

Ok. Mass hysteria.

People lose their minds, they're just crazy, whatever.

There are so many theories around these different cases of mass hysteria, a lot of them are religious reasonings, so ya know. Gonna try not to be offensive.

### **The Dancing Plague**

Europe. Early 1500's. Everyone is generally stressed. They're only like 2 generations removed from the Bubonic Plague, so there's this feeling of impending doom mostly everywhere. In a small city of Strassbourg, the people living there weren't just trying to basically survive, they were also dealing with a super problematic clergy. Monks and priests were apparently drinking a lot, eating tons of meat, and sleeping a lot, rather than doing church stuff. So these holy dudes that are 'the people's direct line to god' were just off having a boys night out like 24/7.

Now these silly church boys were also hiking up taxes and restricting the townspeople from everything. They couldn't graze pigs on common pasture, fishing in local streams, entering the forest for lumber, or picking berries and acorns. This region went through a lot of shit in the last couple of decades on top of having shitty priests.

Every time I point at you, I want you to say 'all the crops died'.

1. In 1492, there was a famine.
2. In 1493, the crops came back! But a bunch of people got syphilis and their skin fell off, causing them to die.
3. Once 1500 came around, things weren't bad. The crops were good for a while. Then.
4. 1507. Hail the size of apples crashed down into the town.
5. The Bubonic Plague made its comeback tour for a while, but was quickly ended due to a horribly bitter winter in 1511 where...
6. Another bitter winter in 1514!
7. Then a drought so bad in the summer of 1516 that....

So people are having a bad time. Could this make people depressed, crazy, generally not liking it here anymore? Sure. So what happened? People in the town started saying that they saw actual zombies rise from the dead, like their relatives and people that got killed in battle. 1517 comes around, which they coincidentally called 'the bad year'. They had everything from the last 20 years in one, from hail, to small pox, to the crops dying, etc.

Okay here's where we get into the real story. July 14th, 1518. A woman named Frau Troffea decided that it was time to take matters into her own hands and fix this damn mess in her town, by walking out into the streets and \_\_\_\_\_???? Dancing. She continued to dance until she passed out from exhaustion, then she would wake up and continue dancing. People were saying that she was doing it in spite of her shitty husband that hated dancing. But she danced so hard that her feet were bleeding, so idk about that. Apparently there was another theory that she was a victim of divine wrath of God, while others pointed to St. Vitus, a saint known for bringing aid to those with epilepsy, but also inflicting it upon those who angered it. There was a shrine to this saint just 30 miles east of Strasbourg, which is where she was carted off to just 6 days into her dancing spree. There's no info about what happened to her there. BUT by July 21st, 6 days later, 34 more residents of Strasbourg started dancing.

### **Dancing was officially in plague status.**

But it wasn't a party. In between their dancing trances, they would scream out in pain and agony for anyone to help them. Now it was the doctors turn to help. What did the doctors say it was? Hot Blood. So what did the local council and magistrate say? Let's just let them keep dancing. Lets clear out all of the local restaurants, bars, open markets, hire some people to play music and instruments, and let them just get it all out. They also told people who weren't affected by this plague to dance alongside the 'victims' and encourage them to keep dancing when they would stop. The musicians were then told to up the tempo.

Now we're a month into this. Tons of people are dancing. They fought fire dance moves with more fire dance moves and got burned. Bad. They didn't quarantine these people and keep them away from the unaffected ones. they literally gave them the spotlight for the rest of the town to watch. One local man is recalled saying that 15 people died per day when the dancing plague was at its worst.

So the council and magistrate finally realize that them being so shitty was probably the reason why St. Vitus put this curse on their people. They banned music, sent everyone home, and said no more dancing. But this didn't fix anything. So the council got desperate. Make a wax figure of St. Vitus. Then put all the dancing people in wagons and take them to the shrine 30 miles away. Put red shoes on the dancers. Once at the altar of St. Vitus, the dancers were led in a circle around it, offered it a penny, and led back to Strasbourg. Did it work? Apparently. What else would have healed

them? The power of love. The normies were really nice to everyone sick with the plague, and tried to help everyone get better. Maybe that's what they needed. To just come together after all this trauma.

### **The Hollinwell incident**

It's July. 1980. Bandcamp season. Sweaty kids and loud noises and a lot of like clicking and tapping and yelling. It's a Sunday morning near showgrounds, in a town called Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Nottinghamshire, Great Britain. There's a brass band competition, brass instruments being trumpets, trombones, ya know the blowy ones. Apparently this was a pretty large competition, as 300 kids ended up having runny noses, sore eyes, and cases of vomiting. Water wasn't contaminated. No gas leak, they're in the middle of a damn field. This is my favorite, RADIO WAVES AND UFO'S. I love that. Internationally though this caught wind and people's favorite culprit for this bizarre case was crop spraying. So the chemicals sprayed on the field which were thought to have been harmless at the time have since been banned by the british government. The name of this chemical is Tridemorph, and apparently the WHO classified it as a 'moderately hazardous' pesticide, and can be harmful if you swallow it and irritating to the eyes and skin. Since it's been basically 40 years we can't really do more research about it.

### **The Tanganyika laughter epidemic.**

Set the scene. 1962. It's January. Late January. January 31st actually. East Africa. Tanganyika, which is now Tanzania. There's a rural boarding school on the shore of Lake Victoria. It's an all girls school in the town of Kashasha. It's a normal day, and then out of nowhere, three little girls just start laughing. They literally didn't stop. Their teachers disciplined them and they still just kept on chuckling. The teaching staff weren't affected by the laughing but it made it real hard to teach.

Then it started to spread. 95 out of 159 students ended up uncontrollably laughing and they had to shut down the school and cause a bunch of panic. THEN it spread outside of the school, and it ended up causing hundreds of people to laugh like this for 6-18 months, which forced 14 different schools to close at one time or another.

**\*Now was it just kids? Adults too? Like wtf is goin on. Couldn't find anything on it.\***

So the biggest theory on why this happened is because it was a large-scale anxiety attack. Apparently Tanganyika had just won its independence in 1962. Young people reported that they were feeling stressed by the higher expectations of their teachers and parents.

So I'm just supposed to sit here and believe that stress over SCHOOL made them devolve into absolute madness? Like ok. A lot of the sources I found on this say it was literally "mass hysteria" which occurs among people experiencing chronic stress. We'll get into that later. Cause idk if i believe all that.

*Christian F. Hemplemann* did actual research on the Tanzania Laughing Hysteria. He was a doctorate candidate for linguistics at Purdue U. and agreed that the situation there was due to extensive stress. He also says it's physically impossible for an entire population to laugh for a year because it's impossible for someone to laugh for more than a minute. It apparently occurred in relapses throughout all of the 'victims', not constantly. They were also showing anxiety-related symptoms, from pain, to fainting, to respiratory problems, and people got rashes. '

### **The Mad Gasser of Mattoon**

Illinois. The small town of Mattoon. It has around 18,000 people living there in September of 1944. So to give some back story there was obviously a war going on during this time, and the media and newspapers were constantly chronicling major developments going on in the war and it was causing a lot of people to be on edge.

So people around town began reporting that they would awaken in the middle of the night to the smell of like a weird fruity sulphur-y smell. Then they would "become nauseous and paralyzed for an hour after". Then other people started saying they were seeing a random man fleeing their yards at the time the strange gas appeared, and then the rumor took off that a man was sneaking up to people's homes and pumping gas in through their open window.

So the next day the local newspaper reported that 33 people had smelled the mysterious gas in the span of 12 hours.

The real explanation was, that instead of a random dude just running around and pumping them all full of gas, that it was gas from a local war plant flowing through the houses due to wind shifts. As for the "man" that some people saw leaving their house and yards was likely a bystander who had

decided to investigate the homes upon hearing the chaos that was erupting inside.

Idk if i believe that one cause who in their right mind would do that? Stand in someone's yard and look at their house cause they hear some shit going on? Like no, obviously ur gonna call the cops? One person probably saw a dude walking his dog and was like *THERES A MAN IN MY YARD HE DID THIS.* anyway.

### **The “strawberries with sugar” virus**

This one is short, cause it's basically gaslighting kids and sayin fuck them kids. So there was a teen soap opera in Portugal that was super popular, called *Morangos com Acucar* (or strawberries with sugar). Apparently in this show there was a terrible disease sweeping through the school that these teenagers went to. Only a few days after the episode aired, a few teens began to develop symptoms like rashes, breathing trouble, and severe dizziness. Just like the characters were developing in the show. Apparently it 'spread' to more than 300 high school students in 14 different portugese schools. Some schools were forced to shut down temporarily because of the severity of this 'outbreak'. The director of the Protugese National Institute for Medical Emergency said 'what we have here is a few children with allergies and a phenomenon of many other imitating.'

### **The Meowing nuns**

In the early 14th century, a nun at a secluded Catholic convent in Northern France began meowing like a cat. Within seven days, all other nuns at the convent started meowing and purring: they even organized afternoon meowing sessions that lasted for hours. Since the Catholic theology of the time considered cats to be the Devil's animals, the nuns were whipped by soldiers employed by the local noblemen and the meowing ceased.

The salem witch trials (but like...eh)

General Mass Hysteria info:

Mass hysteria. This is when a certain behavior is observed in a group of people that is not related to a certain environmental stimulus. There is no specific cause.

Now we call it Mass Psychogenic Illness (MPI). It's psychogenic, meaning it is all in the minds of the people who showed the symptoms. It's not caused by an element in the environment, like food poisoning or a toxin. There is an underlying shared stress factor in the population. It usually occurs in a group of people who don't have a lot of power. MPI is a last resort for people of a low status. It's an easy way for them to express that something is wrong. That may be why it has come to be associated more often with women.

Medical studies suggest that outbreaks of mass hysteria share some common characteristics.

The type of symptoms common during outbreaks of mass hysteria include:

- \* fainting
- \* nausea and general malaise
- \* abdominal pain and convulsions
- \* headaches
- \* tremors and hyperventilation

These are often manifestations of anxiety and hyperventilation.

Many outbreaks are sparked off by a specific incident which gives rise to anxiety

Another feature of mass hysteria outbreaks is their short duration - the majority last just a few hours.