

Nobel Prize Trivia

- > Alfred Nobel wrote the final draft of his Nobel Prize bequest on a torn piece of paper at the Swedish Club in Paris in front of four witnesses, because he distrusted lawyers.
- > Max Born, who received the Physics Prize in 1954, is the grandfather of singer Olivia Newton-John.
- > Tolstoy was the first great author to be rejected by the Nobel Committee in the first year. He was nominated the next year and was found wanting by the conservative committee because of his “animosity toward culture”, “ghastly naturalistic descriptions”, and “criticism of the state and the Bible”.
- > The developer of the prefrontal lobotomy, Antonio Moniz, was awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1949. This treatment for schizophrenia was abandoned in the 1960s.
- > George Bernard Shaw is the only person who has won a Nobel Prize (1925 Literature Prize) and an Academy Award (Best Adapted Screenplay in 1938).
- > Robert E. Lucas, winner of the Nobel Prize in economics in 1997 for his work on the theory of “rational expectations”, had to split the \$1 million prize with his ex-wife. Her divorce lawyer inserted a clause in the settlement agreement to cover just such a possibility.
- > Jean Paul Sartre refused the prize for Literature in 1964 for fear it would turn him into an institution.
- > In 1926, the Nobel Prize for Medicine was awarded to Johannes Fibiger for “finding a cure for cancer”. That claim (and award) appears to have been overly optimistic.
- > According to Artur Lundkvist, a member of the Nobel Literature Committee in 1981, some final nominees for the Nobel Prize for Literature had been on the list for as many as 40 years.
- > Le Duc Tho of North Vietnam received the 1973 Peace Prize for negotiating the Vietnam peace accord with US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Tho refused to accept the prize.
- > A Nobel Prize for Medicine was awarded to Julius Wagner von Jauregg for “proving” that fevers cured mental illness. Oops!
- > Marie Curie won not just one, but two Nobel Prizes: one for physics (which she shared with her husband), and one for chemistry. Her daughter, Irene, also won a Nobel Prize.
- > After Nobel’s death and his will setting up the prize, it turned out that he had not asked any of the deciding bodies he had designated as selectors for the prizes whether they would accept the responsibility; they decided to do so only after some serious hesitation.

- > Brilliant inventors Thomas Edison and Nikola Tesla never won Nobel Prizes. When the committee offered them a joint prize, they promptly rescinded the offer when it was discovered that the pair hated each other so much that they would not stand on the same stage together!
- > The humorous Ig Nobel Prize is a parody which annually honours research “that first makes people laugh, then makes people think”.
- > At the age of 35, Martin Luther King Jr., winner of the Peace Prize in 1964, was the youngest recipient of the Nobel Prize.
- > Hemingway reportedly said of the prize, “You finally scramble ashore and the bastards hit you over the head with a lifebelt”.
- > There have been only four individuals who have won more than one Nobel Prize: Marie Curie (Physics 1903 and Chemistry 1911), Linus Pauling (Chemistry 1954 and Peace 1963), John Bardeen (Physics 1956 and 1972) and Frederick Sanger (Chemistry 1958 and 1980).
- > One organisation has won the Nobel Peace Prize three times, the International Committee of the Red Cross (1917, 1944 and 1963)



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