

NER Christmas Quiz Answers

Here at NER the quizzes we set are deliberately designed to take you on journeys along the less travelled byways of general knowledge. I know that not a few of you do some research and attempt one or two questions because you often email me and tell me about the joys of encountering odd snippets of fact that you found fascinating. I love getting your emails and I do endeavour to acknowledge every one of them, but if I haven't replied to anyone please don't be insulted; it simply means that I have been inundated. I will try to reply to everyone in due course.

The first part of the quiz was posted on the third Sunday in Advent [here](#) and many of you got almost all of the questions correct. The answers I am looking for are as follows:

1) Which famous television personality (former politician, former news anchor, former game show host, former talk show host) was born near Karl Marx's grave, but a few hundred feet deeper down than the communist philosopher is buried, on the thirteenth of February in *AD* 1944?

Jerry Springer in *AD* 1944 on one of the deep platforms at Highgate Tube Station in London U.K. sheltering from WWII air raids.

2) Which famous President of the U.S.A. was born hard by one of today's delicious Bourbons?

President Lincoln was born in Knob Creek, Ky, U.S.A. that is known today for the delicious Bourbon label of the same name and is where visitors can check out the boyhood home of Honest Abe. The Lincolns lived in there in a log cabin until young Abraham was seven, when the family relocated to Indiana. The U.S. National Park Service has managed the

Knob Creek home since AD 2001.

3) Which lead vocalist of a famous rock band was born in the city that gave its name to the Angora wool shorn from Angora rabbits, the long-haired Angora goat (the source of mohair), and the Angora cat?

John Graham Mellor (lived from the 21st of August, AD 1952 to the 22nd of December, AD 2002), known by his stage name Joe Strummer, was an English musician, singer, actor and songwriter who was the co-founder, lyricist, rhythm guitarist and lead vocalist of the Clash, a rock band formed in AD 1976 as part of the original wave of British punk. His father worked for the British Diplomatic Service and John ended up being born in Ankara in Mohammedan occupied Anatolia.

4) Which famous Emperor and conqueror of the land between the two rivers was born on the sixth day of *Hekatombaion* in the city whose ancient Greek name means stone and where a famous Curse Tablet was found in AD 1986?

Alexander the Great (Alexander of Macedon) was born on the twentieth or the twenty-first of July in 356 BC at Pella, the capital city of Macedon that had been built by his father. The Curse Tablet that has been found there has served to confirm the limited knowledge we have of what type of Greek was spoken by the Macedonians in Alexander's time.

5) What is the name of the person who was born (*circa* 1810 BC) in the city that is described in Genesis 10:10 as being founded by Nimrod and who is assumed to have been the first to codify a system of laws, one of which we quote to this day as "an eye for an eye?"

The Code of Hammurabi is one of the earliest known examples of human laws being defined and written down in an orderly way. Little is known about Hammurabi himself;

he ruled Babylon nearly four millennia ago, from roughly 1792-1750 BC and was born there. The code has two hundred and eighty-two entries covering all sorts of civil interactions, from inheritance to theft to slave ownership. Some of the laws are general (anyone caught committing a robbery shall be put to death) and others quite specific ("If any one hire an ox-driver, he shall pay him six gur of corn per year"). The code's best-known dictum is "If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out" – commonly quoted as "An eye for an eye."

Babylon is the town of Babel in Genesis 10:10 – "And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar." – KJV.

6) The Browning Auto-5 was manufactured by a firm based in this city, the city of Pippin, and The Hammer was born here also. By what name is The Hammer more usually known to us today and who did he hammer?

Charles Martel, who consolidated his power through military might, earned the name Martel, which means "The Hammer", with his victory in the October of AD 732 at the Battle of Tours that is considered a turning point in European history because it stopped the Mohammedan advance from Spain. The Browning Auto-5 was manufactured by Fabrique Nationale de Herstal. Herstal is the ancient city in Belgium where the firm was based and where Charles Martel was born.

Pippin of Herstal (*circa* 635–714), Mayor of the Palace and *de facto* ruler of Austrasia and Neustria and founder of the family that established the Carolingian dynasty, chose this location as his main residence. Pippin was the father of Charles Martel.

7) The imperial family of an empire lived in relative luxury

in this city for round about a year. It was also the administrative centre of the home province of “the mad monk” who helped to cause their downfall, but what was the name of the chemist who created the first valid periodic table of the elements in 1869 and who was born in this city?

Russian chemist Dmitri Mendeleev (also Dmitrii Mendeleev or Dmitri Ivanovich Mendeleev) was born on the eighth of February, *AD* 1834 in Tobolsk – actually in a small village in greater Tobolsk called Verkhnie-Aremzyani, both, obviously, in Siberia, so I’ll accept either as an answer. He created the first valid periodic table of the elements in *AD* 1869. With the exception of post-graduate training in England and Germany (where he studied with Robert Wilhelm Bunsen – he of the Bunsen Burner), Mendeleev spent most of his career in St. Petersburg as a popular and influential lecturer at the university. He created a table of the known elements (sixty-three at the time) in ascending order by atomic weight, grouped together by similarities in properties. Mendeleev’s particular genius was to leave gaps for elements not yet discovered. By the 1880s some of those elements had been discovered, proving Mendeleev’s logic and making him famous in and out of Russia.

8) Rambam, probably the most famous Jewish philosopher ever, was born in this town that put up with only its Roman bridge across its dividing river until the construction of the San Rafael Bridge in the mid-twentieth century. What was the great thinker’s real name?

Moses Maimonides (Moshe ben Maimon) is regarded by many as the greatest Jewish philosopher ever. As a doctor, rabbi, religious scholar, mathematician, astronomer, and commentator on the art of medicine, his influence has spanned centuries and cultures. In *AD* 1135 he was born at Córdoba in Spain and later educated by his father, a Jewish judge. Eventually settling in Cairo, he became

court physician to two viziers of Egypt, Saladin and el Fadil, and chief rabbi of the city's Jewish community. His 'Guide of the Perplexed' (AD 1190) used philosophical reasoning to argue that the Bible and Jewish faith did not conflict with Aristotle's popular system of thought. Today, Maimonides' "Thirteen Principles of Faith" are still recited in synagogues. His works continue to be studied by Jewish scholars, including Commentary on the Mishnah (AD 1168), nicknamed "The Luminary," and Mishneh Torah (AD 1180), 14 volumes of biblical and rabbinic law, coded and compiled. His nickname, Rambam, is an acronym for Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon.

Scholars disagree on his birth year. Recent research points to 1138, not the more frequently cited 1135. He was multilingual and wrote most of his works in Arabic. Hospitals in such cities as Brooklyn, N.Y., San Francisco and Montreal bear his name. His tomb in the Galilean city of Tiberias has attracted tourists for centuries.

9) This mathematician who is reputed to have said that God created the best of all possible worlds and who simultaneously with, but separately from, Newton invented calculus, was born in this city that is also famous for hosting Friedrich Schiller when he wrote his poem "Ode to Joy". What is the name of this famous polymathic mathematician?

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz was born in Leipzig on the first of July in AD 1646. He was a German philosopher and mathematician whose broad knowledge made him one of the most influential European thinkers of the eighteenth century. The son of a philosophy professor in Leipzig, he spent most of his professional career in the service of noblemen – particularly a string of Dukes of Hanover (one of whom became England's George I, just two years before Leibniz's death). Leibniz, brilliant in matters ranging from engineering and mechanics to political and theological theory, travelled widely, corresponded

frequently and, in many instances, worked privately on metaphysical and mathematical problems. He's said to have invented infinitesimal calculus in the 1670s, at the same time as Isaac Newton; it's Leibniz's notations that are used today. Although he was a public figure during his lifetime, Leibniz's philosophical works didn't get much notice until after his death, partly because he worked out his philosophy in notes, letters and short essays rather than in published books. Now he's famous for presaging symbolic logic, for his work with binary systems (he built a calculating machine in AD 1673) and for his metaphysical argument that God created this best of all possible worlds (later he was famously ridiculed for this by Voltaire in 'Candide'). His achievements are such that he's considered one of the great geniuses of his era – one whose influence was greater than his individual works.

10) This author was born in the city known as The Abode of Clouds. She has been charged with sedition for her misguided vocal support for the violent Mohammedan separatists in a province of her home country. What is her name?

Arundhati Roy (Suzanna Arundhati Roy) is the Indian social activist and author whose novel 'The God of Small Things' won the prestigious Booker Prize for literature in AD 1997. Roy is an unusual blend of artist and activist; she has yet to publish a second novel. She left home at sixteen and attended the Delhi School of Architecture. In AD 1984 she met her future husband, film director Pradip Krishen. She went on to write the TV movie 'In Which Annie Gives it Those Ones' (AD 1989, in which she also starred), and Electric Moon (AD 1992). After tiring of the film industry she turned to writing fiction; her first effort was the remarkable 'The God of Small Things', a tragic story of Indian twins Estha and Rahel and a family entangled in the rigid Indian caste system. It sold six million copies and made her famous. She spent the next

decade writing and speaking on political topics like India's nuclear weapons programs, the Narmada Dam, and the war in Iraq. Her non-fiction books include *The Cost of Living* (AD 1999), *Power Politics* (AD 2002), and *War Talk* (AD 2003). She announced in AD 2007 that she was beginning work on a second novel.

Some sources say Roy was born in AD 1961; I'll go with the word of the U.S. Library of Congress, The Lannan Foundation and other sources who say AD 1959. Roy was the first Indian woman to win the Booker Prize. She was awarded the Sydney Peace Prize in AD 2004 for her non-violent devotion to social causes. The title 'The God of Small Things' refers to the character Velutha, a family handyman.

(11) Name all the places where the people in the previous ten questions were born.

In order – Highgate in London U.K; Knob Creek, Ky, U.S.A; Ankara in Mohammedan occupied Anatolia (Turkey); Pella, then the capital city of Macedon with its ruins now in Greece proper; Babylon in Mohammedan occupied Mesopotamia (Iraq), which was the first city ever to reach a population of over two hundred thousand souls; Herstal in Belgium; Tobolsk in Russia; Córdoba in Spain; Leipzig in Germany; and Shillong in Meghalaya province in India.

The second part was posted [here](#) on the last Sunday in Advent and, as you expect, the answers I wanted are as follows:

1) On the twenty-third of December in AD 1688 the last Roman Catholic monarch of Scotland landed at a small port in north-west France. (a) What did Napoleon I plan to do from there? and (b) What did Pluto have to do with this town?

The port is called Ambleteuse and (a) Napoleon I planned to invade England from there, and (b) After the Normandy Landings, Ambleteuse became the endpoint for the second

'Operation Pluto' pipeline, fuelling the Allies from supplies in Kent.

2) The following is an extract from a famous poem extolling the virtues of Bohea and published in AD 1700:

"BY Avon's Stream (the Muses calm Retreat)

Palaemon liv'd in his un-envy'd Seat,

None better knew, or practis'd, in his Cell..."

. . . and so on for two cantos.

(a) What did two monarchs do to the author of this poem on the twenty-third of December in AD 1692? and (b) How is Psalm 42 connected to the Christmas carol describing the Annunciation to the Shepherds and also to the poem in this question?

The poem is called 'Panacea, a poem upon tea in two canto's' [sic]. (a) On that day King William and Queen Mary (Orange, of England that is) appointed Nahum Tate, the author of the poem, as the third Poet Laureate. (b) Tate is also connected with the famous 'New Version of the Psalms of David' (AD 1696), on which he collaborated with Nicholas Brady. Some items such as Psalm 42 ("As pants the hart") rise above the general level, and are amongst Tate's finest works. A supplement was licensed in AD 1703 which included the Christmas carol "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks", which is one of a number of much-loved hymns by Tate.

3) The Castle of Bliss saw something dreadful happen to *Le Balafré* on the twenty-third of December in AD 1588. (a) How was the "Forty-five", which belonged to a king, involved and who was the king? and (b) What connection through two authors does *Le Balafré* have to the Right Honourable Lawrence, Earl of Rochester?

Le Balafré, literally "the Scarred" but we would call him

Scarface, was the nickname of Henry, Duke of Guise, leader of the Catholic League (and, confusingly, also that of his father). (a) The "Forty-five" was the bodyguard of Henry III of France and they assassinated Henry, Duke of Guise at the *Château de Blois* (properly *Château Royal de Blois*) on the order of their master on the twenty-third of December in AD 1588, and (b) John Dryden and Nathaniel Lee wrote 'The Duke of Guise' (AD 1683), based on events during the reign of Henry III of France and dedicated it (in what some saw as a somewhat tongue-in-cheek way) to "The Right Honourable Lawrence, Earl of Rochester" (properly: Lawrence, The Right Honourable The First Earl of Rochester KG PC). Also, in John Dryden's satire, 'Absalom and Achitophel', the Earl (family name: Lawrence Hyde) is "Hushai", the friend of David in distress.

4) A well-loved and very brave king, who succeeded to his throne on the twenty-third of December, AD 1909, once said in pointing out the risks in abandoning Christian ideals in his country: "Every time society has distanced itself from the Gospel, which preaches humility, fraternity, and peace, the people have been unhappy. . ." This same king also refused to comply with a great empire's demand that its troops be allowed safe passage through his country and so the United Kingdom of Great Britain was forced to go to war over that issue, amongst others. (a) What does the city of Lumbashi have to do with this king's wife? and (b) What did the Tiwa, or Tigua, peoples of New Mexico give to this king? and (c) Why was this king's wife awarded the title Righteous Among the Nations by the Israeli government?

The king, of course, was the devout and mild-mannered Albert the First of Belgium who succeeded to his throne on the twenty-third of December, AD 1909. The empire he refused safe passage to was that of Germany at the outbreak of World War One. (a) The city of Lubumbashi (Kinshasa) in The Congo was formerly known as

Élisabethville, and it was named in this pious queen's honour when it was founded in 1910 in what was then the Belgian Congo. It adopted its current name in 1966 when, after six years of wrangling following independence, the regime of Joseph Desire Mobutu began purging The Congo of its colonial-era place names, and (b) From the twenty-third of September through to the thirteenth of November in AD 1919, King Albert, his Queen and their son, Prince Leopold, made an official visit to the United States. During a visit to the historic Native American pueblo of Isleta Pueblo, New Mexico, King Albert installed Father Anton Docher as a Knight of the Order of Leopold II. Fr. Docher presented the King with a turquoise cross mounted in silver on behalf of the Tiwas peoples and made by them for this occasion. Ten thousand of the people travelled to Isleta to attend the ceremonies. On that same trip to the U.S.A. Albert was elected an honorary member of the [New York State Society of the Cincinnati](#), and (c) During the German occupation of Belgium from AD 1940 to AD 1944, at great personal risk she used her influence as queen, and her German connections, to assist in the rescue of hundreds of Jewish children from deportation by the Nazis.

5) On the twenty-third of December in AD 962 this Mohammedan occupied city was stormed by a victorious Christian general who became known and feared as 'The Pale Death of the Saracens' and who went on to become an emperor. By his side was his nephew, another future emperor. They razed the city to the ground and killed or enslaved all the Mohammedan inhabitants, carrying off several tons of silver dirhams (a coin of the primitive currency of the Mohammedans) that had been amassed by extorting Christians and Jews, together with thousands of camels and mules and much more treasure besides. Most importantly they retrieved and carried off the ancient and tattered tunic of the Forerunner. (a) What is the name of the city that was razed? and (b) How is the 'Pale Death of the Saracens' linked to Herod Antipas (Herod the King)? and (c)

Why is his nephew important to Mount Athos?

The victorious Christian general was Nicephorus Phocas, who was born into a noble Byzantine family around AD 912. He was a brilliant general and military tactician who gained a considerable reputation for a series of significant victories against the Mohammedans. He went on to become the Byzantine Emperor Nicephorus II Phocas. His family surname, Phocas, means 'the bringer of victories' and so was apt indeed. John Tzimiskes was his also militarily talented nephew who scored many victories against the Mohammedans in his own right and he went on to become Emperor John I Tzimiskes and succeeded his uncle on the throne, and (a) The city was Mohammedan occupied Aleppo and General Phocas stormed into it on the twenty-third of December in AD 962, and (b) The tattered tunic that the victorious armies bore back to Constantinople in triumph was that of Saint John the Baptist, also known as the Forerunner because he was born before Christ and proclaimed His coming. See also the Gospel of Luke, Ch.1: V's 39 to 56 for The Visitation verses. After its recovery the tunic was housed in a reliquary in the Church of Christ Chalkites, which the general's nephew and future emperor John the First Tzimiskes, later rebuilt. The church also became the final resting place of John I. The connection is that Saint John the Baptist was murdered, supposedly in the tunic that was recovered, by Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee and known erroneously as Herod the King. The church in Constantinople that housed the tunic was dedicated to Christ of the Chalke after the great bronze image of the Saviour ("Christ Chalkites") framed above the main entrance of the nearby Chalke Gate of The Great Palace (the church was just to the left of the gate). This church building, the name of which stems possibly from its doors or tiles made with bronze (in Greek, *chálkeos*), was in reality the monumental religious vestibule of the Great Palace of Constantinople. The

desecrated church, already heavily damaged by centuries of Mohammedan depredations and neglect, was demolished by the Mohammedan occupiers in AD 1804, and (c) John I Tzimiskes, granted his Imperial Charter (a typikon for Athos called the Tragos, and the first of quite a few issued by the Byzantine emperors to Athos) to the communities of the religious on Mount Athos expanding their area twice over. In this he was completing the work started by his predecessor and uncle, the great general, Emperor Nicephorus II Phocas who left more than sufficient funds in his will to allow his great and pious friend, Athanasius the Athonite, to found and begin building the Great Lavra on Mount Athos. Nicephorus II Phocas, had promised Athanasius that he would become a monk again in the Great Lavra on retiring from the purple but circumstances and his murder by his nephew and successor cancelled those plans. However, his permanent imperial grant, which was doubled by John I Tzimiskes's Charter, allowed the completion of the buildings of the first community of coenobitic monks on Mount Athos. Both Nicephorus and John are commemorated as saints in the Orthodox tradition on Athos. Strangely Nicephorus's tunic (his sakkos – a type of embroidered vestment that he wore that was similar to the one he wore when a monk acolyte in his teens) and his crown were sent to The Great Lavra by John I Tzimiskes where they are still preserved in the Lavra's library to this day. There is a story that some of the threads in this sakkos came from the Baptist's tunic that was recovered from the Mohammedans at Aleppo and that some are also embedded in the crown, which is why John sent them to The Great Lavra. It appears that the two men were linked together in blood and faith by Athos, by family and by Saint John the Baptist.

The third part was posted [here](#) on Christmas Eve and the answers are straightforward:

1) When the cattle lowed what didn't Jesus do?

"The cattle are lowing the baby awakes

But little lord Jesus **no crying he makes.**"

2) After you've struck the harp what else are you supposed to do?

"Strike the harp and **join the chorus**"

3) When you've risen there are two more things that you're instructed to do. What are they?

". . . **Join the triumph** of the skies;

With th' angelic host **proclaim,**

"Christ is born in Bethlehem.""

4) What appeared in flesh?

Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing"

5) What did they want in a cup?

". . . Now bring us some figgy pudding,

And a **cup of good cheer!**"

6) What did the angels touch when they bent?

". . . From angels bending near the earth,

To **touch their harps of gold:**"

7) What came from the east and was given to the earth?

"They looked up and saw a star

Shining in the East beyond them far

And to the earth it **gave great light**"

8) Who quaked?

“Silent night, holy night!

Shepherds quake at the sight . . .”

9) How many pipers piping?

“On the eleventh day of Christmas, my true love gave to me

Eleven pipers piping . . .”

10) What was The Dayspring exhorted to do?

“O come, Thou Dayspring, come and **cheer**

Our spirits by Thine advent here . . .”

11) What did the bark taste of?

“The holly bears a bark

As **bitter as any gall** . . .”

12) What should be swungen?

“E’en so here below, below,

Let **steeple bells** be swungen . . .”

13) (a) What was offered and (b) what was mine?

(a) “**Frankincense** to offer have I . . .”

(b) “**Myrrh** is mine . . .”

14) In order, name all the carols used in the previous questions.

Away in a Manger; Deck the Halls; Hark the Herald Angels Sing; O Come All Ye Faithful; We Wish You a Merry Christmas; It Came Upon the Midnight Clear; The First Nowell; Silent Night; Twelve Days of Christmas; O Come, O

Come, Emmanuelle; The Holly and the Ivy; Ding Dong Merrily on High; and We Three Kings of Orient Are.

The fourth part was posted [here](#) on Christmas Day and its two questions were designed to act as a non-alcoholic postprandial *digestif* :

1) Why is Santa always represented as being stout, with a white beard and wearing a red suit?

Thomas Nast, who was born on the twenty-seventh of September in AD 1840 and died on the seventh of December in AD 1902, was a German-born American caricaturist and editorial cartoonist considered to be the 'Father of the American Cartoon'. Among his notable works were the creation of the modern version of Santa Claus, which he based on the traditional German figures of *Sankt Nikolaus* and the *Weihnachtsmann*. He also devised the political symbol of the elephant for the USA Republican Party.

2) What have a penny, Christmas day and a church got to do with a very close relationship?

Penny weddings in church on Christmas day. The festive season is one of the most romantic times of the year, but why did so many people in times past tie the knot on Christmas day? It is not uncommon for family historians to encounter the odd Christmas Day wedding during the course of their family research. While this may appear to suggest that our ancestors shared similar views on the romantic nature of the nation's favourite holiday, the appeal of the date was usually rather more practical. During the 18th and 19th centuries, getting married on Christmas Day itself was a popular tradition, with churches across the country holding festive nuptials every December 25th.

However, couples who chose to opt for a Christmas Day wedding would have rarely done so out of a desire to capture a sense of seasonal romance. Christmas Day weddings

usually occurred out of necessity as Christmas and Boxing Day were often the only days of the year that young working class couples were guaranteed to get off work. Even Charles Dicken's Ebenezer Scrooge was forced to reluctantly give his long suffering clerk, Bob Cratchett, the day off in the opening chapter of 'A Christmas Carol'. Christmas and Boxing Day were often the only days of the year that young working class couples were guaranteed to get off work.

Christmas Day is not, and Boxing Day never used to be, bank holidays. They are traditional holidays. For the bank holidays, we need to thank Sir John Lubbock, a banker and politician who loved his cricket and couldn't stand the idea of competitors gaining an advantage by trading on days he and his staff went to support or play in their local village matches. He introduced the Banking Act 1871 which recognised four official bank holidays, Easter Monday, Whit Monday, the first Monday in August, and Boxing Day. In the 1800s, most people worked six days a week and didn't get paid when they didn't work which, of course, the vast majority of people could ill afford. It wasn't like today, when you can simply request a day's holiday to marry on whichever day of the year takes your fancy. It was only with the rise of the labour unions in the twentieth century that working conditions and employee rights started to improve and the tradition of Christmas weddings began to die out. However, enthusiastic reports of Christmas Day weddings can be found within our collection of historic newspapers right through the 1940s and even into the early 1950s.

The process our ancestors went through in order to arrange a marriage was uncomplicated with just three readings of the banns on three consecutive Sundays being all that was required. An ancient legal tradition, banns are an announcement in church of a couple's intention to marry. The readings provided an opportunity for anybody to declare

a reason why the marriage may not lawfully take place. Most weddings were simple, small affairs with few guests and even fewer of the expensive trappings and traditions associated with modern weddings. Best clothes would be worn as they would be in any case for any Sunday and a short service would be followed by dancing and making merry at home, in the local barn or pub. A short service would be followed by dancing and making merry at home, in the local barn or pub.

Christmas Day weddings appear to have been even more common in inner city areas, home to large industrial working class communities. In a number of cities, particularly in London, it was a tradition that churches offered free marriages and baptisms on December 25th. Group weddings appear to have been routinely performed east of St. Paul's, and in the poorer quarters of the city.

Penny Weddings, so-called because each of the contracting parties paid this modest sum for the privilege of being united in the bonds of matrimony, were another relatively common form of working class marriage