


# The famous scientists of the world

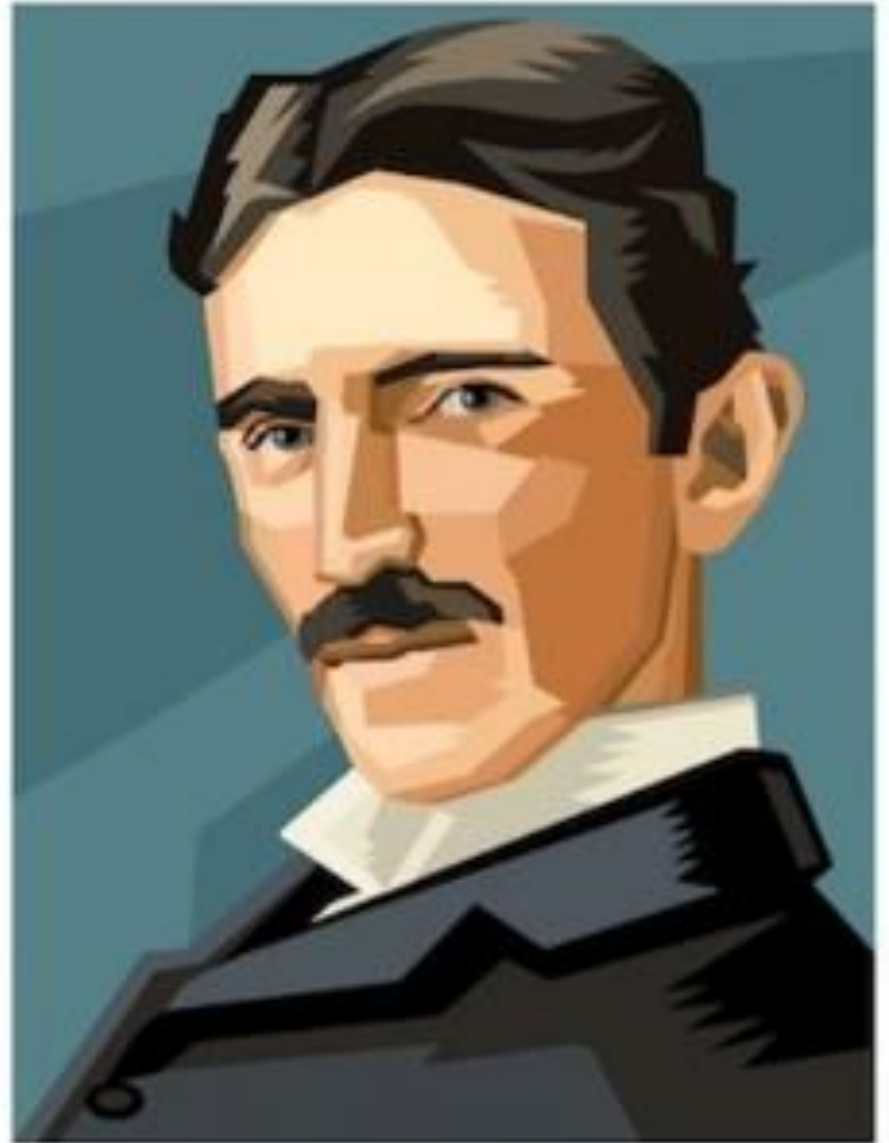
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# Nikola Tesla: Wizard of the Industrial Revolution

- ▶ Nikola Tesla grips his hat in his hand and points toward Niagara Falls and beckons their gaze to the future. This bronze statue on the Canadian side — stands atop a pedestal that depicts the type of engine that drove the first power plant.
- ▶ We owe much of our modern electrical systems to the experiments of the Serbian-American inventor. In 1856 in what's now Croatia. His design for alternating current at the start of the 20th century allowed utilities to send current over long distances, powering American homes across the country. He developed the Tesla coil — a high-voltage transformer — and techniques to transmit power wirelessly. Cellphone makers (and others) are realizing the potential of this idea.





- ▶ Tesla is perhaps best known for his eccentric genius. He once proposed a system of towers that he believed could pull energy from the environment and transmit signals and electricity around the world, wirelessly. But his theories were unsound, and the project was never completed. He also claimed he had invented a “death ray.”
- ▶ In recent years, Tesla’s mystique has begun to eclipse his inventions. San Diego Comic-Con attendees dress in Tesla costumes. The world’s most famous electric car bears his name. The American Physical Society even has a Tesla comic book (where, as in real life, he faces off against the dastardly Thomas Edison).

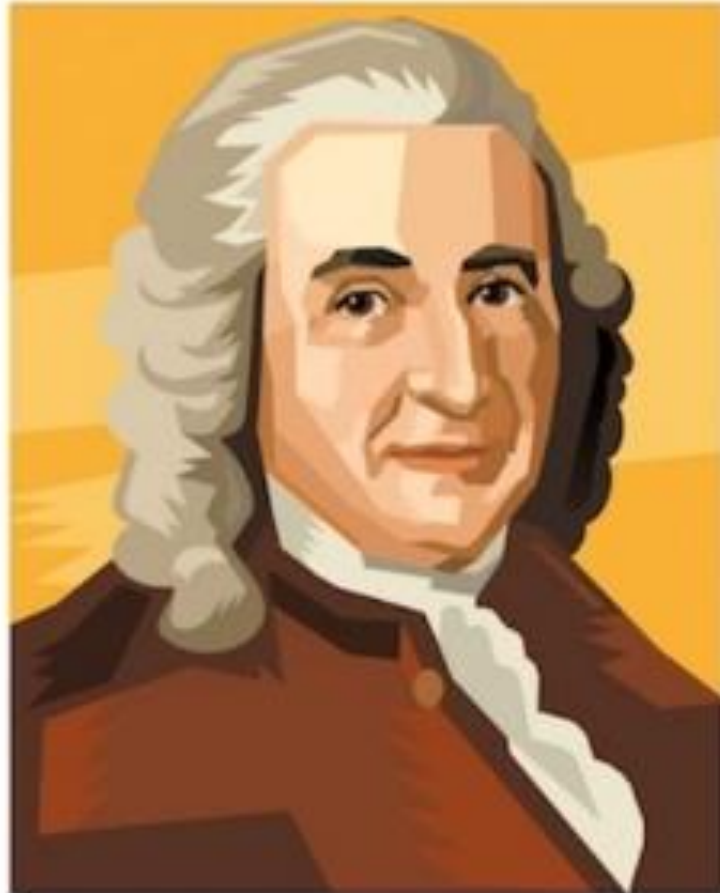




- ▶ While his work was truly genius, much of his wizardly reputation was of his own making. Tesla claimed to have accidentally caused an earthquake in New York City using a small steam-powered electric generator he'd invented — MythBustersdebunked that idea. And Tesla didn't actually discover alternating current, as everyone thinks. It was around for decades. But his ceaseless theories, inventions and patents made Tesla a household name, rare for scientists a century ago. And even today, his legacy still turns the lights on. — Eric Betz

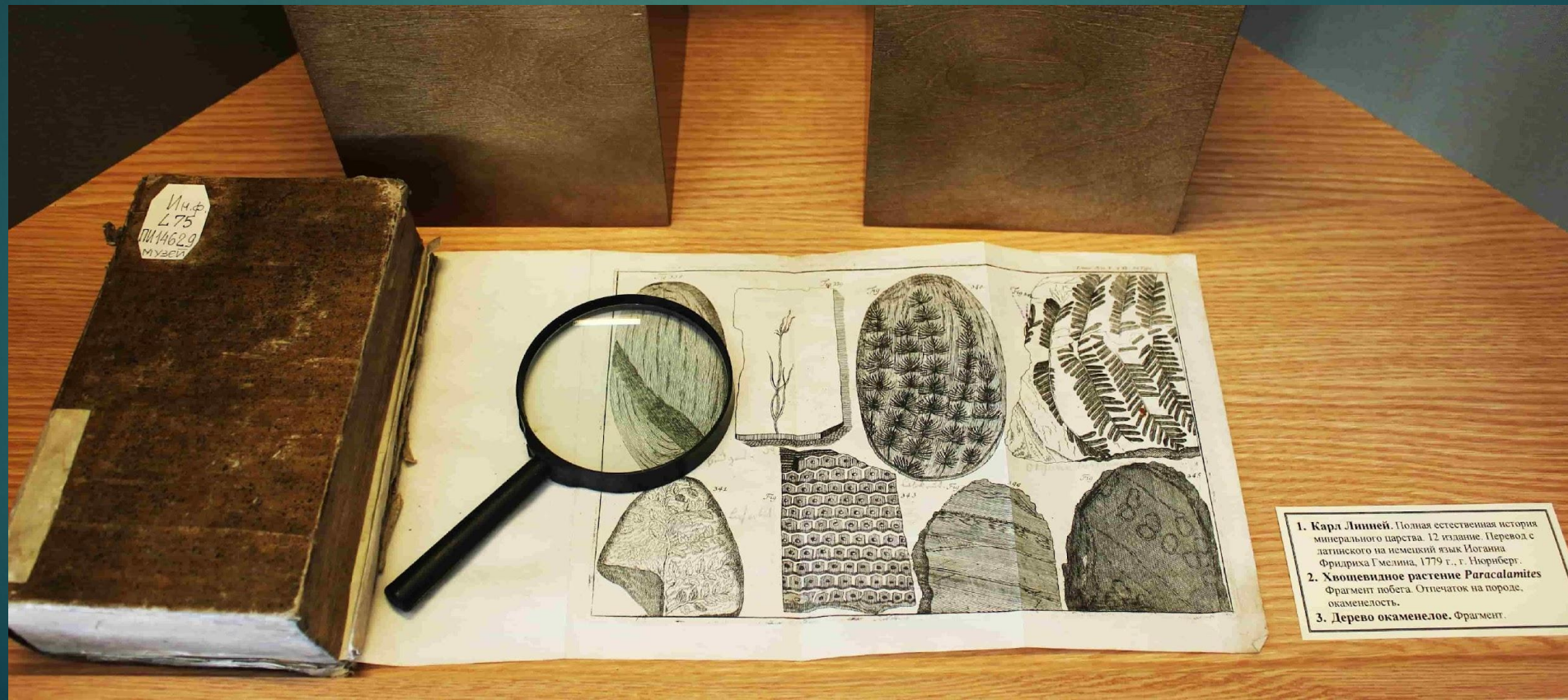


Carl Linnaeus: Say His Name(s)





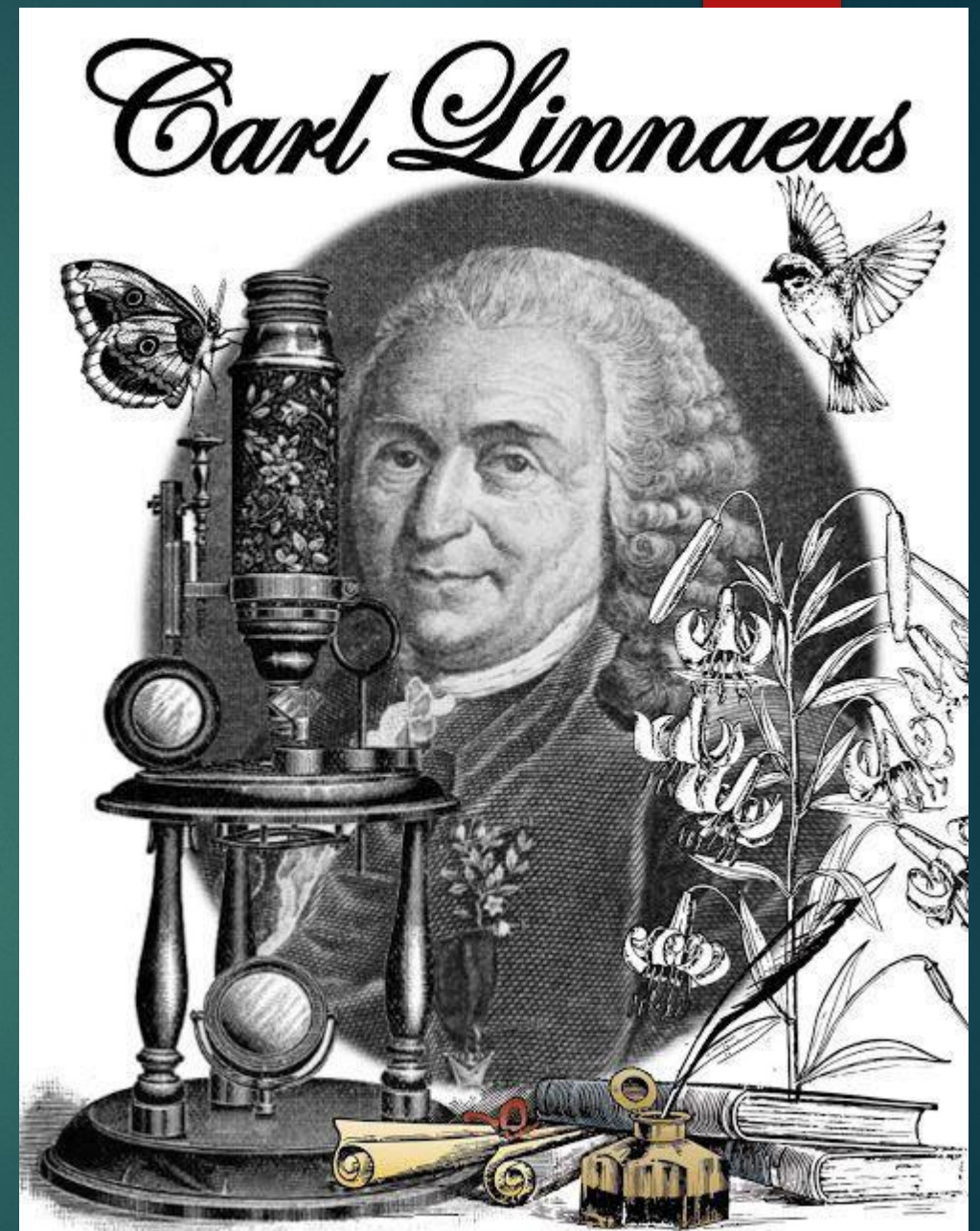
- ▶ It started in Sweden: a functional, user-friendly innovation that took over the world, bringing order to chaos. No, not an Ikea closet organizer. We're talking about the binomial nomenclature system, which has given us clarity and a common language, devised by Carl Linnaeus.
- ▶ Linnaeus, born in southern Sweden in 1707, was an "intensely practical" man, according to Sandra Knapp, a botanist and taxonomist at the Natural History Museum in London. He lived at a time when formal scientific training was scant and there was no system for referring to living things. Plants and animals had common names, which varied from one location and language to the next, and scientific "phrase names," cumbersome Latin descriptions that could run several paragraphs.



1. Карл Линней. Полная естественная история минерального царства. 12 издание. Перевод с латинского на немецкий язык Иоганна Фридриха Гмелина, 1779 г., г. Нюрнберг.
2. Хвошевидное растение *Paracalamites*. Фрагмент побега. Отпечаток на породе, окаменелость.
3. Дерево окаменелое. Фрагмент.



- ▶ The 18th century was also a time when European explorers were fanning out across the globe, finding ever more plants and animals new to science.
- ▶ “There got to be more and more things that needed to be described, and the names were becoming more and more complex,” says Knapp.
- ▶ Linnaeus, a botanist with a talent for noticing details, first used what he called “trivial names” in the margins of his 1753 book *Species Plantarum*. He intended the simple Latin two-word construction for each plant as a kind of shorthand, an easy way to remember what it was.
- ▶ “It reflected the adjective-noun structure in languages all over the world,” Knapp says of the trivial names, which today we know as genus and species. The names moved quickly from the margins of a single book to the center of botany, and then all of biology. Linnaeus started a revolution, but it was an unintentional one.





- ▶ Today we regard Linnaeus as the father of taxonomy, which is used to sort the entire living world into evolutionary hierarchies, or family trees. But the systematic Swede was mostly interested in naming things rather than ordering them, an emphasis that arrived the next century with Charles Darwin.
- ▶ As evolution became better understood and, more recently, genetic analysis changed how we classify and organize living things, many of Linnaeus' other ideas have been supplanted. But his naming system, so simple and adaptable, remains.
- ▶ "It doesn't matter to the tree in the forest if it has a name," Knapp says. "But by giving it a name, we can discuss it. Linnaeus gave us a system so we could talk about the natural world." — **Gemma Tarlach**



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