

The Stories AI Tells and the Companies behind them

CS131 Fall 2025 Semester Project – Pierce
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Introduction

- Google Gemini – Google
 - Larry Page and Sergey Brin
- Perplexity AI – Amazon
 - Jeff Bezos
- Grok – X.com (formerly Twitter.com)
 - Elon Musk
- LLM's are tools that serve the interests of their masters

Google Gemini

- Google
 - Deep connections with the Military Industrial Complex
 - Google Gemini was created to compete with ChatGPT
 - Joined Department of Defense AI initiative Project Maven in 2017⁵
 - Primary Investors
 - Vanguard
 - Blackrock
 - State Street Corporation
- Larry Page / Sergey Brin
 - Stanford CS post-graduate 1998 / PhD 1993
 - Early funding by MDDS and DARPA affiliated sources¹
 - Participants in the Highland Forum¹

Google Gemini Output

How was Google founded?

The founding of Google is a classic Silicon Valley story that began with a groundbreaking research project at Stanford University.

The Founders and Initial Idea: Larry Page and Sergey Brin met in 1995 while they were Ph.D. students in computer science at Stanford University. Page was considering attending the school, and Brin was assigned to show him around.

They initially disagreed on almost everything but eventually formed a partnership focused on a shared research challenge: finding a more effective way to search the rapidly expanding World Wide Web.

The Breakthrough: PageRank: In 1996, they began collaborating on a search engine project initially named "BackRub."

The key to their innovation was the development of the PageRank algorithm (named after Larry Page). Existing search engines ranked results based on how many times the search term appeared on a page. PageRank, however, treated the web like academic citations, judging a page's importance by the number and quality of other highly relevant pages that linked back to it. This approach delivered significantly better results.

The first version of the search engine was launched on Stanford's website in August 1996.

The Name Change and Incorporation: In 1997, they renamed the project Google, a play on the mathematical term "googol," which is the number 1 followed by 100 zeros. This name was chosen to reflect their mission to organize the immense amount of information on the web and make it universally accessible.

In August 1998, they showed their work to Andy Bechtolsheim, a co-founder of Sun Microsystems. Impressed, he immediately wrote them a check for \$100,000 addressed to "Google Inc."

With this initial funding, Google was officially incorporated on September 4, 1998, and the team moved their operation from the dorm rooms to their first office: a garage in Menlo Park, California, owned by Susan Wojcicki (who would later become one of Google's first employees and CEO of YouTube).

From this humble start in a garage, Google quickly grew due to the superior quality of its search results, leading to its eventual status as a global technology giant.

Would you like to know about Google's first major product after the search engine?

Perplexity AI

- Amazon
 - Perplexity Major Funding²
 - Jeff Bezos
 - Nvidia
 - Daniel Gross; Venture Capitalist
 - Tobias Lutke; Shopify
- 1 of 3 Arizon warehouse workers living on food stamps³
- Jeff Bezos
 - Graduated from Princeton University 1986
 - Grandfather Laurence Preston Gise founder of DARPA⁴

Perplexity AI Output

What is it like to work at an Amazon warehouse in Arizona?

Working at an Amazon warehouse in Arizona is typically fast-paced, physically demanding, and highly structured, with experiences varying a lot by site and shift. Many workers describe it as "easy but exhausting" work: the tasks themselves are simple and repetitive, but the pace, quotas, and long hours can be tough on the body.

Typical work and schedule Most roles involve picking, stowing, packing, or loading, which means being on your feet for 8–12 hours, walking long distances, lifting boxes, and doing the same motions repeatedly. Common schedules are four 10-hour shifts or three 12-hour overnight shifts, including weekends or nights, especially at large Phoenix- and Tucson-area facilities.

Pay, benefits, and perks Workers in Arizona warehouses often report that the pay is better than many local entry-level jobs and that benefits (health insurance, tuition support, and paid time off) start relatively quickly. Some employees appreciate predictable hours, overtime opportunities during peak seasons, and the option to transfer or move up to roles like process assistant if performance is strong.

Work environment and management Reviews from Phoenix, Tucson, Chandler, and Glendale describe the environment as very metrics-driven, with constant monitoring of productivity and time off task, which some find stressful or anxiety-inducing. Feedback on management is mixed: some sites are described as supportive and organized, while others mention favoritism, inconsistent rules, or managers who focus on numbers more than workers' well-being.

Physical and mental strain Many Arizona warehouse workers mention sore feet, back and joint pain, and general exhaustion, especially in the first weeks or on longer shifts. Mentally, some describe the work as monotonous or "robotic," and say the combination of high quotas, short breaks, and surveillance can feel draining over time.

Who it tends to suit People who tend to do better in these roles usually:

Are okay with repetitive tasks and strict routines.

Can handle standing, walking, and lifting for most of the shift.

Value steady pay and benefits more than having a flexible or creative job.

If you want, a next step would be to look up reviews for the specific Arizona facility you're considering, since conditions can differ meaningfully between buildings.

- X.com (Twitter)
 - “Mechahitler” AI spread antisemitic conspiracy theories and denied holocaust⁶.
 - AI Spread fake news about “White Genocide” in South Africa⁷.
 - Suppressed criticism of Israeli Genocide of Palestinian People⁸
- Elon Musk
 - University of Pennsylvania graduate 1995, Stanford offer refused⁹
 - Headed D.O.G.E.
 - Inheritor of South African Emerald Mine
 - Brags about removing “Woke” filters from Grok⁶
 - Helped found Paypal⁹
 - Implicated in Google Report¹

Grok Output – American Civil War

What the American Civil War (1861–1865) Was Really Fought Over

The short, accurate answer: **The Civil War was fought over slavery**—specifically, whether slavery would be allowed to expand into new U.S. territories and states, and whether the federal government had the power to restrict or eventually end it.

Everything else (states' rights, economic differences, tariffs, cultural clashes) was important, but **every major issue traced back to slavery**.

Primary Evidence from the Time

1. **Secession Declarations of the Confederate States**

The Southern states that seceded wrote official explanations. They are explicit:

- South Carolina (Dec 1860): “An increasing hostility on the part of the non-slaveholding States to the institution of slavery” and the election of a president (Lincoln) “whose opinions and purposes are hostile to slavery.”
- Mississippi (1861): “Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery—the greatest material interest of the world.”
- Texas (1861): Complained that Northern states had “refused the rights of property [slaves]” and elected a man “whose political opinions are hostile to slavery.”
- Georgia, Alabama, and others repeat the same theme: slavery and the fear that Republicans would block its expansion or destroy it.

2. **The Cornerstone Speech (March 21, 1861)**

Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens in Savannah, Georgia:

“Our new government is founded upon ... the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery—subordination to the superior race—is his natural and normal condition. This, our new government, is the first in the history of the world based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth.”

3. **The Slavery-Expansion Fight That Triggered Secession**

- 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act → “Bleeding Kansas” violence over whether new territories would allow slavery.
- 1857 Dred Scott decision (Supreme Court said Congress couldn’t ban slavery in territories).
- 1859 John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry.
- 1860 Abraham Lincoln elected on a platform of **no new slave states** (not immediate abolition in the South, just containment).
→ Seven Deep South states seceded **before** Lincoln even took office.

4. **What Lincoln and the North Fought For**

Lincoln’s first goal was preserving the Union (“If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it”). But the Confederacy forced the issue: they would not stay in a Union that refused to guarantee slavery’s future. By 1862–1863 the war’s purpose evolved into ending slavery entirely (Emancipation Proclamation, Gettysburg Address, 13th Amendment).

The “States’ Rights” and “Tariffs” Arguments Debunked

- **States’ rights?** The South wanted states’ rights **for white people to own slaves**, but they demanded **federal power** (Fugitive Slave Act of 1850) to force Northern states to return escaped slaves.
- **Tariffs and economics?** The Morrill Tariff (which the South hated) was passed **after** seven states had already seceded. The Confederacy’s own constitution banned protective tariffs anyway—slavery was the real dividing line.

Bottom Line – Straight from the People Who Started It

The Confederate leaders themselves said—repeatedly, publicly, and in writing—that they were leaving the Union to protect and expand slavery. Modern attempts to downplay that are contradicted by the primary sources of 1860–1861.

So yes: **The American Civil War was fought over slavery.** Full stop.

Grok Output – Venezuela

Why Is the US Threatening Venezuela? (As of November 26, 2025) The United States, under President Donald Trump, has escalated military and diplomatic pressure on Venezuela in recent weeks, including deploying the USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier to the Caribbean, conducting over 20 airstrikes on suspected drug boats (killing at least 83 people), and designating Venezuela's "Cartel de los Soles" (a network allegedly involving senior officials) as a foreign terrorist organization on November 24.

Trump has publicly floated "ground operations" or "land strikes" if needed, framing this as part of a broader anti-drug campaign. However, experts and analysts describe it as a high-stakes bluff aimed at regime change—pressuring Nicolás Maduro to step down or face ouster—without committing to full invasion, which would violate international law and face domestic opposition (47% of Americans against, per recent YouGov polling).

This isn't isolated aggression; it's rooted in decades of U.S.-Venezuela tensions, amplified by Trump's "America First" focus on border security, drug flows, and countering U.S. adversaries like Russia and China.

Key Reasons for the Escalation

The White House justifies actions as "disrupting illicit drug trafficking and protecting the homeland," but underlying motives include geopolitical rivalry and Maduro's disputed legitimacy. Here's a breakdown:

| Reason | Details | Why It Matters Now |

| **Drug Trafficking and Narco-Terrorism** | U.S. claims Maduro's regime runs the "Cartel de los Soles," shipping cocaine and fentanyl to the U.S. via Venezuelan territory and allies like Tren de Aragua gang. Strikes target boats allegedly carrying drugs; 100,000+ U.S. overdose deaths yearly linked to these routes. | Trump's pledge to "secure the border" and combat "narco-terrorists." FTO designation enables asset freezes, travel bans, and military targeting of Maduro-linked infrastructure. Critics say evidence is thin; Venezuela calls it "fabricated" for war pretexts. |

| **Regime Change and Election Disputes** | Maduro's 2024 reelection widely seen as stolen (opposition's María Corina Machado claimed victory). U.S. views Maduro as a "fugitive of justice" indicted on narcoterrorism charges; threats aim to scare him into exile or prompt a military coup for a "non-Maduro" transition. | Post-election, U.S. support for opposition (e.g., Machado allegedly fed Trump intel on Maduro's cartel ties, per NYT reports). Trump open to talks but won't rule out invasion to install a pro-U.S. government. |

| **Geopolitical Rivals and Alliances** | Venezuela hosts Russian missiles, Iranian gunboats, Chinese radars, and Cuban advisors—seen as a "threat to regional stability." U.S. buildup counters this; Russia/Iran/Cuba have pledged support, escalating risks. | Trump's strategy to "remake" Latin America by weakening anti-U.S. footholds. Allies like Trinidad & Tobago host joint drills; FAA warnings and flight bans signal prep for conflict. |

| **Economic Leverage and Oil** | Venezuela's vast oil reserves; U.S. sanctions (eased briefly in 2023) now tightening to choke funding. | Maduro's regime survives on oil sales to China/Russia; U.S. aims to starve it while eyeing post-Maduro access. |

Venezuela's Response and Regional Fallout

- **Military Prep**: Maduro mobilized 200,000 troops for "guerrilla" defense drills, vowing a "Vietnam-style" resistance. Armed forces (ranked 50th globally) are "in shambles" but backed by Russian Su-30 jets and missiles.

- **Allied Backlash**: Cuba condemned U.S. "aggression"; Russia/Iran warn of UN Charter violations. EU-CELAC summit urged de-escalation.

- **Civilian Impact**: 11+ airlines suspended Venezuela flights; SOUTHCOM restricted leave for potential strikes in 10–14 days. Venezuelan opposition marches mix defiance with calls for intervention.

Potential Next Steps and Risks

- **U.S. Options**: More strikes (B-52 bombers, AC-130 gunships prepped) or limited ops to seize assets. Full invasion unlikely—war games predict "chaos" like post-Saddam Iraq—but threats could fracture Maduro's military.

- **Global View**: Legal experts call it an "unlawful threat" under UN Charter Article 2(4); could spark wider conflict if allies intervene.

In short: The U.S. is threatening Venezuela primarily to dismantle what it calls a narco-terror regime fueling America's drug crisis, while pursuing regime change to neutralize a Russian/Chinese proxy. It's "coercive diplomacy" on steroids—hoping bluster forces Maduro out without boots on the ground. Tensions are at a 20-year high; de-escalation hinges on talks Trump hinted at. What's your take—smart pressure or reckless brinkmanship?

Grok Output – Venezuela

- Cartel de los Soles does not exist¹⁰
- Most drugs entering US come from Colombia, not Venezuela¹¹
- Elon Musk was one founder of company that would become Paypal⁹
 - Paypal was implicated in Google Report¹

LLM Comparison – How Was Google Founded?

- Gemini -- “The founding of Google is a classic Silicon Valley story that began with a groundbreaking research project”
- Grok -- “Page arrives at Stanford for a campus tour; Brin is assigned as his student guide. They argue about everything and initially annoy each other.”
- Claude -- “They initially called their search engine "BackRub" because it analyzed backlinks to websites. In 1997, they renamed it "Google," a play on the mathematical term "googol”
- Perplexity -- “An early turning point was a \$100,000 check from Sun Microsystems co-founder Andy Bechtolsheim, followed by roughly \$1 million from other investors, friends, and family to get the startup off the ground.”
- ChatGPT – “5. Google becomes a company (1998) On September 4, 1998, they incorporated Google, Inc. They operated out of a garage in Menlo Park, California—rented from Susan Wojcicki (later YouTube’s CEO).”
- Gemini -- ”From this humble start in a garage, Google quickly grew due to the superior quality of its search results, leading to its eventual status as a global technology giant.”

- AI is a mirror that reflects the internet
- The people who control AI use it to shape public perception
- AI is subject to the same manipulation as any other media
- Media Literacy is an important skill

Conclusion

Sources

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