

Outrageous Myths... People Still Seem to Fall For

Although we live in the Information Age, it might as well be the Misinformation Age. People believe the most outrageous things. And they seem to keep falling for them again and again. Here are some of the most common modern myths and their origins. You'll laugh. You'll cry. And you may have to let on that you were once a believer as well

By Turx



Just as Eskimos have 37 words for snow, the English language has all sorts of descriptive terms for lies, including deceit, deception, dishonesty, distortion, fabrication, falsehood, fib, fiction, forgery, hyperbole, libel, misrepresentation, prevarication, tale, tall story, vilification and whopper.

Some of those words essentially mean the same thing, but others hold different shades of meaning. For instance, there are pranks, hoaxes, urban legends, conspiracies and myths. A prank is something that affects just a few people, while a hoax is the exact same idea but involves a lot more people. An urban legend is a hoax that keeps resurfacing, and something people fall for each time the hoax is reenacted either because they didn't have a chance to fall for it the first time or they never got the memo explaining that the first time was a hoax. A little higher up in the ranks is a conspiracy theory, which is an upgraded version of the urban legend. While most hoaxes and pranks are deliberate, urban legends, conspiracies and myths usually aren't.

Myths trump everything in the sense that until they are shown to be myths people are convinced they are facts. "Why do I believe it? What do you mean? Everyone knows it's true...." Here are some of the most outrageous myths of our day.

(Note: Some say that it is a myth that Eskimos have 37 words for snow...)

Carrot Vision

The myth: Eating carrots improves your eyesight

Believed date of origin: 1940

What you probably believed until you read this article is that carrots improve your eyesight. However, the reality is that while



The Battle of Britain inflicted much damage on London and other English cities, but it failed miserably at its goal of forcing England into submission.

carrots are not bad for your eyes, they won't improve them either. Interestingly, there is a specific story behind the origins of this myth and although the story has been around for quite some time the myth has been around for longer.

For some reason, Hitler had always admired the British Empire. He started asking himself questions like: How could a small island like Britain conquer and maintain a quarter of the world? Would the British ever form an alliance with us and help us conquer the other three-quarters of the world? The answer to the second question was, "No." But that didn't stop him from trying. All his gestures to the British were soundly declined.

Then one day Hitler saw an opening. Welcome to Dunkirk, 1940. As the German army blitzed through France, a huge pocket of surviving French, British, and Belgian soldiers found themselves painted into a corner at the coastal city of Dunkirk. They were sitting ducks in the face of the German onslaught. Churchill gave the order that as many soldiers as possible be ferried across the English Channel at top speed. The problem was that there were over 330,000 soldiers and to ship them all across would take days if not weeks. But there was no

reason not to try, and so, rescue efforts began.

Miraculously, in less than two weeks, almost all the ships carrying the trapped soldiers had made it across while hardly a shot was fired by the Germans. Why? Some historians believe that Hitler was offering a peaceful nod toward the British hoping that they would agree to his terms following this generous overture. However, upon receiving word that the British refused to negotiate, Hitler flew into a rage (worse than his usual) and authorized the bombing of England.

German bombers were unleashed and things looked bad for the British. Despite the carnage, however, the Luftwaffe was losing far more planes than were their counterparts in the RAF. Squadrons of German planes were getting shot down by the British as if the Brits knew exactly when they would come and where they would strike. The Germans then limited their sorties to nightfall but it made no difference: the British were always aware of their position.

Of course, the real reason the British were so well informed was a secret new invention called radar. The Germans knew nothing about it, but they were actively working to discover the secret of apparent British foreknowledge. That's when carrots saved the day.

John Cunningham, a celebrated British pilot, was once interviewed by a reporter after having shot down his twentieth German plane. When asked what made him such an ace, he humbly replied that he always ate a lot of carrots and it improved his eyesight so much that he could even see perfectly in the dark.

Of course, none of it was true (except for the part that he ate carrots). What possessed him to say that? Because that's what his superiors told him to say. They hoped it would divert German spies from pursuing the real threat: radar.

In no time, the interview found its way to the front page of all the major news venues. Not only did carrot sales in Great Britain



The evacuation of Dunkirk rescued over 300,000 Allied soldiers.



Artist's depiction of an air battle between a Luftwaffe plane and a Royal Air Force plane.



Entire city blocks in London were flattened by German aerial bombardments.