



Encyclopedia Idiota: History's Worst Decisions and the People Who Made Them

Stephen Weir

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The 64 A.D. burning of Rome during the reign of Nero . . . Winston Churchill's ill-conceived and disastrous World War I plan to invade Turkey at Gallipoli . . . the Maginot Line, built in France in 1929-34 in a foolhardy effort to prevent the feared German invasion . . . the 1950s thalidomide pharmaceutical disaster that resulted in at least 20,000 babies born with deformities . . . the 1989-91 misappropriation of company funds by publishing executive Robert Maxwell, and the collapse of his financial empire . . . the Enron scandal of 2000 that brought down a yet larger business empire. Chronicled in these pages are stories of corporate chicanery, poor military decisions, engineering disasters, diplomatic blunders, and other appalling, large-scale mistakes that resulted in ruin and misery for countless innocent bystanders. Here are baleful tales motivated by false hope, anger, greed, pride, lust, and many other instances of erratic human behavior. A selection of approximately 50 disastrous decisions are presented, each grim account summarized in a report of roughly a half-dozen pages and enhanced with sidebars and thumbnail-sized cartoon-style illustrations. Each account opens with its cast of characters, then sets the story's background before reporting the grim details and concluding with the unhappy moral. Here is a page-turner of a book that recounts some of history's most dramatic-but also catastrophic-moments.

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