



# HISTORY MYSTERIES....



**Can you find the truth behind  
these famous historical  
mysteries?**

# Investigation one: who was to blame for the assassination of JFK?

In the autumn of 1963, President Kennedy was making a tour of Texas to try to raise support and funding for the 1964 Presidential elections. On 22nd November, the President was scheduled to visit Fort Worth, before travelling to Dallas to have lunch at 1pm with local businessmen.

The rest, as they say is history... I recommend watching this video to get a feel for what happened on that day: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rEVfKKjODBg>

It includes footage from Kennedy's trip (though no footage of the assassination) and the moment the announcement of his assassination is made on television.

Within hours the case seemed solved. A 24-year-old former marine, Lee Harvey Oswald, was charged with his murder. No-one ever got to hear his version of events though. Two days after JFK was killed, Oswald was shot dead by nightclub owner Jack Ruby.

Lee Harvey Oswald's death left a vacuum of facts. It's been filled by numerous theories ever since...!

**Activity one:** read through the BBC article here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-41741216>

and discuss, what is the official version of events? What reasons are there to doubt the official version of events?

**Activity two:** Who else might be to blame for the assassination of JFK? Read through the following and decide who you think is the most credible alternative culprit to Lee Harvey Oswald.

<https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/53763/9-people-who-killed-jfk-according-conspiracy-theorists>





# Investigation two: who was to blame for the sinking of the Titanic?

Over one hundred years ago, the ship that had been called 'virtually unsinkable' struck an iceberg and sank within three hours, taking 1,513 members of her passengers and crew with her. History is clear enough on this point, but a mystery follows- how did the Titanic strike the iceberg in the first place?

Finding out more:

Read through the following

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/britain\\_wwone/titanic\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/britain_wwone/titanic_01.shtml)

**Activity 1** : after reading through the BBC link, decide who or what you think was really to blame for the sinking of the Titanic and write a prosecution speech to accuse the culprit.

**Activity 2:** How historically accurate was the 1997 film 'Titanic'?

I recommend first sitting down and watching the classic movie, Titanic (although it has a 12 rating). The trailer for it is available here if you want a shortened version of the activity:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2e-eXJ6HgkQ>

I then recommend following this link here to learn about life on the board the Titanic, and see everything from the types of passengers aboard to the nature of the cabins. This link will give you loads of knowledge about the Titanic which you can use to evaluate the historical accuracy of the movie. <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/life-aboard-titanic/>

To add further context, I recommend watching the remarkable testimony of Eva Hart, a survivor of the shipwreck: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TY-28Jn8yxc>

**Activity 3:** using your knowledge from the previous activity and the links above, you could write a movie review as a historian reviewing the film, pointing out what the Titanic film got wrong and right. (And you could even send it to James Cameron, the director, to let him know what you think!)



# Investigation three: who was Jack the Ripper?

The identity of the killer of five - or possibly six - women in the East End of London in 1888 has remained a mystery, but the case has continued to horrify and fascinate.

Between August and November 1888, the Whitechapel area of London was the scene of five brutal murders. The killer was dubbed 'Jack the Ripper'. All the women murdered were prostitutes, and all except for one - Elizabeth Stride - were horribly mutilated.

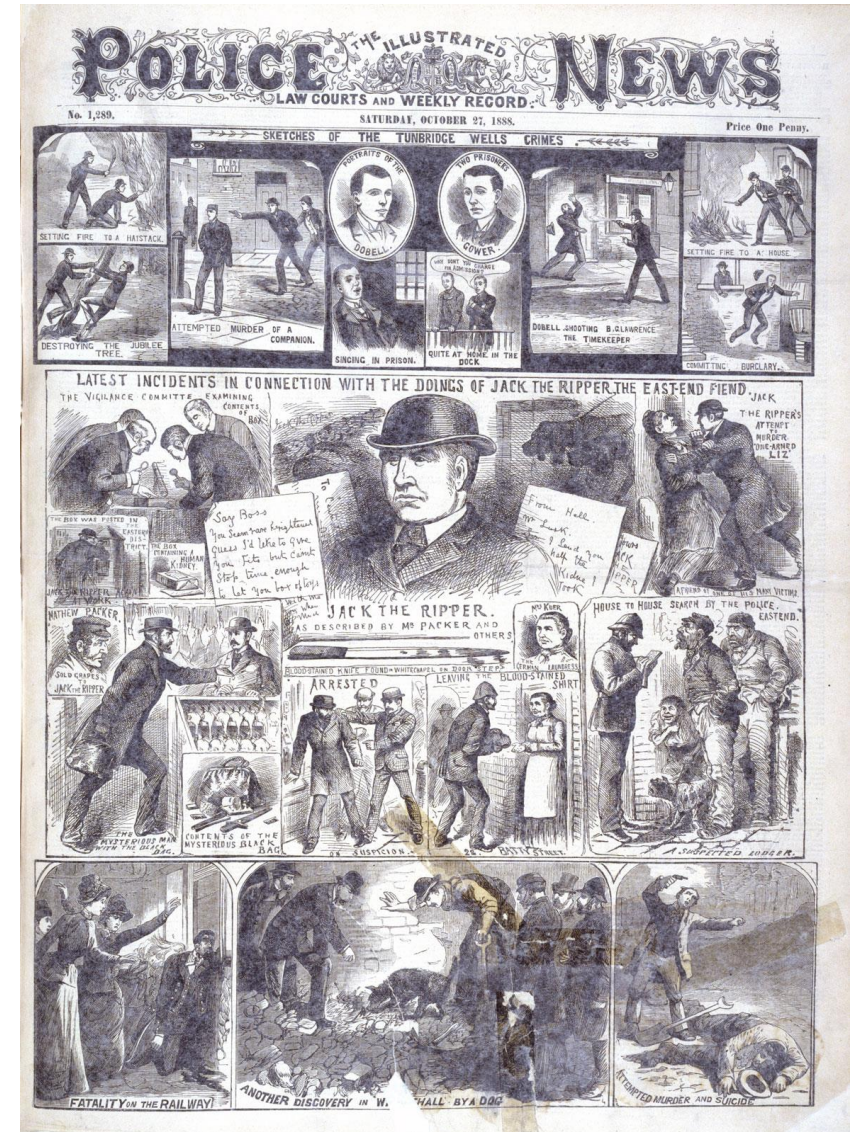
There has been much speculation as to the identity of the killer. It has been suggested that he or she was a doctor or butcher, based on the evidence of weapons and the mutilations that occurred, which showed a knowledge of human anatomy. Many theories have been put forward suggesting individuals who might be responsible. One theory links the murders with Queen Victoria's grandson, Prince Albert Victor, also known as the Duke of Clarence, although the evidence for this is insubstantial.

**Activity 1** – watch the short clip here for an introduction into the Whitechapel murders

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwblAEU6qg0>

**Activity 2** – read the web link below and discuss. Which do you think is the most likely explanation?

<https://www.historyextra.com/period/victorian/jack-the-ripper-identity-theories-nightmares/>





# Investigation four: why did the colony of Roanoke vanish?

It was in the middle of Elizabethan England, and England was trying to establish the first ever colony in America. In August 1587, a group of about 115 English settlers arrived on Roanoke Island, off the coast of what is now North Carolina. Later that year, it was decided that John White, governor of the new colony, would sail back to England in order to gather a fresh load of supplies. But just as he arrived, a major naval war broke out between England and Spain, and White was needed with the war effort. In August 1590, White finally returned to Roanoke. The entire colony had disappeared in 1590, leaving behind only two clues: the words "Croatoan" carved into a fort's gatepost and "Cro" etched into a tree. The settlers were never seen again. What happened to the settlers, and where did they go?

**Activity 1:** Watch these videos to learn some of the facts surrounding the Lost Colony of Roanoke.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f0L3RkyfEjQ>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFMnMEYwqIM&disable\\_polymer=true](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFMnMEYwqIM&disable_polymer=true)

Discuss: what are the mysterious events surrounding the missing Colony? What are some of the most common theories?

Do you have any other ideas?

**Activity 2:** Follow the links and read through the articles below.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/12/131208-roanoke-lost-colony-discovery-history-raleigh/>

<https://historycollection.co/lost-colony-roanoke-8-theories-mysterious-island-inhabitants/>



Discuss: What other theories are there about the fate of the colonists? Which theory do you think is most likely, and why? Is it supported by evidence?

Which is your favourite theory? Why is this?

# Investigation five: what happened to the Princes in the Tower?

Two young princes, Edward and Richard, were the only sons of Edward IV, King of England and Elizabeth Woodville surviving at the time of their father's death in 1483. When they were 12 and 9 years old, respectively, they were kept in the Tower of London by the man appointed to look after them, their uncle, the Lord Protector: Richard, Duke of Gloucester.

It is unclear what happened to the boys after the last recorded sighting of them in the tower. It is generally assumed that they were murdered. Their deaths may have occurred sometime in 1483, but apart from their disappearance, the only evidence is circumstantial. What is certain is that with the Princes gone, Richard Duke of Gloucester became Richard III, King of England.

In 1674, workmen at the tower dug up a wooden box containing two small human skeletons. The bones were found in a box under the staircase in the Tower of London. The bones were widely accepted at the time as those of the princes, but this has not been proven and is far from certain.

**Activity 1:** Watch this short cartoon which tries to piece together some of the events. From this cartoon, what motive do you think someone would have to murder the boys? Who do you think the most likely person was?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vO9vGUWtPKI>

**Activity 2:** Access the resources below. Discuss the following. Which seems to be the most common theory?

What other theories are presented? Which seem the most likely to you? Can you find any evidence to support your theory?

<https://www.historyextra.com/period/medieval/did-richard-iii-really-kill-princes-in-tower-debate-historians/>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G\\_o\\_HxkpKaM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_o_HxkpKaM)

<https://allthatsinteresting.com/princes-in-the-tower>



# Investigation six: what happened to Amelia Earhart?

After a plane ride at an air show, Amelia Earhart decided she would learn to fly. In 1928, she was invited to be the first female to fly across the Atlantic, but only as a passenger. With Pilot Bill Stultz and mechanic Louis E. Gordon, Earhart landed in the United Kingdom on June 17, 1928. Amelia was an instant sensation. After the flight, promoter George P. Putnam began managing Amelia's career. After several more successful flights, including a solo trip across the Atlantic, Earhart decided to fly around the world. Amelia and navigator Fred Noonan took off from Oakland, California on June 1st, 1937 and made it 22,000 miles to Lae, New Guinea. The next leg to Howland Island was problematic. Overcast skies hindered navigation and it was discovered later they were using inaccurate maps. At 8:43 am, on July 3, US Coast Guard Vessel, Itsaca received the last communication from Earhart and launched an immediate search. However, the plane was never found and her mystery is still researched today.

**Activity 1** – watch the links below to get more detail about Amelia Earhart's life

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SiTeCEuxZII&t=64s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPrBgNXpV7w>

**Activity 2** – what do you think happened to Amelia Earhart? Use the links below and other research to help your investigation.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2017/07/amelia-earhart-disappearance-theories-spd/>

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/amelia-earhart-may-have-survived-crash-landing-never-seen-photo-n779591>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/06/world/amelia-earhart-photo-japan.html>

