

Notable Quotable

"The human foot is a masterpiece of engineering and a work of art."

~ Leonardo da Vinci,
Renaissance polymath



April Horoscopes and Birthdays

In astrology, those born from April 1–19 are Rams of Aries, the first sign of the zodiac. Rams are unafraid to forge ahead with passion, zeal, and confidence. Full of optimism, they are unafraid to confront problems head-on. Those born from April 20–30 are Bulls of Taurus. While Taureans enjoy the comforts of luxury, they are unafraid of hard work. Their steadfast natures make them determined and reliable.

Marvin Gaye – April 2, 1939
Eddie Murphy – April 3, 1961
Jackie Chan – April 7, 1954
Al Green – April 13, 1946
Julie Christie – April 14, 1940
Kareem Abdul Jabbar – April 16, 1947
Eliot Ness – April 19, 1903
Barbra Streisand – April 24, 1942
Ella Fitzgerald – April 25, 1917
Willie Nelson – April 29, 1933
Whispering Oak Place Birthdays
Donald R. April 18
Minnie R. April 29

Renaissance Man *cont. from pg. 1*

He showed so much artistic promise that his father apprenticed him to the master painter Andrea del Verrocchio. It was in Verrocchio's workshop that Da Vinci's genius began to shine. Verrocchio found his own work so inferior to his young apprentice's that he vowed never to paint again. Yet Da Vinci was restless. He was interested in so much more than painting. His passion for science led him to study mechanics, architecture, and human anatomy. Da Vinci

began keeping meticulous records of his studies in illustrated notebooks. While the vast majority of what we know of Da Vinci comes from the 6,000 pages of notes and drawings that he left behind, he is best remembered for two paintings: *The Last Supper* and *Mona Lisa*. But to fully appreciate Da Vinci's genius, we must appreciate his belief that science and art were disciplines that elevated each other.

A Poem Like a Secret

April is Poetry Month, which gives us 30 days to appreciate these literary gems. Poems are unique expressions of thoughts and feelings that can inspire epiphanies. But for some, poetry remains inaccessible and difficult to understand. Thirty days' worth of the stuff is torture! For those in need of a smaller dose, April 29 is Poem in Your Pocket Day. On this day, choose any poem you like—long or short, modern or old-timey, humorous or serious, simple or complicated—and carry it in your pocket. Read it to

yourself throughout the day or whenever the feeling strikes. Contemplate it. Puzzle over it. Question it. Share it with others, if you like. Or keep it to yourself, like a secret. No one has to know that you have a poem stashed away in your pocket. Above all else, enjoy it. If you need help getting started, consider these lines by Pulitzer Prize-winner Archibald MacLeish:

*A poem should be palpable
and mute
As a globed fruit*

Whispering Oak Place

April 2021

**Celebrating
April**

**Jazz
Appreciation
Month**

**Habitat
Awareness
Month**

April Fools' Day
April 1

Easter
April 4

Draw a Bird Day
April 8

Ramadan Begins
April 12

Scrabble Day
April 13

**World Amateur
Radio Day**
April 18

Kiss of Hope Day
April 24

**International
Dance Day**
April 29

Assisted Living & Memory Care
903 Calverly Court Ellendale, MN 56026
Tel: 507-684-3026 | Fax: 507-684-3194

Renaissance Man

Leonardo da Vinci was born just outside Florence, Italy, on April 15, 1452. It is most fitting that Da Vinci was born in the springtime, during the season of rebirth. The Renaissance was a period of cultural reawakening after the darkness of the Middle Ages, with Europeans making significant advancements in science, art, philosophy, and politics. Perhaps no one epitomized the era more than Da Vinci. As an artist, scientist, and inventor, he was the ultimate "Renaissance Man."

Surprisingly, it was not Da Vinci who developed the idea of the Renaissance Man. It was the philosopher, writer, artist, and

architect Leon Battista Alberti, a predecessor of Da Vinci who wrote that "a man can do all things if he will." Alberti called this the *uomo universal*, or "universal man," a persona that he himself embodied. But if Alberti laid the foundations of the Renaissance Man, Da Vinci built himself up as its masterpiece.

Da Vinci received no formal schooling beyond the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic.

cont. on pg. 4



The Almighty Dollar

The \$ symbol of the U.S. dollar is recognized around the globe. It was invented by accident by Oliver Pollack on April 1, 1778. Pollack was an Irish merchant living in New Orleans when the Revolutionary War began. As a British colony in revolt, America could not use British currency, so the Spanish peso became the preferred method of payment. Luckily for Pollack, he had built his fortune in Spanish pesos

through illegal trading in the Spanish Caribbean. Pollock lent the Americans 300,000 Spanish pesos, equivalent to one billion of today's dollars, and kept detailed records of his transactions. In a ledger dated April 1, 1778, Pollack scribbled "ps," short for Spanish *peso*, in a way that looked like the dollar sign \$. In 1797, Founding Father Robert Morris adopted the symbol for America's new currency.

Fountain of Fiction



De León is credited for discovering the Gulf Stream, which sped voyages from Spain to North America.

On April 2, 1513, explorer Juan Ponce de León landed on a peninsula he called “La Florida” and claimed it for the Spanish crown. But why had he come? Some say he was searching for the Fountain of Youth, a spring that granted eternal youth to whoever bathed in its waters.

It is said that the indigenous Taino people of the Caribbean passed on stories of a magical fountain and river of rejuvenation to the Spaniards. Rumors reached De León that this was located somewhere north of Cuba. So with permission of King Ferdinand of Spain, De León set out from Puerto Rico to find it. He set sail with three ships and landed in Florida, yet he never found the Fountain of Youth. But then again, historians argue that was never his intention. Not only was the Fountain of Youth a legend but so was De León’s search for it. The truth is that

stories of De León’s search for the Fountain of Youth were invented by his rivals as a means of ruining his reputation after his death.

In 1508, Ponce de León colonized Puerto Rico and became its governor, but a political rift forced him to give up Puerto Rico to Diego Columbus, the son of Christopher Columbus. After De León’s death, Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo, a Spanish court historian and ally of Diego Columbus, wrote a misleading account of a bumbling and foolish De León searching for a magical fountain of youth in Florida. While many at the time knew the writings to be a satirical smear campaign against De León, over the centuries Oviedo’s fantastical fictions have morphed into fact, facts happily accepted by all those who want to believe in the magical Fountain of Youth.

Unnatural History



The Greek historian Ctesias described unicorns as having white bodies, dark red heads, blue eyes, and multicolored horns.

If ever there was a day to believe in magic and hope for the impossible, it is April 9, Unicorn Day. Unicorns have not entered our collective imagination from myth or legend but from natural history. Various ancient Greek historians recorded the existence of unicorns. The Indus Valley Civilization emblazoned the unicorn on official seals, and a unique animal known as a *re’em*, which many believe to be a unicorn, is mentioned in the

Bible. Even Leonardo da Vinci mentioned them in his famed notebooks. Modern-day scientists may have something in common with these scientists of centuries past. Researchers have discovered evidence of a giant hairy rhino that roamed the grasslands of Eurasia and lived alongside humans as recently as 39,000 years ago. Scientists speculate that this “Siberian unicorn” might very well have been the origin of unicorn myths that pervaded so many cultures.

Snack Cake Super Stardom



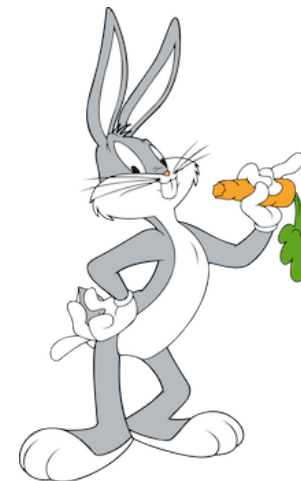
Twinkies were originally filled by workers pedaling a mechanical filler with their feet.

James Dewar started working at Illinois’ Continental Baking Company in the 1920s as a delivery boy. By 1930, he had risen to plant manager, and on April 6 of that year, he created the most famous snack cake the world has ever known, the Twinkie. Before the cakes were called Twinkies, they were Little Shortcake Fingers, pre-packaged strawberry-filled

shortcakes available only during the short strawberry-harvest season. The idle factory equipment drove Dewar to invent a new, still nameless, yellow sponge cake filled with banana crème. While on his way to a marketing meeting, Dewar passed a billboard advertising Twinkle Toe Shoes. He had found the Twinkies name, and the rest is history.

What’s Up, Doc?

On April 30, 1938, Warner Bros. released a new Looney Tunes cartoon featuring Porky Pig as a hapless hunter trying to unsuccessfully bag a humorously hyperactive rabbit named Happy. How could audiences know that this rabbit would evolve into Bugs Bunny, one of the most recognizable cartoon characters of all time?



Bugs Bunny’s original voice was later used to voice Woody Woodpecker.

The rabbit in *Porky’s Hare Hunt* bore little resemblance to the Bugs Bunny we all know and love today. This white rabbit wore no gloves, lacked Bugs’ recognizable voice, and did not eat a single carrot! It would be two years before Bugs made his official debut in *A Wild Hare*. When a redesigned rabbit was requested for the short, animator Bob Givens went to work and sketched a rabbit based on a design by Ben “Bugs” Hardaway that was labeled “Bugs’s Bunny.” The name stuck. When audiences got their first glimpse at the new and improved rabbit, the character stuck, too.

The Bugs Bunny featured in *A Wild Hare* displayed many of the trademarks we have come to love. When staring down the barrel of Elmer Fudd’s shotgun, Bugs first uttered his catchphrase “What’s up, Doc?” The phrase was added by the cartoon’s director, Tex Avery, who had heard the expression a thousand times in his native Texas. Avery was more surprised than anybody when it left audiences rolling with laughter. As for Bugs’ obsession with munching carrots, this was a habit “borrowed” from Clark Gable’s character in the 1934 movie *It Happened One Night*. In one scene, Gable stands by a fence spouting advice to Claudette Colbert while chewing a carrot and talking with his mouth full. The scene was so famous at the time that audiences immediately got Bugs’ imitation, and it earned the bunny instant panache. His popularity would endure for over 70 years, and he remains Warner Bros.’ most recognizable mascot.