31 Kissing Cousins - mental_floss on YouTube (Ep.6)

List Show
https://youtube.com/watch?v=0M6HWoAefsM
https://nerdfighteria.info/v/0M6HWoAefsM

Hi, I'm John Green, welcome to my Salon - hey there Buster. This is mental_floss, and today we're going to learn about 31 people who married their first cousins.

Now, you see these lists periodically, but they almost always cheat by including ANY kind of cousin and being like, 'Franklin Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt were cousins!' Which is true, but they were like fifth cousins once removed. I am fifth cousins once removed with several thousand people.

By the way, second cousins or third cousins look like this on a family tree, whereas cousins once or twice removed look like this; basically, your uncle's kid is your first cousin; your great uncle's grand kid would be your second cousin, while like your uncle's great grand kid would be your first cousin twice removed.

But today we're just going to stick with simple, straightforward first cousins. Well, and first cousins once removed, because that is creepy.

[intro music]

1. Josiah Bartlett, a doctor and the second signer of the Declaration of Independence after John Hancock, married his cousin, Mary, with whom he had 12 kids. He is also, at least in the fictional universe of *The West Wing*, a direct ancestor of President Josiah "Jed" Bartlett.

2. William Whipple, who also signed of the Declaration of Independence and was also from New Hampshire, also married his first cousin, Catherine. Whipple is probably less famous than his slave, Prince Whipple, who fought by William's side in the American Revolution; Prince's heroism led William to believe that it was impossible to fight for liberty while holding slaves, so William freed him.

3. But lest you think it was only American founding fathers, John A. McDonald, first prime minister of Canada, was married to his wife and cousin, Isabella, before her death in 1857, possibly related to her opium addiction.

4. Noted naturalist Charles Darwin was married to his first cousin Emma for more than 40 years. Emma was an accomplished pianist who even took a few lessons from Frédéric Chopin; Darwin was a guy who vomited almost every day of his adult life from a mysterious stomach illness and also wrote *On the Origin of Species*. They were both grandchildren of Josiah - What is it with all the freaking Josiahs? - Wedgwood, who made a fortune in the pottery business. Yes, *that* Wedgwood.

5. Wernher von Braun was also married to his first cousin. You know him, he helped develop rocket technology for the Nazis before moving to the U.S. and heading up the Saturn V rocket booster project that helped take Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, and that other guy who had to stay in the ship to the moon.

Just after the second World War, the U.S. expunged his record of Nazi party membership and brought him here, where he worked for the Army and later NASA. In his mid-30s, he wrote a letter to his 18-year-old cousin Maria proposing marriage. But lest you think that it was merely like a marriage about securing Maria American citizenship, they had three kids.

6. In more recent news, Peruvian Nobel prize laureate Mario Vargas Llosa married his first cousin Patricia. They will celebrate their golden anniversary in 2015.

7. Another Nobel literature laureate, the Frenchman André Gide, was married to his first cousin Madeleine for many years, but their marriage was never consummated, and in general their relationship was exceptionally weird - like, Gide once wrote "I forget [that] she is not my mother." Writers, man, we're weird.

8. And speaking of possibly-unconsummated cousin marriages: Edgar Allan Poe married his 13-year-old cousin Virginia Eliza Clemm in 1836. Many biographers think this was more of like a brother-sister relationship than a sexual one, and in fact they may never have done the deed, but at any rate they remained married until Virginia died from tuberculosis at the age of 24. Stupid tuberculosis is always ruining everything.

9. Let's just stick with writers: H. G. Wells, who wrote *The Time Machine*, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, and other great books that were turned into terrible movies, married his cousin Isabel in 1891, but then they broke up three years later when Wells fell in love with one of his students.

He also had, with his second wife's consent, many affairs with fascinating women who - while not his cousin, are still worth mentioning, including the birth control activist Margaret Sanger and the underrated novelist Rebecca West.

10. Yeah, so after all these writers, I just want to state for the record that my wife is not my cousin. All right, let's move on to some composers, like... Igor Stravinsky, one of the most important composers of the 20th century, who married his first cousin Yekaterina, despite the Russian Orthodox church's opposition. Yekaterina eventually died in 1939 of, wait for it, tuberculosis.

11. The Russian Church's opposition to cousin marriage was also no deterrent to the great composer Sergei Rachmaninoff, who married his cousin Natalia in 1902 and remained married to her for more than 40 years until his death... NOT of tuberculosis!

12. Abraham Maslow, creator of the popular and controversial hierarchy of needs, married his cousin Bertha and once remarked that his life began with marriage, which is so sweet and genuine that it almost makes me dislike the hierarchy of needs less... yeah, no, I still hate it.

13. The British explorer Sir Vivian Fuchs - what? I'm just saying his name! - who completed the first overland crossing of Antarctica in 1958, was long married to his cousin Joyce.

14. And now we come to Greta Scacchi - finally a woman on this list who is famous for something other than marrying her cousin. The star of *Emma* and *Presumed Innocent* had a brief but well-publicized marriage to Vincent D'Onofrio before settling into a still-ongoing but somewhat quieter marriage to her first cousin Carlo.

15. Christopher Robin Milne - the very same Christopher Robin who along with his stuffed animal collection inspired his father A. A. Milne to write *Winnie the Pooh* - is one of the most fascinating characters in history. He always resented his connection to Winnie the Pooh, and he didn't speak to his mother for the last 15 years of her life, partly because she disapproved of his marriage to her brother's daughter, Lesley.

16. Madeleine Milhaud, who wrote the libretti for *Bolivar* and *La mère coupable*, operas that were composed by her husband - and cousin - Darius Milhaud.

17. Noted outlaw Jesse James was married to his cousin Zee James. The murderer, ruffian, train robber, and gang leader had two children who survived into adulthood, one of whom continued in the family tradition of treachery... by becoming an attorney.

18. Early rock 'n roller Jerry Lee Lewis did not marry his first cousin... because she was too old. He married his cousin's daughter. At the ripe old age of 22, Jerry Lee was already on his third marriage - and it was to his 13-year-old first cousin once removed Myra.

The ensuing scandal derailed his career and got him blacklisted from the radio. By the way, Jerry Lee Lewis is also cousins with the disgraced televangelist Jimmy Swaggart, but there is no record of them having married to each other. Jerry Lee Lewis and Myra eventually divorced after 13 years of marriage, and he recently married for the seventh time, not to his cousin.

19. Other first cousin once-removed marriers included: Noted secessionist and asshat John C. Calhoun,

20. Declaration of Independence signer William Ellery,

21. American President Martin Van Buren, and

22. Samuel "Morse Code" Morse.

23. Isaac and Rebecca in the Book of Genesis are another first cousin once removed relationship, but it's an important one, because Christian and Jewish defenders of cousin marriage often point to them as precedent.

24. And now it's time for British Royal Family Cousin Marriages. We'll start with one last first cousin once removed: Richard III and Anne Neville, which, at least according to Shakespeare, was one of the most jacked up and least happy marriages in royal family history, which is really saying something.

I mean, their marriage begins after Richard kills both Anne's husband and her father - I guess given the topic of today's video, I should clarify, those are different people.

25. George I was married was married to his first cousin Sophia, but then they got divorced, and George imprisoned her for more than thirty years for the unforgivable crime of adultery... only unforgivable if you're not the king.

26. George IV also had a deeply unhappy marriage. He was married to his first cousin Caroline; they eventually separated after having one kid, Charlotte, whose death at 21 paved the way for the eventual ascension of...

27. Queen Victoria, who was long married to Prince Albert... currently located in a can.

28. Let's just stay over here for Albert Einstein, who's second and longest marriage was to Elsa, who was both his first and second cousin.

29. Andrew Jackson Donelson was President Andrew Jackson's nephew and eventually became Millard Fillmore's VP candidate in 1856. He also married his cousin, Emily Tennessee Donelson, who became first lady of the United States after her uncle, the very same Andrew Jackson, became a widower while still President. But when she was just 29, Emily Donelson got - you guessed it - tuberculosis and she died. Five years later, her widower, Andrew Jackson Donelson, married a different first cousin, Elizabeth.

30. Carlo Gambino, arguably the most successful mafia member never to have spent a night in prison, was married for his entire adult life to his cousin Catherine.

31. And lastly, we return to my portrait gallery to discuss Saddam Hussein. Saddam had three or possibly four simultaneous wives, but his first and most important marriage was to his cousin - a marriage arranged when Saddam was five and his wife-to-be was seven, so they didn't have much say to the matter. Anyway, she now lives alone in Qatar.

Let's turn to the questions of ethics and legality: More than 10% of all marriages around the world are between first or second cousins, and until relatively recently, very few social orders saw such marriages as problematic.

These days, the worldwide map of cousin marriage legality looks like this; the U.S. is weird because these things are legislated by states, and state laws very dramatically. Like despite what you may have heard, cousin marriage is illegal in both Mississippi and West Virginia, but it is legal in Connecticut and New York.

And here in Indiana, first cousins can marry only if they're both over 65. This is presumably to prevent birth defects, which are slightly higher (but only slightly) in children of first cousins; the risk is 2% for the general population and about 4% for children of cousins.

So in the final analysis, is there anything wrong with cousin marriage? ....is not a question I am going to answer, but I'm sure you will share your opinions in the comments.

Thanks for mental floss which is made with the help of these nice people. Every week we answer a mind blowing question that you have asked. This week's question? Why are all those old statues of ladies armless? Well, its because their arms broke off. I mean, she used to be holding an apple... but she's 2,000 years old. And the arms are always the first to go. Then the nose.

Please submit your mind blowing questions in the comments, we'll try to answer them in a future video. Thanks for watching, best wishes.