Queen Victoria (24 May 1819 – 22 January 1901) was Queen of England and the United Kingdom (England, Scotland and Wales) from 1837 until her death in 1901. She was also Queen of Ireland. In 1876, she was made Empress of India after Great Britain took control of that country.

Queen Victoria was the daughter of Prince Edward, the fourth son of George III. All of Prince Edward’s older brothers died without sons before George III. The year King George died, so did Victoria’s father, leaving her the only surviving heir. Victoria inherited the crown at age 18. England was a constitutional monarchy, so Victoria’s power was limited. She tried to carry some influence in politics, but her major influence was in the lives of the British people. Victoria came to stand for strict standards of personal morality.

Victoria married Prince Albert of Saxe-Gotha (in Germany) in 1840. Victoria and Albert had nine children and 42 grandchildren. Of those 42 grandchildren, 26 married into royal and noble families across Europe. Victoria earned the nickname “the grandmother of Europe.” Albert died in 1861, which left Victoria heartbroken and in a state of mourning for the rest of her life.

Victoria reigned for 63 years, the longest of any British monarch to date. It was a period of industrial, cultural, political, scientific, and military change within the United Kingdom, and was marked by a great expansion of the British Empire.
Samuel F.B. Morse (April 27, 1791 – April 2, 1872) was an American contributor to the invention of a single-wire telegraph system based on European telegraphs, co-inventor of the Morse code, and an accomplished painter.

In 1825, Morse was commissioned to paint a portrait in Washington. While painting, a horse messenger delivered a letter from his father that read one line, "Your dear wife is [dying]". Morse immediately left Washington for his home at Connecticut, leaving the portrait unfinished. By the time he arrived, his wife had already been buried. Heartbroken in the knowledge that for days he was unaware of his wife's failing health and her lonely death, he moved on from painting to pursue a means of rapid long distance communication.

Morse developed the concept of a single-wire telegraph, which he patented in 1837. He created a code (Morse Code) to communicate along a single wire. Morse code uses a series of dots and dashes to stand for individual letters. In time the Morse code would become the primary language of telegraphy in the world, and is still the standard for rhythmic transmission of data.

On 24 May 1844, he sent the message "WHAT HATH GOD WROUGHT" from Washington, DC to Baltimore. This message (quoting Numbers 23:23) was chosen by the daughter of the patent commissioner. The message was all capital letters because the original Morse code alphabet had no question mark or lower case. The Morse/Vail telegraph was quickly deployed in the following two decades; the overland telegraph connected the west coast of the continent to the east coast by 24 October 1861, bringing an end to the Pony Express.
Eli Whitney (December 8, 1765 – January 8, 1825) was an American inventor best known for inventing the cotton gin. This was one of the key inventions of the Industrial Revolution and shaped the economy of the Southern United States before the Civil War. Whitney’s invention made cotton into a profitable crop, which made slavery in the United States more profitable (regardless of whether Whitney intended that or not). Despite the social and economic impact of his invention, Whitney lost many profits in legal battles over patent infringement for the cotton gin. Thereafter, he turned his attention into securing contracts with the government in the manufacture of muskets for the newly formed continental army. He continued making arms and inventing until his death in 1825.

The cotton gin is a mechanical device that removes the seeds from cotton, a process that had previously been extremely labor intensive. The word ‘gin’ is short for engine. The cotton gin was a wooden drum stuck with hooks that pulled the cotton fibers through a mesh. The cotton seeds would not fit through the mesh and fell outside. Whitney occasionally told a story that he got the idea for the cotton gin when he saw a cat attempting to pull a chicken through a fence, and could only pull through some of the feathers.
Alexander Graham Bell (March 3, 1847 – August 2, 1922) was a famous Scottish scientist, inventor and engineer who is credited with inventing the first practical telephone.

Bell’s mother and wife were both deaf, which profoundly influenced his life’s work. His father, grandfather and brother all worked with elocution (the study of formal speaking) and speech. Bells’ research on hearing and speech led him to experiment with hearing devices. From these experiments, Bell developed an early form of telephone, which he patented in 1876. He patented an improved version the following year.

Bell did for the telephone what Henry Ford did for the automobile. Although not the first to experiment with telephonic devices, Bell and the companies founded in his name were the first to develop commercially practical telephones around which a successful business could be built and grow. Bell succeeded where others failed to assemble a commercially successful telephone system. It can be argued that Bell invented the telephone industry.

Bell considered his most famous invention to take away from his real work as a scientist, and did not even keep a telephone in his study. Bell had many other inventions over his career and in 1888 he became a founding member of the National Geographic Society.
James Watt (19 January 1736 – 25 August 1819) was a Scottish inventor and mechanical engineer whose improvements to the steam engine were fundamental to the changes brought by the Industrial Revolution in both his native Great Britain and the rest of the world.

While working as an instrument maker at the University of Glasgow, Watt became interested in the technology of steam engines. He realized that engines of the time wasted a great deal of energy. Watt created a design that avoided this waste of energy and radically improved the power, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness of steam engines. He developed the concept of horsepower. The unit of power, the watt, was named after him.

Watt attempted to commercialize his invention, but experienced great financial difficulties until 1775 he entered a partnership with Matthew Boulton. The new firm of Boulton and Watt was eventually highly successful and Watt became a wealthy man. In his retirement, Watt continued to develop new inventions though none were as significant as his steam engine work. He died in 1819 at the age of 83. Watt has been described as one of the most influential figures in human history.
Karl Marx (5 May 1818 – 14 March 1883) was a German philosopher, economist, sociologist, historian and journalist. His ideas formed the foundation for communism and socialism. Marx's work in economics were very influential, even today. He published numerous books during his lifetime, the most notable being The Communist Manifesto (1848).

Marx's theories about society, economics and politics – collectively known as Marxism – hold that human societies progress through class struggle: a conflict between an ownership class (who own mines and factories, etc.) and a laboring class (who work in the mines and factories, etc.). He called capitalism the "dictatorship of the bourgeoisie (middle class)," believing it to be run by the wealthy classes for their own benefit. He felt that capitalism would eventually destroy itself and create socialism, just as capitalism had replaced feudalism. He argued that the working class would eventually rise up and take control and establish a classless society, socialism or communism, a society governed by a free association of producers. Marx actively fought for socialism and communism, arguing that the underprivileged people should revolt against capitalism.

Marx has been described as one of the most influential figures in human history. Revolutionary socialist governments who agree with Marxist concepts took power in a variety of countries in the 20th century, leading to the formation of such socialist states as the Soviet Union in 1922 and the People's Republic of China in 1949.
Adam Smith (16 June 1723 – 17 July 1790) was a Scottish Enlightenment philosopher and a pioneer of economics. One of the key figures of the Scottish Enlightenment, Smith is best known for *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), usually abbreviated as *The Wealth of Nations*. It is the first modern work of economics. Smith is cited as the "father of modern economics" and is still among the most influential thinkers in the field of economics today.

Smith laid the foundations of classical free market economic theory. In *The Wealth of Nations*, he explained how rational self-interest and competition can lead to economic prosperity. Smith’s ideas were very different than the other economic theories of the time. Capitalism was different than mercantilism, where the government controlled many aspects of trade and commerce. Under capitalism, trade and commerce were in the hands of the individuals, who could make the economy more successful. Smith believed that the government should not control any aspect of the economy. Smith said that an "invisible hand" (like supply and demand—what people want and how much of it there is) kept the economy working and that government control would disrupt it.
Thomas Alva Edison (February 11, 1847 – October 18, 1931) was an American inventor and businessman. He developed many devices that greatly influenced life around the world, including the phonograph, the motion picture camera, and a long-lasting, practical electric light bulb. He was one of the first inventors to apply the principles of mass production and large-scale teamwork to the process of invention, and because of that, he is often credited with the creation of the first industrial research laboratory.

Edison held 1,093 US patents, as well as many patents in the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. More significant than the number of Edison's patents, are the impacts of his inventions, because Edison not only invented things, his inventions established major new industries world-wide, like, electric light and power utilities, sound recording and motion pictures. Edison's inventions contributed to mass communication and, in particular, telecommunications. These included a battery for an electric car, electrical power, recorded music and motion pictures.
Henry Ford (July 30, 1863 – April 7, 1947) was an American businessman and inventor who started the assembly-line methods for automobile manufacturing, which led to faster production at lower costs. One of the most popular figures in history, Ford’s inspired the Industrial Revolution in the United States and worldwide.

Henry Ford built his first steam engine when he was only fifteen. He constructed his first internal combustion engine in 1893 and his first automobile in 1896. Although he didn’t invent the automobile, Ford changed the way automobiles were designed and built. He started using the assembly-line factories for the mass production of vehicles that later led to lower prices, and made it so that many middle-class American’s could afford it. Making the automobile into something that many people could afford changed America. Ford founded the Ford Motor Company in 1903 and was president of the company from 1906 to 1919.
Wilhelm II (January 27, 1859 – June 4, 1941) was Germany's last Kaiser (German King). He was the eldest grandson of the British Queen Victoria and related to many monarchs and princes of Europe, including his cousin King George V of the United Kingdom, and his cousin Tsar Nicholas II. Following the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary on 28 June 1914, Wilhelm and his Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, pressed Austria-Hungary to get revenge on Serbia. Events spiraled resulting in the First World War. Wilhelm did not to foresee the consequences of an Austro-Hungarian attack on Serbia, which pulled France, Russia and Britain into the war. Too late he attempted to scale back German involvement: but his military leaders firmly argued against that. In 1918, Germany's push to win the war collapsed, as U.S. involvement took on real form, and shortages at home in Germany spun out of control. It became clear that Germany was set to lose the war.

With revolution spreading to Berlin, Wilhelm was forced to abdicate (give up the throne) on 9 November 1918. Wilhelm sought exile in Holland, where he lived for the rest of his life.
King George V (June 3, 1865 – January 20, 1936) was the King of England during World War I. George was a grandson of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert and the cousin of Tsar Nicholas II of Russia and Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany. As a result of World War One (1914–18), most other European empires fell but the British Empire expanded to its greatest size. During WWI King George - and his wife May - visited the Western Front (front lines of WWI) on several occasions. During one such visit his horse rolled on top of him, breaking his pelvis, an injury that plagued him for the rest of his life. His reign saw the rise of socialism, communism, and the Indian independence movement, all of which radically changed the political landscape. He was plagued by illness throughout much of his later reign and at his death was succeeded by his eldest son, Edward VIII.
Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924) was the 28th President of the United States, in office from 1913 to 1921. He was narrowly re-elected in 1916 around the slogan, "He kept us out of war." However, during Wilson's second term America ended up getting into World War I. While many Americans felt strongly about staying out of war, American neutrality was challenged in early 1917 when, despite many strong warnings, the German Empire began unrestricted submarine warfare. They also tried to get Mexico to attack the U.S. In April 1917, Wilson asked Congress to declare war in order to make "the world safe for democracy." In the late stages of the war, Wilson took personal control of negotiations with Germany, including the armistice (cease-fire). In 1918, he issued his Fourteen Points, his view of a post-war world that could avoid another terrible conflict. In 1919, he went to Paris to add the formation of a League of Nations to the Treaty of Versailles, with special attention on creating new nations out of old empires. During an intense fight with the Republican-controlled Senate over giving the League of Nations power to force the U.S. into a war, Wilson suffered a severe stroke that left his wife largely in control of the White House until he left office in March 1921. He refused to compromise with the Senate which destroyed any chance of them agreeing to it. The League of Nations was established anyway but the United States never joined.
Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (22 April 1870 – 21 January 1924) was a Russian communist revolutionary, politician. He served as the leader of Soviet Russia from 1917 until his death. In 1924. Born into a wealthy middle-class family in Russia, Lenin gained an interest in revolutionary communism following the execution of his brother in 1887. Arrested for troublemaking and exiled to Siberia for three years, he fled to Western Europe, living in Germany, England and Switzerland. Following the February Revolution of 1917, in which the Tsar (Emperor of Russia) was overthrown and a temporary government took power, he returned home.

As a leader of the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Communist Party, he took a senior role in orchestrating the October Revolution in 1917, which overthrew the temporary Russian government, that had been set up after the Tsar was overthrown, and established the United Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR), the world’s first communist country. Immediately afterwards, Lenin proceeded to put communist reforms into action, including the transfer of estates and crown lands to workers’ soviets groups. Faced with the threat of German invasion, he argued that Russia should immediately sign a peace treaty – which led to Russia’s exit from World War I.

After his death, Lenin remains a controversial and highly divisive world figure. Some have labeled him a dictator whose administration oversaw multiple human rights abuses, but supporters have shown him as a champion of the working class. He had a significant influence on the Communist movement around the world.
Nicholas II (Nikolay Alexandrovich Romanov) (May 18, 1868 – July 17, 1918) was the last Emperor (Tsar) of Russia. Nicholas II ruled from 1 November 1894 until his enforced abdication (give up his throne) on March 2, 1917. His reign saw Imperial Russia go from being one of the greatest powers of the world to economic and military collapse. As head of state, Nicholas approved the Russian entry into WWI in August of 1914, a war in which 3.3 million Russians were killed. The Imperial Army’s severe losses and the High Command’s incompetent handling of the war, along with other policies directed by Nicholas during his reign, are often cited as the leading causes of the fall of the Romanov dynasty.

Nicholas II abdicated (give up his throne) following the February Revolution of 1917 during which he and his family were imprisoned. Nicholas II, his wife Alexandra his son and four daughters, were executed by the Bolsheviks on the night of 16/17 July 1918.
Franz Ferdinand (December 18, 1863 – June 28, 1914) was an Archduke of Austria-Hungary, and from 1889 until his death, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne. His assassination in Sarajevo (Sare-Ee-Ay-Vo) caused Austria-Hungary's declaration of war against Serbia. This caused the Central Powers (including Germany and Austria-Hungary) and the Allies of World War I to declare war on each other, starting World War I.

On Sunday, June 28, 1914, Archduke Ferdinand and his wife were visiting the city of Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia, which was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. As the archduke and his wife rode down the street in the open-topped car, they were attacked by a grenade thrown at their car. However, the bomb detonated behind them, hurting the occupants in the following car. On arriving at the Governor's residence Franz angrily shouted, "So this is how you welcome your guests - with bombs?!

After a short rest at the Governor's residence the royal couple insisted on seeing all those who had been injured by the bomb at the local hospital. However, no one told the drivers that the plan had been changed. When the error was discovered the drivers had to turn around. As the cars backed down the street and onto a side street, the line of cars stalled. At this same time an assassin was sitting at a cafe across the street. He instantly seized his opportunity and walked across the street and shot the royal couple. He first shot Sophie in the abdomen and then shot Franz Ferdinand in the neck. Franz's dying words to Sophie were, "Don't die darling, live for our children." They were both dead within an hour.