

# How Much Do You Know?

## General knowledge for young people from 1938

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### Introduction

It is interesting to note how the mind set of man changes over time. Here are some general knowledge items, reflecting the mindset of the day, which were published in 1938 for young people.

### What Were The Seven Wonders of the World?

Renowned works of art which excited universal admiration in classical times. They were the pyramids of Egypt, the hanging gardens of Babylon, the statute of Zeus in his temple at Olympia in the Peloponnesus (Greece), the temple of Diana at Ephesus (Asia Minor), the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus (Asia Minor), the Colossus at Rhodes (an island in the Aegean Sea), and the Pharos or Lighthouse at Alexandria (Egypt), or alternatively the walls of Babylon. The pyramids and fragments of the Mausoleum and the temple of Diana alone remain. The Colossus at Rhodes, a gigantic bronze statue of the sun-god Helios, was about 100 feet high. Erected in 280 B.C., it was overthrown by an earthquake some fifty-odd years later.

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### Are There Stone Age People Still in Existence?

Some of the Australian blackfellows are still living in a Stone Age of their own; they have not yet learned the use of metals -- apart from what they may have picked up comparatively recently from contact with white men -- nor have they attained to any of the arts which raise mankind above the lowest level of savagery. The invention of the bow and arrow has been beyond their powers. Their hatchets are made of stone, their spears tipped with stone or bone. They have no houses worthy of the name and no pottery, nor have they learned to cultivate the soil or domesticate animals. They can count up to four or five at the most; their character, intellect, customs and social organizations are at a stage of development which in Europe existed during the Stone Age.

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### What is the Origin of the English Language?

The basic element of the English language is Teutonic, or German. The dialects spoken by the various English and Saxon tribes which overran England during the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries all belonged to the West Germanic group of the Indo-Germanic family of languages. Almost all the simple most commonly used words are Germanic. But in modern English the number of German words is far less than those of Latin, Greek and French origin (especially the first-named) which have since been incorporated into it. The fusion between the Germanic and French elements of modern English was a gradual process over a period of roughly 200 years after the Norman Conquest. The

greatest influx of Latin and Greek words took place during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the new learning of the Renaissance profoundly affected the language.  
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### **How Many Kinds of Language are There?**

For long the languages of the world were classified into three types -- inflective, agglutinative and isolating. The first type included all the Indo-European languages and the Semitic, in which changes occur in the form of words -- chiefly different endings added to the roots to indicate voice, mood, tense, case, number and person. In the agglutinative class -- Turkish, Finnish and allied languages -- affixes are used, but the root does not change. Chinese is an example of an isolating or root language, in which the root word is monosyllabic and receives no addition at all. This classification has been found to be far too simple, and languages are now grouped in families, each family descended from a common ancestor.

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### **What is a Mandrake?**

An herbaceous plant which grows in many parts of South Europe in the region of the Mediterranean, Its poisonous root is often forked and looks like a human body. It was formally used as a charm by childless women. Bacon mentions that "Some plants there are, but rare, that have mossy or downy root; and likewise that have a number of threads, like beards; as mandrakes, whereof witches and imposters make an ugly image, giving it the form of a face at the top of the root, and leave those strings to make a broad beard down to the foot." The plant was formally given to patients before operations.

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### **What are the Chief Religions of India?**

Nearly seventy percent of the Indian population are Hindus. Of the remainder twenty-two percent are Mohammedans, and the adherents of this religion are gaining in numbers. There are about 6,000,000 Christians and 4,000,000 Sikhs, while over 8,000,000 backward people still believe in magic and fetish.

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### **What is a Fetish?**

[A fetish is] Any object regarded by people with awe or devotion because of supposed mysterious or magical powers residing in it, which are exercised quite unconsciously. A fetish (or fetich, as it is also spelt) may be a living creature, a natural object, such as a river, stone or shell, or an object carved or otherwise constructed for the purpose. The word comes from the Portuguese *felico* meaning sorcery or magic, and was first applied by [the] Portuguese to idols worshipped by the natives of Senegal.

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### **How Often Does A Mohammedan Pray Each Day?**

[Each day, a Mohammedan prays] Five times, as follows: Before sunrise, a little after mid-day, when the sun has declined half-way towards the horizon, immediately after sunset, and between the disappearance of the red glow of sunset and bedtime. On Friday, the Mohammedan Sunday, or "day of assembly," as it is called, the worshipper repairs to a mosque for the second prayer of the day.

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### **What is the Ka'ba?**

The [Ka'ba is the] most holy place at Mecca. Though now the chief Mohammedan sanctuary, it dates from long before the time of Mahomet, and was originally used for idol worship. It is a roughly built, windowless, stone building. The outside is decorated with rich brocade hangings, which are regularly renewed, the departure of the *Kiswa* of black brocade from Cairo being an event of great religious importance. The Ka'ba contains, in the "black corner" (the south-east corner), the black stone, alleged

to have been given by the Archangel Gabriel to Abraham. This is the first of all pilgrims to Mecca to kiss.

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### **Why Do Men and Women Sit Apart In A Synagogue?**

The whole question of the separation of the sexes in a synagogue appears shrouded in obscurity, but seemingly it is more a matter of custom than precept. The *Talmud* and other sacred books of the Hebrews make no mention of the segregation of female worshippers, and it seems clear that in ancient days they freely mixed with the men, even being allowed to occupy the seats of honour near the ark [of the covenant]. At the same time, the oldest-known synagogues, dating from the second century A.D., show traces of galleries, which may have been occupied by women.

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### **Which Powers Own Land in Africa?**

Great Britain, France, Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Belgium. Before the World War [WWI], Germany owned German East Africa (now Tanganyika), German South-West Africa, Togoland and the Cameroons, while Turkey exercised suzerainty over Egypt. France owns about 4,250,000 square miles, or 37 per cent of the total area of the continent, but the African territories of the British Commonwealth of Nations, though comprising only 24 per cent of the area, contain 46 per cent of the total population.

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### **What Was the Holy Grail?**

According to the legend best known in England, [the Holy Grail was] the sacred vessel from which Christ and His disciples took wine at the Last Supper, and in which His blood was preserved. According to other medieval stories, it was the dish on which the Paschal Lamb was served at the Last Supper, a blood-filled crystal vase, a magic food-providing dish, or even a stone. In the *Morte d'Arthur* (Death of Arthur), the famous prose romance told by Sir Thomas Malory (d. 1471), it is the talisman sought by the Knights of the Round Table. A Twelfth-century French romance tells how it was brought to England by Joseph of Arimathea, and this story in its turn became linked with a supposed visit by that disciple of Jesus to Glastonbury, in Somerset. Modern critics believe that the story is much older than Christian times.

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### **What Is Meant By Horse-Power?**

James Watt (1736-1819), the father of the modern steam-engine, originated the term after having decided by experiment that a strong cart horse was capable of lifting 33,000 pounds 1 foot in one minute. As steam-engines were first used for pumping water from mines, this method of measuring power of an engine enabled the mine-owner to ascertain how many horses he could dispense with. For this particular purpose the unit h.p., which equals 746 watts, was not an altogether reliable guide, as a normally strong cart horse is not capable of maintaining this rate over a day's work. According to Professor Hill, a man furling 100 yards in 10 seconds uses 9 horse-power of energy.

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### **What Is Candle Power?**

One candle-power represents the amount of light supplied by a standard spermaceti candle burning at the rate of 120 grains of wax an hour.

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### **What Are the Six Types of Machines Known to mechanics?**

[The six types of machines known to mechanics are] The lever, inclined plane, wedge, pulley, wheel and axle, and screw. They have all been in constant use since time immemorial. Their forms were crude in ancient days, but the mechanical principles involved were completely exemplified.

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### **How is Aluminium Obtained?**

Aluminium is never found as a metal in nature. It is separated from the clay called bauxite by electrolysis. The bauxite is dissolved in melted cryolite, a mineral which contains aluminium and sodium. The mixture is placed in an iron container lined with carbon and an electric current is applied. The aluminium sinks to the bottom of the molten contents of the container.  
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### **Who Was the Original of "Robinson Crusoe"?**

Alexander Selkirk (1676-1721), a Scotsman associated with the famous buccaneer, William Dampier (1652-1715). In 1704, following a quarrel, Selkirk was put ashore on the uninhabited Island of Juan Fernandez in the South Pacific, where at the moment his ship was in harbour. There he remained for more than four years, living no doubt much as is related in *Robinson Crusoe*, since Daniel Defoe was told the story of Selkirk's sojourn on Juan Fernandez by the Sailor himself and also given by him a written account of his adventures.  
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### **What Territory Did Germany Lose After the War [WWI]?**

In Europe: to France, Alsace-Lorraine, 5,607 square miles; to Belgium, Moresnet, Eupen and Malmedy, 400 square miles; to Poland 17,816 square miles, including parts of Upper Silesia; Memel (given to Lithuania in 1924), 1,026 square miles; Danzig, 739 square miles; to Denmark northern Schleswig, 1,542 square miles; to Czechoslovakia, 122 square miles; giving a total of 27,252 square miles with about 6,500,000 inhabitants. All Germany's territories outside Europe were ceded to the Allies. These were: in Africa, the Cameroons, Togoland, South-West Africa, East Africa; in the Pacific, the Marshall Islands, Samoa, New Guinea, Nauru Island; in China, the province of Shantung. With the exception of Shantung, which was returned to China in 1921 after Japan's efforts to appropriate it had failed, all extra-European ex-German territories became League Mandates, the principle Mandatory Powers being Britain, France and Japan.

**[How much land did Germany lose after WWII?** About 49,000 sqm or 127,000 km. Poland received 112,000 km and Russia received 15,000 km. Germany went from 187,000 sqm to 138,000 sqm. This equates to 26.2 per cent of Germany's territory]  
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### **What Was the Inquisition?**

[The inquisition was] A system of ecclesiastical inquiry into and judgement of heresy during the Middle Ages and later. It dates from the thirteenth century, but grew out of earlier proceedings against heretics. In 1232 a Dominican friar was sent round northern Italy with the title of *Inquisitor haereticae pravitatis* (Inquirer into heretical wickedness), and from that time the Inquisition may be regarded as established. The procedure was secret, there was no counsel for defence, and no accused person was ever completely acquitted. On the other hand, the cruelty of the Inquisition has been grossly exaggerated; punishments were often mild and rarely savage. The Spanish Inquisition was a national institution founded in 1480, and largely used for political purposes. It is this branch of the Holy Inquisition which has rendered its name so obnoxious in Protestant Countries.  
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### **Who Was the "Nine Days Queen"?**

[The "Nine Days Queen" was] Lady Jane Grey (1537-1554), who on the death of Edward VI was placed on the throne by her father-in-law, the Duke of Northumberland. She was proclaimed Queen on July 10, 1553, was never crowned, and occupied the throne for nine days only. Displaced by the rightful monarch, Mary Tudor, she was executed in the following February. In his will her great-uncle, Henry VIII, had placed Lady Jane Grey next after his daughters Mary and Elizabeth in the line of succession. [Convicted of high treason, Northumberland returned to Catholicism and abjured the Protestant faith before his execution on 22 August 1553]  
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### **What Was the Renaissance?**

[The Renaissance was] The "rebirth" of Europe. The emergence of modern thought and ways of life from the decaying structure of the Middle Ages. No precise dates can be given for this lengthy and profound transformation, but it is generally agreed that signs of its beginning were evident in Italy as early as the thirteenth century, that it spread gradually westward, and was virtually complete by about 1600. It was characterized by an immense pouring out of vital energy in every field of human activity. Petrarch (1304-1374), "the first modern man" as Ernest Renan called him, Boccaccio (1313-1375) and Shakespeare (1564-1616) in literature, Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), Michelangelo (1475-1563), Titian (1477-1576) and Raphael (1483--1520) in fine arts, Erasmus (1467-1536) and Luther (1483-1520) in religion, Henry the navigator (1394-1458) and Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) in exploration, Copernicus (1473-1543) and Galileo (1564-1642) in astronomy, are individual examples of the spirit which swept across the continent. The Renaissance received a tremendous stimulus from the invention of printing, Gutenberg (1399-1468). It used to be held that the fall of Constantinople in 1453, with its consequent flight into Europe of scholars bringing Greek and Latin classics, led to the revival of learning, but the cultural influence of this event in now regarded as inconsiderable. [Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Empire In 1453, which came as a bitter shock to Western Christendom. This event is seen as one of history's important turning points.] (p. 178)

### **How Did the Name "Fascist" Originate?**

[The Name "Fascist" originates] From the word *fascis*, the Latin name for the bundle of rods tied with a red band which constituted the emblem of authority of the Roman magistrates and was borne by officials called lictors. In March, 1919, Benito Mussolini, who saw in the Roman *fascis* a convenient symbol of many of his political ideals, formed the original *Fascio di Combattimento* (bundle or bunch of combatants, that is, ex-service men). The group was formed to combat Bolshevik doctrines and was from the start strongly patriotic and nationalist. Hitler's adherents are often described as Fascists, and there are Fascist parties in other countries, including England. All Fascist parties are anti-communist. In 1937 Italy, Germany and Japan signed what was called the Anti-Comintern Pact, directed principally against Soviet Russia. The two chief Fascist powers gave strong armed support to the Nationalist forces of General Franco against the Communist Government of Spain, thus making possible the prolonged continuance of the Civil War which broke out there in 1936. [Spanish Civil war, 1936-1939] (p. 192)

### **How many African States Are Independent?**

Two [African states are independent]: Liberia and Egypt. The first, situated between Sierra Leone and the French Ivory Coast Colony, has an area of about 40,000 square miles and a population of between 1,500,000 and 2,000,000. Freed American slaves began to settle there in 1821, and later formed a negro republic, the independence of which was proclaimed in 1847 and shortly afterwards recognized by almost all the Great Powers. Egypt, formally part of the Turkish Empire, and from 1914-1922 a British protectorate, became independent on February 28, 1922. It is a constitutional monarchy under a king. (p. 206)

### **What Were the "Isles of the Blest"?**

The ancient Greek writers had more than one legend of mysterious islands in the western ocean, as they called the Atlantic. The story of Atlantis, the lost continent, was told by Plato, who even described the ideal state of government which existed upon it. Even older than this story is that of the "Isles of the Blest" or the "Fortunate Isles," where perpetual summer reigned and death was unknown. It is thought by some that the "Isles of the Blest" were the canaries or Madeira, which were probably known to the Phoenicians, but afterwards remained legendary until they were rediscovered in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries respectively. (p. 207)

### **What Are the "Seven Seas"?**

[The "Seven Seas" are] The North Atlantic, South Atlantic, North Pacific, South Pacific, Indian, Arctic, and Antarctic Oceans. In olden times the "Seven Seas" were a series of salt-water lagoons along the east coast of Italy between Torcello and Ravenna. For the most part these are now filled up with silt from the rivers Adige and Po. Of those which remain the lagoon of Venice is the largest.  
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### **What Are the Balkan Countries?**

Those countries which occupy territory in the Balkan peninsula of south-eastern Europe. The chief are Greece, Albania and Bulgaria; Turkey in Europe and the Dobruja section of Rumania are also sometimes included. The latter is south of the Danube, the accepted northern boundary of the Balkans, but Rumania as a whole is not regarded as a Balkan state.  
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### **Who Are the Semites?**

[The Semites are] A group of people including the Arabs, Jews, Ethiopians (in part), and to which the ancient Assyrians, Babylonians and Phoenicians belonged. In language, religion, and mental and physical characteristics all these peoples display a marked similarity, and it is generally considered that the original home of them all was the Arabian Peninsula, from which they have migrated at various remote periods. The word Semite is derived from Shem, the son of Noah, from whom these races are represented in genesis as being descended.  
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### **Why is the White Race Dominant?**

The white race is the most versatile, has the most initiative, a greater faculty for organization, and a more practical outlook on life. This has led to the mastery of the material side of living, urged it to invention and discovery, and to the development of industry, commerce and science. It has had the advantage also of living for the most part in temperate climates, where the struggle for existence has been neither too difficult nor too easy. The black race, enervated by the heat of the tropics, has never shown great capacity for sustained or combined effort. The brown race, also found in hot climates, has produced the world's main religions, and is unexcelled in artistic handicrafts. The yellow race is said still to have a slave mentality: the individual matters nothing, the community is all. Some people think that the spread of modern education may threaten the dominance of the white race.  
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### **What Races Are Found in South America?**

Pure-blooded Indians, descendants of the original inhabitants, are still found in large numbers, especially in Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay, Columbia and Venezuela. The Spanish conquerors of the sixteenth century intermarried with the natives, the result being a mixed race which is widely dispersed. This mixing was further complicated by the importation of African negroes as slaves. Pure whites, usually of Spanish or Portuguese descent, are to be found in considerable numbers, and in many large cities colonies of Chinese and Japanese are met with.  
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