

- 1 Carl Ritter was a German geographer who together with Alexander von Humboldt is thought to be one of the founders of modern geography.
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- 2 He was born in 1779 in the family of a physician. At the university level he opted for Greek and Latin and read history and geography widely.
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- 3 In 1814, Ritter joined the University of Gottingen and studied geography, history, pedagogy (the science of teaching), physics, chemistry, mineralogy and botany.
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- 4 In 1818, Ritter was appointed as a professor of history at the University of Frankfurt.
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- 5 Subsequently, when the first chair of geography was created in Germany he was given the assignment of geography professorship at the University of Berlin.
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- 6 He founded the Berlin Geographical Society in 1828.
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- 7 He served the department of geography of Berlin University for 39 years.
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- 8 In 1859 he breathed his last, the year in which Humboldt also expired.
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- 1 William Buckland, British geologist and paleontologist, once gave a dinner party at which a delicious but unusual soup was served.
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- 2 He challenged his guests to name the chief ingredient, but none guessed correctly.
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- 3 They were then horrified to learn that they were eating the remains of an alligator Buckland had dissected earlier in the day.
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- 4 Two or three were obliged to make a hasty exit from the room.
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- 5 See what imagination is, said Buckland.
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- 6 If I had told them it was turtle or bird's-nest soup, they would have pronounced it excellent, and their digestion would have been none the worse.
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- 7 One of the remaining guests ventured to ask if the soup had really been made from the dissected alligator.
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- 8 As good a calf's head as ever wore a coronet, answered Buckland with a smile.
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- 1 It was the middle of winter and Paul had been driving around for weeks with a backseat full of old clothes to drop off at a local charity.
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- 2 For some reason, even though he drove past the collection point every day, he just kept forgetting to stop.
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- 3 One night after his shift had ended at midnight, Paul was driving home through downtown.
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- 4 The streets were deserted except for a man who was walking with just a blanket thrown over a thin cotton shirt to ward off the bitter cold.
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- 5 Paul pulled a coat, down vest, and some gloves out of the pile in the backseat to give to the man and, after driving a roundabout course to get through all the one-way streets, finally caught up with him.
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- 6 Jumping out of the car with the clothes, Paul ran up to him and said, "I hope they fit."
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- 7 Paul can still see the smile that spread across the man's face, and he thanked Paul.
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- 8 Paul hurried back to his warm car and he was smiling too and a lot more thankful for all that he was able to spare.
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- 1 On August 16, 1966, the 36-year-old mathematician Stephen Smale arrived in Moscow to receive the Fields Medal at the International Congress of Mathematicians.
- 2 Smale had earned this award, often described as the "Nobel Prize of Mathematics," by bringing a profound new understanding to the subject of higher dimensional topology.
- 3 Normally there is little interest in the Fields Medal outside the upper level of the mathematics community.
- 4 In 1966, however, Smale's trip to Moscow frustrated attempts to serve him with a Congressional subpoena.
- 5 On the same day as the Fields Medal ceremony, the House Committee on Un-American Activities began a hearing in Washington to investigate radical antiwar protests by Smale and others.
- 6 The unusual combination of mathematical achievement and political activity raised the profile of a diminutive mathematician with a distinctive, high-pitched voice.
- 7 Ten days later, Smale held an unplanned Moscow press conference in which he criticized the United States involvement in the Vietnam War and compared it to the Soviet invasion of Hungary.