It’s a Conspiracy!

Witches are out to get us. The men behind the Revolutionary War are Satan-worshiping Freemasons hoping to bring the Illuminati into the colonies and destroy the Church. Conspiracy theories have been a part of America since Colonial times.

Historically, conspiracies in this country have largely been anti-Catholic, anti-Masonic, and anti-immigrant. Around the second World War, however, these theories began taking on a much more political divide. Science, religion, and politics are all rife with conspiracy theories.

There are hundreds of conspiracy theories (and even a handful of actual conspiracies). These are just a few.

Conspiracy Theory

noun

1. a theory that explains an event as being the result of a plot by a covert group or organization; a belief that a particular unexplained event was caused by such a group.

2. the idea that many important political events or economic and social trends are the products of secret plots that are largely unknown to the general public.

Note: Every single one of the conspiracies listed in this display is FALSE.
Conspiracies in History

- Protocols of the Elders of Zion is a secret plot to take over the world
- 9/11 was an inside job
- ...So was Pearl Harbor
- Kennedy wasn’t shot by Lee Harvey Oswald (alone)
- The Holocaust didn’t happen
- An alien ship crash landed in Roswell, New Mexico; the ship and recovered alien corpses are being kept in Area 51 or Fort Knox

Conspiracies in Science

- Vaccines cause autism
- Fluoride in water poisons people
- The government introduced crack black communities to decimate them
- The World Health Organization spreads HIV through polio vaccines
- Global warming/Evolution aren’t real and scientists know it
- The Apollo Moon landing happened in a sound stage

Conspiracies in Religion

- Jesus married Mary Magdalene and they had children, which the Catholic Church has tried to keep secret
- Satanic rituals killing children
- The Masons control everything, including the layout of Washington, D.C.
Think we’re wrong? Want to research these topics on your own? Heard another theory that you want to prove/disprove?

Try these resources through the West Library:

1) **Opposing Viewpoints or CQ Researcher**: Search *Conspiracy Theories*

   These are great for background research. They are great first steps when starting a new research project.

2) **Academic Search Complete**

   Want to know why people believe in conspiracies? Looking for what scholars say about vaccine safety or the probability of alien life existing on another planet. Find articles here.

3) **Books**

   Look for your topic in the catalog to find books we have on the subject.
Conspiracy: The United States government created the Apollo moon landing in a Hollywood studio.

Why?: The main reason given for faking the moon landing was to prove American supremacy over Russia in the Cold War.

Their proof: The pictures sent back couldn’t be real. There are no stars, the flag was waving without wind, the shadows aren’t right...

Counterproof: Not only is there evidence in the form of scientific discoveries, materials brought back, and lots of photographs, there are reasonable explanations for all the confused theories presented.

Bottom Line: “It would have been harder to fake it than to do it.” Neil Armstrong.

Sources

- Cunningham, Darryl. How to Fake a Moon Landing: Exposing the Myths of Science Denial.
Conspiracy: The government is hiding evidence of a UFO crash and intelligent alien life in Roswell, NM.

Who: The United States government, especially the military and paramilitary groups such as the Men in Black.

Why: To hide secret technology that the government wants to use to build its own military supremacy.

Their Proof: Something really did crash land in Roswell in 1947; the government really did lie about what it was. There is a strange material that couldn’t burn that was recovered. Bodies were seen being dragged from the crash site.

Counter-proof: A high-altitude balloon equipped with listening devices did crash land in Roswell, near the Air Force base. Crash test dummies, dressed in pressure suits, were recovered. When the details surrounding the Roswell case were finally declassified, the banality of them probably helped fuel more conspiracy fire.

The Bottom Line: There’s no reason to believe a weather balloon crashed in outside of Roswell, but there’s no evidence that what crashed was extraterrestrial.
Conspiracy: *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* is a text that outlines the minutes of a meeting held by Jewish leaders at the end of the 19th century.

Why: To take over the world by ruling over the banks, press, and governments.

Who: This work was actually a forgery created by a Russian secret police officer. For decades, this was published as fact. In American, Henry Ford (yes, the car guy) published 500,000 copies of *The Protocols* and published sections in his *The International Jew: The World’s Foremost Problem*. In Germany, the Nazi party published it and made it a required text for all schools. Currently, only fringe groups in the West and some Middle Eastern governments still claim it is an actual accounting of a large Jewish conspiracy.

Their Proof?: None, really. Those who believe this is real just point to published editions of the book.

Counter-proof: *The Protocols* were shown to be a blatant forgery as early as 1921. Journalists found about 12% of the text was a plagiarism of a satirical poem about Machiavelli.

**Bottom Line:** “For all the harm they have already caused and may yet cause, are nothing but ridiculous nonsense.”

**Swiss Court Ruling, 1935**

Sources

- Shermer, Michael & Grobman, Alex. (2000). Denying History: Who Says the Holocaust Never Happened and Why Do They Say It?
Conspiracy: The US government was involved in the planning, execution, or prior knowledge of the 9/11 Terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

Why: A false flag is a conspiracy set up by the military or government intended to look like an attack is carried out by another group. Most of the 9/11 conspiracies suggest that the 9/11 attacks were the biggest false flag ever: they were actually attacks conducted by the US government as a front to start the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Other False Flag conspiracies include Pearl Harbor, the Boston Marathon, Sandy Hook, and the Oklahoma City bombing.

Who: Largely, the Bush administration is blamed for either knowing that the attacks were going to happen and didn’t say anything to protect people OR for actually causing the damage through direct actions.

Their proof?: Analysis of wreckage pictures, phone records, and the aftermath of the disasters leads many arm-chair experts to believe that the damage that occurred could not have been caused by plane crashes.

Counter-proof: In 2005, Popular Mechanics analyzed each of the engineering suggestions from 9/11 Truthers. Their website has a full account of these claims, along with the science behind the facts.

Bottom Line: The events of September 11, 2001, caused the deaths of 2,977 civilians and the 19 people who hijacked the planes. However, suggestions that this was caused by malice or omission by the United States government don’t have any foundation in fact.

Hey wait...some Conspiracies really did happen.

One of the reasons conspiracy theories can last so long is that nefarious acts have actually been committed by supposedly benign organizations, including the government. These are a few examples:

- **Watergate**: President Nixon really did get help from the CIA and Whitehouse staff to wiretap the Democratic National Headquarters and they really were involved in a long-term cover-up, which eventually led to Nixon’s resignation.

- **MLK and the FBI**: The FBI really did have a file on Martin Luther King, Jr., in which they tried to discredit him and prove him a threat and discredit him. In one memo after his *I have a Dream* speech, King is described as the “most dangerous and effective Negro leader in the country.”

- **Nazi Scientists in America**: During and after WWII, the US government, headed by President Truman, did create fake backgrounds for Nazi scientists, incorporating them in American science. One example, Arthur Rudolph, was a Nazi responsible for thousands of deaths and was integral in the space program.
Suggested Readings and Referenced Sources

Books


Conspiracy Theory in America. By Lance DeHaven-Smith. E839.5 .D44 2013


50 Popular Beliefs that People Think are True. By Guy P. Harrison. AZ999 .H37 2012


Denying Science: Conspiracy Theories, Media Distortions, and the War Against Reality. By John Grant. Q175.5 .G734 2011


How to Fake a Moon Landing: Exposing the Myths of Science Denial. By Darryl Cunningham. Q172.5 .P77 C86 2013

The Believing Brain: From Ghosts and Gods to Politics and Conspiracies—How We Construct Beliefs and Reinforce them as Truths. By Michael Shermer. BF773 .S54 2011


Web Sites


Snopes.com
Factcheck.org
Skeptic.com