Fact or Fiction?

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Myths

Free to choose what we believe, Americans choose myth over reality every time, says Dayton Duncan. He adds, “Americans are dreamers, and a myth after all, is merely a dream of the past rather than the future. Our national dreams have always edited out any nightmarish realities and rewritten popular history whenever our actions fall short of our ideals.”

Some examples: In the movie, The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance (1962), Senator Ranse Stoddard (Jimmy Stewart) returns to the city of Shinbone in the wild west to go to the funeral of his friend, Tom Doniphon (John Wayne). Stoddard is something of a celebrity in this town having spent time there before eventually moving to Washington. When talking to some journalists, who are wondering what the senator is doing in Shinbone, he reminds them how his career started as “the man who shot Liberty Valance (Lee Marvin).” He goes on to tell the press that it was John Wayne who really shot and killed Liberty Valance. The press folks say “we will never report this—you’ve become a legend and when the legend becomes fact, print the legend.”

The Wild West Myth

We’re all familiar with the image of the wild west during the years of the cattle boom. Gunfights, lawlessness, and so on, gave places like Dodge City its fame and this lives in our memories. Much of this is a myth. In all the years of the cattle boom, fewer people were shot or stabbed in Dodge City than died violently in New York City in three days. There were 15 homicides in Dodge City during the years of the cattle boom; about five people a day died of violence in New York City in 1987, the year Ian Frazier reported these facts.

One reason Dodge City got its fame was the fact that the town had several weekly newspapers chronicling each gunfight and its aftermath in detail. This was then picked up by other media in the rest of the country.

Eventually, Hollywood got into the act, and as Paul Harvey would say, “that’s the rest of the story.”

Another myth that has become accepted wisdom is that we should drink at least eight glasses of water a day. This universal advice that has made guzzling water a national pastime is more urban myth than medical dogma and lacks scientific proof, reports Joel Best. The 8 x 8 rule is lavishly followed. Everywhere, people carry bottles of water, constantly sipping from them; it is acceptable to drink water anywhere, anytime. A pamphlet distributed at one southern California University even counsels its students to “carry a water bottle with you. Drink often while sitting in class.” This had its origin in an analysis that did, in fact, recommend the eight glasses level of water intake. But the analysis also noted that most of this water would ordinarily be come from food (bread, for example, is 35 percent water), and meats and vegetables contain even higher proportions of water. However, the notion that food contained most of the water needed for good health was soon forgotten, in favor of urging people to consume the entire amount through drinking.

Myths Die Slowly

Myths, if they die at all, die slowly, stubbornly, clinging tenaciously to life even in the face of incontrovertible facts. We see and hear a lot of this today in the areas of health and environment. High doses in animal testing provide myths about the so-called dangers of foods. When rodents are tested for exposure to chemicals and food additives they are often given very high doses, averaging 380,000 times the dose humans would be given. A person would have to drink 800 cans of diet soda in a day to equal the saccharin dose given to rats, or a 155 pound person would have to eat 82,600 slices of bread every day for a lifetime to be exposed to a dose of furfural comparable to that which causes cancer in rodent tests. One could go on and on with many of these types of examples, and I have in a previous column.

The beloved ‘good old days,’ a pristine pre-human landscape, frozen in time and space as a sort of base point from which to measure change is as good a myth about the environment as you can find. This pastoral idea, embodying the belief that a simple life, without technology, commerce, or industry, was man’s natural state, ensuring peace, health and happiness, and that it had existed in a Golden Age from which society had deteriorated, simply never existed.

The ‘good old days’ simply weren’t that good. The past world was in no way spared the problems we consider horrendously our own, such as pollution, addiction, or urban blight. This subject alone could cover an entire book. For a shortened version see my column in the June 1998 issue of this journal.

Another example of an environmental myth is the tropical rain forest. As Philip Stott reports, “Tropical rain forest does not exist as an object; it is a human construct and is, thus, subject to myth making on a grand scale.” He adds, “Our attachment to the tropical rain forest has grown over the past hundred years from a minority colonial pursuit to mainstream environmental obsession. The tropical rain forest has variously been assumed to be the world’s largest repository of biological diversity and the lungs of the planet.”

Rain Forests

Stott and others say there is not one shred of recent scientific evidence to support the powerful historic and mythic language employed about ‘rain forests.’ Bjorn Lomborg observes that we will not lose 50 percent of all species as claimed by many, but more like 0.7 percent. James Trefil adds, “For the record, I think it would be truly astonishing if something as far-
reaching as the effect of human activity on the planet didn’t drive some species to extinction. Whether the rate of extinction is truly unprecedented, however, is not so clear. I have to confess that I have this sneaking suspicion that animals have probably been becoming extinct at a high rate for hundreds of millions of years. After all, an animal so specialized that it can only survive on one part of one kind of tree is not a good bet to win the Darwinian sweepstakes. And, of course, since we have no idea how fast they became extinct in the past, we have no way of knowing whether their extinction rate is going up or down today.”

The ‘lungs of the planet’ claim is also mythical. Lomborg explains that plants produce oxygen by means of photosynthesis, but when they die and decompose, precisely the same amount of oxygen is consumed. Therefore, forests in equilibrium neither produce nor consume oxygen in net terms.

More from Stott: “The Northern environmentalists conception of the tropical rain forest is far removed from the ecological realities of the places it purports to denote. Most of the ‘million year old forest’ to which environmentalists sentimentally refer turns out to have existed for less than 20,000 years. During the last ice age the tropics were colder and drier than today and probably more closely resembled the savanna grasslands of East Africa.”

Yet, here’s an example where the statement about “millions of years old forest” is used. It’s from a 1992 textbook by Chris Park, Tropical Rainforests, which is widely employed in schools and colleges throughout the UK.

“Tropical rainforests are the most complex ecosystems on earth. Rainforests (better known to many people as jungles) have been the dominant form of vegetation in the tropics for literally millions of years and beneath their high canopy lives a diversity of species which is unrivalled anywhere else on earth.”

E.F. Brueg, Emeritus Professor of Forestry, Hamburg University, says this, “Knowledge of ecology and forestry is poor among the public and understanding of ecosystem properties is almost absent, while myths abound especially with respect to tropical rain forests and their peoples. There is a certain unwillingness to bridge the knowledge gap and abandon inherited or newly developed myths, if they serve self-interests.”

References

5. Steven F. Hayward, Index of Leading Environmental Indicators 2005, (San Francisco, Pacific Research Institute), 9.
fiction, fiction is living with the fact and facts gates life inside a fiction so they are very old friends. 1. Related Questions. More Answers Below. Is science a part of fiction or fiction a part of science? For example: I'm writing a fiction novel; if I put in it as a plot any of the actual factual history of the current US Presidential administration, no reader would find those facts plausible. Your fiction novel has to seem plausible or your readers say this is nonsense BS And throw it against the wall or delete it. (FICTION). 3. Young trick-or-treaters have actually found razor blades in apples and pins in candy bars in their Halloween loot. (FACT). 4. A man was enjoying a lollipop while driving when he got into an accident. The airbag deployed, forcing the lollipop down his throat and choking him to death. (FICTION). 5. Several people have been pronounced dead and buried while still alive. (FACT). Fact Or Fiction. 14,350 likes · 17 talking about this. This page is more specific to facts with more explanation & logic!! >Now you decide IT is fact or...Â Fact Or Fiction :- Piano Stairs in , Odenplan, Stockholm! - must watch & share & comment about IT..!! 38. Fact or Fiction is an online Intellectual Reading Game where I can test my IQ with food for thought about cognition, thoughts, feelings, & goals.Â Fact or Fiction? The Largest Online Think Tank Trivia Game in the World. Introduction. Home. Example: Terms of Use Agreement. Sunday, March 7, 2021. When Dolphins Drink. Dolphins drink sea water anytime they need to be hydrated because they live in the ocean.