

Overview of 1990s and Beyond

- The decade opened with the fall of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.), followed by restructuring and civil wars throughout the area. Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet leader who had been instrumental in bringing about the change, fell out of power and a new era, under the leadership of Boris Yeltsin and others, began.
- War tore apart the nation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, once a part of Yugoslavia, in the aftermath of the Soviet demise.
- Women were on the rise in the United States. The nineties saw the first female attorney general, Janet Reno. Madeline Albright became the first female secretary of state. The position of first lady, the wife of the president, also saw an increased sphere of power and influence in Hillary Rodham Clinton.
- Citizens throughout the United States grieved over the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, in which 168 people were killed.
- Nelson Mandela, the former political prisoner, became the president of South Africa. Apartheid, the law of racial inequity and separation, ended.
- Hundreds of thousand of black men “marched” to Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., in a show of solidarity and commitment to racial and family values. Promoters, calling for one million men to join in the march, named the event the *Million Man March*.
- Sports superstars of phenomenal prowess came to the forefront, including the young Tiger Woods who revolutionized the world of golf and brought its appeal to millions of Americans. Also noteworthy were the women’s gymnastics, swimming, volleyball, softball, and basketball teams of the United States in the 1996 Summer Olympics. Their record-breaking firsts—and gymnast Kerri Strug’s act of heroism—have become legendary.
- The Microsoft Company grew to be one of the most powerful in the world under the creative leadership of its founder, Bill Gates, and the revolutionizing Windows program.
- Technology was at the forefront of industry, education, and home life. Everywhere around the world, people were “surfing the net,” computing through CD-ROM, exploring virtual reality, and talking on the go via their cellular phones.
- Amid the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, an assassin killed prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli leader at the forefront of peace negotiations. In 1994, Rabin shared the Nobel peace prize with fellow Israeli Shimon Peres and Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat.
- Bill Clinton became the president of the decade with comfortable wins in the 1992 and 1996 elections. However, third-party candidacy was on the rise, largely through the leadership of Reform Party candidate Ross Perot.
- Little green men from Mars were not such an unlikely thing: evidence of life was found on the fourth planet.
- Rap music filled the airwaves while gang-related violence filled the streets. Several of the world’s most successful rap stars were gunned down in gang activity, including Tupac Shakur and the Notorious B.I.G. Both were part of the rap movement known as gangsta rap.