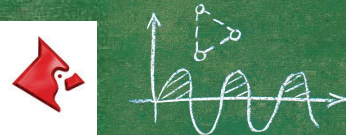




Opening The Windows Of Curiosity

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The first magician to pull a rabbit from a top hat may have been Louis Comte, in 1814.

A special trap door table is sometimes used to perform the rabbit and hat trick.

WORLD OF WONDER Exploring the realms of history, science, nature and technology MAGIC

Call it hocus pocus, conjuring or wizardry, magic has a long history. Once thought to have supernatural powers, magicians today are celebrated as talented illusionists who can make the impossible seem real.



Illustration of George Ripley (one of England's most famous alchemists) from the 16th-century edition of the Ripley Scroll.

Alchemy

Alchemy is the pursuit of a method to transmute metals into other metals. Alchemists also tried to create a potion for immortal life.

Several surviving medieval scrolls combine magic and medicine with alchemy. One of the most famous of these is the Ripley Scroll.

Did you know?

The earliest magicians were thought to be sorcerers with supernatural powers and were often associated with the devil. When Christianity became the dominant religion in fourth-century Europe, magicians were outlawed. Many were tortured and killed as witches or devil worshippers.

Some magicians promoted the idea of the supernatural and occult in their advertisements.

The late 1800s and early 1900s are considered the Golden Age of Magic. Many famous magicians, such as Maskelyne and Devant, Howard Thurston, Harry Kellar and Harry Houdini, were from this time period.

Many modern artists prefer the term "illusionist" instead of "magician."

The largest magic organization is the **International Brotherhood of Magicians**. The oldest organization is the **Society of American Magicians** — Houdini was its president for several years.

The richest magician in the world is **David Copperfield**, who had a net worth of more than \$875 million 2019.

The word **abracadabra** was inscribed inside amulets during the Black Plague as protection from the disease.

Harry Houdini died on Halloween in 1926, in Detroit, Michigan. During his career, he was buried alive, handcuffed, bound in a straitjacket, submerged underwater and hung from a skyscraper.

In some places, magicians need a license to use a rabbit in their shows.

Zulu witch doctor



Early days

Prehistoric people had a lot of magic in their lives. Magic was a form of religion to Stone Age people. Shamans held a great deal of power in the community and were thought to have access to the spirit world and healing magic. Using trances and rituals, shamans were asked to change the weather or bring animals to hunt.

Witch doctors

In many cultures, a witch doctor is a sorcerer, prophet or shamanistic healer who is said to heal with magical powers. In the mid-19th century, the term "witch doctor" came into use to describe African shamans or medicine men.

In a word

The term **magic** comes from Greek *mageia* (μαγεία). The first people to perform magic acts were Persian priests, called *magosh* in Persian and *magoi* in Greek.

The words "hocus pocus" are taken from the name of a sorcerer in Norse mythology, called Ochus Bochus.

Magic show posters

Many old magic show posters and reproductions are highly collectible. They show how magicians advertised their magic acts 100 years ago.



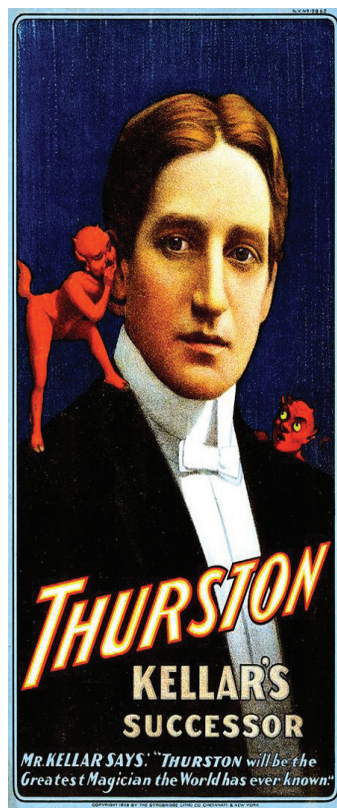
Alexander Herrmann (1844 – 1896)

Herrmann the Great was a French magician. His wife, Adelaide Herrmann, was also a magician. She was known as the Queen of Magic.



Harry Houdini (1874 – 1926)

Perhaps the most famous magician of all time, Houdini performed stunts and illusions. He was best known for his amazing escape acts.



Howard Thurston (1869 – 1936)

Howard Thurston was an American stage magician. He was known for performing a floating lady illusion he learned from his mentor, Harry Kellar.

SOURCES: World Book Encyclopedia, World Book Inc.; <https://kidsconnect.com>; <https://www.theabracadabra.com>; <https://www.factinate.com>

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