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Introduction

Fact: Harry Houdini was born right-handed, but he forced himself to use his left hand until he could use both hands equally well. Because of his continuous rigorous training, Houdini could use his toes as well as most people could use their fingers.

Fact: Beethoven is considered a musical genius. His compositions are hailed today as masterpieces. Yet Beethoven composed some of his greatest work while he was deaf. Also, Beethoven could not multiply.

Take Five Minutes: *Fascinating Facts and Stories for Reading and Critical Thinking* sparks interest. The information reported above is contained in lesson units of this book, and it is this type of information that gets students sitting up in their seats and paying attention. Spanning centuries, from Cleopatra to living heroes of today, *Take Five Minutes: Fascinating Facts and Stories for Reading and Critical Thinking* provides factual information about people and events. It was not written as “test material,” where one is expected to memorize facts. It was written so that a teacher can generate class discussion, reinforce geography skills, and present people and history in a less stilted manner than is typical of academic textbooks.

The lessons and activities in *Take Five Minutes: Fascinating Facts and Stories for Reading and Critical Thinking* are short and fun. They supplement and add to classroom learning.

Polly Bemis (Lalu Nathoy)

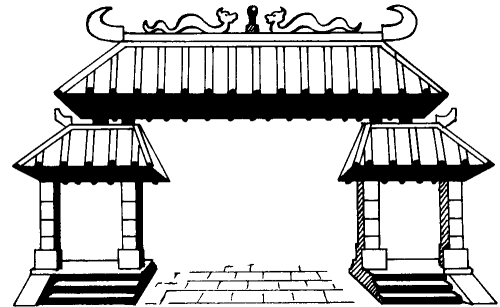
(1853–1933)

When Lalu Nathoy was a young girl in China, if a girl wanted to be attractive and have a good chance at getting married, her feet had to be bound. Strips of cloth would be wound so tightly around a child's foot that the bones would crush. Some grown women had feet no longer than three inches (7.6 cm).

Rather than being bound, Lalu begged her parents to let her help in the fields. Lalu worked hard in the fields for five years. Still, the famine continued. Marauding bandits started stealing whatever they could, and Lalu's father was told that unless he traded Lalu, he and the rest of his family would be killed. Lalu was stolen from her home for two bags of soybeans. Lalu never saw or communicated with her family again.

The bandits sold Lalu some years later to a man in Shanghai. This man then resold her to a special buyer in America. At the age of 19, Lalu was sent to San Francisco, California. To reach there, she had spent weeks in the sweltering heat of a hold of a cargo ship. It was filthy and filled with human vomit and waste.

At the Chinatown marketplace in San Francisco, Lalu was auctioned off to the highest bidder. She was sold to a man who lived in the mining town of Warrens, Idaho. This man changed Lalu's name to Polly. The man cheated and abused Polly, but when this man lost Polly in a poker game to Charlie Bemis, Polly's life took a new turn. Polly opened up a boarding home, and she became one of Warrens's most trusted and respected citizens. Polly's ability to heal the sick and injured became legendary. One time, Polly even nursed Charlie back to health after he had been shot in the head and the local doctor had said that there was no chance of recovery. Charlie and Polly married, and they homesteaded along the Salmon River.



Polly suffered horribly throughout most of her life. She was abused and taken from her family. Though her name could be taken and changed, nothing could take away Polly's spirit or her kindness. When Polly died in 1933, the entire town of Warrens turned out to honor her. They remembered her as the woman who had the rare power of making them all feel happy.

Questions to Ponder

- Polly lived the last years of her life in Idaho. What is the capital of Idaho? (*Boise is the capital of Idaho.*)
- Does Idaho border a foreign country? If so, which one? (*Yes, the northern part of Idaho borders Canada.*)
- What do both girls and boys do to their bodies today to make themselves more attractive? Should some of these things, like feet binding, be stopped?
- Marauding bandits rode into Lalu's village and stole her. What does *marauding* mean? (*Maraud means "to roam about and raid in search of plunder."*)

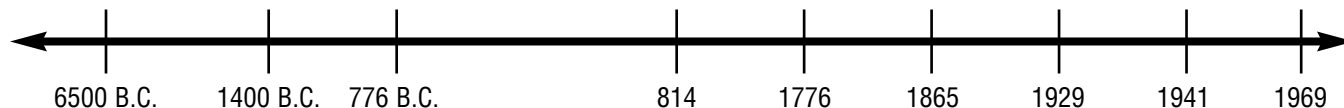
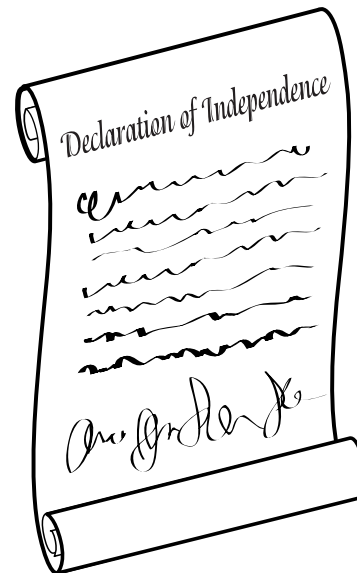
Which Came First?

Chronos was the Greek god of time. *Chronological* means “arranged in the order of time.”

Great Events in World History

Can you put these great events in the correct chronological order? Place the corresponding letter for each event on the time line accordingly.

- A. Man walks on the moon for the first time.
- B. Wheel is invented by Sumerians.
- C. Japan attacks U.S. bases in Hawaii. U.S. joins Allies in World War II.
- D. Declaration of Independence is signed.
- E. U.S. Civil War ends. President Lincoln is assassinated.
- F. Iron Age begins in Asia.
- G. First (Ancient) Olympic Games are held in Greece.
- H. U.S. stock market crash triggers worldwide depression.
- I. Arabic numerals are established.



Questions to Ponder

- What other great event in world history would you put on this quiz?
- Ghana was an African country that gained independence from England in 1956. Can you name the capital of Ghana and find it on the map? (*The capital of Ghana is Accra.*)
- What is your favorite Olympic Game event? Do you think professional athletes should be allowed to participate in the Olympic Games?