# Famous People on School of Life

**One of the great writers of children's stories, Hans Christian Andersen was born in the slums of Odense, Denmark, in 1805. He didn't receive any formal education until he was about twenty years old, when he first entered grammar school. (Charles Reichblum, in Knowledge in a Nutshell, p. 161)**

**That style of residential architecture called “California ranch house” was created by an imaginative fellow named Cliff May. Without the degree and license to call himself an architect, he settled for “designer.” Builders paid him fees. From just one of his designs, they put up 18,000 houses. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Although the U.S. Capital building is one of the most beautiful buildings in America, it was originally designed -- not by a professional architect -- but by an amateur. Congress established a contest for someone to design the Capital in 1793, and the winner was Dr. William Thornton, who had no training as an architect. He was awarded $500 and a city lot. (Charles Reichblum, in Knowledge in a Nutshell , p. 158)**

**If you don't have a string of degrees after your name, don't worry, you're in good company. Irving Berlin, for instance, only had two years of formal schooling. He never took a music lesson in his life and never learned how to read music. When he composed his songs, he would hum the melody and a musical secretary would write down the notes. He became one of the greatest songwriters the country has ever known. (Bits & Pieces)**

**Luther Burbank, who had no formal education beyond high school, was inspired by Charles Darwin's Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication to pursue a career as a plant breeder. Using his keen memory and powers of observation to detect changes in his breeding stock, Burbank developed more than 80 new plant varieties. (Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts)**

**Dr. Alexis Carrel, the French surgeon who generations ago invented the technique of sewing severed blood vessels back together, learned his craft from a lacemaker. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Researchers checked out CEO’s** **of 1,000 top U.S. companies and learned 10 percent have law degrees, 18 percent have MBA's and 6 percent have no college. (L. M. Boyd)  
The great classical writers Homer, Horace, Virgil, and Plato all never saw a book. Books were only produced in the Western world after the years 1400-1500. Earlier writers read scrolls. (The Diagram Group, in Funky, Freaky Facts, p. 183)**

**You qualified for the clergy in medieval times if you could read the opening words of the last verse of the 51st Psalm. (L. M. Boyd)**  
**After one year at the University of Texas in Austin, Michael Dell, founder of Dell Computer, dropped out when his part-time computer business took off. Today, Michael Dell is a colorful and dynamic speaker. He begins many of his public speaking engagements with mention of the company he started in his garage based on the concept of “build-to-order” technology. No degree, no problem for Michael dell. But Dell has created big problems for older manufacturers of the PC market who now fight for market share in the arena of personal computers. (Jim Romeo, in Business’ Most Wanted, p. 65)**

**Do horse dentists use Novocaine? Not generally. Most don't have medical licenses, so can't legally administer anesthetics. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Raised on a Missouri farm, Walt Disney took art lessons through correspondence courses and at a local museum. He was known to have had a learning disability. He later was an apprentice advertising animator after serving in the Red Cross during World War I. Armed with no formal college education but much art instruction and experience as an illustrator, he set out for Hollywood to make animated films with his older brother, Roy, in 1923. Education or not, the Disney name grew, stuck, and is known throughout the world today. (Jim Romeo, in Business’ Most Wanted, p. 67)**

**Thomas Edison spent three months in school, and then was home-schooled by his mother. At the age of twelve he began his entrepreneurial ventures selling fruit, candy, and newsletters to railroad commuters. He suffered from deafness and later worked his way into a telegraph position with Western Union Telegraph. The kid with no education is now part of every American child’s education. (Jim Romeo, in Business’ Most Wanted, p. 65)  
  
Benjamin Franklin attended school only between the ages of 8 and 10. That's all it took to produce one of the wisest and most revered men in our history. (Bernie Smith, in The Joy of Trivia , p. 43)**

**Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft Corporation, went off to Harvard University to become a high-flying attorney like his father. But when his interest and intellect turned toward computers, he dropped out of Harvard, and went on to form his computer software company. (Jim Romeo, in Business’ Most Wanted, p. 64)**

***“*If I had been technically trained, I would have quit,” said King Gillette after spending eight frustrating years striving to invent and introduce his safety razor. (Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 186)  
Why God never received tenure at any university: 1. He had only one major publication and it had no references. 2. Some people doubted that he wrote it himself. 3. He never applied to the ethics board for permission to use human subjects. 4. He expelled his first two students -- for learning. 5. When one particular experiment went awry, he tried to cover it up by drowning the subjects. 6. He rarely appeared in class, usually just telling students to read the book. 7. His office hours were infrequent and usually held on a mountain top. 8. Although there were only ten requirements the great majority of students could never pass his test. 9. It may be that he created the world, but where has He been since? (On Course magazine)**

**My father, an avid golfer, visited my Marine husband, Kevin, and me at Camp LeJeune, N.C. Not golfers ourselves, we set him up with a friend to fill out a foursome of two majors and a colonel. Afterward I asked Dad if he learned anything about the military. “Yes,” he said. “Whenever the colonel walks up to the tee, it's his turn. And whenever he takes a swing, it's, ‘That was a nice shot, sir.’” (Debra O'Heran, in Reader's Digest)  
Patrick Henry quit school at age 10. Then learned Greek and Latin. (L. M. Boyd)  
You don't have to know much about the hotel business to be a hotel magnate, evidently. Conrad Hilton once said the only thing he'd learned about hotels was that the shower curtain should be placed inside the bathtub. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Although he graduated from Caloundra State in 1979, Steve Irwin never had any formal education in dealing with animals. His learning came from daily contact and experiences with the animals at the park, as well exposure to the creatures that were brought in for his mother to rehabilitate. Shortly before his untimely passing, the University of Queensland’s School of Integrative Biology had chosen to name Steve an adjunct professor at the college. (D. L. Nashton, in Tidbits)**

**Peter Jennings was a high school dropout. (Don Voorhees, in The Essential Book of Useless Information, p. 15)**

**Did Jesus have credentials? Jesus was a healer without a medical license; he spoke of law without a law degree; he ministered to others without a Reverend or Father before his name; he counseled with no certificate hanging on his wall; he was a king without a crown or an earthly kingdom. To many, in today's world, he would have no obvious credentials. (Sandra Radhoff)**

**Steven Jobs, founder of Apple Computer, dropped out of Reed College in Portland, Oregon, after one semester. The bright and audacious entrepreneur had a sixth sense for what sort of technology he wanted to see and use, so he launched the Apple computing empire. The kid without a college degree became a household name and a star of the information technology hall of fame. (Jim Romeo, in Business’ Most Wanted, p. 64)**

**As breaks go, this is one of the biggest. Tommy Lee Jones won his first Broadway acting role only 10 days after arriving in New York. And Tommy Lee had never taken an acting lesson. He went on to star in the movie CoalMiner's Daughter.(Ripley's Believe It or Not!: Book of Chance, p. 4)**

**After leaving school when he was thirteen years old, Henry J. Kaiser, industrialist and entrepreneur, became a photographer’s apprentice and bought the business at age twenty. After some career stints in construction and shipbuilding, he became heavily involved in labor relations. In 1942 Kaiser founded the first health maintenance organization, now known as Kaiser Permanente, which grew to become one of the largest HMOs in America. Education or not, he made his mark. (Jim Romeo, in Business’ Most Wanted, p. 66)**  
  
**13 famous American lawyers who never went to law school:**

**1. Patrick Henry (1736-1799), member of the Continental Congress, governor of Virginia**

**2. John Jay (1745-1829), first chief justice of the Supreme Court**

**3. John Marshall (1755-1835), chief justice of the Supreme Court**

**4. William Wirt (1772-1834), attorney general**

**5. Roger B. Taney (1777-1864), secretary of the treasury, chief justice of the Supreme Court**

**6. Daniel Webster (1782-1852), secretary of state**

**7. Salmon P. Chase (1808-1873) senator, chief justice of the Supreme Court**

**8. Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), president**

**9. Stephen Douglas (1813-1861), representative, senator from Illinois**

**10. Clarence Darrow (1857-1938), defense attorney in Scopes trial of 1925. (While Clarence Darrow attended a law school for one year, he did not distinguish himself and preferred to study law on his own. He received the greater part of his education in a law office in Youngstown, Ohio)**

**11. Robert Storey (b. 1893), president of the American Bar Association (1952-1953)**

**12. J. Strom Thurmond (b. 1902), senator, governor of South Carolina**

**13. James O. Eastland (b. 1904), senator from Mississippi. *(Wallechinsky/Wallace, in The Book of Lists, p. 35)***

**Mozart never went to school. (Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Book)  
Before Louis Armstrong became world famous, he spent a lot of time walking in his neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago. One afternoon he noticed a small crowd gathered around two street musicians. He stopped to listen and, to his delight, they were playing his improvised chorus of “Struttin' With Some Barbecue.” At the finish of the number, Armstrong walked over and said, “Man, you're playing that too slow!” “How would you know?” the musicians challenged. “I'm Louis Armstrong. That's my chorus you're playing!” The next day the pair had a sign next to their tin cup. It read, “Pupils of Louis Armstrong.” (Bud Freeman, in You Don't Look Like a Musician)**

**20 famous people who never attended college:**

**1. Joseph Chamberlain, British statesman**

**2. Grover Cleveland, U.S. president**

**3. Joseph Conrad, British author**

**4. Aaron Copland, U.S. composer**

**5. Hart Crane, U.S. poet**

**6. Eugene Debs, U.S. socialist leader**

**7. Amelia Earhart, U.S. aviator**

**8. Paul Gauguin, French painter**

**9. Kahlil Gibran, Syrian author and painter**

**10. Ernest Hemingway, U.S. author**

**11. Rudyard Kipling, British author**

**12. Abraham Lincoln, U.S. president**

**13. H. L. Mencken, U.S. editor and journalist**

**14. John D. Rockefeller, U.S. oil magnate**

**15. Eleanor Roosevelt, U.S. lecturer, author, and humanitarian**

**16. George Bernard Shaw, British playwright and critic**

**17. Dylan Thomas, British poet**

**18. Harry S Truman, U.S. president**

**19. George Washington, U.S. president**

**20. Virginia Woolf, British author. *(Wallechinsky/Wallace, in The Book of Lists, p. 277)***

**15 famous people who never graduated from grade school:**

**1. Andrew Carnegie, U. S. industrialist and philanthropist**

**2. Charles Chaplin, British actor and film director**

**3. William “Buffalo Bill” Cody, American scout and showman**

**4. Noel Coward, British actor, playwright, and composer**

**5. Charles Dickens, British novelist**

**6. Isodora Duncan, U.S. dancer**

**7. Thomas Edison, U.S. inventor**

**8. Samuel Gompers, U.S. labor leader**

**9. Maksim Gorky, Russian writer**

**10. Claude Monet, French painter**

**11. Sean O'Casey, Irish playwright**

**12. Alfred E. Smith, U.S. politician**

**13. John Philip Sousa, U.S. bandleader and composer**

**14. Henry M. Stanley, British explorer**

**15. Mark Twain, U.S. humorist and writer. *(Wallechinsky/Wallace, in The Book of Lists)*  
  
Nancy Aston, a member of Unity Center of Practical Christianity, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, was the winner of the World Poetry** **Prize at its annual convention in New York City. Her poem “Voice of Canada” won first prize of $10,000. It is said that life begins at forty. Nancy, sixty-eight, didn't begin writing poetry until she was forty. Although she had only a ninth-grade education and no formal training, Nancy has always been fascinated with words. “I've never studied poetry forms. I tried, but just became confused,” she said. “I seldom change anything because I don't think it's good to chop up a poem and analyze it. If it's not right the first time, I abandon it.” (The Unity World Report, Summer, 1994)**

**Charles William Post attended Illinois Industrial College (now the University of Illinois) but soon dropped out, believing that school was a waste of time. He manufactured agricultural machines and worked on various inventions. After undergoing medical treatment in Battle Creek, Michigan, Post developed Postum Food Coffee and launched one of the first massive advertising campaigns for a food product. He later introduced Post Grape Nuts and Post Toasties, which illustrate his health-conscious approach to diet. Sadly, Post sporadically suffered from depression and fell victim to suicide after recovering from appendicitis. (Jim Romeo, in Business’ Most Wanted, p. 66)  
The beauty of U.S. government is that it gives on-the-job training to its Presidents. The four-year course is free and also provides an intern salary of $200,000 a year, plus free housing. (Art Buchwald, in Los Angeles Times)**

**Nine of the thirty-nine U.S. Presidents did not attend college: Truman, Cleveland, Andrew Johnson, Lincoln, Fillmore, Taylor, Van Buren, Jackson, and Washington. (Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 347)**

**Saint Francis, who founded the Franciscan religious order in 1209, had no theological training. (Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 56)  
A friend once asked Isidor I. Rabi, a Nobel prize winner in science, how he became a scientist. Rabi replied that every day after school his mother would talk to him about his school day. She wasn't so much interested in what he had learned that day, but she always inquired, “Did you ask a good question today?” “Asking good questions,” Rabi said, “made me become a scientist.” (Bits & Pieces)While attending a laser seminar for obstetric and gynecologic surgeons, I found a booth where the doctors were encouraged to practice their laser skills on animal tissues. One young intern used an excellent technique dissecting a membrane. “Where did you learn that?” I asked her. “Labs? Seminars? Conferences?” “No way,” she replied. “Nintendo!” (Andy Lopreato, in Reader's Digest)**

**U.S. Supreme Court justices are not required to have any legal training. That's somewhat hard to believe because those judges rule on some of the most complex legal questions in the nation. But nowhere in the Constitution does it say that Supreme Court justices have to be lawyers, or have any legal training. In fact, several justices in the court's history had never attended law school. And James Byrnes, on the court from 1941 to 1942, had little formal education and never attended college.  
(Charles Reichblum, in Knowledge in a Nutshell , p. 80)**

**Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy’s International, dropped out of school in Fort Wayne, Indiana, in the tenth grade and went to work full-time at a local restaurant. The ambitious Thomas’s lack of education never seemed to impede his ability to build a major fast-food corporation, which now has over 4,400 locations in over 34 countries and territories. (Jim Romeo, in Business’ Most Wanted, p. 65)  
  
Ted Turner, founder of CNN, always known for his “shoot from the hip” and dare-devil demeanor, was expelled from Brown University after he allowed a female guest into his dorm room against regulations. His expulsion didn’t stop him though. He later inherited his father’s Atlanta-based television station after his father tragically committed suicide. Turner went on to build the station into the CNN media empire that we know today. (Jim Romeo, in Business’ Most Wanted, p. 66)  
The extent of George Washington’s formal education corresponded to about the fifth grade in a modern public school. (E. C. McKenzie)Eighty-five percent of the TV weather reporters learn on the job, not in meteorology classes. That's why the accredited meteorologists among them make such a big deal of it. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Walt Whitman, author of the American classic “Leaves of Grass,” ended his formal schooling at the age of 11. (Ripley’s Believe It or Not!: Book of Chance, p. 331)  
  
Mark Twain has been called the greatest of the American writers. Where did he graduate from high school? He didn’t. You can say the same for Charles Dickens and Noel Coward. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Brigham Young had exactly 11 days of formal education. So say those who know their Mormon history. (L. M. Boyd)**

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