

Amelia Earhart

The first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean.

Dates

Born 1897, died 1937

Overview

Amelia Earhart was born in the United States. She had a childhood full of adventures and even learnt how to use a rifle. Amelia later studied medicine and mechanics. When she was 23, Amelia took her first flight in an aeroplane and she was hooked! She saved the money to have flying lessons and finally bought her own plane. She soon became a skilled pilot and was famous for making and breaking world records. Sadly, Amelia and her plane disappeared during a flight across the Pacific Ocean in 1937.



Achievements

In 1928, Amelia and her co-pilots flew across the Atlantic Ocean, making her the first woman to do so. Amelia went one step further in May 1932, when she became the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean. She was also the first woman to fly from Hawaii to California and broke the flying height record for female pilots.

Impact

By the time of her disappearance, Amelia Earhart had become one of the most famous pilots in the world. She was a hero in the United States and was given medals by the President. Amelia also fought for women's rights and inspired other women to follow their dreams and take up sports and activities such as flying.

Fascinating fact

Amelia's world record-breaking trip across the Atlantic Ocean from the United States ended when she landed (safely) in a cow field in Ireland!

William Wilberforce

The British social reformer who helped to end slavery.

Dates

Born 1759, died 1833

Overview

William grew up in Hull. His family were wealthy and he was well-educated. He became a leading politician and was very religious. William's Christian faith led him to improve the lives of poor people in Britain and to fight against cruelty. He died at the age of 73 and was buried in Westminster Abbey, London.



Achievements

William played an important role in ending the slave trade in Britain. For many years, British ships had taken people from Africa and sold them as slaves in America and elsewhere. William Wilberforce believed that this cruel trade had to stop. He persuaded many of the British people to want slavery banned. The government finally ended slavery in 1833, giving all slaves in the British Empire their freedom.

Impact

William's greatest achievement was helping to end the slave trade in Britain. However, he also helped to change the lives of poor people in Britain. He worked to pass laws that improved factory conditions, helped educate children and protected animals. Even today, his story inspires others to change things that they feel are wrong.

Fascinating fact

William was one of the founders of the RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals).

Florence Nightingale

The nurse who reformed conditions in hospitals.

Dates

Born 1820, died 1910

Overview

Florence Nightingale grew up in a wealthy family. Early on, she enjoyed helping the poor and sick, so she trained to become a nurse. Florence worked hard and was soon running a London hospital. Then, in 1854, she travelled to Turkey to manage the nursing of wounded British soldiers in the Crimean War. She was horrified by the dirty, overcrowded conditions in the hospital camps. Many men were dying of diseases that could be prevented. Florence ordered her staff to clean up the camps and keep patients comfortable and well-fed. After the war, Florence helped to improve hospital conditions and nursing in Britain. She died at the age of 90.



Achievements

Florence showed people how to improve nursing and care for patients. She set up nursing schools and proved that patients got better when hospitals were clean and well-run. She also helped to improve the living conditions of people in their homes. The government took notice and made many changes that prevented the spread of disease.

Impact

Florence's work changed the lives of thousands of people during her lifetime and beyond. Hospitals followed many of her instructions. They became cleaner and better at treating patients and saving lives. Many believe that Florence Nightingale started modern nursing.

Fascinating fact

Florence was nicknamed 'The Lady with the Lamp' because she was often seen checking on patients at night, guided by her lamp.

Neil Armstrong

The first person to walk on the Moon.

Dates

Born 1930, died 2012

Overview

Neil Armstrong was born in the United States. As a boy, he wanted to become a pilot, and his dream came true when he was just 16! Later, Neil worked in the United States Navy as a pilot and became an engineer for NASA. He took part in early space missions and taught others how to pilot spacecraft. In 1969, Neil Armstrong was the lead pilot of the Apollo 11, which became the first craft to land people on the Moon. After this historic mission, Neil continued to work for NASA and as a teacher. He died in 2012, aged 82.



Achievements

Neil Armstrong's greatest achievement was being the first person to set foot on the Moon. Before this, animals and humans had been sent into space, but nobody had walked on the Moon. Neil's actions helped the United States to become a leading nation in space exploration. He was awarded many medals for his achievements.

Impact

Neil Armstrong's actions greatly increased interest in space exploration. Millions of people across the world watched the Moon landing, and the astronauts became heroes. Even today, children are inspired to become astronauts thanks to the Apollo 11 mission.

Fascinating fact

As Neil Armstrong stepped onto the Moon's surface, he said, 'That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.'

Boudicca

The Celtic queen who fought Roman invaders.

Dates

Birth date unknown, died around AD 60

Overview

Boudicca became the leader of a Celtic tribe called the Iceni, who lived in the area we know as eastern England. The Romans had already invaded Britain and controlled the Iceni tribe through her husband. When he died, the Romans wanted total power, so they whipped Boudicca and attacked her daughters. She decided to defend herself and her tribe, so she gathered an army of warriors to fight the Romans. Boudicca defeated them in many battles, but eventually was caught by Roman soldiers. She is believed to have poisoned herself rather than remaining captured.



Achievements

It was unusual for women at the time to lead armies. Boudicca used her power to gather thousands of warriors from across the country and lead them into battle. Many people on both sides died in the fighting, but Boudicca had come close to defeating the Romans early in the battle.

Impact

Boudicca is remembered as a strong, determined leader who defended her family and tribe. She led a huge uprising against the Romans and showed great courage. Although many facts are unknown, her story was written down by the Romans and has been retold through the years.

Fascinating fact

Boudicca went into battle on a chariot led by horses, with her daughters at her side. A statue of Boudicca and her chariot stands on Westminster Bridge in London.

Pelé

One of the world's greatest footballers.

Dates

Born 1940

Overview

Pelé was born in Brazil into a very poor family. He loved playing football, but his parents couldn't afford to buy him a proper ball so he practised by kicking around a stuffed sock! Pelé worked hard and saved up, becoming a professional footballer when he was only 15 years old. He went on to play for Brazil and became a very successful and famous footballer. Pelé now works to promote sport around the world.



Achievements

Against the odds, Pelé became a talented footballer. At 16, he became the youngest ever player to play for Brazil. Pelé later helped his team to win three World Cups and often scored the winning goals. In fact, he holds the record for scoring the most goals for Brazil, 77 goals in 92 games. Pelé later worked for the government in Brazil as the Minister for Sport. He has also won awards including the BBC Sports Personality of the Year Lifetime Achievement Award.

Impact

Pelé inspired thousands of children to take up football and to follow their dreams, however hard their lives were. Since retiring from football, Pelé has helped to promote health, education and sport around the world.

Fascinating fact

During a war in Africa in 1967, the battle was paused so that soldiers could watch Pelé play!

Joan of Arc

Led the French army into battle against England.

Dates

Born around 1412, died 1431

Overview

Joan of Arc was a peasant girl born in France. Her country was fighting a long war with England. When she was a teenager, Joan claimed to have heard voices telling her that God wanted her to lead France to victory. Despite having no training, she joined the army and wore men's clothes and armour. Joan of Arc became a successful soldier and defeated the English in many battles. She was eventually captured by the English and some French leaders who had turned against her. Joan was found guilty of acting against the Church and was burnt to death.



Achievements

She led the French army to many victories in the final years of the war against England. Joan was asked by the French king to rescue people in the city of Orléans, which she did. Although she was only a teenager, she was a successful leader. Many of her enemies preferred to give up rather than fight her army!

Impact

Joan of Arc is regarded as a heroine in France, for helping them to defeat the English. Nearly 500 years after her death, the Catholic Church made Joan of Arc a saint, to honour her religious beliefs and actions. Some people claimed that she performed miracles, such as healing two sick people.

Fascinating fact

Joan of Arc did not fight in the battles herself. Instead, she worked out the battle plans and inspired her soldiers with speeches.

Martin Luther King Jr

Leader of the civil rights movement in the United States.

Dates

Born 1929, died 1968

Overview

Martin Luther King Jr was born in the United States and became a church minister. He was troubled by the unfair treatment of black people at that time. In some areas, black people had to live and travel separately, go to separate schools and receive lower pay than white people.

Martin Luther King Jr became a leader of the civil rights movement and believed in protesting without violence. He gave speeches and organised marches, gaining support from people of all races. However, some people didn't like his views. He was shot and killed by one of these people in 1968.



Achievements

Martin Luther King Jr raised awareness of the treatment of black people in his country. His protests helped to change unfair laws, making more restaurants and public buildings welcome both black and white people. In 1963, he delivered his famous 'I Have a Dream' speech, calling for an end to racism. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 for his achievements.

Impact

Over two hundred thousand people came to listen to Martin Luther King Jr deliver his 'I Have a Dream' speech in Washington. It was also watched on television by people across the world. After his death, an important law was passed to make the United States a more equal country. Martin Luther King Jr is still regarded as a national hero today.

Fascinating fact

Over 700 streets in the United States are named after Martin Luther King Jr.