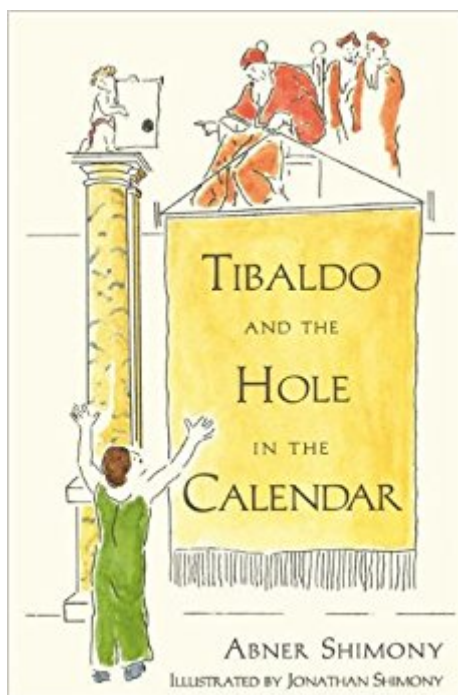


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# Tibaldo And The Hole In The Calendar



## Synopsis

The story of how an eleven-year old boy growing up in 16th century Italy loses his birthday when the Gregorian calendar replaces the Julian calendar in 1582, and how he fights to prevent this loss. The author cleverly weaves elements of the cultural and scientific milieu of the time into an engaging and intelligent tale. Tibaldos father is a medical assistant, and his sister is a midwife. Thus, the boy grows up learning about current medical practices and his fascination for medicine makes him a fast learner. Then, when Tibaldo learns that he is about to lose his 13th birthday, he determines to do something about it. The result is both amusing and informative.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 165 pages

Publisher: Springer-Verlag; 1998 edition (October 30, 1997)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0387949356

ISBN-13: 978-0387949352

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.6 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

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[Historical Fiction > Renaissance](#) #19 in [Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction >](#)

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Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 7 - 12

## Customer Reviews

YA?In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII, following the advice of astronomer Christopher Clavius, decided to drop 10 days from the calendar that was currently in use throughout the world. Hence, Thursday, October 4, 1582 (Julian), would be followed by Friday, October 15, 1582 (Gregorian). Shimony charmingly describes these events through the eyes of Tibaldo Bondi, a student at the prestigious St. Joseph-in-the-Corner school in Bologna. Since he is about to lose his 12th birthday in the reorganization of the calendar, the determined and astute young man sets about finding a solution to his dilemma. Weaving fictitious characters and events into actual occurrences, the author vividly brings 16th-century Italy to life. Readers learn about the tribulations of school children during this era (try multiplying 488 by 877 in Roman numerals) as well as the scientific understandings of

Clavius and Copernicus. The book is illustrated with drawings that reflect the art of the period. The tale is followed by two readable astronomy lectures, one about the seasons and the other about the appearance of stars from various locations on Earth, which will have particular appeal to readers whose scientific curiosity has been piqued by Tibaldo's story. ?Carol DeAngelo, Garcia Consulting Inc., EPA Headquarters, Washington, Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This delightful tale of a lucky boy is an introduction to the time and place that gave rise to modern science: the 16th-century city-states of Italy. The hero Tibaldo was born into a large and happy family in Bologna on October 10, 1570, a lively, good-hearted kid, bright, adventuresome, even a little quirky. Tibaldo was going on 12 when the hole appeared in the calendar. Pope Gregory had grasped a few years earlier that the old Julian calendar of Rome adopted by the Church in the fourth century was now badly in error. It had used the leap year to manage the approximation of the year at 365.25 days on average, by skipping the correction in three out of four years and taking the full slippage all in one day. But the year is in fact longer than that by almost 12 minutes. That bothers no one, less than one day in a long lifetime. But in the 12 centuries since the early Church had adopted the rules for calculating the date of Easter by the position of the sun among the stars, the day count had run slow by 11 full days compared with the sun's way around its yearly circle. The spring equinox was early: Easter would in time be celebrated in midwinter cold, and no one wanted so full a break with the ancient harmony between spring and the Resurrection. The calendar change was proclaimed in late February 1582 by the learned Pope Gregory: the year 1582 would have the day following October 4 designated as October 15. For Tibaldo, it meant his birthday would be missing that year, fallen into an unprecedented hole in the calendar! Surely Tibaldo knew this was but a change in name; no days were lost, only their names. But the people rioted more than once asking for a return of their 10 days, and Tibaldo, too, was obsessed by his sense of personal loss. He managed to be made one of the students who would display their Latin fluency to the pope on his forthcoming visit to Tibaldo's school and found the chance to describe his loss, adding wisely that many people would lose anniversaries and name days, and the saints' days, too, would go unremarked. Pope Gregory was moved and amused; he at once added a paragraph saying all festivals, personal or public, should be observed according to both the new and the old dates. Each of the 10 days would do double duty just this once; no one would lose, and many would gain from the double celebration. Tibaldo was a hero! Verily, this book is a delicious, instructive fiction. The pope and the calendar change are quite real, however, although Pope Gregory did not revise his reform message. The pope had power over all Catholic lands, but other countries kept the Julian

form for some time. Britain and its American colonies changed over in 1752, Russia only in 1919, when the hole had grown to 13 days. History is less reasonable and less sweet than ingenious physicist-philosopher Abner Shimony. His artist son (really) provided dozens of enlivening drawings done in sepia in a persuasive period style.

Tibaldo and the Hole in the Calendar is a fictional story with a historically and scientifically correct setting. In 1582 Pope Gregory XIII proclaimed a reform of the calendar, including the omission of ten days--Oct. 5 through Oct. 14 of 1582-- to correct the inaccuracy of the Julian calendar. Tibaldo Bondi's twelfth birthday, on Oct. 10, 1582, would be omitted, to his distress. He imaginatively and courageously fought to recover his birthday, by asking help from his teachers and the governor of Bologna, and eventually from the Pope himself. The Pope was so amused (laughing for the first time in eight years!) by Tibaldo's daring and clever arguments that he issued a special decree restoring the celebration that would have been lost in 1582. This fictional decree is printed here in authentic papal Latin, but a translation is given. Tibaldo goes on to become a famous physician, pioneering in the use of the microscope and in preventive measures against the spread of infections. He also pioneers in the education of women, marrying a woman astronomer and ensuring that one of his daughters becomes a midwife, one a physician, and one an astronomer. As the background for the story much information is given about astronomy, medicine, midwifery, the history of the calendar, and the religious and political history of Italy. The book is printed in a Renaissance format and the beautiful etchings by Jonathan Shimony are in the style of Renaissance book illustration. The story and the factual background are accessible to children of age ten years or more but are also fascinating reading for adults. It is a particularly instructive and amusing book for a parent to read with a child. Tibaldo has been translated into French, Italian, German, Japanese, Chinese, Polish, and Greek, and is due to be translated into Spanish, Portuguese, and Hebrew. Tentative plans are underway to make a movie of it, to be set in Bologna, Italy.

A delightful book written for children but very useful for adults as well. Final chapter deals with basic astronomical principles and discoveries over the past 400 years. In my comments below are links to the author.

This book is really quite charming. It beautifully blends science, philosophy, history, and fiction into a format that is accessible to children and entertaining for adults. Highly recommended

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