



BIG HISTORY TIMELINE



Printable version

THE BIG BANG

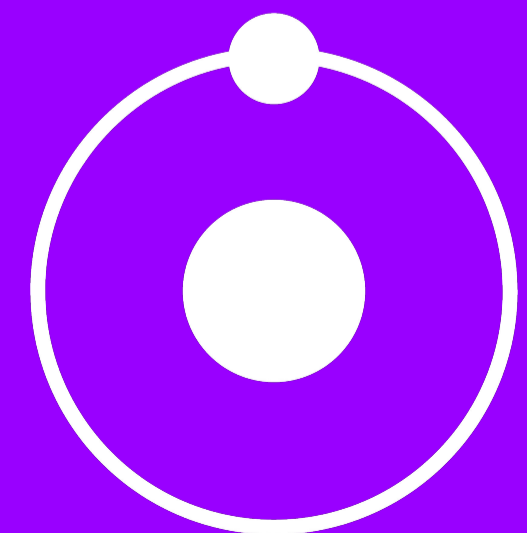
The universe was born 13.8 billion years ago when all matter rapidly begins to expand from a single point.



13 800 000 000 BCE

THE FIRST STARS

The first stars formed when gravity pulled clouds of gas and matter together. The pressure from gravity caused the temperature to increase until they ignited and burned at a temperature between 10 and 100 million degrees.



13 200 000 000 BCE

NEW ELEMENTS ARE FORMED

The early universe contained mostly hydrogen and helium, but stars are hot enough to create new elements. Through fusion, new and heavier atoms combine to form all the elements in the periodic table.



13 200 000 000 BCE

THE SUN IS FORMED

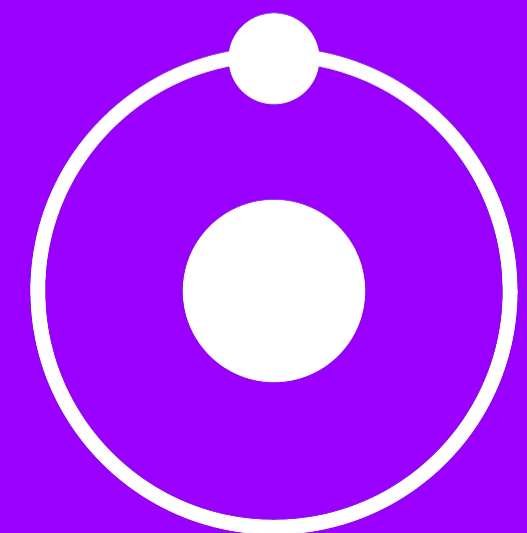
A star like any other, but significantly more important to us on Earth.



4 600 000 000 BCE

THE EARTH IS FORMED

Soon after the formation of the Sun, our Earth is created from leftover matter that is merged by gravity as it rotates around the Sun. For millions of years it is a hot planet without life or oxygen.



4 500 000 000 BCE

THE ORIGIN OF LIFE

The oldest traces of living cells are about 3.8 billion years old. We still don't know for sure how life first arose from dead matter, but there are many theories.



3 800 000 000 BCE

PHOTOSYNTHESIS

About 3.4 billion years ago, photosynthesis appeared for the first time in aquatic plants. With its help, carbon dioxide and water were converted into oxygen, which we need to live.



3 400 000 000 BCE

THE CAMBRIAN EXPLOSION

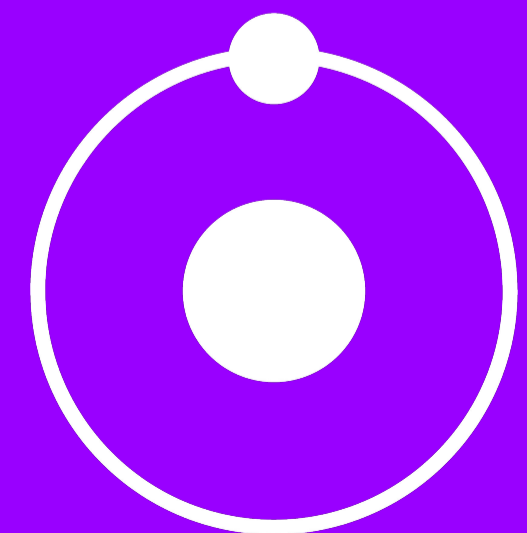
During this period, life on Earth evolved from simple organisms such as bacteria and plankton to larger aquatic animals.



540 000 000 BCE

FIRST PLANTS ON LAND

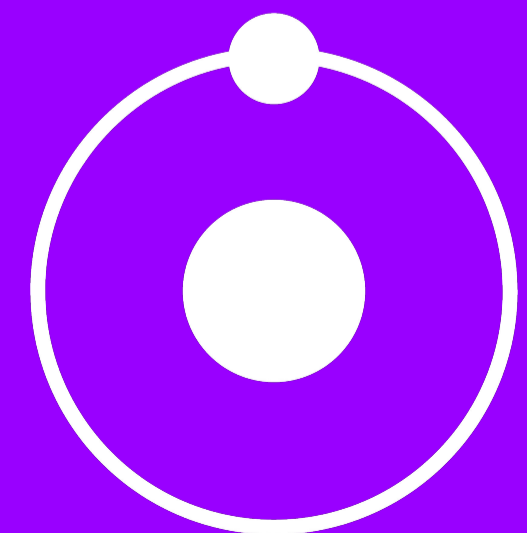
The first plants begin to grow on land, which lays the foundation for animals to be able to survive outside the water.



470 000 000 BCE

FIRST ANIMALS ON LAND

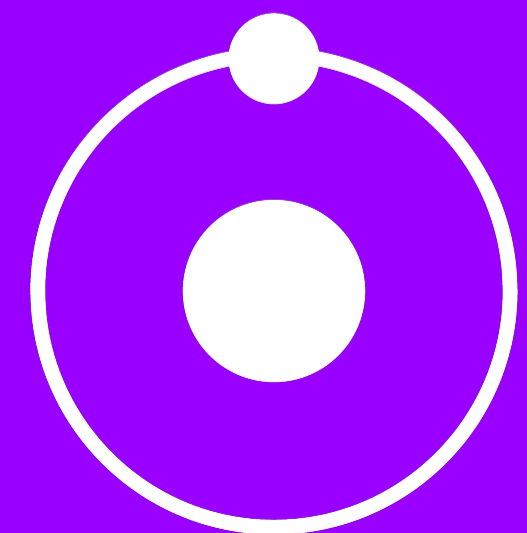
The first animals crawl onto land, learn to lay eggs in dry environments and eventually develop further into birds, reptiles and mammals.



420 000 000 BCE

DINOSAURS DOMINATE EARTH

At this time, dinosaurs dominate animal life. Our mammalian ancestors are mice and other smaller animals that can hide underground but don't stand a chance against the predators above.



230 000 000 BCE

THE DINOSAURS EXTINCT

A giant asteroid hits present-day Mexico with a force equivalent to millions of nuclear weapons. The dust and water vapor ejected into the atmosphere block the sun's rays and lead to the extinction of the dinosaurs.



66 000 000 BCE

FIRST HUMAN RELATIVE

The first human relatives (homo) lived in what is now Ethiopia.



2 800 000 BCE

FIRST PRIMITIVE TOOLS

About 2 million years ago, early humans began creating simpler axes that were used for digging, butchering animals, and chopping wood. Archaeologist have also found simple tools that may be more than 3 million years old.



~2 000 000 BCE

FIRE IS CONTROLLED

It is uncertain exactly when human ancestors learned to control fire, but when they did, it gave the ability to eat a more varied diet. It now became easier to absorb calories and nutrients from the cooked food.



~1 000 000 BCE

HOMO SAPIENS

Our current subspecies of the great apes developed at this time. In addition to walking on their hind legs and having hands adapted for a life on the ground, homo sapiens also have larger brains than other apes.



300 000 BCE

FIRST HUMAN ART

The oldest found cave painting, depicting an animal, is painted in Borneo.



40 000 BCE

AGRICULTURE

Humans discovered the art of agriculture in Western Asia (Iraq) and China around this time. It requires humans to stay in one place, makes surpluses possible, and leads to the development of cities.



8 000 BCE

THE WHEEL

The wheel was invented in Mesopotamia and paved the way for easier transport and, by extension, water wheels and many more inventions.



3500 BCE

WRITING

The art of writing arises in Mesopotamia, probably as a way to record stocks of raw materials and resources.



-3400 BCE

MESOPOTAMIA

Throughout this period, culture flourished between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers in present-day Iraq. Many inventions - everything from mathematics and sewage systems to beer - were developed here.



3100-539 BCE

EGYPT

Glass making, boat building, mathematics, medicine and of course the building of the pyramids are some of the new technologies that were developed in Egypt during this time.



3100-30 BCE

INDUS VALLEY

One of the first great ancient civilizations. The civilization stretched from eastern Afghanistan to western India. Techniques for agriculture, sewage systems and crafts were developed here.



2600-1300 BCE

FOUNDATIONS OF HINDUISM

Migrants from West Asia (Iran) came to the Indus with the foundations of Hinduism.



~1700 BCE

SHANG DYNASTY

The supposed first civilization around the Yellow River in China. The oldest Chinese written sources are from this period.



1600-1046 BCE

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

According to the Old Testament, Moses gave the Ten Commandments to the Jews. He is considered the most important prophet in Judaism, but is probably a legend rather than a real person.



~ **1550 BCE**

NOK IN NIGERIA

One of the largest early civilizations in Africa south of Egypt. Developed iron tools, pottery and cultivation.



1500 BCE - 500 CE

IRON AGE BEGINS

That people learned to produce hard iron and steel has been incredibly important for both everyday objects and technological development. Some of the first to produce iron were the Hittites (Turkey/Syria) and peoples in West Africa.



~ **1100 BCE**

FIRST MAYAN CITIES

The Mayan culture founded its first cities in Central America, completely independent of the cultures of Asia, Europe and Africa.



750 BCE

ASHURBANIPAL'S LIBRARY

King Ashurbanipal in Assyria (Mesopotamia) created a library by copying texts and stories onto burnt clay tablets. Thanks to the remains of this library, we know much more about Mesopotamia than we otherwise would have.



~650 BCE

FIRST COINS

The first coins were developed around the same time in China, India, Turkey and Greece. They enabled easier bartering of different goods.



650 BCE

BUDDHA IS BORN

Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, was born in Nepal.



563 BCE

ROMAN EMPIRE FOUNDED

Rome had been a powerful city ruled by kings, but in the late 5th century BCE, Rome became a semi-democratic republic. For the next thousand years, Rome will dominate large parts of Europe and Western Asia.



500 BCE

ATHENIAN DEMOCRACY

Athens in ancient Greece created a democratic system that has survived as an inspiration to the present day. However, democracy did not apply to women and slaves.



460 BCE

ALEXANDER THE GREAT

King Alexander III of Macedonia conquered large areas of land, spreading Greek culture across the world and intensifying cultural exchange between Europe and West Asia.



356 BCE

QIN UNIFIES CHINA

Qin unites large parts of China into one country. Among other things, he is known for having burned all books in an attempt to increase his control, for starting the construction of the Great Wall of China, and for having connected China with new roads.



221 BCE

HAN DYNASTY IN CHINA

During the Han Dynasty, China developed economically, culturally and technologically. The emperors of the Han dynasty, unlike the Qin, encouraged education.



206 BCE - 220 CE

PAX ROMANA

A long period of peace and stability in the Roman Empire led to the development of many new technologies. These include sewage systems, stone-paved roads with standardized measurements, the postal service and the legal system.



27 BCE - 180 CE

JESUS IS BORN

The founder of Christianity is born. He preached his view of God and was subsequently executed by the Romans. Our chronology is based on Jesus' birth as year zero, but everything indicates that he was born no later than 4 BCE.



~4 BCE

FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

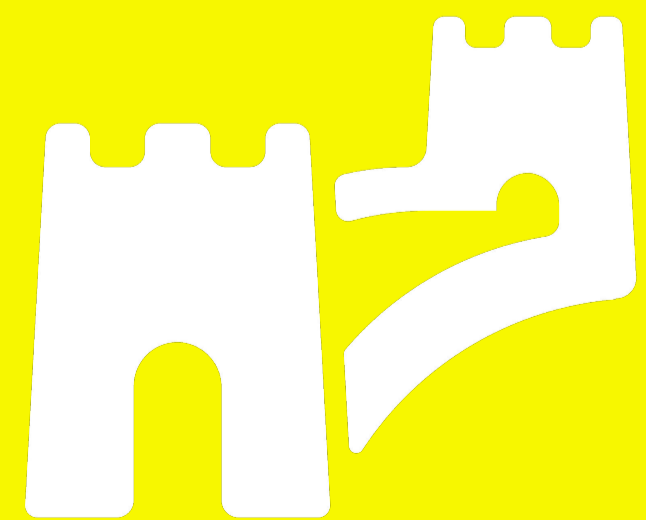
The barbarians invade and cause the Roman Empire to fall. Europe eventually split up into smaller city-states.



476 CE

MUHAMMAD IS BORN

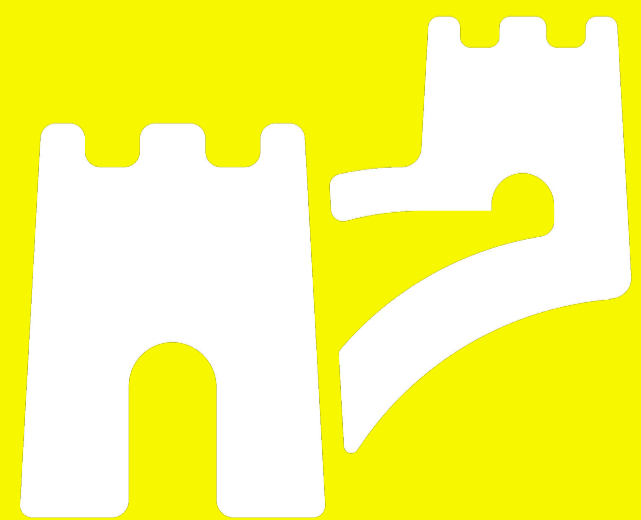
The founder of Islam is born in Mecca on the Arabian Peninsula. During his lifetime, he united a vast area under the new religion.



570 CE

GUNPOWDER

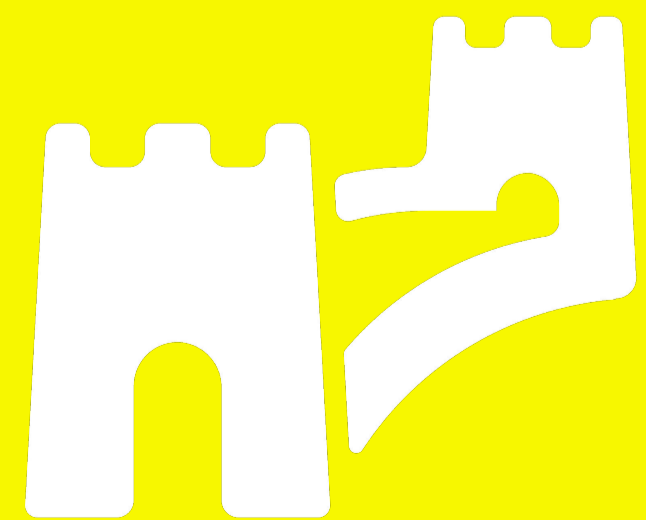
Gunpowder was invented in China and then spread further around the world.



800s CE

AVICENNA

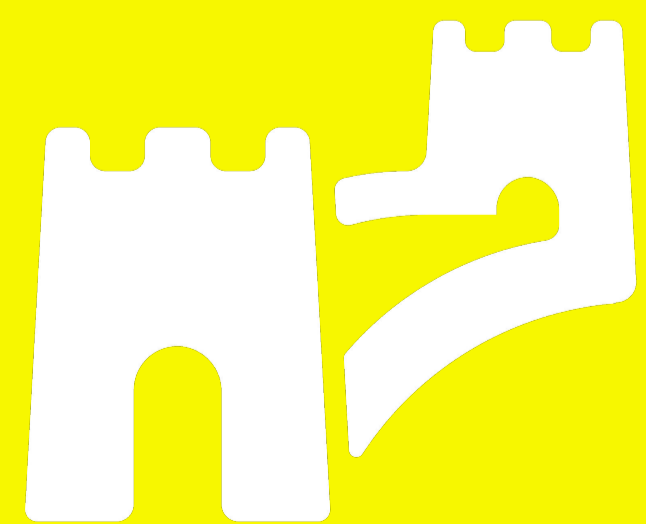
Iranian philosopher during the Islamic golden Age who has been called "the father of modern medicine". Compiled ancient medical knowledge in his book *Canon*, which was used for hundreds of years in both Europe and Western Asia.



980-1037 CE

THE MONGOL EMPIRE

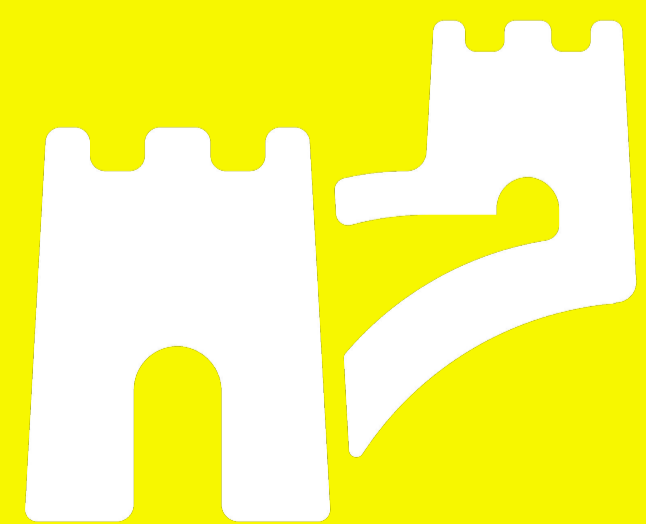
Genghis Khan founded the largest contiguous empire in world history. The kingdom spanned all of Asia and was a constant threat to both China, West Asia and Europe.



1206-1368 CE

TENOCHTITLÁN FOUNDED

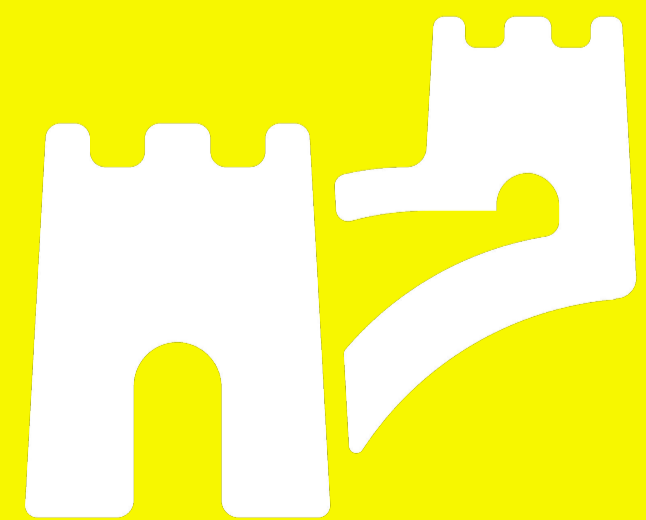
One of the world's largest cities and the center of the Aztec Empire. Today, Mexico City is located in the same place.



1325 CE

THE PLAGUE REACHES EUROPE

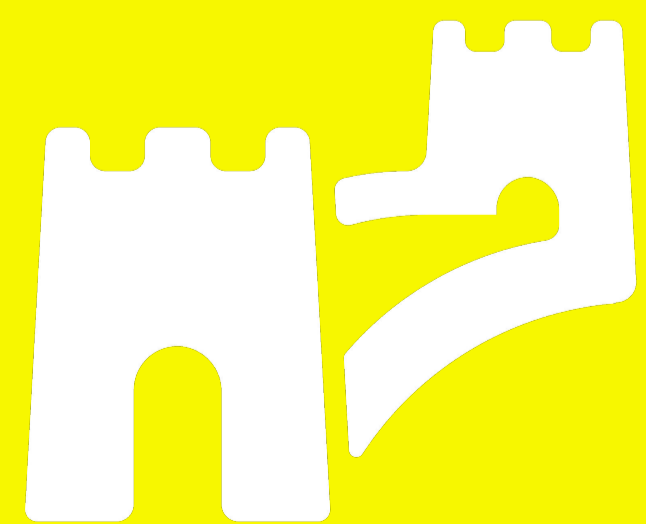
Black Death - the plague - reaches Europe from Asia. 25% of the population died in Europe and China. The Mongols, West Asia and North Africa were also affected.



1346 CE

THE PRINTING PRESS

Johannes Gutenberg developed a printing press where letters could be moved around. This made it much cheaper to print books and written knowledge could be spread around the world. Gutenberg's Bible is one of the first mass-produced books.



1439 CE

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

Christopher Columbus sailed across the Atlantic hoping to find a new sea route to India. Instead, he discovers a new continent unknown to Europe. This is the start of European conquest throughout North and South America.



1492 CE

VASCO DA GAMA

The Portuguese Vasco da Gama manages to navigate to India by rounding the southern tip of Africa.



1498 CE

THE REFORMATION

Martin Luther protests against the Catholic Church by writing his 95 theses.
The Protestant Reformation of Christianity begins.



1517-1648 CE

TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

The first slave ship travels between East Africa and America, marking the start of the transatlantic slave trade..



1526 CE

BIRTH OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

Britain begins to colonize distant lands, including North America, the West Indies and India. This is the first step towards making England a superpower.



1604 CE

NEWTON WRITES *PRINCIPIA*

Isaac Newton's *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, one of the most influential books in the history of natural science, is published. It explains gravity and other physical laws in a way that is still broadly considered correct.



1687 CE

THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR

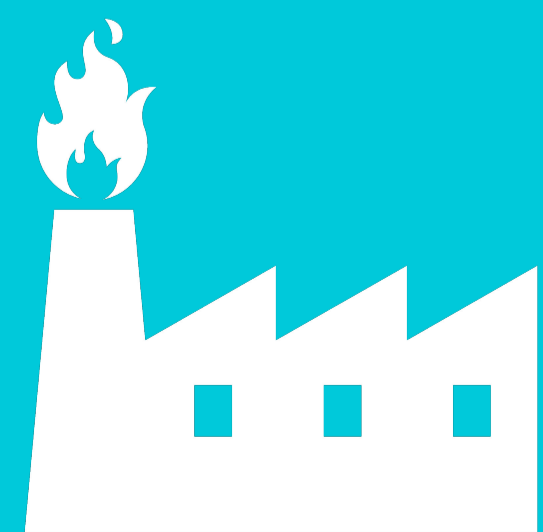
European powers are fighting a world war. England is among the winners and takes control of more colonies. The war also means large foreign debts for several countries, which creates political unrest that triggers both the American and French revolutions.



1756-1763 CE

THE STEAM ENGINE

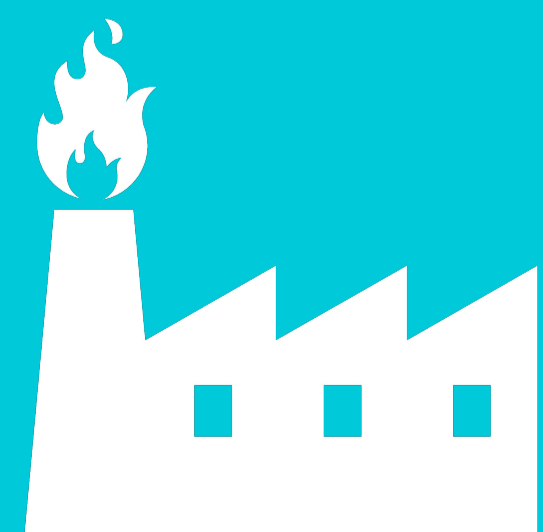
England has found large amounts of fossil coal but uses it mostly for heat and inefficient steam engines. James Watt invents a more efficient steam engine that can power the factories in England. The industrial revolution starts.



1765 CE

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

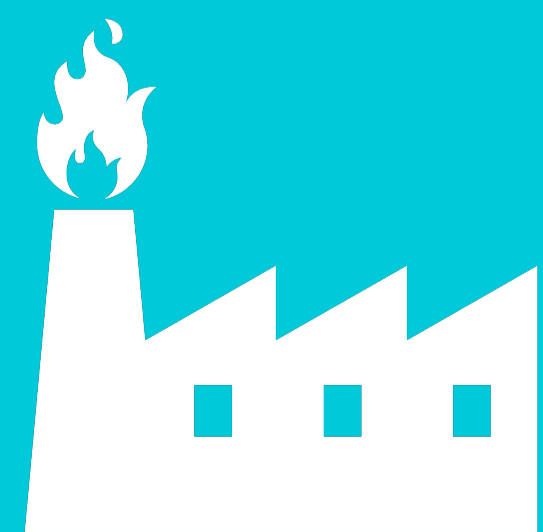
North America has been an English colony, but is rebelling to become a free country. Their revolution inspires more revolutions in France and Latin America.



1775 CE

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

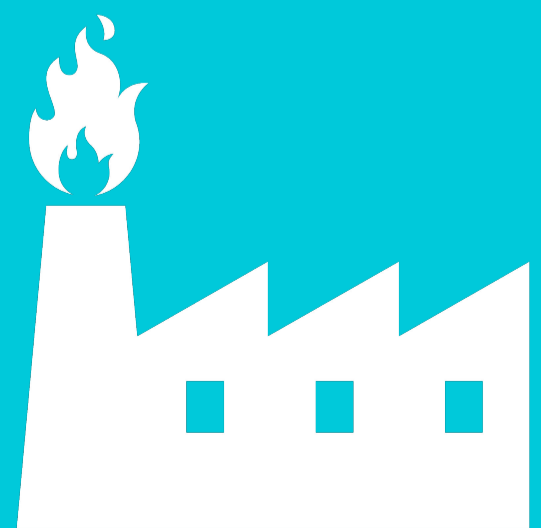
France takes the first steps towards democracy in a revolution that spreads Enlightenment ideas across Europe.



1789 CE

HAITI REVOLTS

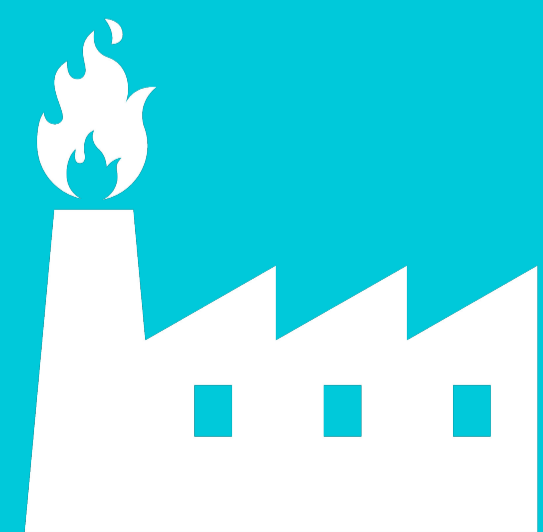
Haiti follows the example of the United States and rebels against the French colonial masters. This starts a wave of uprisings in which large parts of Latin America throw out their European colonizers.



1804 CE

FIRST RAILWAY IN ENGLAND

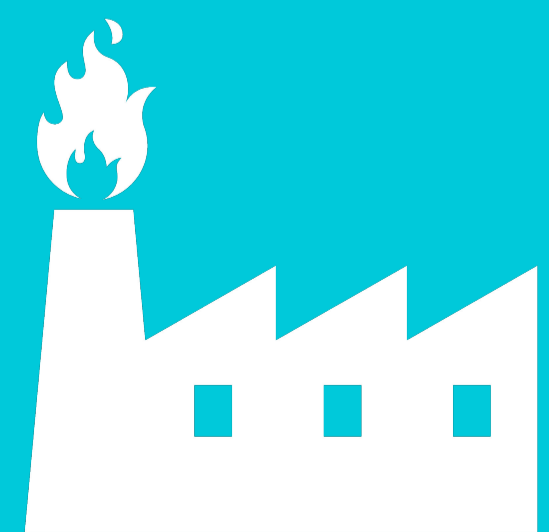
The first steam-powered railway was built in Durham, England. Soon, raw materials and finished products can be transported across the country and industries grow.



1825 CE

FIRST ELECTRIC MOTOR

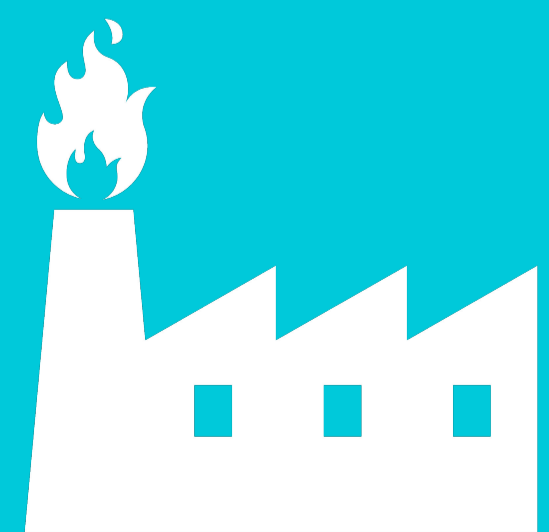
The first electric motor - a machine that can convert electricity into motion - was invented.



1832 CE

OPIUM WARS

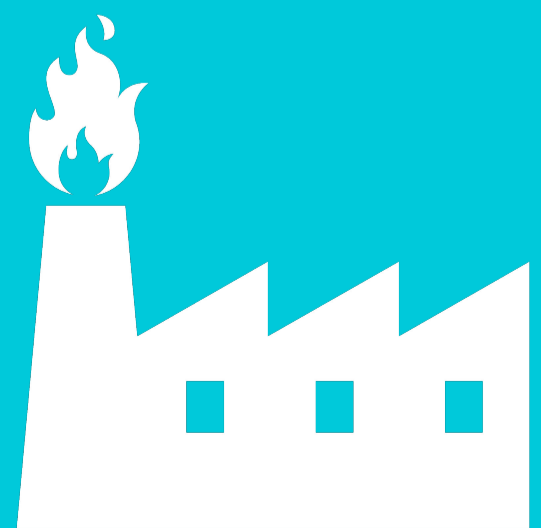
England has made a lot of money selling opium to China. China tries to ban the harmful drug, leading to war. England wins and the result is stronger control over China.



1839-1860 CE

KEROSENE IS INVENTED

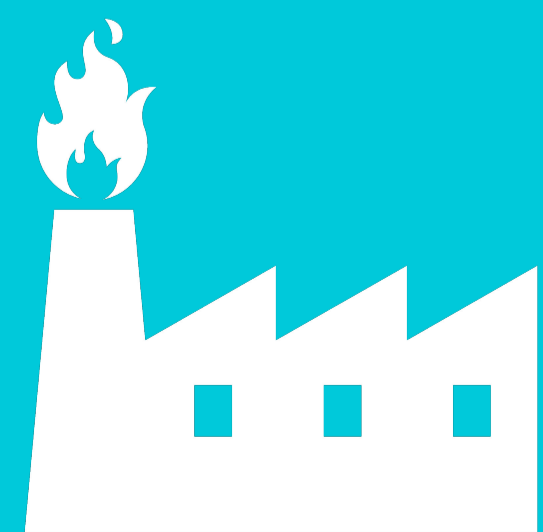
Crude oil has been used as a fuel and building material for thousands of years, but when Scotsman James Young succeeds in creating kerosene from the oil, it lays the foundation for more uses. The gasoline age and modern oil drilling are taking off.



1852 CE

ON THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES

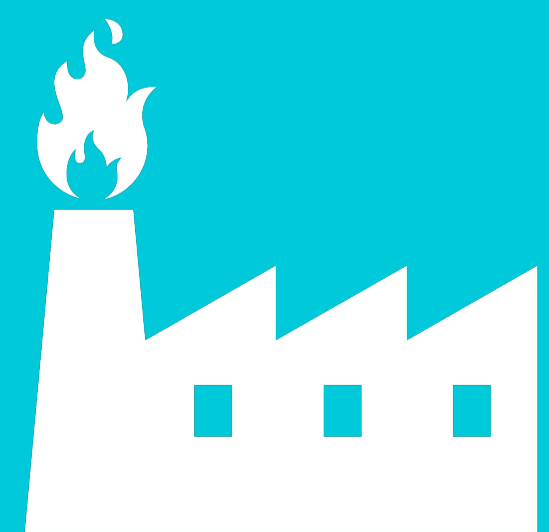
Charles Darwin releases his book On the origin of species, which revolutionizes our view of the evolution of Earth's animal life.



1859 CE

SLAVERY ABOLISHED IN THE US

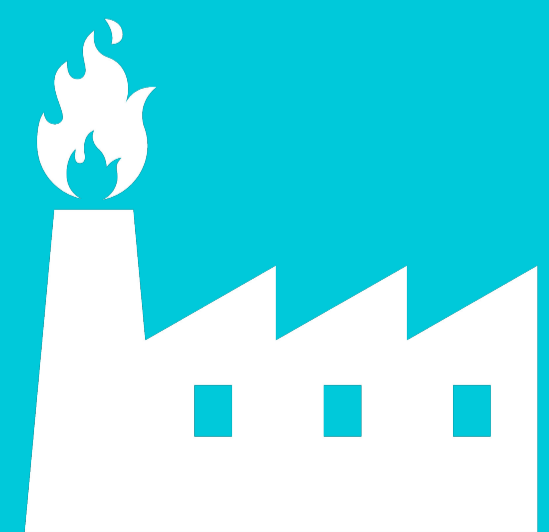
After the Civil War between the North and the South, slavery was abolished in the United States.



1865 CE

KARL MARX'S *CAPITAL*

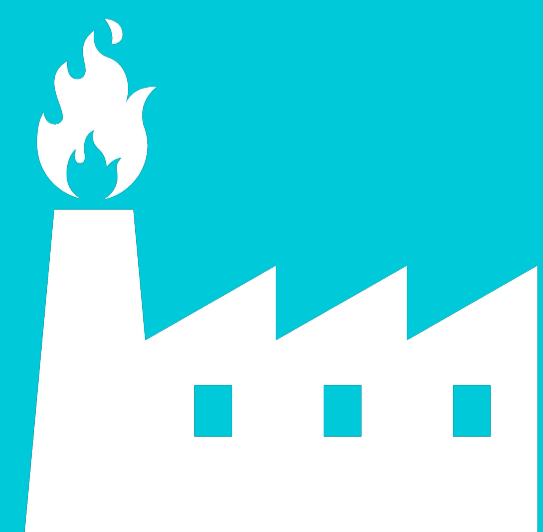
Karl Marx wrote the book that will inspire political movements all over the world, from communists to social democrats.



1867 CE

DYNAMAMITE

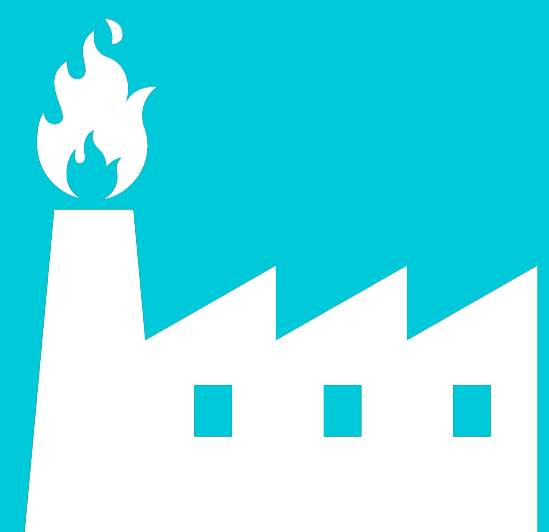
Alfred Nobel invents dynamite - a new, more manageable explosive. The dynamite can be used in war but also for the mines needed for industrialization.



1867 CE

THE LIGHT BULB

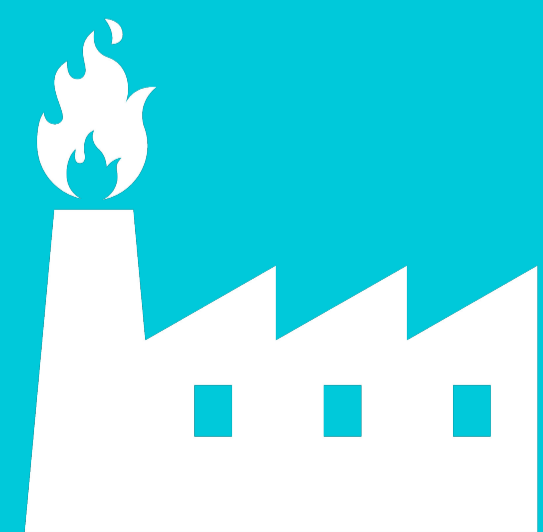
Thomas Edison develops an efficient light bulb.



1879 CE

THE VACCINE

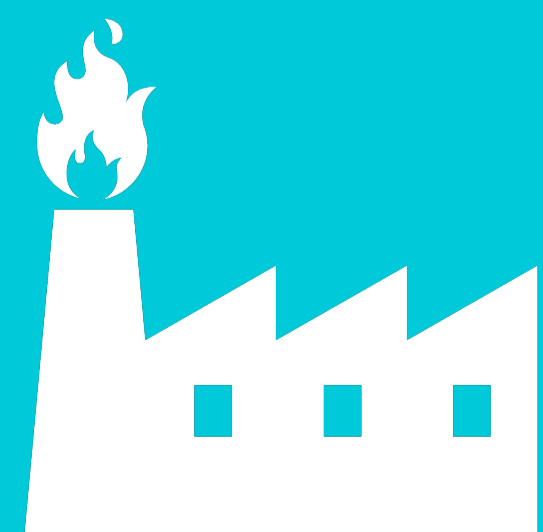
Louis Pasteur researched bacteria and invented, among other things, the vaccine, pasteurization and sterilization: three of the most important protections against illness and infection that contributed to increasing life expectancy worldwide.



1881 CE

EUROPE COLONIZES AFRICA

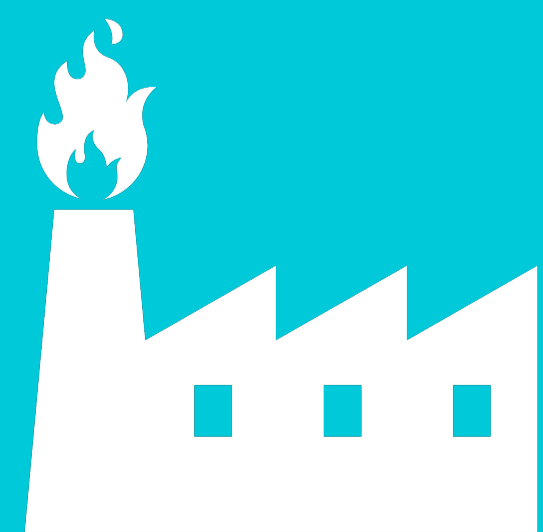
Europe had previously failed to colonize Africa, but thanks to more effective malaria drugs and the invention of the machine gun, they can now take control of almost the entire continent.



1881 CE

UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE

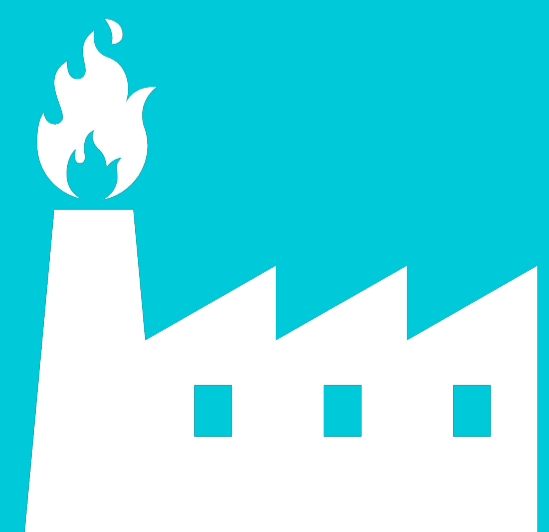
New Zealand became the first country to expand the right to vote to (almost) all adult men and women.



1893 CE

THE RADIO

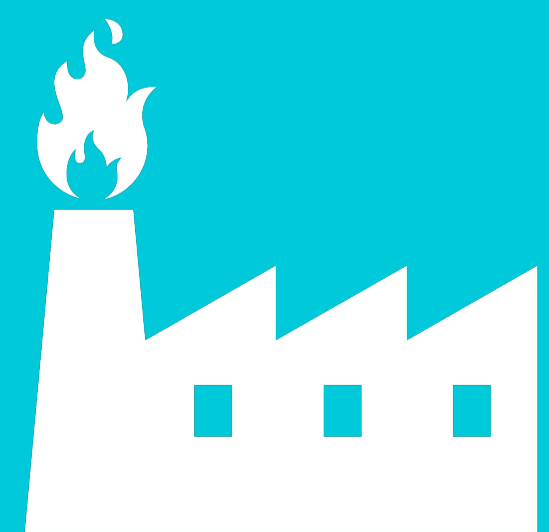
Guglielmo Marconi made the first radio broadcast to reach across the Atlantic.



1901 CE

THE AIRPLANE

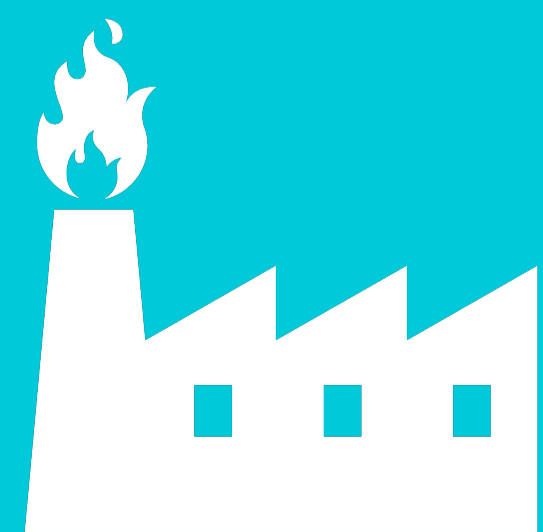
For the first time, the Wright brothers succeeded in constructing a functioning motor-driven airplane. After that, development is rapid and changes both travel and warfare.



1903 CE

FORD MODEL T

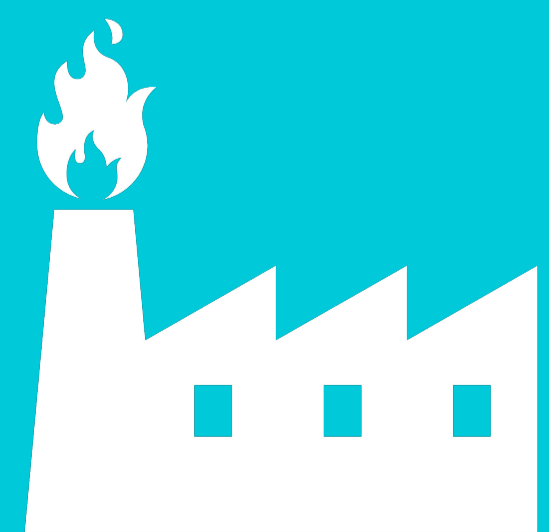
Henry Ford starts his factory to mass produce the Ford Model T - a car that ordinary Americans can afford. This will be the start of both mass motoring and of new, more efficient factories with assembly lines.



1908 CE

WORLD WAR I

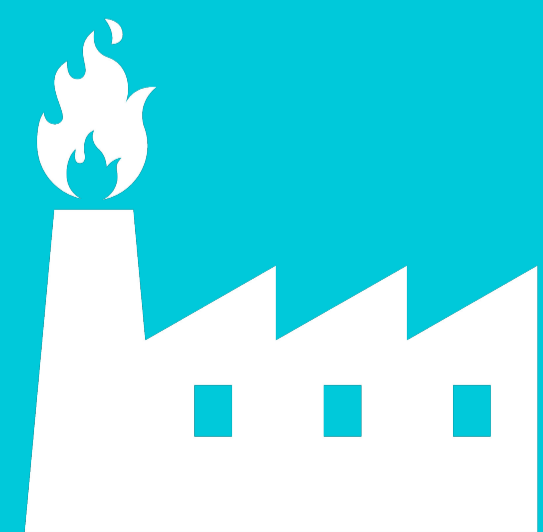
The competition between European states escalates to full-scale war after Austria's heir to the throne, Franz Ferdinand, is assassinated by a Serbian nationalist. Large parts of the world are drawn into the war, which ends with nine million dead soldiers. After the war, the map of Europe was redrawn and the ruins of Germany became a perfect breeding ground for Nazism.



1914-1918 CE

THE THEORY OF RELATIVITY

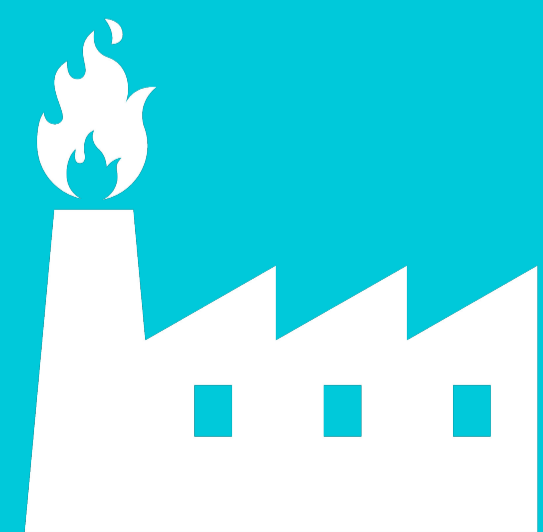
Albert Einstein published the special theory of relativity in 1905 and the general theory of relativity in 1915. They include, among other things, calculations showing that nothing can travel faster than light, the formula for how much energy is contained in mass ($E=mc^2$) and developments of Newton's theories about gravity.



1915 CE

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

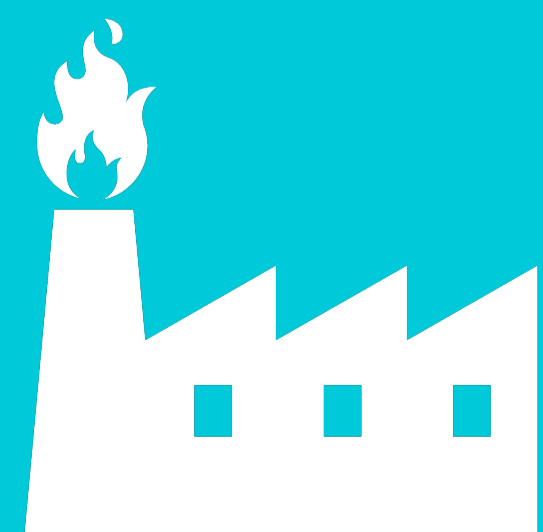
Inspired by Marx's ideas, workers' councils took over Russia from the tsarist dictatorship. The Bolshevik Party, led by Lenin, took control of the state and introduced a new, communist dictatorship.



1917 CE

THE BRITISH EMPIRE LARGEST

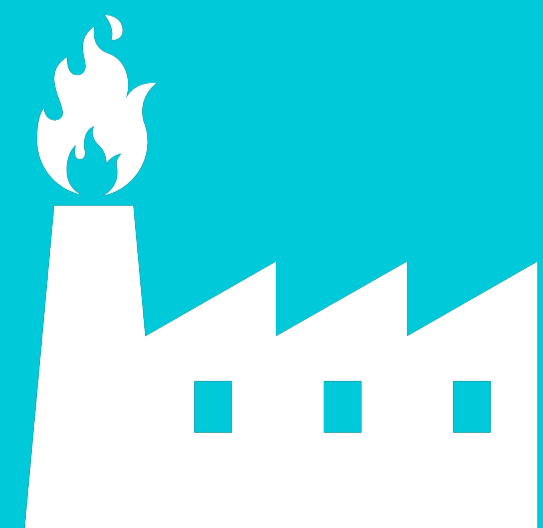
At this time, Great Britain had colonies or some form of control over about a quarter of the earth's surface. It is the largest empire that has ever existed and is the main reason why English is still spoken all over the world.



~1920 CE

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

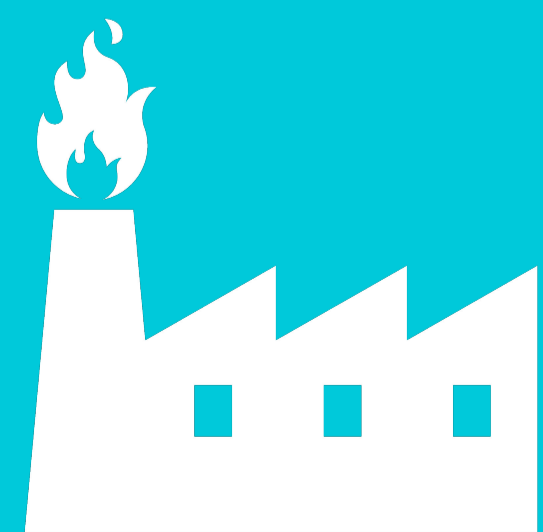
After a decade of optimism and wild stock trading (The Roaring 20s), the economy crashed and sent the United States into perhaps its worst economic crisis ever.



1929 CE

THE HOLOCAUST

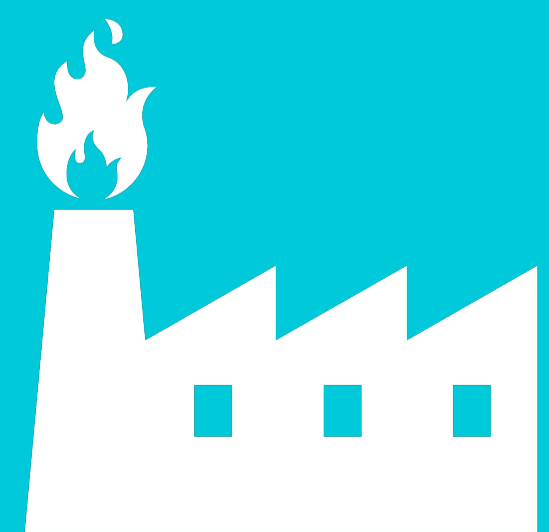
The extermination of six million Jews as well as millions of Romani, communists, disabled and others whom the Nazis considered inferior. The Holocaust can be said to have begun with the discriminatory Nuremberg Laws in 1935 and continued to escalate until Germany lost the war.



1935-1945 CE

WORLD WAR II

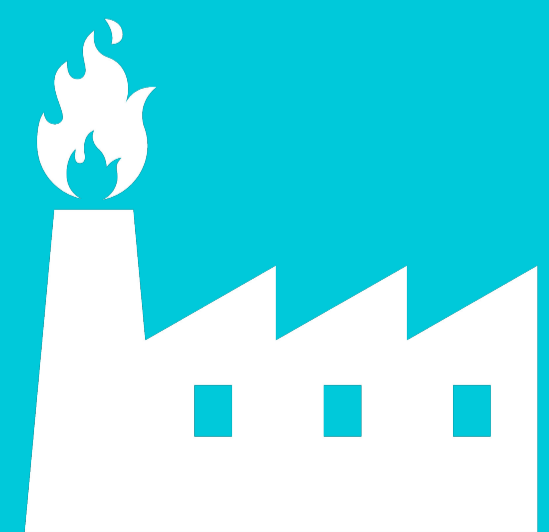
Hitler's Germany drags Europe and the world into yet another war. The war is the deadliest conflict in human history and ended with at least 50 million casualties.



1939-1945 CE

PENICILLIN

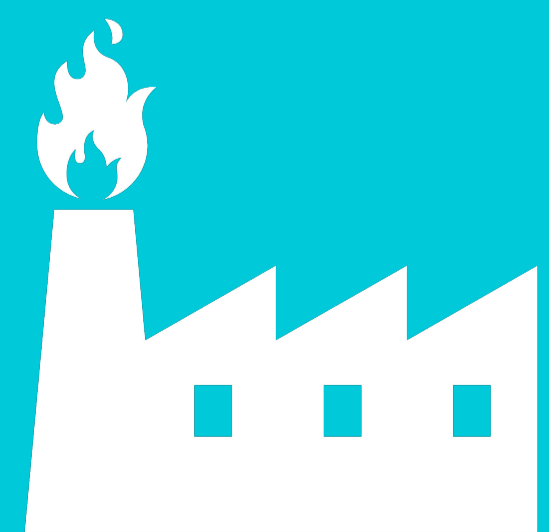
In 1928, Alexander Fleming succeeded in identifying a mold with antibacterial characteristics. In 1942, mass-production began and many lives could be saved. Today, more and more bacteria are resistant after the overuse of antibiotics.



1942 CE

UNITED NATIONS IS FOUNDED

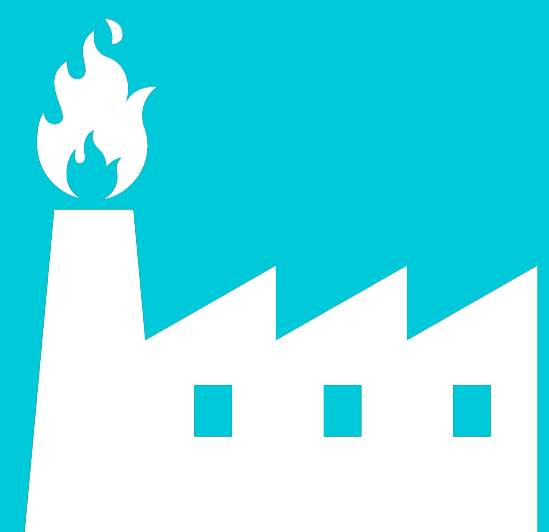
To prevent future wars, the absolute majority of the world's countries agree to join together in the United Nations.



1945 CE

THE COLD WAR

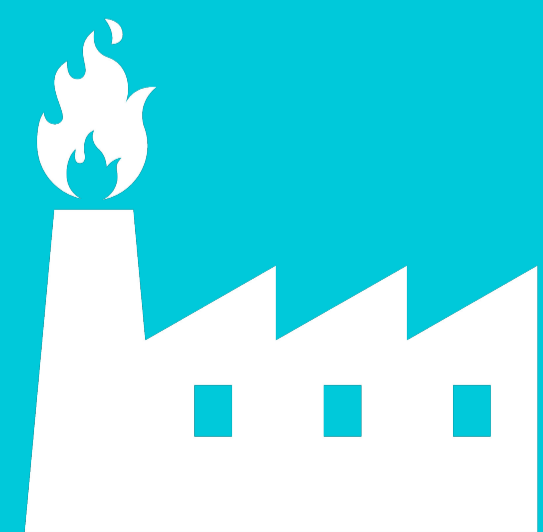
After the end of the Second World War, the situation was tense between the communist Soviet Union and the capitalist USA. The fear of the atomic bomb prevented full-scale war, but smaller wars and conflicts are fought between the superpowers.



1945-1990 CE

THE VIETNAM WAR

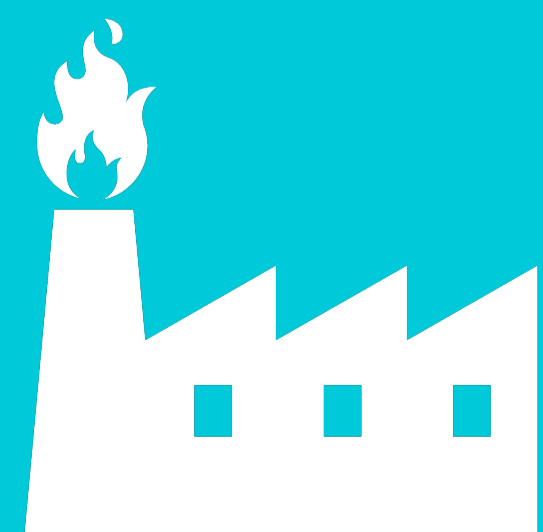
As part of the Cold War, the United States entered Vietnam to prevent the country from becoming communist. After long battles and millions of deaths (mainly Vietnamese), the US is forced to admit defeat.



1955-1975 CE

THE TRANSISTOR

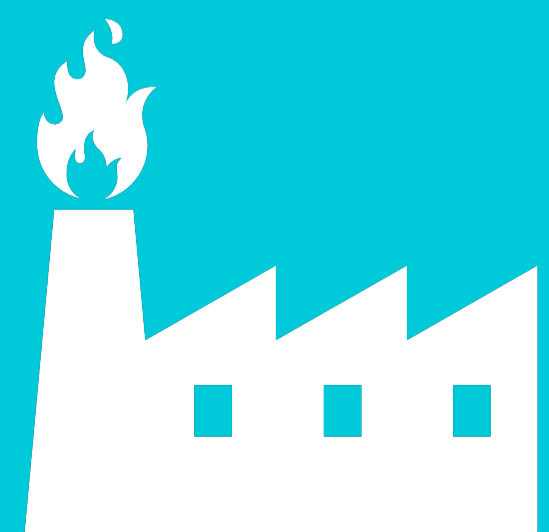
Transistors are found in almost all electrical machines, especially computers. They control the electricity in the computer and can be turned on and off several million times per second, which is the basis on which computers can process information in electrical form.



1947 CE

INDIA INDEPENDENT

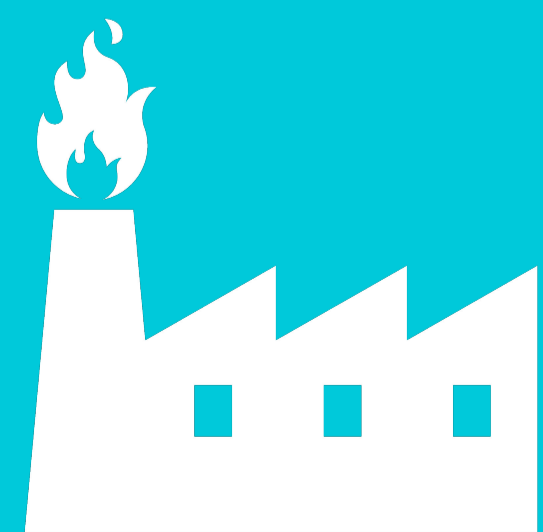
India gained independence from Great Britain after a peaceful struggle led by, among others, Mahatma Gandhi.



1947 CE

THE EUROPEAN UNION

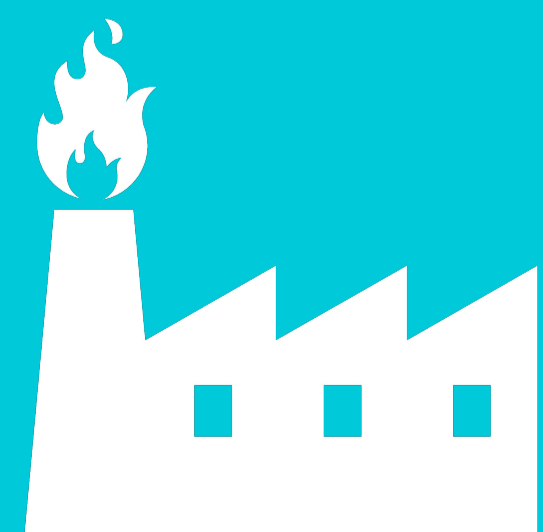
The first step towards the EU is taken in a trade agreement (The European Coal and Steel Community) that will also serve as a guarantee for peace. The hope is that joint trade will also lead to peace between the countries.



1952 CE

SOLAR POWER

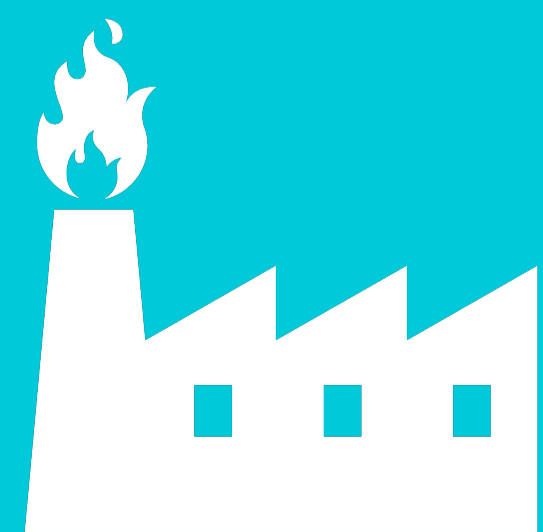
The first practically usable solar cell is demonstrated. Due to their high price, they are initially used mainly on satellites.



1954 CE

THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD

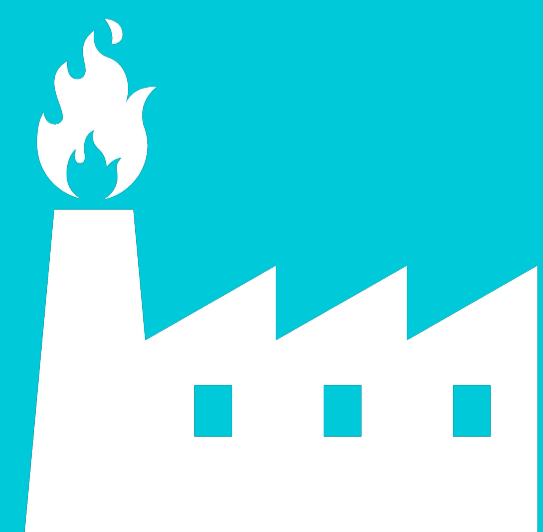
Mao Tse Tung and the Communist Party are rapidly trying to streamline agriculture in China. Inefficient bureaucracy and people's fear of reporting bad harvests lead to incorrect statistics and vital food being sent to the state. Millions of people starve to death as a result.



1958-1962 CE

THE MICROCHIP

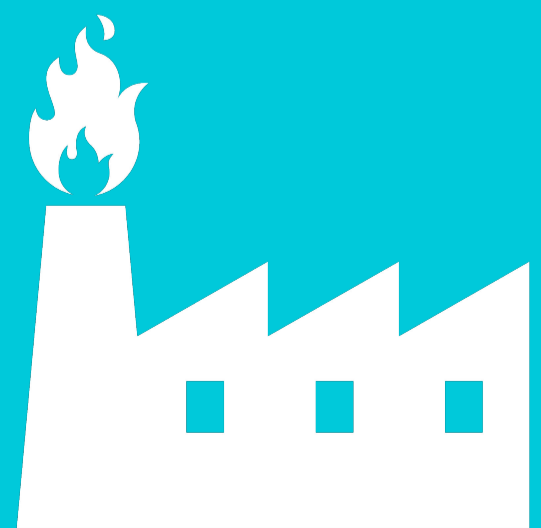
The microchip is a collection of transistors on a small surface. They are used in almost everything electronic, such as computers and mobile phones. The chip made manufacturing even cheaper and the machines smaller, which initiated the digitization of the entire society.



1958 CE

BIRTH CONTROL PILLS

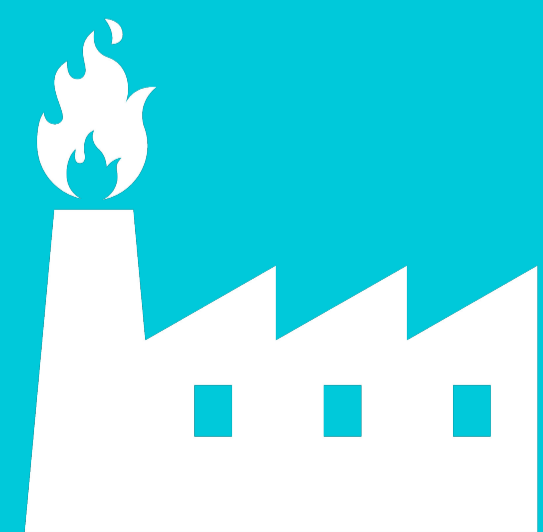
The birth control pill was invented and gave us increased opportunities to choose when and if we want to become parents. Primarily, it gave women greater freedom to work and study.



1960 CE

CIVIL RIGHTS ACT

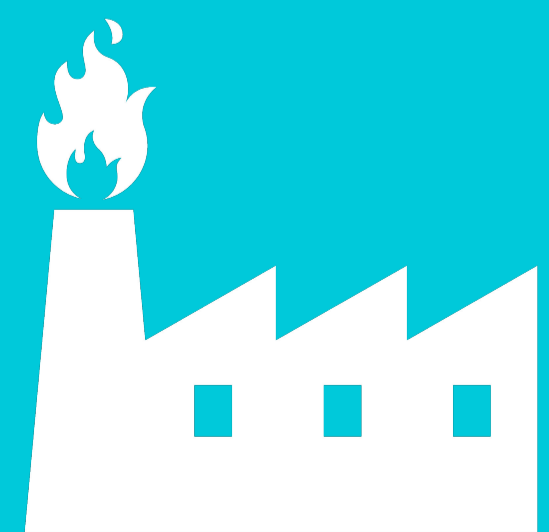
After the abolition of slavery, discriminatory laws remained in the United States. After the civil rights movement protests, these were finally abolished in 1965 and all races became equal before the law.



1964 CE

THE MOON LANDING

After a long space race between the United States and the Soviet Union, the United States succeeds in landing a manned craft on the moon.



1969 CE

ROE V WADE

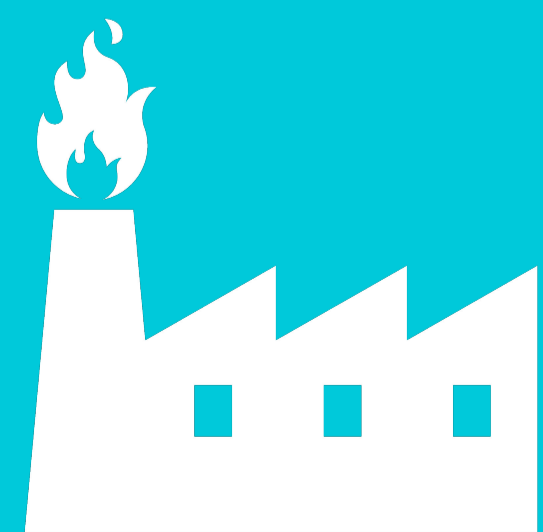
After being banned in the US since the early 19th century, the Supreme Court ruled that abortion should be legalized. Similar legislation is being implemented in many countries at the same time.



1973 CE

THE BERLIN WALL FALLS

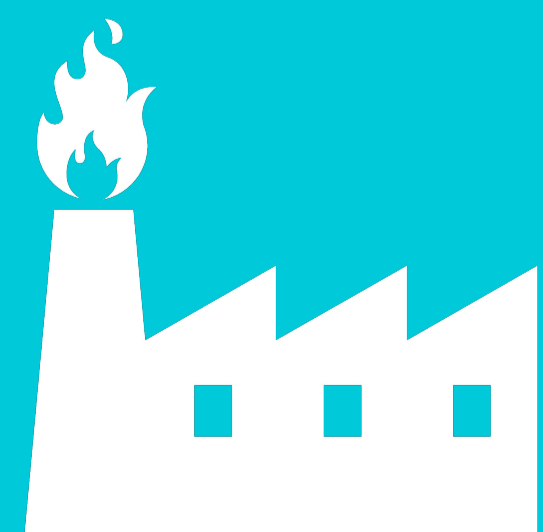
The wall between communist East Berlin and capitalist West Berlin is torn down by the influx of crowds. Not long after, the Soviet dictatorship collapsed.



1989 CE

THE INTERNET

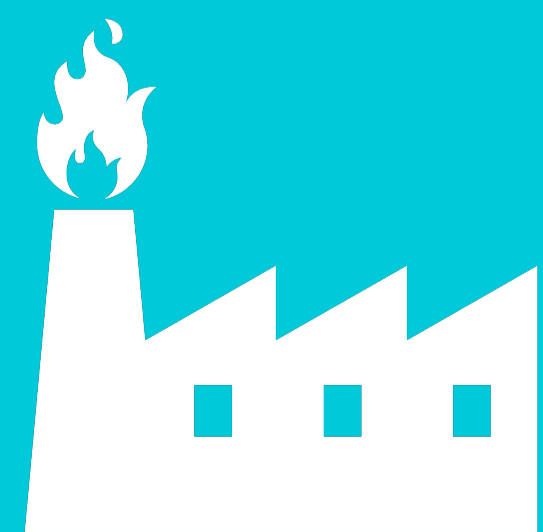
The Internet was originally a military research project. In 1990, Tim Berners-Lee at CERN put up the first public website on what would become a global Internet. He later created the first web browser that made it possible to browse the few pages that existed.



1990 CE

APARTHEID ABOLISHED

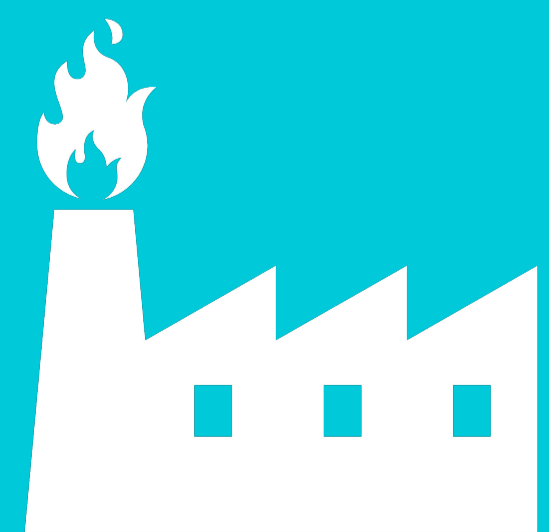
After nearly 50 years of racial segregation between black and white South Africans, the apartheid system collapses after long protests. Civil rights activist Nelson Mandela is elected president.



1994 CE

9/11

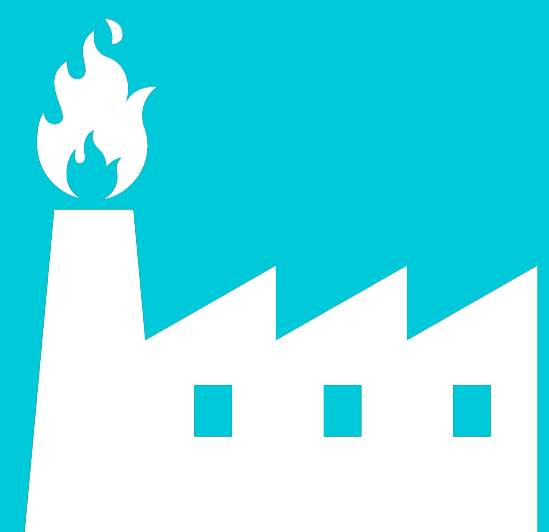
On September 11, terrorists crashed planes into the World Trade Center in New York and into the Pentagon. It will be the start of increased anti-terrorist focus in many countries and the American invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.



2001 CE

HUMAN GENOME PROJECT

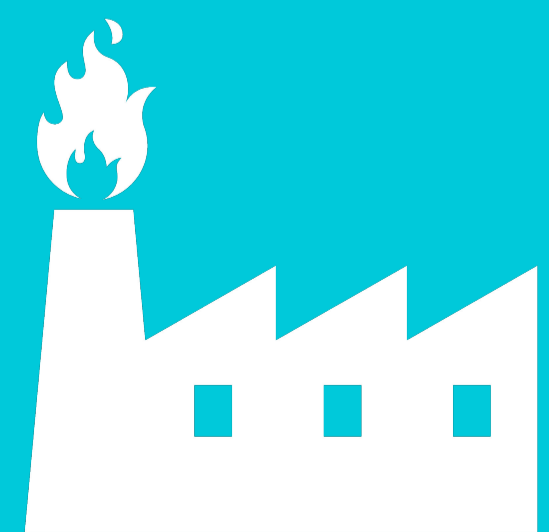
After a major research collaboration between several countries, the result is an almost complete mapping of human DNA. The discovery has made it easier to understand diseases and create better medicines.



2003 CE

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The ambition to create a truly flexible artificial intelligence seems to have taken a new leap forward as Chat-GPT is released to the public.



2022 CE