On Campus

A Matter of Degrees

Take a quiz on some of Columbia’s famous dropouts

Fall 2018



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Before he left school to play professional baseball, Lou Gehrig was Columbia's most celebrated athlete, excelling in baseball and what other sport?

a. basketball
b. wrestling
c. football

Lauryn Hill entered Columbia in 1993 and spent about a year in college before becoming a superstar with the rap group the Fugees. Her 1998 solo album The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill made Hill the first woman to do what?

a. be sole writer, producer, and recording artist on a best-selling album
b. win five Grammy Awards in one night
c. win a Grammy for best album of the year

When future US president Theodore Roosevelt '1899HON attended Columbia's law school in the early 1880s, before leaving for the New York State Assembly, he was writing what would become a major historical work. What was the subject?

a. corporate monopolies
b. naval battles
c. the Federalist Party

This singer-songwriter signed with Columbia Records at fifteen and was accepted to Columbia University at sixteen. She spent four weeks at Columbia before leaving to pursue a career that resulted in fifteen Grammys. Who is she?

a. Alicia Keys
b. Alanis Morissette
c. Alison Krauss

The poet Langston Hughes spent two semesters at Columbia before becoming one of the leading lights of the Harlem Renaissance. What did he study?

a. English literature
b. engineering
c. sociology

In 1943, Franklin D. Roosevelt ’08HON, who studied law at Columbia from 1905 to 1907, became the first sitting US president to do what?

a. visit survivors of a mine explosion
b. fly in an airplane
c. introduce frozen foods to the White House

Actor Ben Platt had to leave Columbia in 2012 to fulfill his contractual obligation to what Broadway musical?

a. Jersey Boys
b. Billy Elliot: The Musical
c. The Book of Mormon

In 1928, Columbia premed dropout Amelia Earhart became the first woman to complete a transatlantic flight. What was the name of her plane?

a. Columbia
b. Friendship
c. Kitty Hawk

Actor and dancer James Cagney left Columbia as a freshman in 1918 due to what event?

a. the death of his father in the Spanish-flu pandemic
b. fracturing his hip during a tap-dance rehearsal
c. a fire at his family’s home on New York’s Lower East Side

Prominent Columbia non-graduates Jack Kerouac and Alexander Hamilton both had a lot to say. Which of them said which?

a. “A national debt, if it is not excessive, will be to us a national blessing.”
b. “I had nothing to offer anybody except my own confusion.”
c. “A nation which can prefer disgrace to danger is prepared for a master, and deserves one.”
d. “My witness is the empty sky.”

ANSWERS 1C, 2B, 3B, 4A, 5B, 6B, 7C, 8B, 9A, 10 HAMILTON—A, C; KEROUAC—B, D



Guide to school abbreviations

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