QI

everything you think you know is probably wrong...

7 Molotov didn’t invent anything. Molotov cocktails, handmade incendiary devices made from bottles filled with flammable liquid, were named after him as an insult by the Finns, who used them against the Russians during the Second World War. Molotov, who was the Soviet foreign minister, had authorized the invasion of Finland. The Finns had themselves copied the devices from weapons invented by Franco’s forces during the Spanish Civil War.

8 The language most commonly spoken in ancient Rome was not Latin, but Greek. Rome was the capital city of a rapidly expanding empire and many of its inhabitants were not native-born Romans. ‘Koine’, or ‘common Greek’, was the lingua franca used by all tradespeople and Greek was also the language of choice for Rome’s elite, as it was considered more educated.

9 Although the Nile is usually associated with Egypt, in fact most of it is in Sudan. The main river (the White Nile) rises in Rwanda and flows through six countries on its journey to the sea.

10 Apart from Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of Great Britain from 1979–1990, who was given this nickname, it could also be the Eiffel Tower in Paris. It was called ‘The Iron Lady’ because of the material used to make it.

11 A game that involved kicking a leather ball stuffed with fur or feathers and trying to score a goal without using hands was played in China over 2,000 years ago, long before the English claim to have started playing it. The game was called cuju, and it was first recorded in the 5th century BC.

12 His full name is Cristiano Ronaldo dos Santos Aveiro, so his surname is dos Santos Aveiro. He was called Ronaldo after the US president Ronald Reagan, who his parents admired.