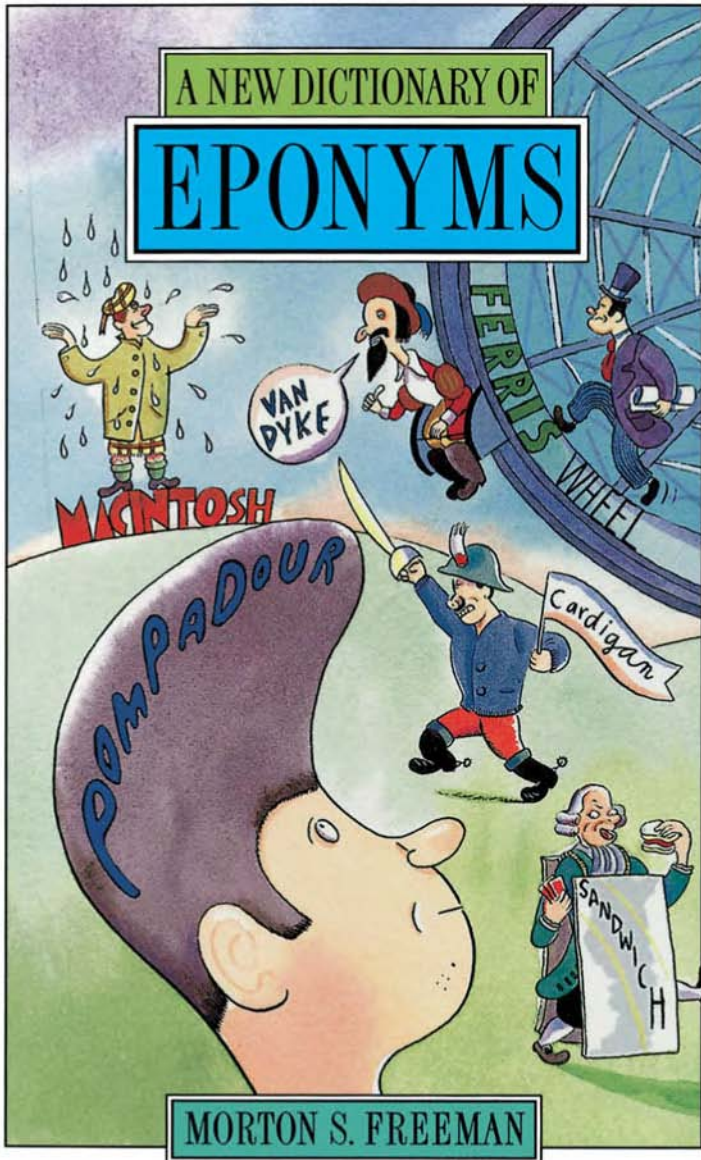


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# A New Dictionary of Eponyms

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A New Dictionary of  
**Eponyms**

Morton S. Freeman

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To Mildred, my wife—the best

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## Foreword by Edwin Newman

Writing the foreword to someone else's book is not the same as testifying in court, or appearing before a Congressional committee. Nonetheless, one should declare one's interest. Mine is that Morton Freeman and I are friends, from which it follows that I have a friendly interest in the success of this book.

Still, permit me to say how Mort and I came to be friends. It was through a mutual interest in English, in preserving and protecting the language. Not only, however, in preserving and protecting it. There was more: a view both of us had that when it came to English, too many Americans were leading sadly and unnecessarily deprived lives. That was because they had never been led to understand the satisfaction that can come from using the language well. It was also because they had never been led to understand the delight that English imaginatively used, precisely used, humorously used, appropriately used, can offer.

In his books, Mort has sought to drive that lesson home, not in an academic way, but by example, by showing how using the language well can be profitable, can be fascinating, and can be fun.

Here, then, is his latest undertaking in that line. Because this is a foreword, however, I get to go first: An eponym is a proper name that comes to stand for a place, or a thing, or an institution. Let's see now—freeman? Forget the dictionary definitions: a person not in slavery or serfdom, or one who loves English and appreciates its value, and helps the rest of us—to our great benefit—to do so, too.



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## Preface

The term *eponym* was created about a century ago. Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language*, published in 1775, did not include it. The word was a coined from two Greek words, *epi*, "on" or "upon," and *onama*, "a name." But its broadened meaning, as dictionaries set it out, refers to the person for whom something is named. For example, a *derrick* is a hoisting crane. This is an eponymous term for Godfrey Derrick, the notorious hangman. It is the thing named for him. And the same may be said about the word *guillotine*, the instrument for decapitation, named for Dr. Joseph Ignace Guillotin.

In these two examples the eponymous words are nouns, but many such words are adjectives—Shakespeare, Shakespearean; Victoria; Victorian; Rebelais, Rabelaisian. Some are verbs—Macadam, macadamize; Passeur, pasteurize; Bowdler, bowdlerize. But a trend among some writers is to consider the eponym the word that stems from the proper noun rather than the root word itself. With them, *Shakespearean* and *macadamize* would be regarded as eponyms. In this book, however, the eponyms will honor their original meaning, a name-giver, the person or thing from which the eponymous words were derived.

The number of eponyms to select from is astronomical, for any proper noun can be a candidate. The size and purpose of a book on eponymy must therefore be considered in the selection process. Many excellent possibilities may have to be dis-

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carded and some fields—such as medicine—satisfied with a smattering of entries.

In the text that names of prominent writers, from whose works citations have been borrowed, are given by their surname only if their full name and accreditation is given in the bibliography. For example, Morris is named for William and Mary Morris; Brewer for E. Cobham Brewer.

The compiling of these many, and unrelated, entries has been a real but pleasureable challenge. Delving into the lives of so many historical figures—scientists, inventors, and writers, all long gone—has brought new life to me, as I hope it will to those who read this book.

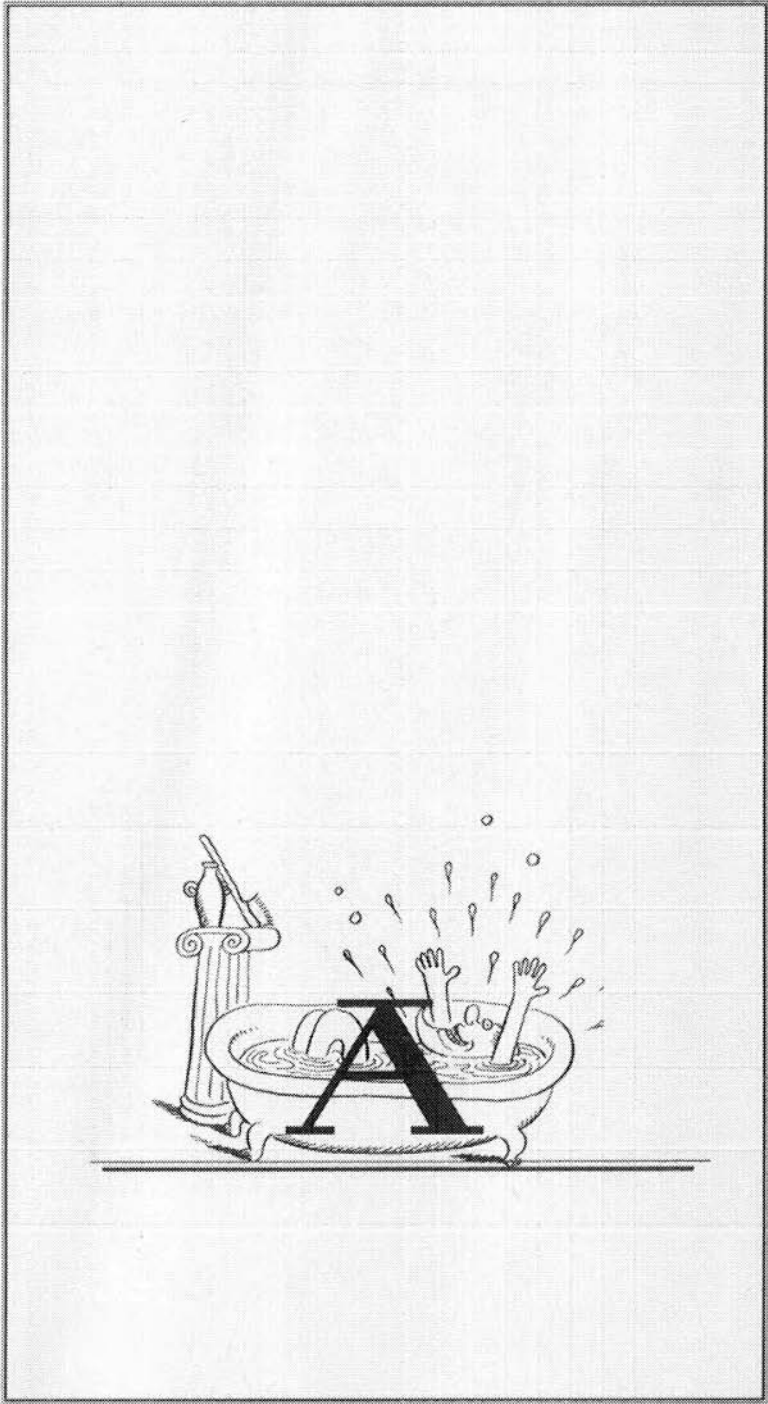
A word of thanks to my wife, Mildred, for her assistance and encouragement and for her understanding of my need to spend long hours by myself in research and writing. Any my gratitude to James T. McDonough, Jr., Ph.D, for volunteering to review the manuscript and for offering helpful suggestions. And thanks to Jean Toll, editor par excellence.

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## A-1, LLOYD'S OF LONDON

*Lloyd's Register of British and Foreign Shipping*, which deals with the design and construction of ships, was first published in the mid-1700s. Lloyd's of London, as the world-famous association came to be popularly known, insured vessels based on information contained in the *Register*, which classified and graded the condition of ships with a system of letters and numbers. The state of a ship's hull was designated by letters and that of its equipment (anchor, cables, etc.) by numbers. This meant, for example, that a ship classified A-1 was first-rate. If classified A-2, the hull was considered first-rate, but its equipment second-rate. This classification of A-1 to mean excellent, perfect, the very best in ships, has come to apply to almost anything else after Charles Dickens used the designation A-1 to describe people and things.

Lloyd's, an insurance society, is an association of more than 8,000 individual underwriters grouped into about 400 syndicates (or committees), varying in size from a few persons to several hundred people. Each individual underwriter must deposit a sum of \$45,000 or more to guarantee claim payments. Under reinsurance contracts, insurers spread their risks among many companies. This method has enabled Lloyd's to pay off enormous claims for which they have issued policies—the San Francisco earthquake and fire in 1906, the sinking of the *Titanic* in 1912, the airship *Hindenburg*, which burned in 1937, and many later disasters, including hurricanes in the United States.

Lloyd's today is known for its insuring of almost any risks, many of them unusual, from a dancer's feet (Zorina's toes), to an actor's nose (Jimmy Durante's), to a starlet's hips against gaining four inches over a seven-year period (Julie Bishop's), and a policy of happiness that insured against worry lines appearing on a model's face.

And all this had its genesis in 1668 in Edward Lloyd's coffee shop, a favorite meeting place for shipping and insurance men. Edward Lloyd had no financial connection with the insurance enterprises that developed, which at the beginning accepted marine insurance, and which is still its main form of insurance.

## ACCORDING TO HOYLE

Although card-playing was a favorite among the wealthy for many generations, it was not until the seventeenth century that the manufacture of inexpensive decks of cards enabled the masses to enjoy this game. Cards soon became the rage throughout Europe. The game that held an irresistible attraction for the English was whist, the forerunner of bridge.

Whist could be played according to dozens of systems, which led Edmund Hoyle, an English writer (1672–1769), to write a book of rules called *A Short Treatise on the Game of Whist* (1742); the book eventually became the accepted authority on the playing of the game. Hoyle soon

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wrote on other popular card games and was quickly regarded as the authority on them, too.

As Hoyle's expertise on the correct play of a game gained exposure, many people would frequently consult his books to see whether the procedure being followed met approval. If the play followed the rules set forth by Hoyle, its correctness was beyond dispute. Because of the frequent and widespread reference to Hoyle, whenever someone wished to indicate that everything was in order, that it was being handled properly—whether or not card-playing was involved—the saying “It is according to Hoyle,” came to refer to the final authority in any field.

Incidentally, Hoyle must have lived his life according to the rules because he laid down his last trump at the age of ninety-seven.

## ACHILLES' HEEL

The story concerning the legendary hero Achilles has been told many times. Achilles was the central figure and tragic protagonist in Homer's *Iliad*. He possessed athletic strength, warlike prowess, and handsomeness. His mother, Thetis, had a premonition that her son would die in battle. She therefore, when he was still an infant, held him by the heel and dipped him into the river Styx to make him invulnerable. The water touched every part of his body except the heel that Thetis held, leaving it the weak link in his magic armor. During the siege of Troy, a poisoned arrow from the bow of the Trojan prince Paris pierced Achilles' heel, fatally wounding him. W. S. Merwin in *The Judgment of Paris* described the lethal arrow in these words: “In the quiver on Paris' back the head of the arrow for Achilles' heel smiled in its sleep.” The elopement of Paris with Helen, the wife of Menelaus, King of Sparta, you may recall, started the Trojan War.

This story gave birth to the saying that the weak part of anything, no matter how small or how large, is that person's Achilles heel. The name *Achilles tendon* (alternative scientific name of *tendo Achilles*) has been given to the strong muscle that connects the calf of the leg with the heel.

Homer had hinted at, but didn't describe, the death of Achilles. His reference to Achilles' death was simply that he died “before the Scaean gates” during the Trojan War.

## ALICE IN WONDERLAND

A girl who has recently come to a strange, exotic, fantastic surrounding is sometimes called an “Alice.” Ideas, schemes, plans, and projects that are wholly impractical, those daytime dreams that can exist only in the realm of fantasy, may be alluded to as an idea from “Alice in Wonderland.”

Lewis Carroll's children's books, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and its sequel *Through the Looking Glass* (1871), illustrated by Sir John Tenniel, the *Punch* artist, have enjoyed great longevity. Known



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for their whimsical humor and “nonsense” verse, the *Alice* books continue to attract readers and are arguably the most famous children’s books in the world.

The name Carroll was a pseudonym of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832–1892), an Oxford mathematician. *Alice* originated in 1862 on a boat trip with Lorina, Alice, and Edith, the daughters of Dean Henry George Liddell, who also was at Oxford and was best known as a compiler, together with Robert Scott, of the *Oxford Greek-English Lexicon*. Carroll fantasized an impromptu story for the amusement of the children but particularly for Alice, of whom he was very fond. Later the story in book form evolved into a worldwide bestseller.

## ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

*Alzheimer’s disease* is a progressive deterioration of the brain, first described in 1907 by the German neurologist Alois Alzheimer (1864–1915). It is the most common form of dementing, or mind-depriving, illness, affecting cells in an area of the brain important to memory.

*Alzheimer’s disease* or *Alzheimer’s syndrome* most commonly strikes elderly adults, but it has also been known to afflict people in their late twenties. Formerly, this disease was known as *pre-senile dementia* or just plain *senility*. It was erroneously attributed to “hardening of the arteries.” The disease involves degeneration of nerve cells rather than blockage of blood vessels.

The cause of *Alzheimer’s disease* is unknown, and there is no known cure for it. Investigators are studying the role of such possible factors as viruses, genetic influences, abnormal immunological responses, and environmental or toxic agents.

## AMAZON, AMAZON RIVER

According to the Greek historian Herodotus, the Amazons were a fierce nation of Scythian women who lived by themselves. They dealt with men only in battle or for procreation, and either killed their sons or sent them to their fathers. Their daughters were raised to become warriors. When grown, each woman hacked off her right breast so that it wouldn’t hinder her range with the bow. *Amazon* in Greek is a composite of *a-*(without) and *mazos* (breast).

The Amazons frequently appear in Greek mythology. One of the tasks of Hercules was to obtain the girdle of Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons. He slew her and took her girdle (sash). Another queen of the Amazons, Penthesilea, whose army came to aid the besieged Trojans, was killed in battle by the redoubtable Achilles.

Legend says that one Vincente Yanez Pinzon, the discoverer of the Amazon River in 1500, named it Rio Santa Maria. But in 1541 Francisco de Orellana, an explorer, after descending from the Andes on this river to the sea, was attacked by a savage tribe. Believing women fought along-

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side men, he then renamed the river *Amazonas*; its name in English, of course, is *Amazon*. This is an intriguing story; the explorer may have assumed that skirted Indians were women.

A strong, aggressive woman, especially if she looks masculine, may be called an *amazon*.

## AMERICA, AMERICAN

The injustice of naming two continents after Amerigo Vespucci (1451–1512) can no longer be rectified. And we cannot justify excluding Canada, the second-largest country in area in the world, from the appellation *America*. By the same token, *America, the gem of the ocean* is equally faulty. It should have been *Columbia*.

Controversy concerning the naming of America may never be resolved because who did what and when is not subject to historic proof. Amerigo Vespucci, originally a Florentine navigator, claimed he made four trips—in 1497, 1499, 1501, and 1503—to the New World, then known as the *Mundus Novus* (a term that first appeared in Vespucci's letters published in 1504). However, only two of these trips were actually documented. A former manager of the Seville office of the notorious Medici family of Italy, Vespucci reported to his patrons an account of his voyages along the coasts of what are now Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina.

In 1507 Martin Waldseemüller, a German geographer, published an appendix to a work called *Cosmographiae Introductio*, which included a map labeled *America* that corresponded roughly to South America. The name stuck, not only for South America but for North America as well, when mapmakers filled in that continent.

Vespucci took two trips under the aegis of Spain and two under that of Portugal, and became Spain's "pilot major." Nevertheless, some historians say he never did take the voyages he reported, but merely heard stories from sailors and put himself in the picture.

The Spanish refused to accept the name *America*; they called the land, in Spanish, *Colombia*. This remains a distinguished name; many towns, rivers, and other places have been named *Columbia*, including the seat of our government: the District of Columbia. And let us not forget *Columbia, the gem of the ocean*.

## AMPÈRE, AMP, AMPÈRE'S LAW

Would you believe that a person so traumatized that he could not speak or read for more than a year went on to become a distinguished scientist, so distinguished that he gave his name to the English language? In every dictionary can be found the word *ampere*: a unit of electric current equal to the steady current produced by one volt acting through a resistance of one ohm.

André Marie Ampère (1775–1836), a French scientist, lived so tragic a life as to make one wonder how his mind could have retained its

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brilliance. The tragedy that rendered him incapable of speaking at age eighteen was the execution of his father by guillotine during the Reign of Terror. With time, Ampère recovered his voice and at age twenty-four he married. A few years later, his wife died and Ampère became despondent once again.

Ampère poured himself into his work. While a professor of physics at the College de France in Paris, he made important discoveries relating to the nature of electricity and magnetism. He was the first to expound the theory that the earth's magnetism is the product of terrestrial electric currents that circle the globe from east to west. Through mathematics he made his greatest discovery, which formulated the law of mechanical action between electric currents and came to be known as *Ampère's law*. His discovery was instrumental in the development of the science of electrodynamics.

Ampère invented the astatic needle, which made it possible to detect and measure electric currents, and contributed to the invention of the electric telegraph. The International Electric Congress, in 1881, lifted his name forty-five years after his death to designate the unit of intensity of electric current, abbreviated *amp*.

Ampère did his best thinking while walking. He paced his room for long periods and became, possibly, the world's best-known peripatetic scientist after Aristotle.

## **ANNIE OAKLEY**

An *Annie Oakley* is a complimentary ticket to a theater. The ticket has holes punched in it to prevent its exchange for cash at the box office. This oddity came about in an unusual way.

Annie Oakley (1860–1926), born in Darke County, Ohio, was the stage name for Phoebe Anne Oakley Mozee. Annie was probably the greatest female sharpshooter ever. She got her professional start when, at the urging of friends, she entered a shooting match in Cincinnati pitting Frank E. Butler, a vaudeville marksman, against all comers. Butler gave no thought to this fifteen-year-old girl who dared compete with him. But upon seeing Annie's first shot, he paid strict attention. She won the contest, and a husband to boot, for Butler and Annie fell in love and were married. They then began a vaudeville tour as a trick-shooting team.

The Butlers joined Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show in 1885, but it was Annie who became the star attraction. She remained as the rifle sharpshooter for forty years. She thrilled audiences with her expert marksmanship and dazzled them with her trick shooting. In one of her outstanding feats, she would flip a playing card into the air, usually a five of hearts, and shoot the pips out of it.

But what, you might ask, has that to do with a free ticket? Circus performers were reminded of their meal tickets by the riddled playing

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cards, because their meal tickets were punched every time they bought a meal. Hence they came to call their tickets "Annie Oakleys." The idea of a punched card caught on, so that today a complimentary ticket to a show, a meal, or a pass on a railway has Annie Oakley holes.

Annie Oakley needed no encomiums during her forty years with the Wild West Show, but she was given one, nevertheless, by Sitting Bull, who labeled her "Little Sure Shot." In more recent times Ethel Merman, the star of *Annie Get Your Gun*, popularized Annie Oakley once again, making her for today's generation a "big shot."

## ARCHIMEDES' PRINCIPLE

Archimedes (287–212 B.C.) was a legend during his lifetime. He was a brilliant mathematician and an inventor of the *Archimedes' screw*, a machine for raising water. Although the lever had been in use long before Archimedes, he worked out the theoretical mathematical principles of its use. He designed the pulley and the windlass, but is best remembered for his work with hydrostatics. His unforgettable cry "Eureka" has made him famous ever since. But it wasn't the cry, it was what he deduced: the *Archimedes' principle* of specific gravity. His remarkable discovery arose because Hieron, King of Syracuse in Sicily, wished to determine whether a crown was of pure gold or whether the goldsmith had fraudulently alloyed it with some silver. While mulling over this problem, Archimedes came to a place of bathing, and there, as he sat in the tub, realized that the amount of water he had displaced must be equal to the bulk of his immersed body. It is said that he did run nude through the streets and did excitedly shout "Eureka" ("I've found it" in Greek). Ever since, the word *eureka* has been an interjection to express surprise.

Archimedes was born in Syracuse, Sicily, and died there while pursuing a problem. The Romans took the town of Syracuse in 212 B.C. However, orders had been issued by the Roman consul Marcellus that Archimedes was not to be harmed, but brought to him alive. The story has it that a Roman soldier informed Archimedes of Marcellus's order, to which Archimedes replied that he was working on a geometrical problem in the sand. "I'll come when I'm finished," he said. Unfortunately the Roman warrior was impatient and with his sword slew Archimedes.

## ARGYLE

In western Scotland in a county named Argyllshire lived a duke of Argyle, the head of the Campbell clan. According to Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, the duke had a series of posts erected around the treeless part of his estate so that his cattle might rub against them to ease themselves of the torment of flies. The herdsmen saw the value of this practice, and as they rubbed their own itching backs against the posts, they thankfully uttered the phrase *God bless the Duke of Argyle*.

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The phrase spread among the Scottish Highlanders and became a generally accepted humorous remark. The clan received additional publicity when it was mentioned in novels by Sir Walter Scott.

Fabric manufacturers found that the Campbell clan tartan, in green and white, would make an attractive design. It gave rise to the manufacture of a diamond pattern, known as argyle plaid, used on sweaters and socks. The pattern has appeared on articles sold worldwide.

## **ATLAS**

The term *Atlas* is used chiefly for a book of maps, a size of paper, and the first vertebra of the neck. The name Atlas is attributed to a mythological character, one of the Titans who tried to overthrow Zeus but failed. The punishment meted out to him for his part in the conspiracy was to hold up the pillars of heaven for the rest of his days. Because he was an immortal god, his days went on forever.

Hercules graciously offered to support the heavens for a while if Atlas would obtain for him the golden apples guarded by the Hesperides. Atlas agreed and felt renewed without the heavens on his shoulders. He then stole the apples from the garden where they grew, returned to Hercules, and offered to take them back home for him. Hercules thought he detected a trick, and so he told Atlas to hold up the heavens while he found a pad for his shoulders. When Atlas took over, Hercules departed with the apples, never to return, leaving a raging Titan with his burden.

The story of Atlas and his mythic burden has many versions. One is that Atlas, after holding up the world for centuries, became faint from weakness. One day Perseus, carrying the head of Medusa, flew by. Atlas, knowing that anyone who looked at Medusa would be turned to stone, begged Perseus to let him look at her. Perseus agreed, Atlas looked, was petrified, and became the Atlas Mountains, which extend for 1,500 miles along the coast of North Africa.

In the sixteenth century, the Flemish cartographer Gerhardus Mercator put a figure of Atlas supporting the world on his shoulders on the title page of his first collection of maps. The idea appealed to other publishers of geography books, who then adopted a similar picture for the title page of their books.

## **AUGUST, AUGUSTAN AGE**

Latin *Augustus* means venerable, a title conferred by the Senate in 27 B.C. on Gaius Octavianus, who thus became the first Roman emperor. He then changed his name to *Augustus Caesar* and was the founder of the Imperial Roman government. Augustus was the adopted son of Julius Caesar, for whom the month of July, consisting of thirty-one days, had been named. The month named for Octavianus was August, originally *Sextilis*, the sixth month in the old Roman calendar, which started in March. As Augustus Caesar, he resented the fact that July was longer

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than his month. He therefore stole a day from February so that August would also have thirty-one days.

The Augustan Age, which began approximately in 43 B.C. and continued to about A.D. 18, was marked by peace, the historic “Pax Romana,” and was indeed the most illustrious period in Roman history. Its writers were brilliant, polished, and sophisticated. Vergil published his *Georgics* and completed the *Aeneid*; Horace, his *Odes*, Books I-III, and *Epistles*, Book I. Livy began his monumental history of Rome; Ovid, the author of *Metamorphoses*, a mythological history of the world from the creation to the Augustan Age.

“Augustan Age” came to be applied to the apogee of any nation’s cultural achievements, primarily to its “classical” period in literature.

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