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## Master American History in 1 Minute a Day

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**NOTE:** This PDF preview of *Master American History in 1 Minute a Day* includes only the preface and/or introduction. To purchase the full text, please click [here](#).

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# INTRODUCTION

The late Daniel Boorstin, who was a very good historian and Librarian of Congress, said that trying to plan for the future without a sense of the past is like trying to plant cut flowers. We are trying to raise a lot of cut flowers these days. Public policy, journalism, foreign adventures, and many other parts of modern life are crafted with little understanding of the warnings or opportunities arising from what has come before.

Prior to the nineteenth century, much of written history was hagiography—the glorification of some leader, dynasty, or national or ethnic group. Often it involved the casual repetition of unexamined legends and stories passed between generations, with little concern for accuracy of fact or interpretation. By the turn of the twentieth century, however, historians were insisting on a more exact, even scientific, search for data, and on a more dispassionate analysis. The best historical work today involves the meticulous examination of primary documents, periodic reexamination of long-held conclusions, and rigorous debate about interpretation. Like all university-based historians, along with teaching and institutional service, I have been engaged in similar scholarly pursuits—specifically, examining the nexus of religion and politics in seventeenth-century Puritan London.

I am also a public historian; that discipline takes historical inquiry to another important level, making academic history accessible to a wider audience. Many people hunger to understand the historical context of events and personalities that affect our world today but are so caught up in immediate pressures of life that they have little time for serious inquiry. Public historians help craft a conduit through which important insights are made informative and arresting to such people.

One such conduit has been *A Moment in Time*, a brief historical examination of events and personalities from the past, heard on many domestic public-radio stations and Armed Services Radio around the world. This book and *A Moment in Time* come from the same animating impulse.

My associates and I have learned several things as we have produced the radio program:

- People learn differently now. They get their information in thirty-second bursts, tweets, and other forms of social media and are uncomfortable with long scholarship. The short-form delivery of high-quality information can help people improve their overall knowledge base.
- To make an impact on a mass audience, historians have to go where the people are, not wait for the people to come to them. Public historians create accurate and compelling historical vehicles for radio, television and the internet—interactive and multimedia tools to aid parents, schools, teachers, and students as they expand their historical perspective.
- People of all ages, particularly baby boomers and their children, respond to compelling and effective ways of teaching history.

- One of the most effective ways of teaching history, or for that matter science, literature, and the arts, is to convey it as a story. Recapturing the narrative tradition is an integral part of the work of public history.

Herein, I present three hundred stories that follow the American journey from the age of discovery to the recent era of social and political upheaval. Naturally, none of them tells the complete story. Readers should consider each a historical snapshot, an abbreviated conversation starter, hopefully whetting the appetite for more.

Most of these vignettes originated as radio programs, but each radio script was crafted from a much lengthier and more complex transcript that can be found at [www.amomentintime.com](http://www.amomentintime.com). All visitors may access the website, but subscribers receive a daily email journey into history, crafted from the daily programs heard on *A Moment in Time*.

After each title in this book is a date associated with the events described in the vignette. After that is a reference (e.g., 03-007) that ties the story to a transcript at [www.amomentintime.com](http://www.amomentintime.com), where the reader can examine a discussion of the topic in greater detail. Some vignettes have more than one reference.

Each story has a corresponding entry in the Bibliographic Appendix with a list of resources. These lists are not exhaustive but will help readers begin a voyage of discovering more about the topic.

Those of us at Familius wish you “fair winds and following seas” as you begin your journey into the exciting and challenging American experience.