

**Bowling for Columbine** is a film directed by and starring Michael Moore. It won an Academy Award in the category of Best Documentary, and has received both praise, controversy, and criticism, both for the genre of the film (creative documentary), and the claims Moore makes in it. The film opened on October 11, 2002, and internationalized Moore's previously cultish American status. The film won the 55th Anniversary Prize at the 2002 Cannes Film Festival, and received a 13-minute standing ovation at the end of its screening at the festival.

The film's purpose is to explore what Moore suggests are the reasons and causes for the Columbine High School massacre, and other acts of violence with guns. Moore focuses on the background and environment in which the massacre took place, and some common public opinions and assumptions about different particular points. The film takes an informal, artistic and up-close-and-personal look into the nature of violence in the United States, focusing on guns as the controversial symbol of both American freedom and its paradoxical self-destruction.

In Moore's discussions with various people, including South Park co-creator Matt Stone; the National Rifle Association's president, Charlton Heston, who suffers from Alzheimer's disease and was allegedly interviewed under false pretenses; and musician Marilyn Manson, he seeks to answer, in his own unique style, the questions of why the Columbine massacre occurred, and why the United States has higher rates of violent crimes (especially crimes involving guns) than other developed nations, in particular Germany, France, Australia, Japan, the United Kingdom, and especially Canada.

The Columbine High School massacre occurred on Tuesday, April 20, 1999 at Columbine High School in unincorporated Jefferson County, Colorado, near Denver and Littleton, Colorado, in the United States. Two teenage students, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, carried out a shooting rampage, killing twelve fellow students and a teacher, as well as wounding twenty-four others, before committing suicide. It is considered to be the deadliest school shooting, and the second deadliest attack on a school in US History.

The massacre provoked intense debate regarding gun control laws and the availability of firearms in the United States. Much discussion also centered on the nature of high school cliques and bullying, as well as the role of violent movies and video games in American society. Several of the victims who were believed to have been killed due to their religious beliefs became a source of inspiration to others, notably Christians, and led some to lament the decline of religion in public education and society in general. The shooting also resulted in an increased emphasis on school security, and a moral panic aimed at goth culture, heavy metal music, social pariahs, the use of pharmaceutical anti-depressants by teenagers, violent movies and violent video games.

**<http://en.wikipedia.org/>**

The following transcript is from a cartoon in the film. It was inspired by the work of Matt Stone and Trey Parker, creators of the animated series South Park. Although Matt Stone appears in the film, he did not do this animation. The cartoon points to America's past as a clue to why the American pursuit of happiness is so riddled with violence. Is this account fair? Is this an objective or biased history of the US?

## A brief History of the United States of America

Now, it's time for a brief History of the United States of America... Hi, boys and girls! Ready to get started?

Once upon a time, there were these people in Europe called 'pilgrims' and they were afraid of being persecuted. So they all got in a boat and sailed to the New World where they wouldn't have to be scared ever again. (*Oh, I'm so relaxed. I feel so much safer.*)

But as soon as they arrived, they were greeted by savages and they got scared all over again. (*Injuns!*) So they killed them all. Now, you'd think wiping out a race of people would calm them down, but no. Instead, they started getting frightened of each other.

(*Witch!*) So they burned witches. In 1775 they started killing the British, so they could be free. And it worked.

But they still didn't feel safe. So they passed a second amendment which said every white man could keep his gun (*I loves my gun, loves my gun.* ) which brings us to the genius idea of slavery.

You see, boys and girls, the white people back then were also afraid of doing any work. So they went to Africa, kidnapped thousands of black people, brought them back to America, and forced them to work very hard for no money. And I don't mean 'no money' like: (*I work at Wal Mart and make no money.*) I mean zero dollars. Nothing, nada, zip. Doing it that way made the USA the richest country in the world.

So did having all that money and free help calm the white people down? No way. They got even more afraid. That's because after two hundred years of slavery, the black people now outnumbered the white people in many parts of the South. Well, you can pretty much guess what came next: the slaves started rebelling. There were uprisings and the old masters' heads got chopped off and when white people heard of this, they were freaking out and going (*I want to live! Don't kill me, big black man.* )

Well, just in the nick of time came Samuel Colt, who, in 1836 invented the first weapon ever that could be fired over and over without having to reload. And all the settlers were like: *Yee hah!* But it was too late. The North soon won the Civil War and the slaves were free. Yup, they were free now to go chop all the old masters' heads off. And everybody was like: (*Oh, no, we're gonna die.*) But the freed slaves took no revenge. They just wanted to live in peace.

But you couldn't convince the white people of this. So they formed the Ku Klux Klan and, in 1871 the same year the Klan became an illegal terrorist organization, another group was founded: the National Rifle Association.

Soon, politicians passed one of the first gun laws, making it illegal for any black person to own one. It was a great year for America, the KKK and the NRA. Of course, they had nothing to do with each other and this was just a coincidence. One group legally promoted responsible gun ownership and the other group shot and lynched black people.

And that's the way it was all the way till 1955 when a black woman broke the law by refusing to move to the back of the bus. White people just couldn't believe it. (*Huh? Why won't she move? What's going on?*) Man, all Hell broke loose. Black people everywhere started demanding their rights. White people had a major, freaky fear meltdown and they were all like: (*Run away! Run away!*) And they did. They all ran fleeing to the suburbs, where it was all white and safe and clean. And they went out and bought a quarter of a billion guns. And put locks on their doors, alarms in their houses, and gates around the neighborhoods. And finally, they were all safe and secure and snug as a bug.

And everyone lived happily ever after.

### Choose the most plausible translation(s)

Once upon a time	Un jour / il était une fois / Une fois seulement
Pilgrims	des Missionnaires / des Curés / des Pèlerins
sail	ramer / naviguer / marcher
scared	égarés / effrayés / étonnés
safe	sauvé / sauf / en sécurité
greeted	rejetés / accueillis / recueillis
wipe out	essuyer / exterminer / chasser
frightened	égarés / effrayés / étonnés
witch	sorcière / sorcier / magicien
slavery	esclave / esclavage / bagne
'Wal Mart'	une chaîne de télévision / de supermarchés / d'armuriers
No way !	Pas question ! / On ne passe pas ! / Tu parles !
outnumber	dénombrer / dépasser en nombre / faire sortir
uprising	soulèvement / rébellion / guerre civile
chop off heads	décapiter / découper des têtes / guillotiner
freak out	flipper / s'éclater / faire la fête
in the nick of time	peu après / en un temps record / juste à temps
weapon	arme / fusil / mitraillette
reload	réfléchir / télécharger / recharger
settler	cow-boy / colon / chasseur
freed	libre / émancipé / libéré
pass a law	voter une loi / faire passer une loi / rejeter une loi
own	posséder / transporter / collectionner
promote	promouvoir / encourager / soutenir
all Hell broke loose	Ce fut la Bérézina / Ce fut l'Enfer / Ce fut le chaos
flee	filer / fuir / s'enfuir
the suburbs	la banlieue / le centre ville / la ville
billion	millier / million / milliard
lock	serrure / alarme / verrou
gate	clôture / barrière / grillage
snug as a bug	heureux comme un pou / douillettement installé / confortable

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**Find out when the following events occurred (dates)**

**Tick the ones that are referred to in the video**

**Rewrite the sentences below using the preterite**

Discovery of America by Christopher Columbus  
Arrival of the Pilgrim Fathers on the Mayflower in Plymouth  
The witchcraft trials in Salem  
War of Independence between Great Britain and the 13 British colonies  
Second amendment of the constitution : everybody can keep a gun  
Samuel Colt invents the Colt  
Mexican war : the USA declares war on Mexico to gain California and other territories  
Gold is discovered in California : the Gold Rush  
Civil war between North and South  
Birth of the KKK (Ku Klux Klan)  
Foundation of the NRA (National Rifle Association)  
Ellis Island becomes the chief immigration station of the USA  
The USA enters World War I  
Japan attacks Hawaii and America goes to war  
The Allies invade France on D-Day  
Start of the Civil Rights Movements  
Martin Luther King delivers his 'I have a dream' speech in Washington  
President John Fitzgerald Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas, Texas  
The Vietnam War  
The Gulf War : the USA leads an international coalition in military operation Desert Storm  
The Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York are destroyed by a terrorist attack  
President Obama is elected as President of the USA ; he will be reelected 4 years later  
Donald Trump becomes the 45<sup>th</sup> and current American President

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# TEACHER

Discovery of America by Christopher Columbus **1492**

***Arrival of the Pilgrim Fathers on the Mayflower in Plymouth 1619***

***The witchcraft trials in Salem 1692***

***War of Independence between Great Britain and the 13 British colonies 1775***

***Second amendment of the constitution : everybody can keep a gun 1791***

**Samuel Colt invents the Colt 1836**

Mexican war : the USA declares war on Mexico to gain California and other territories **1846-1848**

Gold is discovered in California : the Gold Rush **1848**

***Civil war between North and South 1861-1865***

***Birth of the KKK (Ku Klux Klan) 1865***

***Foundation of the NRA (National Rifle Association) 1871***

Ellis Island becomes the chief immigration station of the USA **1892**

The USA enters World War I **1917**

Japan attacks Hawaii and America goes to war **1939**

The Allies invade France on D-Day 1944

***Start of the Civil Rights Movements 1955***

Martin Luther King delivers his 'I have a dream' speech in Washington **August 1963**

President John Fitzgerald Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas, Texas **November 1963**

The Vietnam War **1965-1973**

The Gulf War : the USA leads an international coalition in military operation Desert Storm **1991**

The Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York are destroyed by a terrorist attack

**Sept 11, 2001**

President Obama is elected as President of the USA ; he will be reelected 4 years later **2009**

Donald Trump becomes the 45<sup>th</sup> and current American President **2017**

## Possible questions

Why choose this format (an animated cartoon) for a history lesson?

Who is this aimed at / targeted at? Who is the target audience?

Would you say this presentation of America's history is biased/subjective/over simplified or unbiased/objective/neutral?

Can you find examples of untrue / fake / exaggerated / unrealistic events?

What does Michael Moore (the author) focus on / emphasize / stress / underline / highlight?

According to the author, what two things was America built on?

Can you find in the transcript words/expressions linked to the idea of fear (la peur)?

What does he want to prove? What's his point / aim / purpose?

What is the message he wants to pass on?

Would you say 'humour' is the best way to get across?