

The Gullibility Test

Pretend that you're an editor at a major newspaper. A reporter has just handed you a story that contains the following statements. Unfortunately, this reporter has a reputation for embellishing stories with wild claims that are completely untrue.

Using common sense and whatever you know about history and the natural world, you've got to decide which statements are true and which are false before the paper goes out to print. Saying 'I don't know' isn't an option. Could your readers depend on you to ferret out the truth for them? Remember that truth is often stranger than fiction.

✓ for TRUE	✓ for FALSE
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History and Culture

1) Sir Thomas Crapper invented the toilet.		
2) The Eskimo language has over 100 words for snow.		
3) Early Dutch traders bought the entire island of Manhattan from a Native American tribe for a few coins worth around \$700 in today's currency.		
4) When the Pilgrims landed in the New World they were surprised to discover that one of the first Native Americans they met had lived in England for many years.		
5) The idea to build Stanford University came to Leland Stanford during a seance while he was contacting the ghost of his son, Leland Stanford Jr.		
6) There is a lake in Massachusetts called Lake Chargoggaggoggmanchaugagoggchaubunagungamaug. The name is a Native American word that means "You fish on your side, I'll fish on my side, nobody fish in the middle."		
7) When Columbus sailed to America in 1492, most Europeans believed that the earth was flat.		
8) The Ancient Sumerians worshipped a deity named Ninkasi. She was the Goddess of Beer.		
9) At least ten people are known to have survived two atomic bomb blasts, having been in both Hiroshima and Nagasaki when the bombs were dropped on those cities during World War II.		
10) Lewis and Clark claimed to have seen a living dinosaur on their 1806 expedition to the American West.		

Science and Nature

11) Cockroaches can survive for up to a month with their heads cut off.		
12) Sharks do not get cancer.		
13) Long-tailed, South American monkeys have an unusual way of crossing rivers. Clinging to each other, they form their bodies into a long, living chain of bodies that stretches between the trees on either side of a river. Other members of the pack then climb across this 'monkey chain' to reach the other side.		
14) The laws of physics change over time.		
15) Turtles, once they reach maturity, do not continue to grow old.		
16) Lemmings commit suicide by hurling themselves, en masse, off cliffs.		
17) There is a small village in Ecuador, called Vilcabamba, whose inhabitants have an average lifespan of over 100 years.		
18) Lightning occasionally imprints photographic images of the surrounding scenery onto the skin of those it has struck.		
19) Physicists recently announced that they were able to slow down light waves until the waves were almost frozen in place.		
20) Gravity has a stronger pull at the Earth's poles than it does at the equator. As a result, a person who weights 150lbs at the equator, would weigh almost a pound heavier if they stood at the North Pole.		