

# Introduction—American Trivia Quiz Book

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Recent surveys reveal that almost half of Americans don't know that the Constitution gives Congress, and not the president, the right to declare war. One-quarter of Americans say that Columbus set sail after 1750, and one-third can't identify the century in which the Revolutionary War was fought. Three-quarters of respondents do not know that America achieved its independence from Great Britain.

Only 7 percent can name the first four presidents of the United States in order (Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and Madison), and only 21 percent know that the faces of Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt are carved on Mount Rushmore.

While only 25 percent of Americans can identify more than one of the five freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment in our Bill of Rights (freedom of the press, petition, religion, speech, peaceful assembly), more than half can name at least two members of the Simpsons' cartoon family.

We wrote this book to help make the knowledge of our nation's history at least match the nation's knowledge of the Simpsons.

We all share a nation with many people who may look different from us, speak a native language different from ours, pray in a way that may be foreign to us, and dress and eat in ways that we don't. What, then, holds us together in this vast and varied land of ours?

The one thing all Americans have in common is our history. It doesn't matter if you're a first-generation or twelfth-generation American. You own our history. That's what makes you an American. That's the glue that holds us together as a people.

Most of us learn some of that history in school. Then, like so many other facts that we acquired there, the chronicle of our national adventure fades into the background of our lives. Will and Ariel Durant said it best: "We Americans are the best informed people on earth as to the events of the last twenty-four hours. We are not the best informed as to the events of the past sixty centuries."

We hope that the quizzes in this book will make the history of America live for you—that you'll think more about the people who have gone before us and worked so hard to bequeath us a united, spirited, and enchanting country. We hope that you'll find even more precious our national gifts of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Any good quiz book consists of items of varying levels of difficulty. Some of the posers in this book are gimmes. Others are likely to stump you the first time around. Still others—the ones signaled by a ☺—add lightness and humor.

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