howells](#) at: <https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/playing-cards-captured-at-sea-prize-papers-of-laimable-julie/>

Some of The National Archives (NA) most striking visual records are found in the most unexpected places. While NA has specific collections consisting entirely of designs, photographs and artwork, there is always the possibility of finding something beautiful hidden among correspondence files and other papers.

### 18th-century playing cards

One wonderful collection is the Prize Papers collection, which are the High Court of Admiralty records. Among these, NA holds a selection of gorgeous playing cards from the 18th century. These were found among papers of the French merchant ship *L' Aimable Julie* and were presumably used by sailors aboard ship to entertain themselves. Cards like these are found throughout the Prize Papers collection.

These cards display the French suits – hearts, clubs, diamonds and spades – with a design very similar to our modern playing cards. The colours, particularly in the face cards, are beautifully striking!

Inspired by these playing cards, NA has created a gorgeous new set of greeting cards which are perfect for any occasion and now available in their shop – [see the range here](#).

### What were the cards used for?

Another intriguing thing about these playing cards is what you find on their backs. They each display scribbled notes which indicate that they were used as vouchers in place of cash on board ship, as IOUs or promissory notes, as calling cards or simply to write notes or jot down calculations.

### The Prize Papers project

These playing cards were unearthed during the process of cataloguing the Prize Papers, which consist of a huge collection of documents and small objects from the period between 1652 and 1815. During this period, European powers would engage in capturing, or prize-taking, enemy ships and any papers or small objects found on captured ships would be held as evidence. And so, the Prize Papers collection came into being.

The Prize Papers project is a collaboration between the University of Oldenburg, Germany, and The National Archives of the UK, partly funded by the Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities in Germany, and seeks to catalogue and digitise the entire collection. To read more about the Prize Papers project, see other blogs which tell the story of the cataloguing and digitisation process.

The greeting cards are available in The National Archives shop, and you can [browse the selection here](#).



NOTE: OGL: content is available under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#)

Picture Credit: "Vintage French playing cards" by crackdog is licensed under CC BY 2.0

## Victoria and her Prime Ministers

Excerpt from <https://www.sparknotes.com/biography/victoria/section7/>



In Queen Victoria's reign, the years between 1867 and 1885 are most known for two great, contending prime ministers—the Conservative Benjamin Disraeli and the Liberal William Gladstone. Victoria's relationship with the former was very good; the latter she disliked immensely.

Overall, she favoured Disraeli's conservative views and his imperialist views on foreign policy. But she detested Gladstone's democratic sensibilities as well as his personality.

Picture Credit: "Queen Victoria" by Doc Kazi is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

Benjamin Disraeli was Jewish by heritage, though a Christian convert in his faith – to what is known as a Messianic Judaism. In January 1867, while the Conservatives were in power, Disraeli introduced the Second Reform Bill, which passed both houses of Parliament. The bill was urged along by a popular movement to expand the vote to members of the British working class, most of whom owned no property and lived in the cities. It was ironic that Disraeli the Conservative pushed through the Reform Bill, but his politics were more democratic than previous Conservative and Tory prime ministers.



Picture Credit: "Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881)" by Political Graveyard is licensed under CC BY 2.0

The Second Reform Bill reduced property requirements for voting - the working-class who earned a certain income were given the vote. However, it primarily affected the middle classes and relatively wealthy artisans and workers who lived in the towns and cities. The bill was seen as an important achievement for Disraeli, who became Prime Minister in February 1868, but not for long as the Liberals under William Gladstone took control of the Commons in December that year. But that was to change again in 1874.

February 1874 brought a Conservative victory at the polls, along with a second Disraeli government. His relations with Queen Victoria were exceptionally good. Indeed, a number of historians have said that he shamelessly flattered the Queen on many occasions, and that she succumbed to his flattery too easily. A chief example of such flattering behaviour was Disraeli's decision to press her desire to be officially titled "Empress." On 5th May 1876, the act was passed, enabling Victoria to be crowned "Empress of India." She rewarded Disraeli by making him Earl of Beaconsfield.

You can read the whole story [here](#).



## “The Captain”: the true story of Willi Herold

Sources: • [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willi\\_Herold](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willi_Herold)  
• [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Captain\\_\(2017\\_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Captain_(2017_film))



Picture Credit:  
Screen clip  
from the  
promotional  
trailer to the  
film.

**The Captain** is a 2017 international co-produced historical drama film written and directed by Robert Schwentke. It was screened in the Special Presentations section at the 2017 Toronto International Film Festival. It tells the true story of German war criminal Willi Herold, who assumed the stolen identity of a high-ranking German officer and then orchestrated the killing of deserters and other prisoners at one of the Emslandlager camps\*.

\* The Emsland camps were a series of 15 labour, punitive and POW camps, active from 1933 to 1945 and located in the districts of Emsland & Bentheim, Lower Saxony, Germany. Emslandlager was also the site of a post-WWII British sector displaced person camp.

### Willi Herold

Willi Herold, the son of a roofer, was born in September 1925 in Saxony. In 1936, Herold was expelled from the Hitler Youth because he did not want to participate in the required exercises. In September 1943, Herold was called up for military service. After basic training with a parachute regiment in Tangermünde, he was sent to Italy and fought at Nettuno and Monte Cassino, where he was promoted to the rank of corporal and awarded the Iron Cross First Class.

In March 1945, Herold's unit was relocated to Germany. In the chaos of the retreating German army, he was separated from his unit in early April 1945. Near Gronau and Bad Bentheim, Herold came across an abandoned car containing the luggage of a *Luftwaffe* captain. Herold put on this uniform and pretended to be the officer, gathering several equally lost soldiers around him.

On 11<sup>th</sup> April 1945, Herold's group arrived at the Aschendorfermoor prison camp (containing German army deserters), one of the Emslandlager camps. Herold told the German authorities at the camp that he was acting under the direct orders of Adolf Hitler and took command. Herold and his merry band of followers then began to murder inmates guilty of any transgression. Within the next eight days, Herold had 90 camp inmates murdered. Following an air raid on the camp, most of the surviving inmates managed to escape. Herold's group left the camp and committed several further war crimes on their journey. The local German commander arrested them, after which Herold confessed to his crimes and was sent for trial by the Kriegsmarine. In the chaos of the last days of the war, incredibly, Herold was released by mistake.

### Arrest, Trial and Execution

Herold headed for Wilhelmshaven and returned to his old profession as a chimney sweeper. He was arrested by Royal Navy personnel on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1945 for the theft of a loaf of bread. Following an investigation and the questioning of witnesses, Herold was identified as a wanted war criminal. On 29<sup>th</sup> August 1946, Herold and six other co-defendants (Karl Hagewald, Bernhard Meyer, Karl Schütte, Josef Euler, Hermann Brandt and Otto Paeller) were sentenced to death, but five others were acquitted. On 14<sup>th</sup> November 1946, Herold and five other defendants were executed.

### The Film

You can see a promotional trailer of the film at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LANyo2O40IM>

## The Phaistos Disc: a lost message from the ancient world

Sources: • <https://geoffjward.medium.com/the-mysterious-phaistos-disc-a-lost-message-from-the-ancient-world-5e5314c61b5e>  
• [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phaistos\\_Disc\\_decipherment\\_claims](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phaistos_Disc_decipherment_claims)  
• [https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/ancient-cd-rom-phaistos-disk-code\\_n\\_6055178?ri18n](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/ancient-cd-rom-phaistos-disk-code_n_6055178?ri18n)



Picture Credit: "Phaistos Disc" by Timothy Valentine is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Geoff Ward, writer, poet, tutor and mentor in literature and creative writing (see [here](#)), says that for over a century, scholars have been puzzled by the spirals of strange pictograms on a 4,000-year-old artefact of the Minoan civilisation. We need to go back to July 1908 to start the journey of

understanding some things about the small disk made from baked clay. It was then that the Italian archaeologist Luigi Pernier made his discovery during excavations at the site of the Palace of Phaistos on the south coast of Crete.

On both sides of the disc, there are 45 different symbols or picture signs, and they are unlike any writing system known to man. The disc, which measures only six inches in diameter and slightly more than 1 centimetre (0.39 inches) in thickness, is covered on both sides with a spiral of stamped symbols. It is now in the Heraklion Archaeological Museum, Crete. Pernier dates it to around 1700BCE.

### Cracking the Code

The disk can be read in a spiral direction from the outside rim to the inside. Using what previous studies have shown about Cretan hieroglyphics and the scripts Minoan Linear A and Mycenaean Linear B from ancient Greece, a researcher (see below) was able to identify three keywords:

- IQEKURJA, which may mean "pregnant mother" and/or "goddess."
- IQE, which may mean "mother" and/or "goddess" and which repeatedly appears on the disk.
- IQEPAJE or IQE-PHAE, which may mean "shining mother" or "goddess."

Source: In a [Huffington Post](#) article, *Scientists Finally Crack The Code Of The Ancient 'Phaistos Disk'* at [https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/ancient-cd-rom-phaistos-disk-code\\_n\\_6055178?ri18n](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/ancient-cd-rom-phaistos-disk-code_n_6055178?ri18n)

### Uncertainties Remain

The purpose of the disc and its original place of manufacture remain disputed despite many attempts to decipher the code behind the disc's signs. While it is not certain that it is a script, most attempts to decipher it assume that it is. Although the Phaistos Disc is generally accepted as authentic by archaeologists, a few scholars still believe it is a forgery or a hoax.

### Video



Dr Gareth Owens (a linguist researcher with the Technological Educational Institute of Crete) has worked out not only what the Minoan language sounded like but also some of the meaning it conveys. To view a TED talk by Dr Owens, click here:  
<https://youtu.be/6Chcplx3tZ8>

Picture Credit: Screenshot from Video described above

## The Eiffel Tower and its secret apartment

Excerpted from and acknowledgements to:

- <https://history.howstuffworks.com/european-history/eiffel-tower-apartment.htm> • <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/eiffel-tower-paris-secret-apartment>
- <http://www.roomonethousand.com/eiffels-apartment-and-the-architecture-of-dreams/>
- <https://www.toureffel.paris/en/news/130-years/did-gustave-eiffel-live-tower>



When Gustave Eiffel designed his eponymous tower in Paris, he made a personal decision and included a private apartment for himself at the top. The Tower's height and unique silhouette above the Paris landscape quickly made the Eiffel Tower one of the most popular attractions in Paris.

Picture Credit: (Cropped) "Adolf Hitler in Paris" by Marion Doss is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

The Eiffel Tower was unveiled in Paris as the *pièce de résistance* of the 1889 World's Fair. It was engineered as a testament to France's technological machinations and as a striking way to mark the 100th anniversary of the French Revolution. It was built in record time: two years, two months and five days.

But nobody knew that the German Chancellor would pose for photographs in front of it a half a century after its inauguration.

### The Secret Apartment

Gustave Eiffel, whose company designed and built the tower, added several extras to the Tower, ranging from the secret apartment to telegraph and radio broadcast equipment.

In his book *'La Tour Eiffel de Trois Cent Mètres (The Eiffel Tower of 300 Meters)'*, author Henri Girard explains that Parisians would offer up "a small fortune" to rent his private space for a single night, but Eiffel consistently refused. However, Eiffel would occasionally entertain guests of the utmost prestige (Thomas Edison is one notable example). Gustave Eiffel became "the object of general envy" amongst the residents of Paris, inspired not by the fame that had accrued upon himself as its designer or the fortune the tower generated but rather from a single design feature he had built into the plan. Eiffel had installed a private apartment at the summit of his colossal tower to which he alone had access.

The Tour Eiffel website ([here](#)) says:

*It was intended from the very beginning that the last floor of the Eiffel Tower be used to accommodate visitors. However, Gustave Eiffel reserved the platform at the very top of the Tower, located just below its spire. Completely surrounded by an open-air balcony, this dwelling measured approximately 1076 square feet (100 square meters), though a large portion was occupied by the elevator cabin, the stairwell landing from the floor below and numerous technical installations. Eiffel's apartment included a living room with a table, a couch, a piano, three small desks, a kitchen, a bathroom with a sink, and a separate toilet cubicle.*

In 1903, just six years before the tower was to be demolished (it was originally planned to stand for only 20 years), Eiffel doubled down on his invitations to scientists to host brainy discussions and conduct research from within the tower's little-known apartment.

The apartment, about 1,000 feet (304 metres) off the ground, was furnished with cosy rugs and chairs surrounded by other comforts, but it also had adjacent spaces to serve as mini laboratories.

Today, the Eiffel Tower receives about 7 million visitors each year, and those who purchase a ticket to the top of the tower can look through a window at the apartment where Thomas Edison once conversed with Eiffel and other invitation-only erudite guests (see below). For the most part, the apartment's original appearance has been preserved. There is upholstered furniture, a grand piano and burnished wood cabinets against a backdrop of patterned wallpaper. The apartment's laboratory areas still exhibit some of their original scientific equipment, and there is an observatory above the apartment, but it is not open to public viewing.



Picture Credit: "Gustave's Apartment - Eiffel" by Serge Melki is licensed under CC BY 2.0

### The Eiffel Tower in Movies

The Eiffel Tower has appeared frequently in cinematic works of fiction because of its iconic nature. You can be pretty sure that no matter where in Paris a film scene is set, the Eiffel Tower will be visible in the background.

Take a trip to Wikipedia ([here](#)) to discover films that have featured the Tower. You'll be surprised at what you'll find. A few examples from a long list include:

- 1949 - In *The Man on the Eiffel Tower*, the tower plays a central role.
- 1953 - In *The War of the Worlds*, most (if not all) of Paris is destroyed by the Martian attack. The tower can be seen in ruins at the end of the film depicting the death of the Martians.
- 1970 - In the animated film *The Aristocats*, the tower is seen in the background of Paris in 1910.
- 1980 - In *Superman II*, the tower (and the rest of Paris) are almost blown up by a terrorist nuclear bomb, and Lois Lane nearly plunges to her death under its elevator.
- 1985 - The James Bond film *A View to a Kill* contains a scene in the tower, including scenes in the Jules Verne restaurant there (filmed elsewhere), a fight on the stairway, and a BASE jump off the top of the tower as Bond (played for the last time by Roger Moore) chased a masked assassin who had just killed the French detective who Bond was meeting with.
- 2004 - In *Godzilla: Final Wars*, Kamacuras attacks the tower.
- 2015 - In *Tomorrowland*, the protagonists travel to the tower to access an inter-dimensional travel capsule.
- 2020 - The second part of the two-part premiere of *Doctor Who* series 12 "Spyfall" featured a meeting between the 13<sup>th</sup> Doctor and The Master atop the Eiffel Tower during the German Occupation of France.

## Facts and Figures about Deafness

Sources: • <https://www.hearinglink.org/your-hearing/about-hearing/facts-about-deafness-hearing-loss/> • [https://deafunity.org/article\\_interview/debunked-myths-about-deafness/](https://deafunity.org/article_interview/debunked-myths-about-deafness/) • <https://bda.org.uk/fast-facts-about-the-deaf-community/> • <https://www.deaflink.org.uk/services/deaf-awareness/deaf-awareness-facts> • <https://www.baaudiology.org/about/media-centre/facts-about-hearing-loss-and-deafness/> • <https://rnid.org.uk/about-us/research-and-policy/facts-and-figures/> • <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/deafness-and-hearing-loss> • <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/health-wellbeing/conditions-illnesses/hearing-loss/> • <https://www.british-sign.co.uk/> • [https://www.makaton.org/TMC/About\\_Makaton/What\\_is\\_Makaton.aspx](https://www.makaton.org/TMC/About_Makaton/What_is_Makaton.aspx)



Picture Credit: "Senior woman with a hearing aid" by [www.ilmicrofono.it](http://www.ilmicrofono.it) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)

In the UK, more than 40% of people over 50 years old have hearing loss, rising to more than 70% of people over the age of 70.

### Sign Language and other methods used by Deaf People

It is estimated that there are 151,000 people in the UK who use *British Sign Language* and, of these, 87,000 are deaf. Sign Language is a visual means of communicating using gestures, facial expressions, and body language. Sign Language is used mainly by people who are deaf or have hearing impairments.

*Fingerspelling* is a method of spelling words using hand movements. The fingerspelling alphabet is used in sign language to spell out names of people and places for which there is no sign. Fingerspelling is an alternative method for the deaf to communicate besides sign language. As the name suggests, it involves spelling out the letters of the alphabet. So you have distinct differences in manual alphabets and hand signs for sign languages in Latin, Hebrew, Greek, Devanagari and so on

*Makaton* is a language programme that uses signs together with speech and symbols to enable people to communicate. It supports the development of essential communication skills such as attention, listening, comprehension, memory and expressive speech and language.

### Technology can help

An article in the *U3A third age matters* newsletter in February 2021 (page 31) said something about how the pandemic paved the way for better hearing technology due to lockdown lifestyle changes. The British Irish Hearing Instrument Manufacturers Association (BIHIMA) predicts a rise in technology solutions to help those with hearing loss as people get used to using tablets and smartphones to communicate with family and friends. It is estimated that there are approximately 11 million people in this country with a hearing loss which makes it the second most common disability in the UK. However, as an invisible disability, it often goes unnoticed, making it easier for those living with hearing loss to be ignored or forgotten.

### Statistics

Here are some statistics from the Hearinglink website about deafness in the UK:

- As many as 1 in 6 of the UK adult population is affected by hearing loss. Eight million of these are aged 60 and over.
- 6.7 million could benefit from hearing aids, yet only about 2 million people use them.
- About 900,000 people are severely or profoundly deaf.
- About 12,000 people in the UK use cochlear implants (a surgically implanted device to provide a person with moderate to profound sensorineural hearing loss with a modified sense of sound. CIs bypass the normal acoustic hearing process to replace it with electric signals which directly stimulate the auditory nerve).
- Many people with hearing loss also have tinnitus which affects 1 in 10 adults. They may also have balance difficulties.

Hearing loss is associated not only with mental health conditions (see below) but also with numerous physical health conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, anaemia, chronic kidney disease, rheumatoid arthritis, sleep apnea, balance problems and an increased risk of falls.

The British Deaf Association (BDA) provide further statistics ([here](#)):

- It is estimated that about nine million people in the UK are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Deafness is the third most common disability in the world, but you probably wouldn't spot a deaf person in a crowd.
- Most deaf people don't view their deafness as a disability or as a problem that should be fixed. For many of them, it's a natural part of a cultural experience that they share with friends, both deaf and hearing.
- Most deaf people use sign language use British Sign Language (BSL). It's a rich combination of hand gestures, facial expressions and body language. BSL isn't simply English with hand signs, it is a different language with its own grammar and sentence construction. While you would say "what is your name?" in English, a BSL user would sign, "your name, what?"
- You might assume that sign language across the world is the same – but actually, British Sign Language is totally different to other sign languages such as American Sign Language or Japanese Sign Language
- Even the best lip-readers only catch less than half of the words said to them, natural facial expressions and hand gestures can really help.
- Nine in every ten deaf children are born to hearing parents, but only one in ten of those parents will learn sign language to be able to communicate fully with their child.
- As a deaf person, you rely on your eyes for clues to what people are saying or feeling, and you rely on other clues like vibrations in floors to be aware of what is going on around you.

### Impact on Older People

Unassisted hearing loss has a significant impact on older people leading to social isolation, depression, reduced quality of life and loss of independence and mobility.

Hearinglink says that hearing loss increases sharply with age – nearly 42% of those aged over 50 years have hearing loss, increasing to about 71% of people aged over 70. About 400,000 older people live in care homes and are disproportionately affected by hearing loss, with approximately 75% of residents having a hearing problem.

### Dementia

When hearing loss is unassisted, those with a mild hearing loss are twice as likely to develop dementia as people without hearing loss, whilst those with moderate hearing loss are three times more likely to develop dementia and those with severe hearing loss are five times more likely to develop dementia. There is evidence that cognitive decline can be addressed through early detection of hearing loss and the provision of amplification.

### Wrong Beliefs

The following beliefs (see [here](#)) that most people have are simply not true:

- Hearing aids restore hearing loss.
- Deafness only affects older adults.
- All hearing loss is the same.
- Deaf people can't go to the cinema or watch TV.



## Learning from Confucius

Sources: • <https://people.howstuffworks.com/culture-traditions/cultural-traditions/confucius.htm>  
• [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confucius\\_Institute](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confucius_Institute) • <https://www.thoughtco.com/best-confucius-quotes-2833291> • <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Analects-Confucius-ebook/dp/B07QTGWC27/>



Picture Credit:  
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Confucius was born in 551 B.C.E. to the concubine of a man of moderate social status in the kingdom of Lu (now the Shandong Peninsula of China). Confucius' father, an important aide in a more powerful house, died when Confucius was just three years old, leaving his family in poverty. The turmoil of

Confucius' personal life was mirrored in the political and cultural changes in Lu, where power-hungry warlords were tearing down the age-old traditions and norms of the ruling class. As a young man, Confucius gained a reputation for his mastery of the traditional rituals and ceremonies associated with the once-flourishing Zhou culture. He began tutoring aristocratic young men in the importance of li, the ritual institutions of the Zhou that included everything from religious rites and court ceremonies to personal etiquette and ethical behaviour. He said that it was only through li that a man could become a junzi, a truly benevolent and capable person, or a "gentleman."

### Selected Sayings of Confucius that still resonate today

Confucius was a philosopher, scholar, politician, and teacher. He was actually named Kong fuzi or "Master Kong", and the impact of his teachings on ethical and moral philosophy — in short, the best way to live and treat others — have echoed down the centuries. Following his death, a handful of his dedicated followers passed on Confucius' teachings to future generations in the book, *The Analects of Confucius* (available at Amazon). Together, the sayings express a philosophy, or a moral code, by which Confucius believed everyone should live - as can be discerned from these quotes:

- *That which you do not desire, do not do to others. Also: Never do to others what you would not like them to do to you.*
- *Wheresoever you go, go with all your heart.*
- *Everything has its beauty, but not everyone sees it.*
- *You do not yet understand life — how could you possibly understand death?*
- *Guide [people] with virtue...and [they] will have a sense of shame and fulfil their roles.*
- *Keeping past teachings alive and understanding the present — someone able to do this is worthy of being a teacher.*
- *Wealth and high rank obtained by unrighteous means are like the floating clouds.*
- *Silence is a true friend that never betrays.*
- *What the superior man seeks is in himself; what the small man seeks is in others.*
- *In a country well governed, poverty is something to be ashamed of. In a country badly governed, wealth is something to be ashamed of.*
- *Faced with what is right, to leave it undone shows a lack of courage.*
- *To be able under all circumstances to practise five things constitutes perfect virtue; these five things are gravity, generosity of soul, sincerity, earnestness, and kindness.*
- *To see what is right, and not to do it, is want of courage or of principle.*
- *Fine words and an insinuating appearance are seldom associated with true virtue.*
- *Before you embark on a journey of revenge, dig two graves.*

See more at: <https://www.thoughtco.com/best-confucius-quotes-2833291>

### Confucius Institutes

Confucius Institutes (are public educational partnerships between colleges and universities in China and colleges and universities in other countries; the partnerships are funded and arranged in part by Hanban, which is itself affiliated with the Chinese government. The aim is to promote the Chinese language and culture, support local Chinese teaching internationally, and facilitate cultural exchanges. The organisation has been criticised over concerns about the Chinese government's undue overseas influence and suppression of academic freedom.

## Rome, in just a few words...



Picture Credit:  
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### The Modern Romans

World of Books ([here](https://www.worldofbooks.com/rome-by-robert-hughes)) describe the book "Rome" by Robert Hughes as follows:

*'Rome - as a city, as an empire, as an enduring idea - is in many ways the origin of everything Robert Hughes has spent his life thinking and writing about with such dazzling irreverence and exacting rigour. In this magisterial book he traces the city's history from its mythic foundation with Romulus and Remus to Fascism, Fellini and beyond. For almost a thousand years, Rome held sway as the spiritual and artistic centre of the world. Hughes vividly recreates the ancient Rome of Julius Caesar, Marcus Aurelius, Nero, Caligula, Cicero, Martial and Virgil. With the artistic blossoming of the Renaissance, he casts his unwavering critical eye over the great works of Raphael, Michelangelo, and Brunelleschi, shedding new light on the Old Masters. In the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, when Rome's cultural predominance was assured, artists and tourists from all over Europe converged on the city. Hughes brilliantly analyses the defining works of Caravaggio, Velasquez, Rubens and Bernini. Hughes' Rome is a vibrant, contradictory, spectacular and secretive place; a monument both to human glory and human error. This deeply personal account reflects his own complex relationship with a city he first visited as a wide-eyed twenty-year-old, thirsting for the sights, sounds, smells and tastes he had only read about or seen in postcard reproductions. In equal parts loving, iconoclastic, enraged and wise, peopled with colourful figures and rich in unexpected details, ROME is an exhilarating journey through the story of one of the world's most timelessly fascinating cities.'*

### The Ancient Romans

Ben Bassett writing at <https://quillette.com/2017/08/22/yes-romans-diverse-not-way-understand/> says the Romans were diverse, but not in the way we understand it:

*'The site for Rome on the banks of the river Tiber, which was established in myth by Romulus and Remus, did not at first have inhabitants. Romulus supposedly solved this problem by creating an asylum or a place of refuge on what became the Capitol and inviting in the trash of primitive Latium: runaway slaves, exiles, murderers, criminals of all sorts. Legend makes it out to have been (to employ a more recent simile) a kind of Dodge City.'*

The tale of the founding of Rome is recounted in traditional stories handed down by the ancient Romans themselves as the earliest history of their city in terms of legend and myth. The most familiar of these myths, and perhaps the most famous of all Roman myths, is the story of Romulus and Remus, twins who were suckled by a she-wolf as infants in the 8th century BC. Another account, set earlier in time, claims that the Roman people are descended from Trojan War hero Aeneas, who escaped to Italy after that war, and whose son, Iulus, was the ancestor of the family of Julius Caesar. The archaeological evidence of human occupation of the area of modern-day Rome, Italy dates from about 14,000 years ago.

## Quickies to brighten your day!

- ▶ Due to the current or next economic crisis, Greece is cancelling all production of Houmous and Taramasalata. It's a double dip recession.
- ▶ Jonathan Ross has been accused of shoplifting a kitchen utensil from Tesco. He says it was a whisk he was prepared to take.
- ▶ My mate just hired an Eastern European cleaner, took her 15 hours to Hoover the house. It turns out she was a Slovak.
- ▶ I've been charged with murder for killing a man with sandpaper. To be honest, I only intended to rough him up a bit.
- ▶ Two Indian junkies accidentally snorted curry powder instead of cocaine. Both are in hospital... One's in a korma... The other's got a dodgy tikka!
- ▶ A woman standing nude in front of a mirror says to her husband: 'I look horrible, I feel fat and ugly, pay me a compliment.' He replies, 'You've nothing to worry about - your eyesight is perfect.'
- ▶ A Mummy covered in chocolate and nuts has been discovered in Egypt... Archaeologists believe it may be Pharaoh Rocher...
- ▶ The Grim Reaper came for me last night, and I beat him off with a vacuum cleaner. Talk about Dyson with death.
- ▶ A mate of mine recently admitted to being addicted to brake fluid. When I quizzed him on it he reckoned he could stop any time...
- ▶ I went to the cemetery yesterday to lay some flowers on a grave. As I was standing there I noticed 4 grave diggers walking about with a coffin, 3 hours later and they're still walking about with it. I thought to myself, they've lost the plot!!
- ▶ I was at an ATM yesterday when a little old lady asked if I could check her balance, so I pushed her over.
- ▶ I was driving this morning when I saw an RAC van parked up. The driver was sobbing uncontrollably and looked very miserable. I thought to myself: that guy's heading for a breakdown..
- ▶ I saw a poor old lady fall over today on the ice!! At least I presume she was poor - she only had £1.20 in her purse!
- ▶ The wife was counting all the 5p's and 10p's out on the kitchen table when she suddenly got very angry and started shouting and crying for no reason. I thought to myself, "She's going through the change."
- ▶ Bought some 'rocket salad' yesterday but it went off before I could eat it!
- ▶ A teddy bear is working on a building site. He goes for a tea break and when he returns he notices his pick has been stolen. The bear is angry and reports the theft to the foreman. The foreman grins at the bear and says "Oh, I forgot to tell you, today's the day the teddy bears have their pick nicked."
- ▶ 19 paddies go to the cinema, the ticket lady asks: "Why so many of you?" Mick replies, "The advert said 18 or over."
- ▶ An Asian fellow has moved in next door. He has travelled the world, swum with sharks, wrestled bears and climbed the highest mountain. It came as no surprise to learn his name was Bindair Dundat.



**Tommy Cooper in a Chinese Restaurant:**

Click [here](#) to find out what he said.

## Eh?

A man was telling his neighbour, 'I just bought a new hearing aid. It cost me four thousand pounds, but it's state of the art... It's perfect.'

'Really,' answered the neighbour. 'What kind is it?'