



# History's Greatest Lies: The Startling Truths Behind World Events our History Books Got Wrong

*By William Weir*

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## **History's Greatest Lies: The Startling Truths Behind World Events our History Books Got Wrong** By William Weir

The true stories behind historical events give readers a fascinating new look at our past. The revelations shock and amaze by exposing veiled motivations and convenient inaccuracies in well-documented actions by established leaders that often have a continuing effect on the world.

Each of the fifteen chapters points out a myth that is held as a common truth in history and summarizes what we think we know. Then the author shreds the tale to academic ribbons using the latest findings on each subject. Each true story sets the record straight, reveals timeless ulterior motives, introduces important personalities who successfully (and suspiciously) avoided responsibility in common history texts, and notes underlining issues that have continued relevance in the modern age. For instance, did Nero really fiddle as Rome burned? Did Paul Revere actually alert the militia that the British were coming? Did the Catholic Church imprison Galileo because his teachings conflicted with the Bible? Weir takes on all these myths and tells the reader what really happened.

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**History's Greatest Lies: The Startling Truths Behind World Events our History Books Got Wrong By William Weir Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #645428 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Fair Winds Press
- Published on: 2009-01-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.50" h x .75" w x 7.50" l, 1.10 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 288 pages

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In historian Weir's newest, he examines and debunks popular historical myths, trimming the proceedings in a textbook-like assemblage of color illustrations and sidebars. Weir cites numerous sources while restoring historical accuracy to popular legends, including Nero's fiddling, the "unconquerable" Afghanistan and Paul Revere's ride. Though largely well-written and meticulously researched, Weir stretches mightily to incorporate some of his investigations; his look at Jesse James in particular rings false, citing an "American Robin Hood" myth that Weir may as well have made up (has anyone ever argued that James wasn't a vicious murderer and thief?). A few more stories like this unfortunately detract from the strong entries; especially illuminating are the passages on Wyatt Earp and John Dillinger. Though there are surprises to be found for history buffs, knowledgeable readers will find enough off-track editorializing and fluff to question some of Weir's more salient and interesting points. 125 color illus.

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Review

#### **Publishers Weekly, February 9, 2009**

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#### **Bookviews.com, February 2009**

"I love reading history, so I was naturally intrigued by William Weir's *History's Greatest Lies* in which he neatly dispatches many of the most treasured stories to be found in the schoolbooks and repeated elsewhere. Weir relates that Emperor Nero did not fiddle as Rome burned because the fiddle or violin wasn't invented until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. His enemies are the source of that story and he had plenty of them. Paul Revere did his best to alert the extensive Colonial militia that the British were coming, but they got to him first, holding him for awhile as the word was spread by a variety of means. The Bastille was stormed because the crowd wanted to get at its store of gunpowder. Its political prisoners actually lived in comfortable quarters. All things considered, this book provides a very interesting new look at history."

About the Author

William Weir is the author of several history books, including *Written with Lead*, *Fatal Victories*, *A Well Regulated Militia*, *Soldiers in the Shadows*, *Turning Points in Military History*, *Fifty Weapons that Changed Warfare*, and *Fifty Military Leaders Who Changed the World*. He lives in Guilford, Connecticut.

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