



# Gustave Eiffel, Architect of the Eiffel Tower

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An engineer who helped bring the world some of its most recognizable landmarks, Gustave Eiffel is best known for his eponymous<sup>1</sup> Parisian tower. Eiffel's creations can be found on several continents.

## Gustave Eiffel's Early Days

Alexandre Gustave Eiffel, more commonly known as Gustave Eiffel, was born Dec. 15, 1832, in Dijon, France. He was a civil engineer who gained renown for designing bridges and other structures around the world. After graduating from the College of Art and Manufacturing, he specialized in metal construction, working primarily on bridges like the iron bridge in Bordeaux, France. He also engineered the framework for the Statue of Liberty.

In 1887, Eiffel agreed to his largest project ever: building locks in the Panama Canal. Although large in potential, the end result was a monumental financial scandal—the largest of the century. When Eiffel began work on the locks, he started collecting profits. The project was risky, so he was offered some financial guarantees. The company helping with construction was liquidated<sup>2</sup> in 1889, however. Eiffel was subsequently indicted<sup>3</sup> for fraud along with the company manager and sentenced to prison, although he couldn't be held personally accountable for failures on the job. Eventually the ruling against Eiffel was annulled.

## Eiffel's Notable Accomplishments

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The Eiffel Tower was built to serve as a focal point for the Paris Centennial Exposition of 1889. When Eiffel set out to construct this monument, the idea behind it wasn't entirely fresh. American engineers had already designed a tower for Philadelphia's 1876 Centennial Exposition, but never built it. Even the concept behind the tower wasn't all Eiffel's. Another engineer proposed the initial Eiffel Tower sketch, drawing inspiration from bridges Eiffel himself had already designed. Artists in Paris protested the tower, calling it "vertiginously<sup>4</sup> ridiculous" and "barbarous."

<sup>1</sup>**eponymous:** giving one's name to a place or work (book, film, etc.)

<sup>2</sup>**liquidated:** sold to settle business debts

<sup>3</sup>**indicted:** charged with a crime

<sup>4</sup>**vertiginously:** producing dizziness



Although he couldn't understand the criticism surrounding the project, Eiffel's work was, of course, completed. When it was finished, the tower was the tallest structure in the world, the next closest being the 555-foot Washington Monument. At one point, Eiffel said, "I ought to be jealous of the tower, it is much more famous than I am."

### The Rest of the Story

Gustave Eiffel was 91 years old when he died in December 1923. He remained proud of his work, and the Eiffel Tower in particular. There came a point, however, when Eiffel's "name and the monument became one and the same, while the man behind the masterpiece gradually disappeared in the towering shadow of his creation," according to the Paris Eiffel Tower News.

Blogger Tony Wheeler said it's easy to consider Eiffel a "one-hit wonder" and forget that he created more than just the Eiffel Tower. In fact, Wheeler noted, he's encountered many Eiffel creations on his world travels. In Gabon, Wheeler visited the St. Anne Mission. While there is some doubt that this mission is an Eiffel design, he said "it certainly has the Eiffel feel." Eiffel also designed the Pont Faidherbe Bridge in St Louis, Senegal, and the Long-Bien Bridge in Hanoi, Vietnam, which was bombed repeatedly during the Vietnam War, but has been repaired and is still used today.

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- 9 Which statement summarizes the selection?
- A The Eiffel Tower, designed in 1889 by Gustave Eiffel, stands today as an iconic Paris landmark.
  - B Gustave Eiffel was an engineer who designed many bridges and structures, including the Eiffel Tower.
  - C Gustave Eiffel died in 1923 and is remembered for designing the "one-hit wonder" Eiffel Tower.
  - D Engineer Gustave Eiffel was indicted for fraud while building locks in the Panama Canal.



- 10 Which section of the selection summarizes the text?
- A The Introduction
  - B Gustave Eiffel's Early Days
  - C Eiffel's Notable Accomplishments
  - D The Rest of the Story
- 11 According to the selection, which statement is true?
- A The Eiffel Tower was originally to be built next to the Panama Canal.
  - B Gustave Eiffel's designs for the Eiffel Tower were original and widely accepted.
  - C Gustave Eiffel was sentenced to prison for fraud on his work on the Statue of Liberty.
  - D The Eiffel Tower was built to serve as a focal point for the Paris Centennial Exposition of 1889.
- 12 Based on the last sentence in the paragraph 4, what does the word *barbarous* emphasize?
- A disapproval and negative feelings
  - B happiness and contentment
  - C gratitude for a job well done
  - D that an object is too expensive for what it is worth



- 13 Which quote from the selection is the example of Gustave Eiffel's point of view?
- A "Artists in Paris protested the tower, calling it 'vertiginously ridiculous' and 'barbarous.' "
  - B "He couldn't understand the criticism surrounding the project."
  - C " 'I ought to be jealous of the tower, it is much more famous than I am.' "
  - D " 'The man behind the masterpiece gradually disappeared in the towering shadow of his creation.' "
- 14 What did blogger Tony Wheeler mean by the phrase, "one-hit wonder" in the last paragraph?
- A to only hit one home-run in baseball
  - B to be popular for one specific accomplishment
  - C to question who was responsible
  - D to judge someone by their strength and power
- 15 How does the author support her claim that Gustave Eiffel's creations can be found on several continents?
- A by naming every bridge that Gustave Eiffel built
  - B by listing all the masterpieces constructed by Gustave Eiffel
  - C by including structures such as St. Anne Mission and Pont Faidherbe Bridge in the selection
  - D by explaining the design for Philadelphia's 1876 Centennial Exposition