

Gold Class Book Addicts



2024 Yearbook

Susannah Fullerton



NOTES FROM A BOOK ADDICT

GOLD CLASS

2024 was the year of my Gold Class – handpicked and exclusive content for my most book addicted readers.

There is no known cure for Book Addiction, but luckily treatment is highly effective, and careful management allows those living with a book addiction to lead full and productive lives. Reliable intervention results in the best outcome.

Book addicts who chose to treat their Book Addiction* with Gold Class membership settled comfortably into their recliner seats and enjoyed a wonderful range of exclusive extras throughout the year.

The Gold Class Year is now compiled into this eBook that you can keep forever. Keep on reading!

Susannah

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This eBook is a work of literary research and analysis. It includes references to online and print articles, which are cited where applicable. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy in the representation of sources; however, interpretations and conclusions are solely my own.

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For permission requests, inquiries or bookings, please contact me.

Susannah Fullerton, <https://susannahfullerton.com.au/>

* As described by me, Susannah Fullerton. This is not a medical condition.

The Beauty of Poetry



The Beauty of Poetry

Unlock the beauty of poetry like never before!

Whether you're a seasoned poetry enthusiast or just beginning your poetic adventure, I'll bring clarity and insight to every verse. Immerse yourself in the beauty of language, emotions, and history as we explore these remarkable works together and gain a deeper understanding of the world's greatest poems.

Let the power of poetry enrich your life.

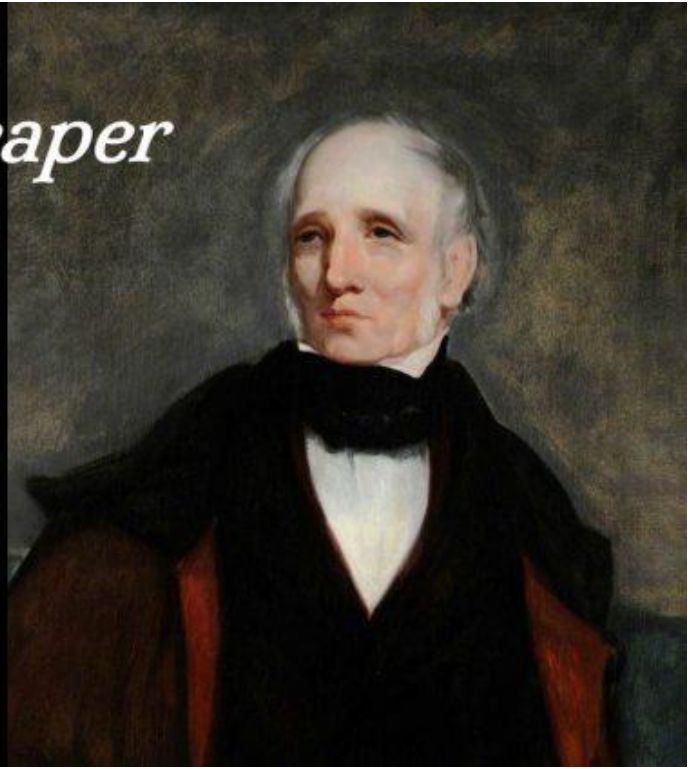
The Solitary Reaper

by William Wordsworth

presented by

Susannah Fullerton

<https://susannahfullerton.com.au/>



The Solitary Reaper

I'm a big Wordsworth fan and love to read and discuss his poems. 'The Solitary Reaper' is a particular favourite. It's set in Scotland and was the result of a walking tour Wordsworth enjoyed there, but he was also influenced by a book a friend of his had written.

You can find out more, enjoy some of the illustrations of the poem, and learn something of its magic, from my video discussion of this classic poetic work. I've included a text version of the poem also. Watch my video on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/KztuYt-VuiE>

***The Solitary Reaper* by William Wordsworth**

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travellers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?—
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;—
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Susannah Fullerton: William Wordsworth is appointed Poet Laureate](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: William Wordsworth & *The Solitary Reaper*](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Poet Laureate](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Living Where The Poets Lived](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: My 2019 Favourites](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: William Wordsworth is born](#)

[Poetry Foundation: William Wordsworth](#)

[The Poetry Society: Poet Laureate](#)

[William Wordsworth Selected Poems](#)

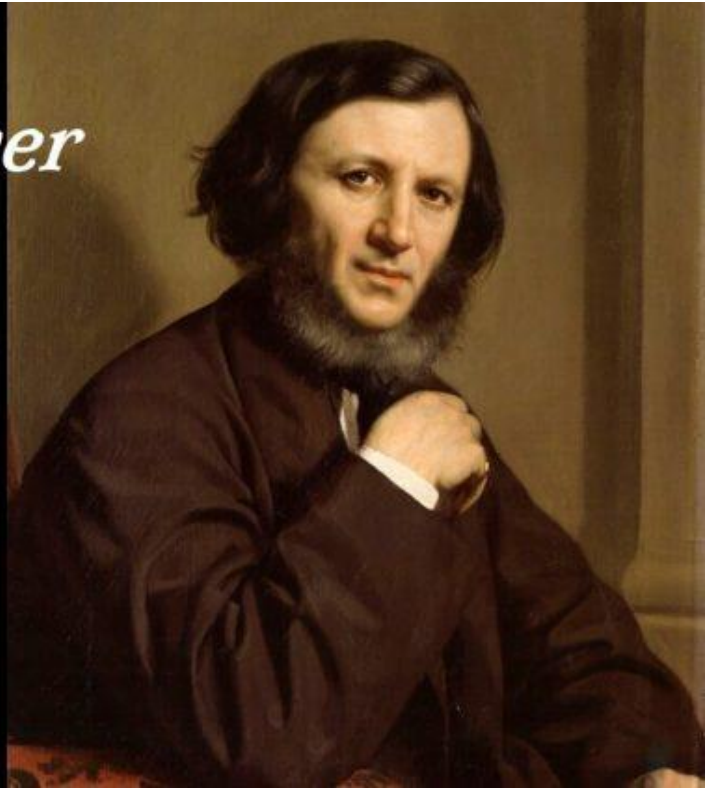
Porphyria's Lover

by Robert Browning

presented by

Susannah Fullerton

<https://susannahfullerton.com.au/>



Porphyria's Lover

I find Robert Browning a most intriguing poet. Some of his poems are simply lyrical and describe the beauty of nature, but others are much more disturbing and psychologically troubling. 'Porphyria's Lover' is one such example and is a most unusual poem – how often do you find poems narrated by a murderer? And it describes a murder too!

You can find out more, enjoy illustrations of the poem, and learn something of its deep psychology, from my video discussion of this fascinating work. I've included a text version of the poem also. Watch my video on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/aCNmv7sFdVQ>

***Porphyria's Lover* by Robert Browning**

The rain set early in to-night,
The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
And did its worst to vex the lake:
I listened with heart fit to break.
When glided in Porphyria; straight
She shut the cold out and the storm,
And kneeled and made the cheerless grate
Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;
Which done, she rose, and from her form
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,
And laid her soiled gloves by, untied
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
And, last, she sat down by my side
And called me. When no voice replied,
She put my arm about her waist,

And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
And all her yellow hair displaced,
And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,
Murmuring how she loved me — she
Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,
To set its struggling passion free
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
And give herself to me for ever.
But passion sometimes would prevail,
Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain
A sudden thought of one so pale
For love of her, and all in vain:
So, she was come through wind and rain.
Be sure I looked up at her eyes
Happy and proud; at last I knew
Porphyria worshipped me; surprise
Made my heart swell, and still it grew
While I debated what to do.
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
Perfectly pure and good: I found
A thing to do, and all her hair
In one long yellow string I wound
Three times her little throat around,
And strangled her. No pain felt she;
I am quite sure she felt no pain.
As a shut bud that holds a bee,
I warily oped her lids: again
Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.
And I untightened next the tress
About her neck; her cheek once more
Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:
I propped her head up as before,
Only, this time my shoulder bore
Her head, which droops upon it still:
The smiling rosy little head,
So glad it has its utmost will,
That all it scorned at once is fled,
And I, its love, am gained instead!
Porphyria's love: she guessed not how
Her darling one wish would be heard.
And thus we sit together now,
And all night long we have not stirred,
And yet God has not said a word!

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Susannah Fullerton: Robert Browning is born](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Robert Browning first wrote to Elizabeth Barrett](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Elizabeth Barrett Browning & *How Do I Love Thee?*](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Robert Browning dies](#)

[Poetry Foundation: Robert Browning](#)

[Selected Poems by Robert Browning](#)

Dover Beach

by Matthew Arnold

presented by

Susannah Fullerton

<https://susannahfullerton.com.au/>



Dover Beach

Most men are too busy with other things to write poems on their honeymoons, but not Matthew Arnold, one of the great poets of 19th century Britain. I adore his poem, *Dover Beach*, which is about love but also about the crisis of faith that was becoming so strong at that time, as men and women began to question religion and Biblical stories of the origins of species.

This is a rich, moving poem, with a wonderful flow to it. I hope you love it as much as I do. Watch my video on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/IEqqizxK3ps>

***Dover Beach* by Matthew Arnold**

The sea is calm tonight,
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits; on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
Listen! You hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back and fling
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow

Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long withdrawing roar,
Retreating to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Susannah Fullerton: *Dover Beach* by Matthew Arnold](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: *To Marguerite* by Matthew Arnold](#)

[Poems by Matthew Arnold](#)

[Poetry Foundation: Matthew Arnold](#)

Ozymandias

by Percy Bysshe Shelley

presented by

Susannah Fullerton

<https://susannahfullerton.com.au/>



Ozymandias

In 1817 the [British Museum](#) announced that soon it would have on display a massive head of the Egyptian Pharaoh Ramesses II. The statue did not actually arrive in Britain until 1821, but the mere news of its coming was enough to inspire [Percy Bysshe Shelley](#) who penned a sonnet exploring the fleeting nature of power and the inevitable decline of all empires. Written in 1817 and first published in 1818, the poem recounts the tale of a traveller who discovers the ruined statue of an ancient king in the desert. This king once boasted of his mighty works, yet all that remains now is a shattered visage and a few inscriptions, surrounded by endless sands. Watch my video on YouTube: https://youtu.be/QhBZqu_EOQw

Ozymandias by Percy Bysshe Shelley

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

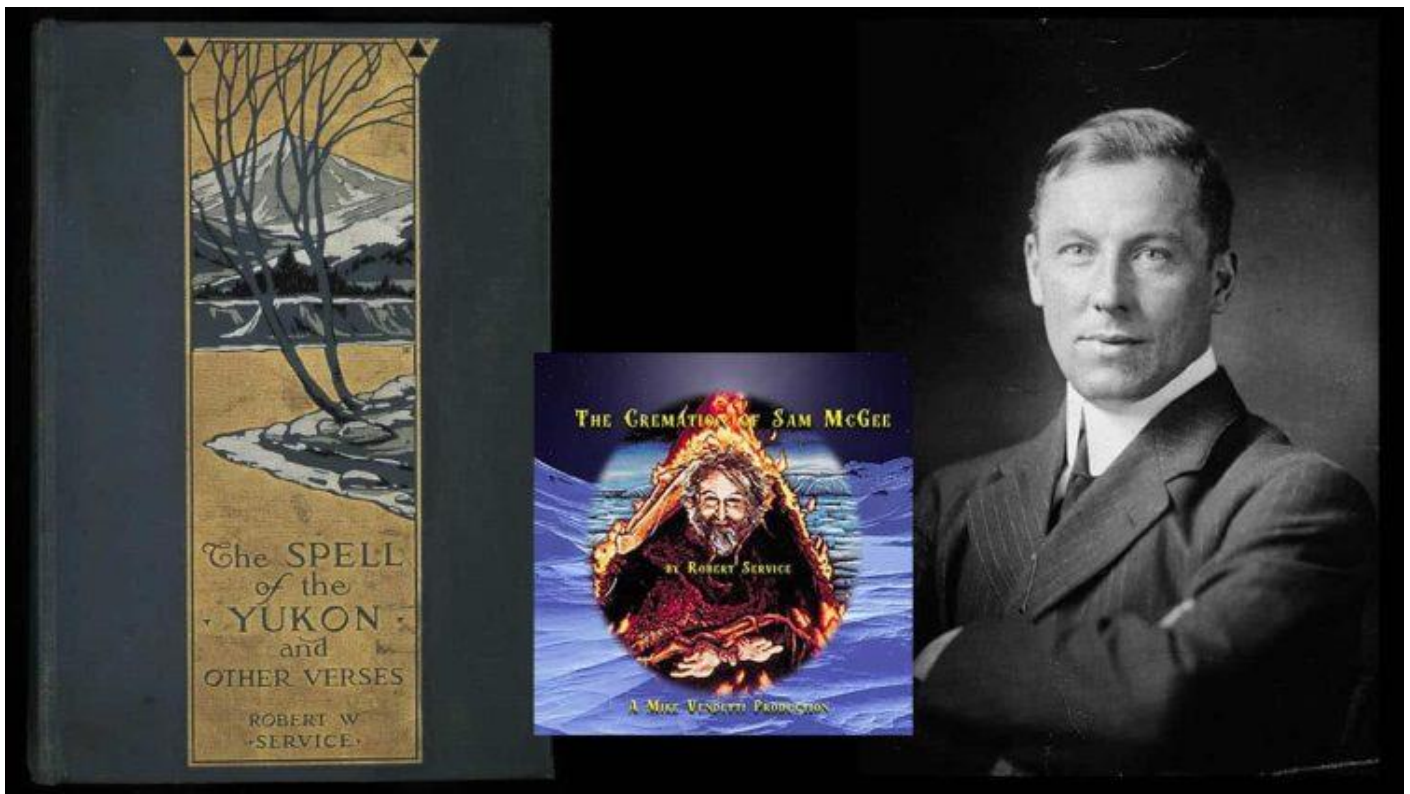
[Susannah Fullerton: Percy Bysshe Shelley is born](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Percy Bysshe Shelley is expelled from Oxford University](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Percy Bysshe Shelley elopes with Mary Godwin](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Percy Bysshe Shelley, Horace Smith & *Ozymandias*](#)

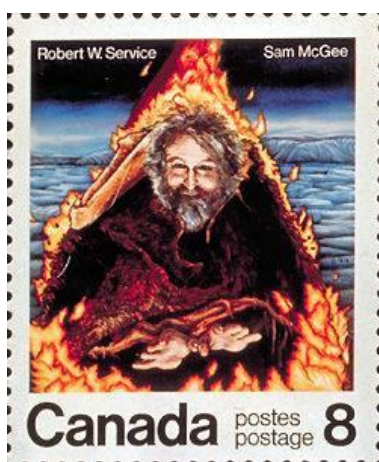
[Susannah Fullerton: Percy Bysshe Shelley dies](#)



The Cremation of Sam McGee

This is a wonderful poem. It was one of my dear Dad's favourites and he knew it by heart.

Robert Service was a Scottish-Canadian poet, and is often known as 'the Bard of the Yukon'. He was born in England, of a Scottish family, and worked as a bank clerk. When his bank sent him to the Yukon, he was hugely inspired by tales of the Klondike gold rush and wrote two poems which made him famous – [The Cremation of Sam McGee](#) and [The Shooting of Dan McGrew](#). He followed these up with other poems in a similar vein and they all enjoyed amazing sales. In fact, he made so much money he was able to go and live on the French Riviera. He'd always loved writing poetry and is said to have composed his first verse on his 6th birthday. He was educated mainly in Glasgow. When young, he had had dreams of becoming a cowboy, but he also read lots of poetry and later used some of Kipling's rhythms in his own verse (he insisted that what he wrote was "verse, not poetry". After writing this poem, Service sent it to his father so he could arrange to have a few copies printed which would make nice gifts for friends. Instead, Service gave it to a publisher who recognised its power. Evidently the men working in the printing house loved reciting it as they worked.



The Cremation of Sam McGee was first published in the 1907 volume [Songs of a Sourdough](#) (a 'sourdough' is a resident of the Yukon). Service had heard a story of a man who'd had trouble burying his friend in the frozen wastes and so cremated him in the firebox of a steamer – he turned that tale into a comic, yet also chilling poem. Poor Sam has travelled to the Yukon from Plumtree, Tennessee (there is no actual town of that name), and feels he will never be warm again. As he nears death, he asks his friend Cap to make sure his body is cremated.

The poem rapidly became a part of Canadian literature. It was used to illustrate a postage stamp in 1976, it was regularly recited around campfires, it has been adapted by musicians, and it drew many tourists to the Yukon.

I'd love to go and see Lake Leberge (Service altered the spelling from Leberge to Lebarge, so it would rhyme with 'marge'), but suspect I'd share Sam's longing for warmth as its waters are always extremely cold.

The poem was recorded by Johnny Cash who reads it superbly. Watch it on YouTube:
https://youtu.be/wGhFNYll_mU

And here's the poem in printed form, but I think it was made to be listened to, rather than read from a page, so please make sure you listen to Johnny Cash. https://youtu.be/wGhFNYll_mU

***The Cremation of Sam McGee* by Robert Service**

*There are strange things done in the midnight sun
By the men who toil for gold;
The Arctic trails have their secret tales
That would make your blood run cold;
The Northern Lights have seen queer sights,
But the queerest they ever did see
Was that night on the marge of Lake Lebarge
I cremated Sam McGee.*

Now Sam McGee was from Tennessee, where the cotton blooms and blows.
Why he left his home in the South to roam 'round the Pole, God only knows.
He was always cold, but the land of gold seemed to hold him like a spell;
Though he'd often say in his homely way that "he'd sooner live in hell."

On a Christmas Day we were mushing our way over the Dawson trail.
Talk of your cold! through the parka's fold it stabbed like a driven nail.
If our eyes we'd close, then the lashes froze till sometimes we couldn't see;
It wasn't much fun, but the only one to whimper was Sam McGee.

And that very night, as we lay packed tight in our robes beneath the snow,
And the dogs were fed, and the stars o'erhead were dancing heel and toe,
He turned to me, and "Cap," says he, "I'll cash in this trip, I guess;
And if I do, I'm asking that you won't refuse my last request."

Well, he seemed so low that I couldn't say no; then he says with a sort of moan:
"It's the cursed cold, and it's got right hold till I'm chilled clean through to the bone.
Yet 'tain't being dead—it's my awful dread of the icy grave that pains;
So I want you to swear that, foul or fair, you'll cremate my last remains."

A pal's last need is a thing to heed, so I swore I would not fail;
And we started on at the streak of dawn; but God! he looked ghastly pale.
He crouched on the sleigh, and he raved all day of his home in Tennessee;
And before nightfall a corpse was all that was left of Sam McGee.

There wasn't a breath in that land of death, and I hurried, horror-driven,
With a corpse half hid that I couldn't get rid, because of a promise given;
It was lashed to the sleigh, and it seemed to say: "You may tax your brawn and brains,
But you promised true, and it's up to you to cremate those last remains."

Now a promise made is a debt unpaid, and the trail has its own stern code.
In the days to come, though my lips were dumb, in my heart how I cursed that load.
In the long, long night, by the lone firelight, while the huskies, round in a ring,
Howled out their woes to the homeless snows— O God! how I loathed the thing.

And every day that quiet clay seemed to heavy and heavier grow;
And on I went, though the dogs were spent and the grub was getting low;

The trail was bad, and I felt half mad, but I swore I would not give in;
And I'd often sing to the hateful thing, and it hearkened with a grin.

Till I came to the marge of Lake Lebarge, and a derelict there lay;
It was jammed in the ice, but I saw in a trice it was called the "Alice May."
And I looked at it, and I thought a bit, and I looked at my frozen chum;
Then "Here," said I, with a sudden cry, "is my cre-ma-tor-eum."

Some planks I tore from the cabin floor, and I lit the boiler fire;
Some coal I found that was lying around, and I heaped the fuel higher;
The flames just soared, and the furnace roared—such a blaze you seldom see;
And I burrowed a hole in the glowing coal, and I stuffed in Sam McGee.

Then I made a hike, for I didn't like to hear him sizzle so;
And the heavens scowled, and the huskies howled, and the wind began to blow.
It was icy cold, but the hot sweat rolled down my cheeks, and I don't know why;
And the greasy smoke in an inky cloak went streaking down the sky.

I do not know how long in the snow I wrestled with grisly fear;
But the stars came out and they danced about ere again I ventured near;
I was sick with dread, but I bravely said: "I'll just take a peep inside.
I guess he's cooked, and it's time I looked"; ... then the door I opened wide.

And there sat Sam, looking cool and calm, in the heart of the furnace roar;
And he wore a smile you could see a mile, and he said: "Please close that door.
It's fine in here, but I greatly fear you'll let in the cold and storm—
Since I left Plumtree, down in Tennessee, it's the first time I've been warm."

*There are strange things done in the midnight sun
By the men who toil for gold;
The Arctic trails have their secret tales
That would make your blood run cold;
The Northern Lights have seen queer sights,
But the queerest they ever did see
Was that night on the marge of Lake Lebarge
I cremated Sam McGee.*

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Songs of a Sourdough by Robert Service](#)
[Wikipedia: Songs of a Sourdough by Robert W. Service](#)
[Poetry Foundation: The Cremation of Sam McGee](#)
[Poetry Foundation: The Shooting of Dan McGrew](#)
[Robert W. Service](#)



The Cataract of Lodore

There is something mesmerising about watching fast-moving water. To see water rushing towards a drop and then tumbling over the edge is both dramatic and soothing. Clearly Robert Southey loved waterfalls and when asked by his young son to describe a famous Lake District cataract, he had a huge amount of fun coming up with words and rhythm that would capture the rush of water and its descent. I hope you enjoy this onomatopoeic poem as much as I do. Watch my video on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/exYTgD96jJM>

***The Cataract of Lodore* By Robert Southey**

“How does the water
Come down at Lodore?”
My little boy asked me
Thus, once on a time;
And moreover he tasked me
To tell him in rhyme.
Anon, at the word,
There first came one daughter,
And then came another,
To second and third
The request of their brother,
And to hear how the water
Comes down at Lodore,
With its rush and its roar,
As many a time
They had seen it before.
So I told them in rhyme,
For of rhymes I had store;
And ’twas in my vocation

For their recreation
That so I should sing;
Because I was Laureate
To them and the King.

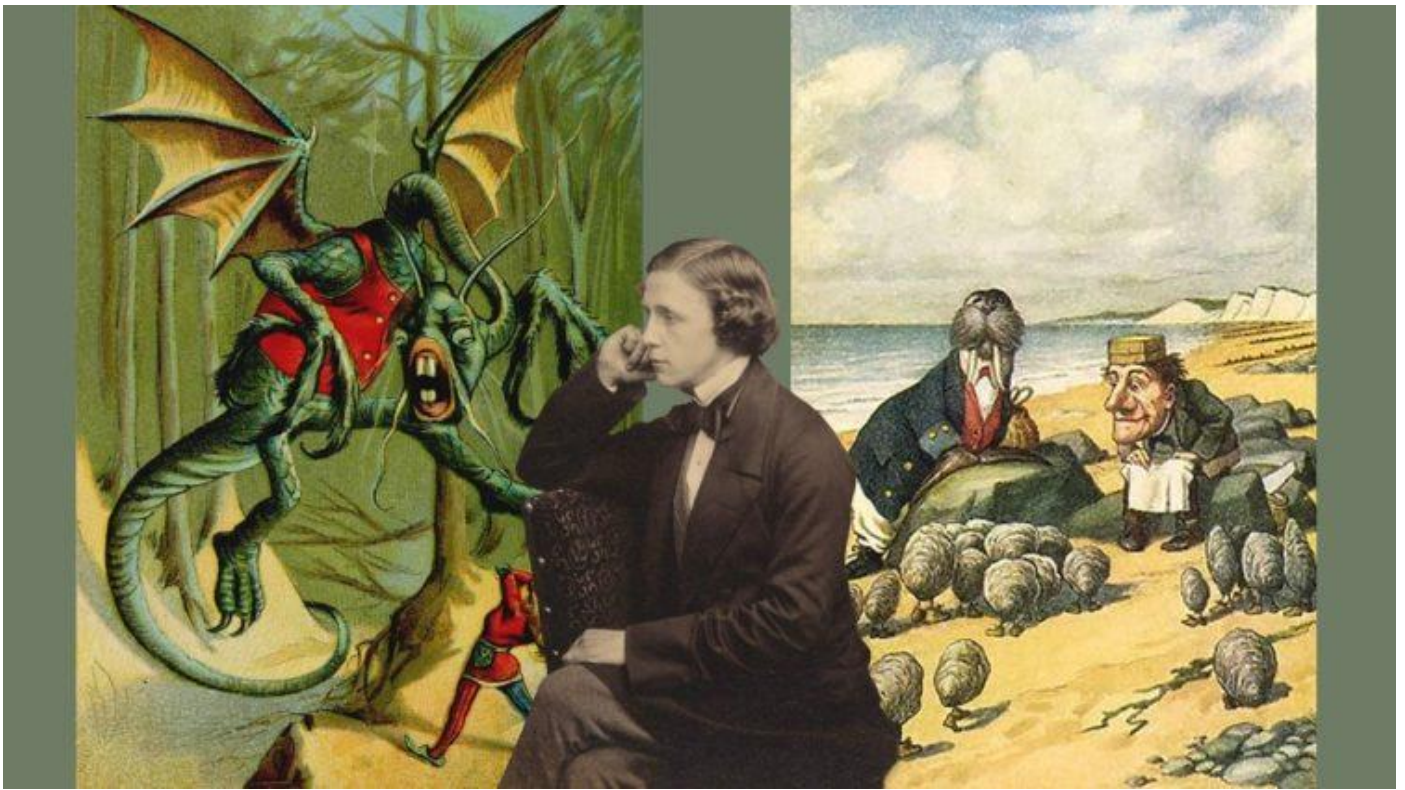
[continue to read this poem at Poetry Foundation.](#)

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Poetry Foundation: *The Cateract of Lodore*](#)

[The Cateract of Lodore by Robert Southey](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Poet Laureate](#)

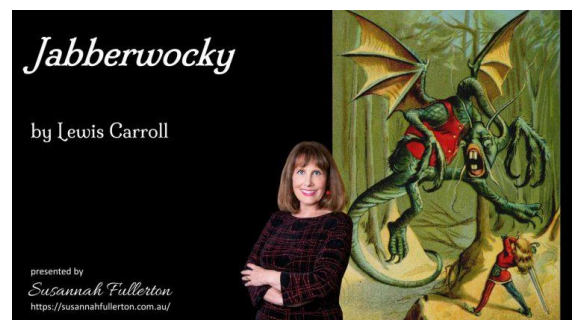


Lewis Carroll's Nonsense Poems

There's a lot of fun to be had with nonsense and one of the best ever writers of nonsense verse was Lewis Carroll. I hope you share my enjoyment of a couple of my favourites.

Jabberwocky

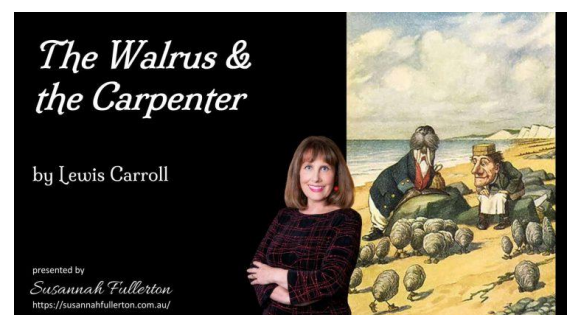
It might be nonsensical, but I love nonsense verse, especially the ridiculous poems written by Lewis Carroll, with made up words and absurd situations. *Jabberwocky* was published as part of his classic novel *Through the Looking Glass*, the sequel to *Alice in Wonderland*, and it immediately became popular. Alice doesn't really understand it, but she thinks it is "very pretty". The illustrations by John Tenniel have fixed in our minds his vision of the poem.



I'll tell you my take on this poem, its possible meanings, its impact and the words it has contributed to our language. Watch my video here: <https://youtu.be/3cipZP92Px0>. Enjoy my reading of it, and I hope it gives you a "frabjous day".

The Walrus and the Carpenter

This poem first appeared in *Through the Looking Glass*, where it is recited by Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Is it a poem about Darwin's theory of survival of the fittest, does it discuss expansionism and territorial encroachment, or does it warn the young of 'stranger danger'? Illustrated by John Tenniel, this is another nonsense poem that has become a classic. I often find myself quoting "The time has come, the Walrus said, to talk of many things..."



It's such a fun poem to read, and I hope you enjoy both the poem and the explanation. Watch my video here:
https://youtu.be/E8m_YvYjDM

Like me, do you also find yourself repeating these lines?

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Internet Archive *Through the Looking Glass* by Lewis Carroll](#)

[Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking-glass and What Alice Found There by Lewis Carroll](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Charles Lutwidge Dodgson is born](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Lewis Carroll first appeared](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Sir John Tenniel is born](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: *Jabberwocky* by Lewis Carroll](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is published](#)

[Lewis Carroll Society of North America](#)

Literary Escapes with Susannah

Susannah Fullerton
<https://susannahfullerton.com.au/>



Escape with Susannah

From the cozy bookshops of Paris to the historic libraries of Oxford, join me as we journey through the pages of literature to uncover hidden gems and iconic landmarks that have inspired generations of writers.

Take your complimentary seat on a virtual tour and I'll show you some of my favourite literary destinations around the world and tell you why I find them just so special.

Don't forget to pack your book.



McCrae House, Ontario, Canada

The name John McCrae does not immediately bring to mind any particularly famous poems in the minds of most people, and yet I think almost everybody knows his wonderful poem *In Flanders Fields*. If you visit Canada, not too far from the big city of Toronto in a place called Guelph, Ontario, it's possible to visit the John McCrae Birthplace Museum. A really fascinating house about a very interesting man.

This small limestone cottage, built in 1858, was owned by the McCrae family from 1870 for just 3 years. The family moved a year after John's birth, although he continued to live in Guelph before qualifying as a physician and serving in the Canadian Army Medical Corps. Other families occupied the house until 1966, when it was purchased and preserved as a museum. It is now an excellent exhibition and memorial to the life and times of this interesting man. Come and share it with me on YouTube, click the picture. <https://youtu.be/4KgIDrxUAPo>

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Keats Shelley House](#)

[The Keats Foundation](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: John Keats is born](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: John Keats' first poem is published](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: John Keats & *Bright Star*](#)

[The Complete Poems of John Keats by John Keats](#)

Keats Shelley House Rome, Italy



Susannah Fullerton
<https://susannahfullerton.com.au/>



Keats Shelley House, Rome

Escape with me to the Piazza di Spagna, right in the heart of Rome, Italy.

One of the most moving literary visits you can make is to the Keats-Shelley House in Rome. It is in one of the small rooms there that Keats died, with the sounds of the fountains down below, and all the life and bustle on the steps reminding him of all of the joys of life he would lose when he died from tuberculosis.

Located beside the majestic Spanish Steps on the Piazza di Spagna, this historic building now serves as a museum housing an extensive collection of manuscripts, letters, and memorabilia associated with both poets and other writers of the time, offering visitors an intimate glimpse into their lives and works. It also has one of the finest libraries of Romantic literature in the world, to which thousands of volumes are added every year.

To stand in the little room where Keats died is such an emotional experience. Come and share it with me on YouTube, click the picture. <https://youtu.be/xXYFhmsuRLc>

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

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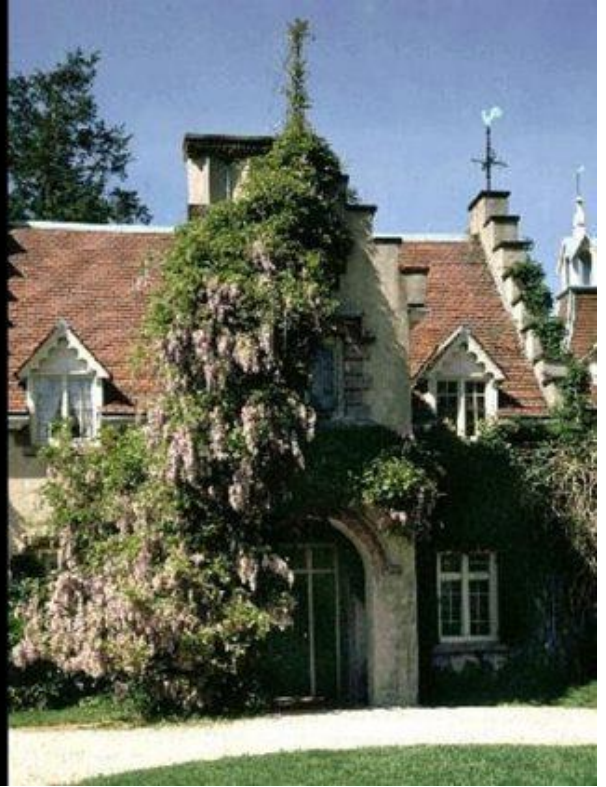
[Susannah Fullerton: John Keats & Bright Star](#)

[The Complete Poems of John Keats by John Keats](#)

Sunnyside Tarrytown, New York



Susannah Fullerton
<https://susannahfullerton.com.au/>



Sunnyside, Tarrytown, New York

Washington Irving was a short-story writer, essayist, biographer, and historian renowned for his contributions to early American literature. Born in New York City, he achieved literary fame with the iconic stories *Rip Van Winkle* and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. These tales, with their blend of European folklore and distinctly American settings, established Irving as a master of short fiction. His ability to craft captivating narratives with vivid characters and imaginative settings endeared him to the readers of his time, but he is not much read today.

Irving's charming estate, Sunnyside, located in Tarrytown, New York, reflects his fascination with Dutch architecture and culture. It became his sanctuary and a symbol of his deep connection to the Hudson River Valley. Sunnyside is now a museum and remains a testament to Irving's legacy, capturing the essence of his life's work and his influence on American culture and storytelling.

Come and share it with me on YouTube, click the picture. <https://youtu.be/BXtAJOGUIo>

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Washington Irving's Sunnyside](#)

[Books by Washington Irving](#)

[Gutenberg: Books by Washington Irving](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: *Rip Van Winkle* is published](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Literary Statues](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: "It was a dark and stormy night"](#)



George Sand House, Nohant, France

Escape with me to the small French village of Nohant, right in the heart of the Berry region of central France.

George Sand (Amandine Aurore Dupin) is the most celebrated French female novelist of the 19th century. She was famed not only for her writings, but for her love affairs (with poet Alfred de Musset, and with the composer Chopin) and for her radical political ideas.

The House of George Sand is in the village of Nohant, in the Indre department of France. In 1808, at just four years old, Sand lived there with her grandmother after the accidental death of her father. When her grandmother died in 1821, Sand inherited the small château from her grandmother and here she entertained literary and artistic friends, Balzac, Flaubert, Turgenev, Liszt and Delacroix.

Come and share it with me on YouTube, click the picture. <https://youtu.be/aNaNZrbtWmA>

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Susannah Fullerton: George Sand is born](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Chopin's Piano and George Sand](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: George Sand dies](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: *The Miller of Angibault*](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Literary France – Susannah's Top Ten Places to Visit](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: In Search of Literary France free to watch on YouTube](#)



Villa La Foce, Tuscany, Italy

Iris Origo was a biographer and historian. She is the author of several books including *Images and Shadows*, *War in Val d'Orcia*, *A Study in Solitude*, and *The Merchant of Prato*, among others.

Iris and her husband Antonio Origo purchased Villa La Foce in 1924. Over the course of the next 15 years, together with English architect Cecil Pinsent, they refurbished the house and designed an elegant terraced garden with box hedges, a rose garden, fountains and a pergola draped in wisteria. They transformed the dilapidated historic estate into one of Italy's most sumptuous countryside villas.

Despite a need to remain in the good graces of the Italian and German forces during WWII, La Foce provided shelter to orphaned and war-displaced children during the war years as well as a sanctuary for Allied pilots and POW escapees.

After the war, Iris and Antonio remained at La Foce for the rest of their lives, raising two daughters on the estate. Come and share it with me on YouTube, click the picture. <https://youtu.be/4KglDrxUAPo>

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[La Foce](#)

[Books by Iris Origo](#)

A Moveable Feast



Susannah Fullerton
<https://susannahfullerton.com.au/>

A Moveable Feast

Join me for a unique experience offering you a taste of literary recipes, tantalizing tipples and timeless home remedies.

Where do these culinary delights appear in novels? What special favourites did authors have to satisfy their thirst or calm their hunger. Will the recipes I find be good enough for you to eat and drink like they did in the books?



A Madeleine Moment

Possibly the most famous food moment in all of literature is the bite of a small cake called a madeleine, dipped into a cup of lime flower tea, which occurs in Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (also known as *Remembrance of Things Past*):

No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shudder ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, something isolated, detached, with no suggestion of its origin. And at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory – this new sensation having had on me the effect which love has of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me it was me. ... Whence did it come? What did it mean? How could I seize and apprehend it? ... And suddenly the memory revealed itself. The taste was that of the little piece of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray (because on those mornings I did not go out before mass), when I went to say good morning to her in her bedroom, my aunt Léonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of tea or tisane. The sight of the little madeleine had recalled nothing to my mind before I tasted it. And all from my cup of tea.

Proust uses the little cake to contrast voluntary with involuntary memory and when the narrator uses taste and smell to show how memories of the past can involuntarily come flooding back. I think we all know the way that smell and taste can bring back vivid memories of the past. 'Proust's madeleine' is a term still used today to refer to a sensory cue that triggers a memory.

A madeleine is a small sponge cake, in the shape of a shell. It can be flavoured with almond or with lemon. It originated in northeastern France, some time in the 18th century, but it is not known exactly why they have the shape and name they do. They could be connected with the Santiago de Compostela pilgrimage (the sign for a pilgrim is the shell of St Jacques), or there could have been a woman named Madeleine who made them for a noble family.

The little cakes are now so intimately connected with Proust that in the town of Illiers-Combray, the 'Combray' of his novel, two rival baking establishments claim that it was in their shop that the madeleine of Proust's novel

was first bought (the novel is intensely biographical, so it can be taken for granted that Proust himself experiences the gastronomic moment he gives to his narrator). The air of the little town is filled with the scent of freshly baked cakes and all the shops sell them as souvenirs.

Smell accounts for over 75% of what we are tasting, and the little cakes do smell, and taste, fabulous! So how about creating your very own 'madeleine moment' and cooking these gorgeous little cakes yourself?

Madeleines

You should use a traditionally-shaped madeleine pan. However, if you don't have one, you can cheat and use a baking tin with hollows of a similar size. This is my recipe:

75g butter, melted and cooled, plus extra to grease pan
75g of self-raising flour, sifted
2 eggs, lightly beaten
75g caster sugar
Zest of 1 lemon
Icing sugar, to dust



Heat oven to 220 degrees. Brush madeleine tin with melted butter, then with flour, shaking off any excess.

Whisk eggs and sugar and lemon zest, until pale and doubled in volume. Gently fold in the flour. Pour the batter around the edges of the bowl and fold in, making sure you keep as much volume as possible. Cover and chill for 50 minutes.

Fill each madeleine hole two-thirds full with mixture, then bake for 10-12 mins or until risen and golden. Allow to cool in the pan for a few minutes and then slip madeleines onto a rack to cool. Dust with icing sugar before serving.

Makes 12.

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Susannah Fullerton: Marcel Proust is born](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: *Swann's Way* is published](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Marcel Proust Centenary](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Literary France – Susannah's Top Ten Places to Visit](#)

[In Search of Lost Time by Marcel Proust](#)

[Swann's Way by Marcel Proust](#)

[A Hundred Years of Proust's Madeleine](#)



Mr Bingley's White Soup

"If you mean Darcy," cried her brother, "he may go to bed, if he chuses, before it begins—but as for the ball, it is quite a settled thing; and as soon as Nicholls has made white soup enough I shall send round my cards." (Spoken by Mr Bingley as he plans the Netherfield Ball in Volume I, Chapter 11 of *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen.)

White Soup, considered a delicacy in Regency era Britain, has medieval origins dating back to the 13th century. Throughout the years different versions appeared, some sweet but most were savoury.

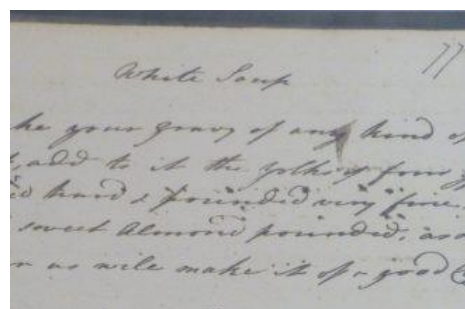
By Jane Austen's time, White Soup had become creamy and rich, known for its smooth, white appearance. The flavour was mild and the long list of ingredients it required made it a high-status, elegant party dish. The exact recipe varied, but a common version included veal or chicken broth that was thickened with cream, almonds, and sometimes rice. It was often garnished with finely chopped herbs, and sometimes small pieces of meat or poultry were added.

The soup was typically served at balls and formal gatherings, or as a first course at grand dinners, and it was enjoyed as a luxurious and elegant dish.

Recipes for the white soup that would have been eaten at Netherfield were published in a few popular cookbooks of the time. Martha Lloyd's recipe for it includes a mixture of cream, broth, finely ground almonds, and crushed egg yolks. (Martha Lloyd, a friend of the Austen family who lived with them in Southampton and at Chawton, compiled a handwritten book containing recipes and remedies used in the household.)

Martha Lloyd's White Soup

Make a gravy of any kind of meat, add to it the yolks of four eggs boiled hard and pounded very fine, 2 oz. of sweet almonds pounded, as much cream as will make it a good colour.



Julienne Gehrer's White Soup

This recipe for White Soup can be found at [Eat Like Jane Austen With Recipes From Her Sister-In-Law's Cookbook](#).

Serves 4 to 6.

8 cups veal or chicken stock
4 ounces vermicelli
4 hard-boiled egg yolks
¼ cup ground almonds
1 cup cream

Bring veal or chicken stock to boil in a large pot over high heat. Break vermicelli into small pieces and add to stock. Boil pasta for 7 minutes or until tender. Remove soup from heat.

Push egg yolks through a sieve using the back of a spoon. Do the same with the ground almonds, discarding any large pieces. Add yolks and almonds to soup.

Slowly stir in cream, then return soup to heat. Cook over medium heat until just warm. Serve immediately.

Recipe copyright Julienne Gehrer. Originally published in *Dining With Jane Austen*, 2017. Recipe adapted from *The Knight Family Cookbook*. sourced from Atlas Obscura, 5/11/2023, <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/jane-austen-recipes-cookbook>

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Atlas Obscura: Eat Like Jane Austen](#)

[Jane Austen's House: Martha Lloyd's Household Book](#)

[Video: The Soup that Powered the Netherfield Ball: Making White Soup from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* Martha Lloyd's Household Book by Martha Lloyd & Julienne Gehrer \(Introduction\)](#)



A Bouillabaisse Ballard

Bouillabaisse is a traditional French provençal fish stew that originated in Marseille. It has in it at least 3 different kinds of fish – red rascasse, sea robin and European conger. It can also include bream, turbot, monkfish, mullet, hake, and it usually includes shellfish such as sea urchins, mussels, velvet crabs, spider crabs, or langoustine. The vegetables added are leeks, onions, tomato, celery and potatoes. The broth is traditionally served with a rouille (a mayonnaise made from garlic, olive oil, saffron and cayenne pepper, served on grilled slices of bread).

A bouillabaisse is different from other fish soups because of the use of bony Mediterranean fish, the selection of herbs and spices, and the fact that the fish are added one at a time, in the correct order. The dish's name comes from the preparation in that correct order – the broth is boiled (bolh), then the different fish added one by one with the broth coming to the boil each time, then the heat is lowered (abaissa).

Recipes for bouillabaisse vary from family to family in Marseille and local restaurants dispute which is the most authentic recipe. The dish was created by Marseille fishermen who wanted to make a filling meal after returning to port, using the fish that was too bony to sell to restaurants and cooking them in a cauldron of sea water on a camp fire. In the 19th century, when Marseille became more prosperous, restaurants began serving the dish to customers, with fish stock instead of sea water, and the dish was soon being served in Paris.



In Roman mythology something very like it was fed to Vulcan by Venus. Fairly similar dishes are found in Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece, but only with bouillabaisse is the broth served separately from the vegetables.

I love eating bouillabaisse, and also love the fact that a great novelist once wrote a poem in its praise. William Makepeace Thackeray, author of the brilliant and satirical *Vanity Fair* adored Paris and one of his favourite dishes was bouillabaisse:

***The Ballad of Bouillabaisse* by William Makepeace Thackeray**

A street there is in Paris famous,
For which no rhyme our language yields,
Rue Neuve des Petits Champs its name is—
The New Street of the Little Fields.
And here's an inn, not rich and splendid,
But still in comfortable case;
The which in youth I oft attended,
To eat a bowl of Bouillabaisse.

This Bouillabaisse a noble dish is—
A sort of soup or broth, or brew,
Or hotchpotch of all sorts of fishes,
That Greenwich never could outdo;
Green herbs, red peppers, mussels, saffron,
Soles, onions, garlic, roach, and dace:
All these you eat at TERR'S tavern,
In that one dish of Bouillabaisse.

Indeed, a rich and savory stew 'tis;
And true philosophers, methinks,
Who love all sorts of natural beauties,
Should love good victuals and good drinks.
And Cordelier or Benedictine
Might gladly, sure, his lot embrace,
Nor find a fast-day too afflicting,
Which served him up a Bouillabaisse.

I wonder if the house still there is?
Yes, here the lamp is, as before;
The smiling red-checked caitre is
Still opening oysters at the door.
Is TERR still alive and able?
I recollect his droll grimace:
He'd come and smile before your table,
And hope you liked your Bouillabaisse.

We enter—nothing's changed or older.
“How's Monsieur TERR, waiter, pray?”
The waiter stares and shrugs his shoulder—
“Monsieur is dead this many a day.”
“It is the lot of saint and sinner,
So honest TERR'S run his race.”
“What will Monsieur require for dinner?”
“Say, do you still cook Bouillabaisse?”
“Oh, oui, Monsieur,” 's the waiter's answer;
“Quel vin Monsieur desire-t-il?”
“Tell me a good one.”—“That I can, Sir:
The Chambertin with yellow seal.”

“So TERR'S gone,” I say, and sink in
My old accustom'd corner-place,
“He's done with feasting and with drinking,
With Burgundy and Bouillabaisse.”

My old accustom'd corner here is,
The table still is in the nook;
Ah! vanish'd many a busy year is
This well-known chair since last I took.
When first I saw ye, cari luoghi,
I'd scarce a beard upon my face,
And now a grizzled, grim old foggy,
I sit and wait for Bouillabaisse.

Where are you, old companions trusty
Of early days here met to dine?
Come, waiter! quick, a flagon crusty—
I'll pledge them in the good old wine.
The kind old voices and old faces
My memory can quick retrace;
Around the board they take their places,
And share the wine and Bouillabaisse.

There's JACK has made a wondrous marriage;
There's laughing TOM is laughing yet;
There's brave AUGUSTUS drives his carriage;
There's poor old FRED in the Gazette;
On JAMES'S head the grass is growing;
Good Lord! the world has wagged apace
Since here we set the Claret flowing,
And drank, and ate the Bouillabaisse.

Ah me! how quick the days are flitting!
I mind me of a time that's gone,
When here I'd sit, as now I'm sitting,
In this same place—but not alone.
A fair young form was nestled near me,
A dear, dear face looked fondly up,
And sweetly spoke and smiled to cheer me
—There's no one now to share my cup.

I drink it as the Fates ordain it.
Come, fill it, and have done with rhymes:
Fill up the lonely glass, and drain it
In memory of dear old times.
Welcome the wine, whate'er the seal is;
And sit you down and say your grace
With thankful heart, whate'er the meal is.
—Here comes the smoking Bouillabaisse!

Please enjoy the reading I made of this poem that you can find here: <https://youtu.be/iTVX9eRIUAI>

Make Bouillabaisse yourself

This 5-star rated recipe for Bouillabaisse comes from [BBC Good Food](#).

Serves 6

Ingredients

1 leek, green top left whole, white finely sliced
small bunch fresh thyme
3 bay leaves
bunch parsley, stalks whole, leaves roughly chopped
2 strips of orange peel
1 mild red chilli
4 tbsp olive oil
2 onions, chopped
1 leek
1 fennel, fronds picked and reserved, fennel chopped
4 garlic cloves, minced
1 tbsp tomato purée
1 star anise
2 tbsp Pernod, optional, if you have it
4 large, ripe tomatoes, chopped
large pinch (one-third tsp) saffron strands
1.5l fish stock
100g potato, one peeled piece
1kg of filleted mixed Mediterranean fish, each fillet cut into large chunks. (We used a mix of red and grey mullet, monkfish, John Dory, and gurnard)
300g mussels, optional

For the rouille

2 garlic cloves
1 small chunk of red chilli (optional)
small pinch saffron
1 piece of potato, cooked in the broth, (see above)
1 egg yolk
100ml olive oil
1 tbsp lemon juice

For the croutons

Half a baguette, thinly sliced
1 tbsp olive oil

Method

STEP 1

To make the croutons heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. Lay the slices of bread on a flat baking tray in a single layer, drizzle with olive oil and bake for 15 mins until golden and crisp. Set aside – can be made a day ahead and kept in an airtight container.

STEP 2

Use a layer of the green part of the leek to wrap around and make a herb bundle with the thyme, bay, parsley stalks, orange peel and chilli. Tie everything together with kitchen string and set aside.

STEP 3

Heat the oil in a very large casserole dish or stock pot and throw in the onion, sliced leek and fennel and cook for about 10 mins until softened. Stir through the garlic and cook for 2 mins more, then add the herb bundle, tomato purée, star anise, Pernod if using, chopped tomatoes and saffron. Simmer and stir for a minute or two then pour over the fish stock. Season with salt and pepper, bring to a simmer, then add the piece of potato. Bubble everything gently for 30 mins until you have a thin tomatoey soup. When that piece of potato is on the brink of collapse, fish it out and set aside to make the rouille.

STEP 4

While the broth is simmering make the rouille by crushing the garlic, chilli and saffron with a pinch of salt in a mortar with a pestle. Mash in the cooked potato to make a sticky paste then whisk in the egg yolk and, very gradually, the olive oil until you make a mayonnaise-like sauce. Stir in the lemon juice and set aside.

STEP 5

Once the chunky tomato broth has cooked you have two options: for a rustic bouillabaisse, simply poach your fish in it along with the mussels, if you're using (just until they open) and serve. For a refined version, remove the herb bundle and star anise. Using a handheld or table-top blender, blitz the soup until smooth. Pass the soup through a sieve into a large, clean pan and bring to a gentle simmer. Starting with the densest fish, add the chunks to the broth and cook for 1 min before adding the next type. With the fish we used, the order was: monkfish, John Dory, grey mullet, snapper. When all the fish is in, scatter over the mussels, if using, and simmer everything for about 5 mins until just cooked and the mussels have opened.

STEP 6

Use a slotted spoon to carefully scoop the fish and mussels out onto a warmed serving platter, moisten with just a little broth and scatter over the chopped parsley. Bring everything to the table. Some people eat it as two courses, serving the broth with croutons and rouille first, then the fish spooned into the same bowl. Others simply serve it as a fish stew. Whichever way you choose the rouille is there to be stirred into the broth to thicken and give it a kick.

Recipe copyright BBC Good Food (<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/bouillabaisse>), sourced 27/01/2024.

French Chef, Bouillabaisse A La Marseillaise with Julia Child



Julia Child, in her *French Chef* series of cooking videos, demonstrated cooking Bouillabaisse. The episode opens in a Marseille fish market. [View Bouillabaisse A La Marseillaise here.](#)

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[BBC Good Food: Bouillabaisse](#)

[Julia Child: French Chef, Bouillabaisse A La Marseillaise](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: William Makepeace Thackeray dies](#)

[Vanity Fair: A Novel Without A Hero by William Makepeace Thackeray](#)



Cucumber Sandwiches

Cucumber sandwiches sound very simple, but they are wonderfully refreshing and, if properly made, truly delicious.

Oscar Wilde makes much of them in his comedy of manners *The Importance of Being Earnest*. At the start of the play Algernon and his friend Jack are waiting for the arrival of Algernon's aunt, Lady Bracknell. The butler, Lane, has prepared a plate of cucumber sandwiches, and as he waits, Algernon scoffs the lot. When Lady Bracknell arrives, and she is particularly fond of cucumber sandwiches, Algernon has Lane fib and assert that there were no cucumbers to be had at the market that day, "not even for ready money".

When making cucumber sandwiches, it is a matter of vital importance to get the ingredients right – fresh and soft white bread (so thinly sliced that one should be able to see daylight through the pores of the bread), the very best butter (ensuring that the bread is buttered all the way to the edges), a little salt and some freshly ground black pepper, and flavoursome cucumbers.



If you retain some of the skin, you get a delightful glimpse of green within each sandwich. The cucumber must be sliced very thinly, and the sandwiches should be sliced into fingers. They should be made only minutes before serving, so that the bread has no chance of getting damp.

Oscar Wilde's character Lane obviously prepared his platter of sandwiches too early, allowing Algernon Moncrieff to eat them all before his guest arrived. Had they not been eaten, they might well have been getting soggy by the time Aunt Augusta got to eat them.

The sandwich originated in the UK. It has made regular appearances at afternoon teas during breaks in cricket matches (as a result of cricket, cucumber sandwiches became popular in India, where green chutney was usually added). They were considered appropriate delicacies to offer visiting clergy. Today they are often served at [Buckingham Palace Garden Parties](#).

However, there are now various American variations. Americans often add cream cheese, mayonnaise and even minced garlic or salmon. A touch of lemon juice can add some zest, and finely sliced dill or chives can add texture and more greenery. It is always best to remove the crusts from the bread. It can be very lightly toasted, but I'm sure Lady Bracknell would not approve of that.

Cucumber sandwiches really make the perfect accompaniment to a summer afternoon tea. Here's some dialogue from the play for you to enjoy as you indulge in your own cucumber sandwiches and the image shows Michael Denison as Algernon and Michael Redgrave as Jack in the 1952 Javelin Films production of *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

Jack: *Why cucumber sandwiches? Why such reckless extravagance in one so young? Who is coming to tea?*

Algernon: *Oh! merely Aunt Augusta and Gwendolen.*

Jack: *How perfectly delightful! ...*

Algernon: *—[Jack puts out his hand to take a sandwich. Algernon at once interferes.] Please don't touch the cucumber sandwiches. They are ordered specially for Aunt Augusta. [Takes one and eats it.]*

Jack: *Well, you have been eating them all the time.*

Algernon: *That is quite a different matter. She is my aunt. [Takes plate from below.] Have some bread and butter... and later*

Lady Bracknell: *... And now I'll have a cup of tea, and one of those nice cucumber sandwiches you promised me.*

Algernon: *Certainly,*

Aunt Augusta: *(Goes over to tea-table.) . . . (picking up empty plate in horror). Good heavens! Lane! Why are there no cucumber sandwiches? I ordered them specially...*



Michael Denison and Michael Redgrave in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1952)

.....

Oscar Wilde, in his greatest play, wonderfully pairs the unbridled appetite of his bachelor hero with his general lack of self-discipline and hopeless handling of finances. Through food, Wilde mocks the Victorian virtue of self-discipline. Food is used symbolically in the power conflicts of the play, and is connected with materialism, sex and domination. The sandwiches are intended for female characters, but they are gobbled up by a man who feels entitled to any property intended for women.

How to make perfect cucumber sandwiches

If you'd like all the detail of Cucumber Sandwiches and their mysteries, *The Guardian* has it covered in this article, [How to make perfect cucumber sandwiches](#).



Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[The Guardian: How to make the perfect cucumber sandwiches](#)

[Food: Buckingham Palace Cucumber Sandwiches](#) (featuring the Queen's secret ingredient)

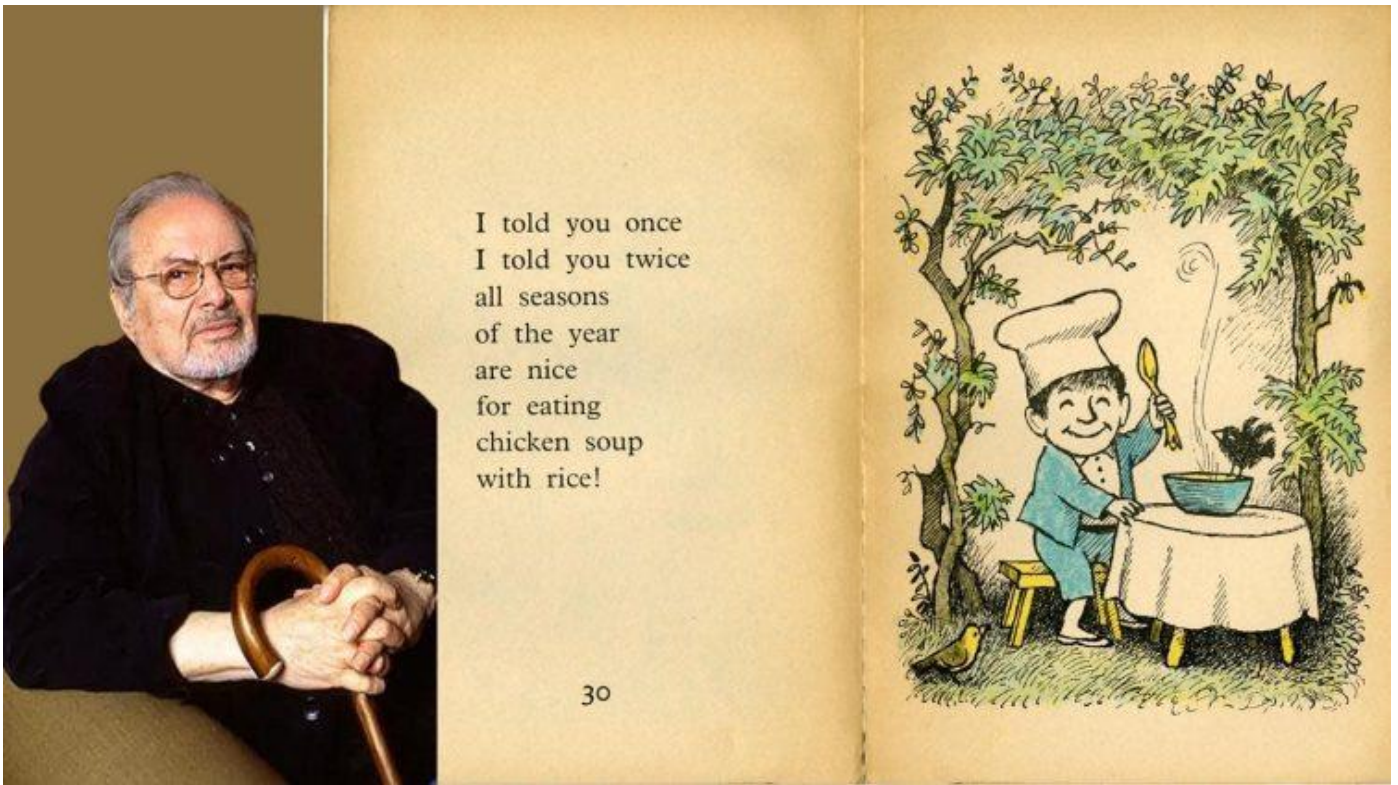
[The Importance of Being Earnest, 1952 production, full movie](#)

[The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde](#)

[Gutenberg: The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Oscar Wilde's final play is first staged](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: The Importance of Being Earnest: The Life and Works of Oscar Wilde](#)



Chicken Soup with Rice

[Maurice Sendak](#) (1928 – 2012) was a Jewish-American author, whose childhood was deeply affected by the loss of family in the Holocaust. His 1963 book [Where the Wild Things Are](#) is extremely famous, but I've always preferred his wonderfully comforting [Chicken Soup with Rice](#), which was published in 1962 as part of the four little books of 'The Nutshell Library'. It is a book of simple rhymes that take the reader through the months of the year, each one connected to the pleasure of eating chicken soup with rice in some exotic locale or in extreme conditions. The little boy and his friends are able to enjoy their soup in amazing places every month of the year. Here's one fabulous verse:

Chicken Soup with Rice

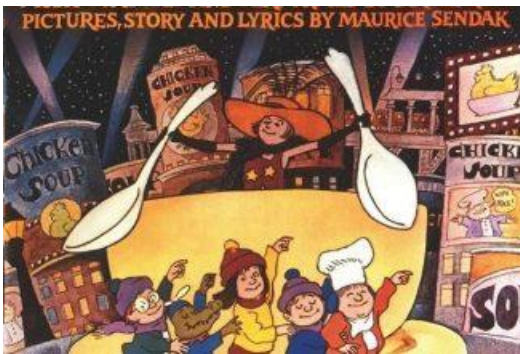
Chicken soup is a staple of Jewish cooking, something offered for comfort and nourishment. Surely Sendak drew on his Jewish heritage as he wrote this book? Here's my delicious recipe for it:

- 1 tbsp oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 3 large carrots, diced
- 1 stalk celery, diced
- 1 tsp chopped garlic
- 1 tsp dried parsley
- ½ tsp thyme
- 5 cups of chicken stock
- 2 uncooked chicken breasts
- 1 cup brown rice (rinsed)
- Salt and Pepper
- ½ cup evaporated milk



In a large pot, heat oil. Add onion, carrots and celery, stir until onion begins to turn golden. Add herbs and cook 1 minute. Add stock, chicken, rice, and seasonings. Stir and bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer, cover and cook for 30 minutes, stirring often.

Remove chicken from pot and shred it. Add it to pot and add evaporated milk. Serve.



Really Rosie is a musical with a book and lyrics by Maurice Sendak and music by Carole King. The animated show follows a typical summer day in the life of the Nutshell Kids, a group of several neighbourhood friends from *The Nutshell Library* books, and Rosie and Kathy from *The Sign on Rosie's Door*. Rosie, the self-proclaimed sassiest kid on her block of Brooklyn's Avenue P, entertains everyone by directing and starring in a movie based on the exciting, dramatic, funny (and slightly exaggerated) story of her life.

A half-hour animated television special aired on 19 February 1975.

It was directed by Maurice Sendak with Carole King voicing the title character. You can view it in full here: [Really Rosie 1975 TV special](#)

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Chicken Soup with Rice by Maurice Sendak](#)

[Nutshell Library by Maurice Sendak](#)

[Where The Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Maurice Sendak is born](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Where the Wild Things Are is published](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Maurice Sendak dies](#)

[Maurice Sendak: a life in pictures](#)

[Maurice Sendak Foundation](#)

[Carole King: Chicken Soup with Rice](#)



Marilla's Raspberry Cordial

In Chapter XVI of L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, Anne serves her friend Diana some of Marilla's "three year old home-made currant-wine" thinking it to be raspberry cordial. Diana, who thinks it tastes fabulous and drinks three large glasses of it, gets tiddly, starts to feel dizzy and insists on going home, bringing the girls' tea-party to an abrupt end. Marilla is proud of her housekeeping and cookery and has a pantry lined with preserves of all sorts.

The novel is set on Prince Edward Island, which voted for Prohibition in 1901, so Marilla's wine would have been illegal at the time the novel was written. This hints at a slightly subversive side in Marilla's repressed personality. Wine was made by some families for purely medicinal purposes (but isn't wine always medicinal, I ask?) but I like to think that Marilla enjoyed the odd quiet tippie when the silence of her brother Matthew and her lonely life (before Anne came on the scene) got too much for her.

It's a wonderfully comic scene in the novel. Diana's strict mother is horrified at seeing her daughter drunk and asserts that Anne did it deliberately. Marilla defends her adopted daughter and goes to see Mrs Barry who refuses to relent. As a result, Diana is forbidden to even speak to Anne.

Diana Barry's Favourite Raspberry Cordial

(from *Canadian Living Magazine*, June 2000)

300g frozen unsweetened raspberries
1 ¼ cups sugar
3 lemons
4 cups boiling water

In large saucepan over medium heat, combine raspberries and sugar. Cook, stirring occasionally, 20-25 minutes or until sugar is dissolved. Transfer raspberries to a bowl, and using a masher, mash well. Strain through a fine sieve, pressing to extract all the juice. Discard seeds.

Squeeze two of the lemons and strain juice. Add to bowl of raspberry juice. Pour in boiling water. Allot to cool slightly. Refrigerate until chilled.

Slice remaining lemon thinly. Pour cordial into glasses and garnish with lemon slice.

Raspberry Cordial Recipe

(from [from *The Anne of Green Gables Cookbook*, 1985](#)) View it here: <https://youtu.be/wXFuddH26rk>

500g fresh raspberries
1/3 cup lemon juice (around 3 lemons)
12 cups boiling water
3 cups white sugar
approximately 400ml cool water

1. Wash raspberries and place them in a large bowl
2. Squeeze lemons, then pour the juice through a strainer onto the raspberries. Mix gently.
3. Boil 12 cups of water in a large pot
4. Stir sugar into boiling water until it dissolves
5. Pour liquid onto raspberries
6. Cover mixture and let steep in the refrigerator for 24 hours
7. Take mixture from the fridge and pass it through a sieve to remove the seeds
8. Use a potato masher to press the raspberries and extract as much of the juice as possible
9. Add approximately 400ml of cool water to the raspberry mush to help extract natural flavours and colours
10. Strain mixture until all pulp and seeds are removed
11. Enjoy (responsibly!)

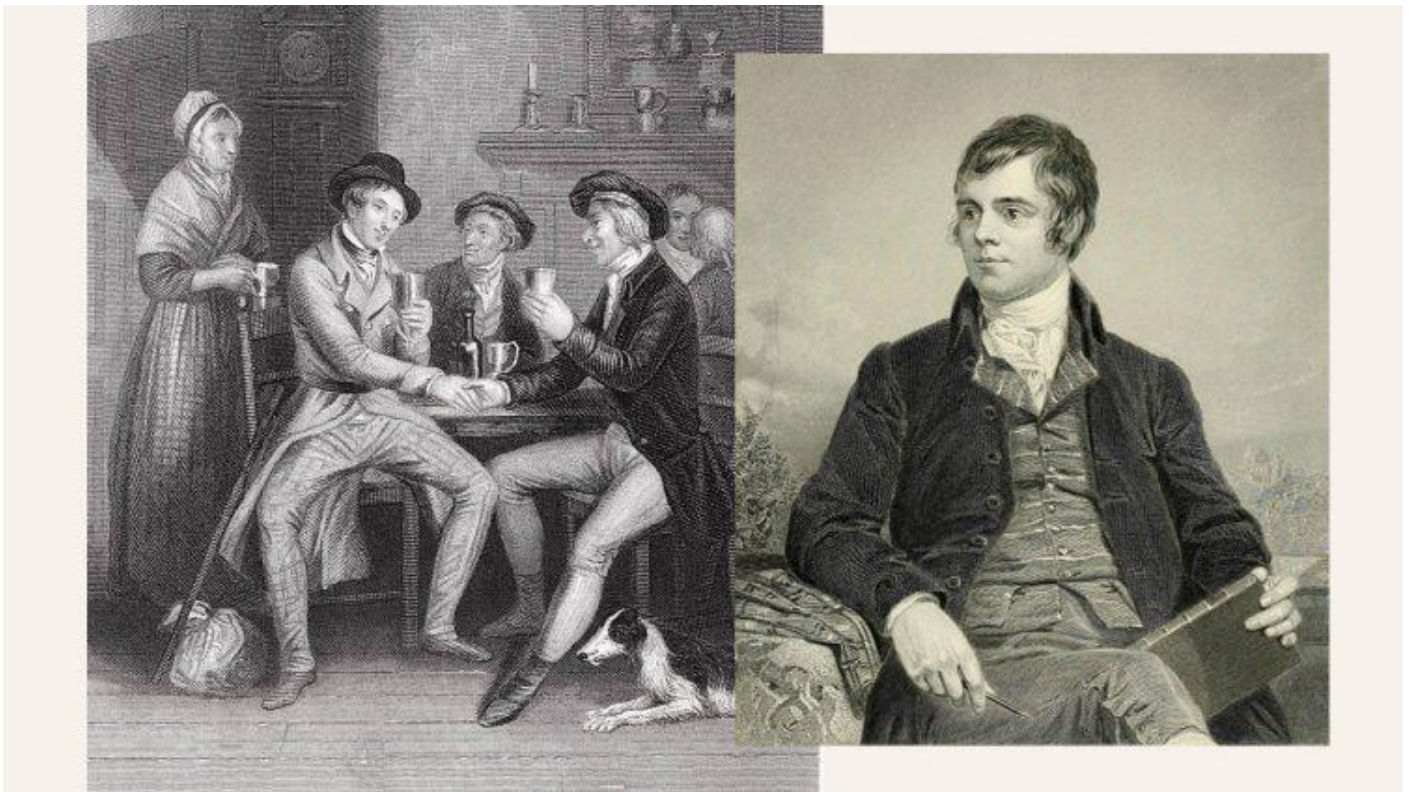


Spiked Raspberry Cordial

[Here's a recipe](#) for those occasions when you need a raspberry cordial that more closely resembles the one that Marilla had in her cupboard. (2 quarts of fresh Raspberries converts to about 1 kg.)

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Canadian Living: Diana Barry's Favourite Raspberry Cordial](#)
[Anne of Green Gables: Recipes from Avonlea](#) including Raspberry Cordial
[Susannah Fullerton: Anne of Green Gables is published](#)
[Susannah Fullerton: L.M. Montgomery & Anne of Green Gables](#)
[Susannah Fullerton: L.M. Montgomery marries](#)
[Susannah Fullerton: Film adaptations of the classics](#)
[L.M. Montgomery](#)
[Anne of Green Gables by Lucy Maud Montgomery](#)



Robert Burns Whisky

Robert Burns was a man of convivial spirit who appreciated the social aspects of sharing a drink with friends. His poems often reflect the drinking culture of his time, and he wrote about the joys of raising a glass with fellow revellers.

Burns was born in Alloway, Ayrshire in 1759 and although he never actually visited the Isle of Arran, he is certain to have been able to see it on clear days as he laboured in the fields of his father's farm. At that time there were several illicit stills on Arran which produced whisky that was claimed by many to be "among the finest whiskies available".

Burns' reputation as a lover of both poetry and conviviality endures, and he is celebrated annually on Burns Night (January 25th), where people gather to commemorate his life and works with traditional Scottish food, music, and, of course, a "wee dram" of Scotch whisky.

Many of Burns' poems and songs feature well-lubricated hospitality, and even wrote an entire poem, [Scotch Drink](#), about his love of whisky. Here is the last verse.

"Fortune! if thou'll but gie me still
Hale breeks, a scone, an' whisky gill,
An' rowth o' rhyme to rave at will,
Tak a' the rest,
An' deal't about as thy blind skill
Directs thee best."

Today, the '[Robert Burns Scotch Whisky](#)' comes from the Isle of Arran, and its bottling is officially endorsed by the [World Burns Federation](#).



Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Susannah Fullerton: Robert Burns, a video talk](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Robert Burns, *To a Mouse*](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Visit Burns locations on my Literary Tour of Scotland](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Robert Burns dies](#)

[Burns Country: *Scotch Drink* by Robert Burns](#)

[Scotch Whiskey Magazine: Robert Burns](#)

[Robert Burns Whisky](#)

[The Complete Poems and Songs of Robert Burns by Robert Burns](#)

[Project Gutenberg: books by Robert Burns](#)



Paul Verlaine Absinthe

French poet [Paul Verlaine](#) drank himself to death, and in his last moments cursed the ‘green fairy’, the drink that had caused his ruin. But he was still sneaking kisses from the green fairy on his deathbed, even as he damned it.

The green fairy, more accurately known as [absinthe](#), was created in Switzerland in the late 18th century. It rose to great popularity as an alcoholic drink in late 19th- and early 20th-century France, particularly among Parisian artists and writers. Notable imbibers included Ernest Hemingway, James Joyce, Lewis Carroll, Charles Baudelaire, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Arthur Rimbaud and Paul Verlaine.

Paul Verlaine is best remembered as a prominent 19th century [symbolist poet](#) whose work was revered for his distinctive and evocative style. His poetry often delved into themes of love, melancholy, and fleeting beauty, showcasing a delicate and musical quality that set him apart. His tumultuous personal life, marked by his complex relationship with fellow poet [Arthur Rimbaud](#), further fuelled interest in him.

Verlaine’s last years saw his descent into drug addiction, alcoholism, and poverty. He lived in slums and public hospitals and spent his days [drinking absinthe in Paris cafés](#) as seen in the photograph above by Paul Marsan Dornac taken in the Café François 1er in 1892. He once wrote to a friend, “It was upon absinthe that I threw myself, absinthe day and night.” He felt uncultivated for drinking it and called it “that green and terrible drink”, but he could not stop. Verlaine’s drug dependence and alcoholism finally took his life, and he died in Paris at the age of 51 on 8 January 1896.

According to popular legend, absinthe began as an all-purpose remedy around 1792 and its popularity grew steadily when it was given to French troops as a malaria preventive. It became so popular in French bars, bistros, cafés, and cabarets by the 1860s that the hour of 5 pm was called l’heure verte (“the green hour”). Absinthe was favoured by all social classes, from the wealthy bourgeoisie to poor artists and ordinary working-class people. By the 1880s, mass production had dropped the price, and the French were drinking 36 million litres per year by 1910. By 1915, it had been banned in much of Europe. However, in the second half of the 20th

century, the popularity of the green fairy faded, being replaced by cocktails, martinis and, in the 1960s, a panoply of mind-altering drugs.



From time to time absinthe has appeared in special marketing bottles bearing Verlaine's name, but it doesn't appear to be available locally at the moment.

Bans are no longer in place and today's absinthe is a "tongue-numbing drink" that "sharpens the senses," said Lance Winters, master distiller and proprietor at St George Spirits in a [BBC interview](#). Absinthe has never been illegal to import or manufacture in Australia and is readily available in bottle shops.

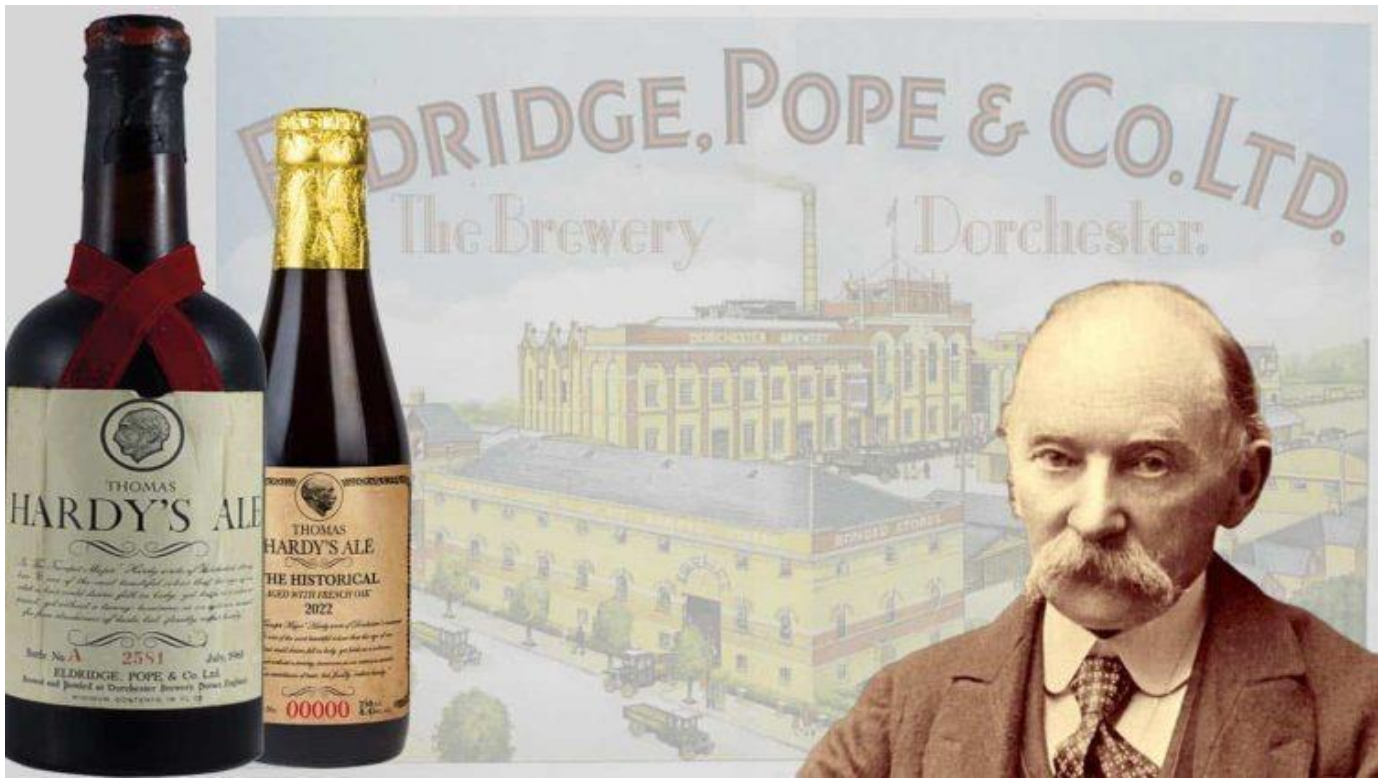
Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Poetry Foundation: Paul Verlaine](#)

[Kegworks: What is Absinthe?](#)

[BBC: Absinthe: How the Green Fairy became literature's drink](#)

[Stash Movies: The Green Fairy | Absinthe Documentary](#)



Thomas Hardy's Ale

Today's tipple wasn't actually available at the time this author lived. Instead it was created in his memory.

*It was of the most beautiful colour that the eye of an artist in beer could desire; full in body, yet brisk as a volcano; piquant, yet without a twang; luminous as an autumn sunset; free from streakiness of taste, but, finally, rather heady.” – Thomas Hardy, *The Trumpet Major**

Thomas Hardy's Ale, a beer that has become a legend in the world of brewing, was first crafted in 1968 by the [Eldridge Pope Brewery](#) in Dorchester, England. This ale was no ordinary brew; it was a rich, strong ale, inspired by a reference in Thomas Hardy's 1880 novel *The Trumpet-Major*, where he describes a beer that could last “until it was old enough to vote.”

This beer was originally brewed to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Hardy's death, and the brewery's aim was to craft a beer that could be aged, much like fine wine, developing complexity and depth over time. With an alcohol content that often exceeded 12%, Thomas Hardy's Ale was a potent brew, renowned for its rich maltiness, fruity notes, and sherry-like character.

Each bottle of the original 1968 brew was individually numbered and sealed with a cork, further enhancing its status as a collector's item. The beer quickly gained a reputation for its ability to age gracefully, with some enthusiasts cellaring bottles for decades.

Eldridge Pope continued to produce Thomas Hardy's Ale until 1999 before shutting its doors the following year. During this period, the ale became a symbol of the brewery's craftsmanship and dedication to traditional brewing techniques. After the closure of Eldridge Pope, the beer's future was uncertain,



but it [found new life](#) and a 50th Anniversary “Golden Edition” was produced in 2018. Today, Thomas Hardy’s Ale remains a sought-after brew for connoisseurs, celebrated for its rich history, complex flavour, and the sense of timelessness it embodies, and the bottles have become collector’s items.

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Eldridge Pope Brewery](#)

[The Trumpet-Major by Thomas Hardy](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Thomas Hardy is born](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Thomas Hardy marries for the second time](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Thomas Hardy dies](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: *Beyond the Last Lamp* by Thomas Hardy](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: *When I set out for Lyonesse* by Thomas Hardy](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: *In Church* by Thomas Hardy](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: *The Ruined Maid* by Thomas Hardy](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Thomas Hardy’s Women](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: *Thomas Hardy: Novelist and Poet*](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Unpopular 19th Century Novels that Became Classics](#)

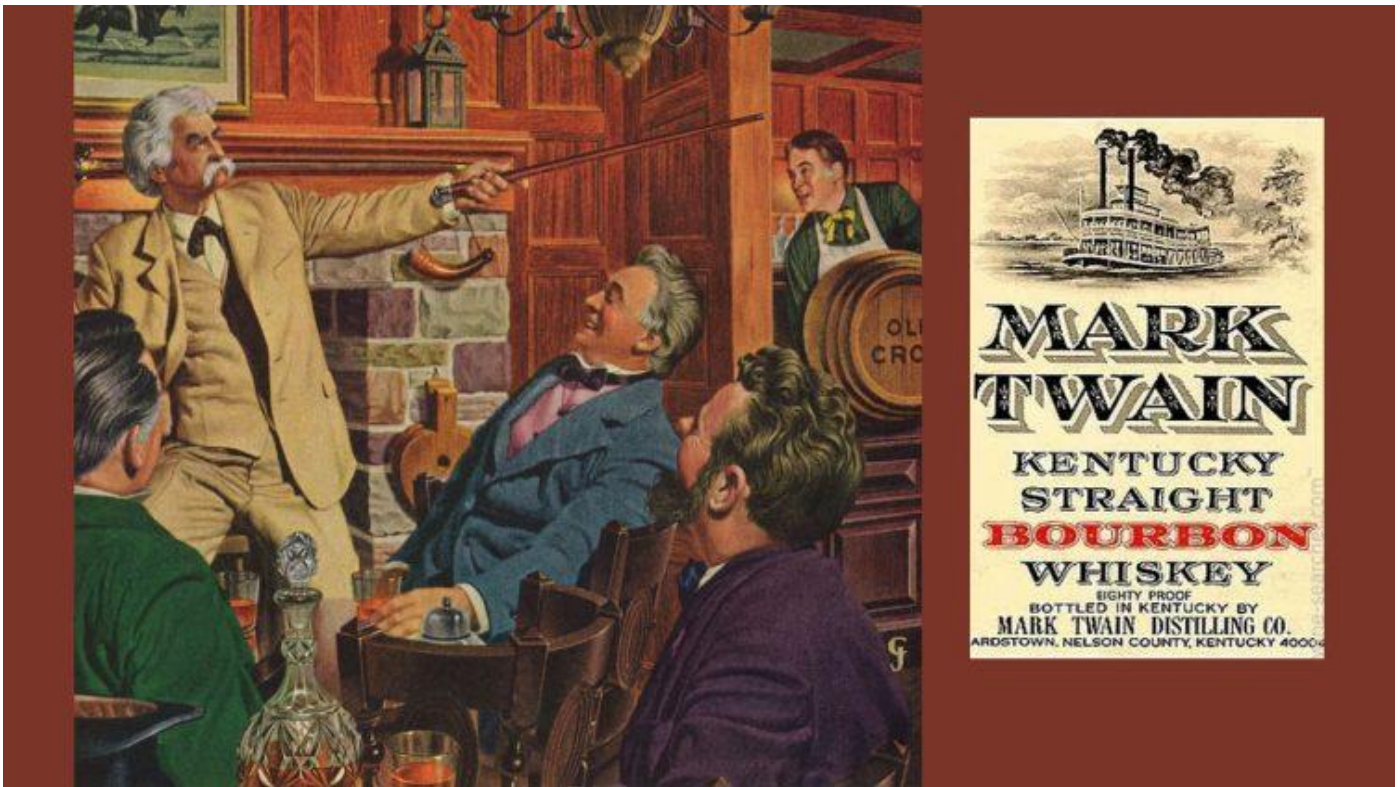
[Susannah Fullerton: Literary Readers Guide to *Far From the Madding Crowd* by Thomas Hardy](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Video Talk – *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy](#)

[Hardy Society](#)

[Hardy’s World](#)

[Poetry Foundation: Thomas Hardy](#)



Mark Twain Bourbon

Here are some quotes from Mark Twain. Can you detect a theme?

Never refuse to do a kindness unless the act would work great injury to yourself, and never refuse to take a drink – under any circumstances.” – Mark Twain

Too much of anything is bad, but too much good whiskey is barely enough.” – Mark Twain

I always take Scotch whiskey at night as a preventive of toothache. I have never had the toothache; and what is more, I never intend to have it.” – Mark Twain

Mark Twain, renowned American author and humourist was known to enjoy whiskey and cigars. His writings often reflect his humorous and sometimes irreverent attitude towards these indulgences, and he once said, “If I cannot drink bourbon and smoke cigars in heaven, I shall not go.”

Old Crow whisky from Kentucky was said to be Twain’s favourite drink. He visited the distillery in the 1880s, and Old Crow advertised this heavily. By the early 1950s, Old Crow were capitalizing on Twain’s fondness for their whiskey in their magazine ads. A number of Old Crow ads appeared featuring Twain, including one with Rudyard Kipling reading to Twain at Quarry Farm.

Sometimes too much to drink is barely enough.” – Mark Twain

‘Livy my darling, I want you to be sure & remember to have, in the bathroom, when I arrive, a bottle of Scotch whisky, a lemon, some crushed sugar, and a bottle of Angostura bitters. Ever since I have been in London I have taken in a wine glass what is called a cock-tail (made with these ingredients) before breakfast, before dinner and before going to bed... To it I attribute the fact that up to this day my digestion has been wonderful – simply perfect. It remains day after day and week after week as regular as a clock.” – Mark Twain



Today the 'Mark Twain Straight Bourbon Whiskey' is distilled at the Heavens Hill Distillery and bottled at Mark Twain Distilling Co. The bourbon has an alcohol strength of 40%.

And, one last quote...

Water, taken in moderation, cannot hurt anybody." – Mark Twain

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Mark Twain and American Whiskey](#)

[Mark Twain, Mad Magazine, & Old Crow Whiskey](#)

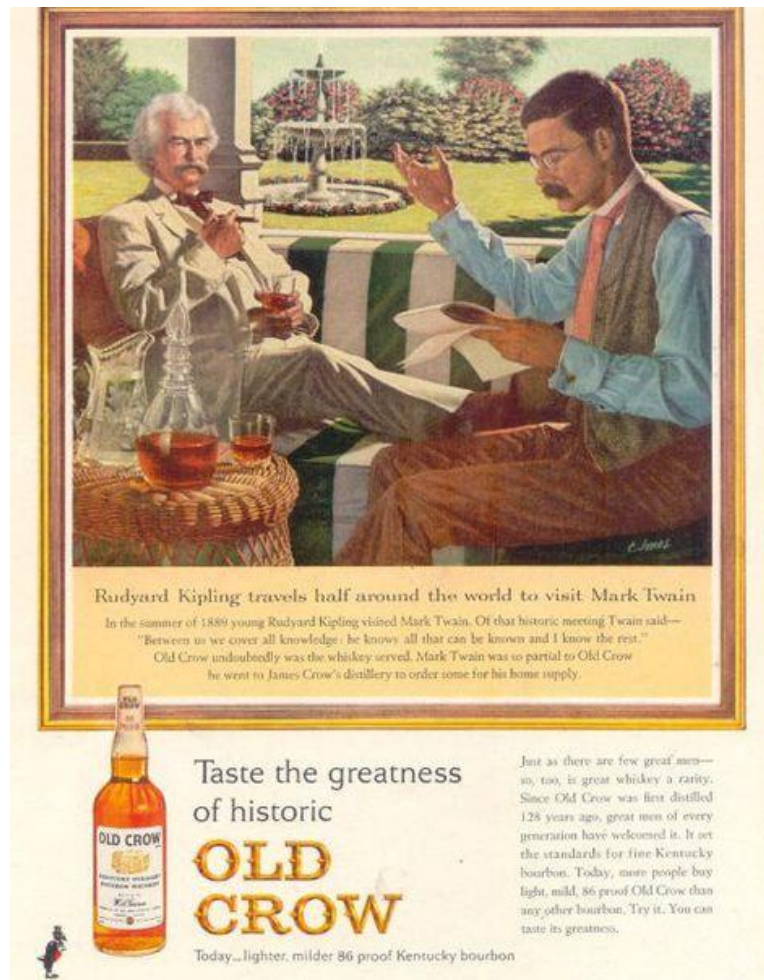
[official Mark Twain website](#)

[The Mark Twain House and Museum](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Mark Twain is created](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Twain and Trollope in Oz](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Brief Encounters, Literary Travellers to Australia](#)



Rudyard Kipling travels half around the world to visit Mark Twain

In the summer of 1889 young Rudyard Kipling visited Mark Twain. Of that historic meeting Twain said—
"Between us we cover all knowledge; he knows all that can be known and I know the rest."
Old Crow undoubtedly was the whiskey served. Mark Twain was so partial to Old Crow
he went to James Crow's distillery to order some for his home supply.

Taste the greatness
of historic
**OLD
CROW**

Today...lighter, milder 86 proof Kentucky bourbon

Just as there are few great men—
so, too, is great whiskey a rarity.
Since Old Crow was first distilled
128 years ago, great men of every
generation have welcomed it. It set
the standards for fine Kentucky
bourbon. Today, more people buy
light, mild, 86 proof Old Crow than
any other bourbon. Try it. You can
taste its greatness.



Dorothy Parker Gin

Today we share a drink with a woman who deplored her reputation as a “wisecracker”.

[Dorothy Parker](#), the sharp-tongued wit of the Jazz Age, stood out as a sensation in an era teeming with talent. She was a poet, essayist, and short story writer, renowned for her razor-sharp quips.

A true New Yorker, Dorothy was a founding member of the legendary [Algonquin Round Table](#) – as much a fixture as the cocktails served there. Amidst the laughter, clever repartee, and the clinking of glasses, her love for both the written word and a well-mixed drink intertwined, and her national fame blossomed. The image of Parker with a gin cocktail in hand has become an emblem of her unconventional spirit.

Dorothy Parker would have been the ultimate drinking companion, and her love for sharing drinks with friends suggests she would have been delighted to have a gin named in her honour. [Dorothy Parker American Gin](#), crafted by the New York Distilling Company, offers a blend of traditional and contemporary botanicals which is used in [this recipe](#).

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[BBC: Dorothy Parker's stunning wit and tragic life](#)
[The Dorothy Parker Society](#)
[Gin Magazine: NYDC's Dorothy Parker Ginn](#)
[Susannah Fullerton: Dorothy Parker & *One Perfect Rose*](#)
[Susannah Fullerton: Literary Hotels – The Algonquin](#)



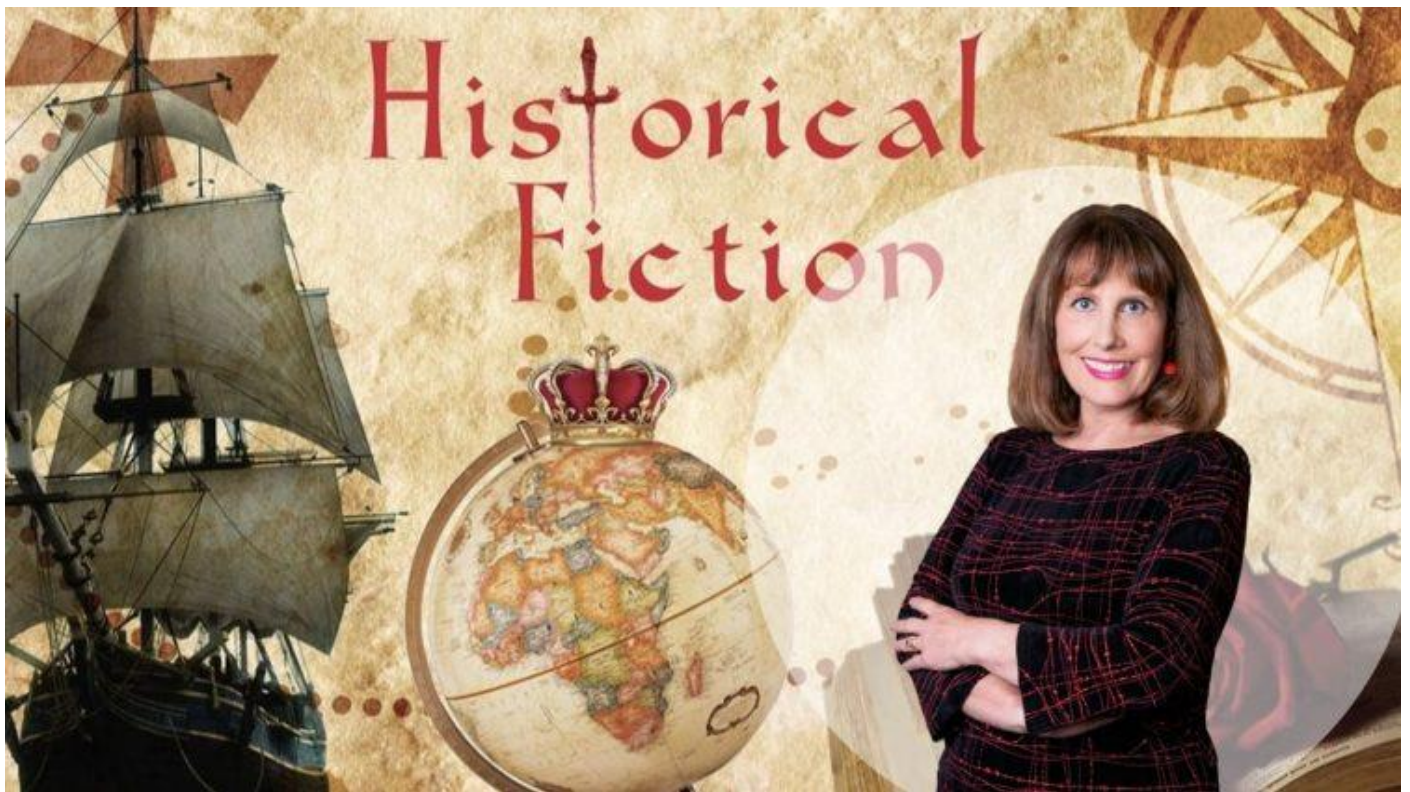
Books with a Beverage



Books with a Beverage

1Bring your favourite tippie to an exclusive Zoom rendezvous to chat about something bookish at that most enchanting time of day – happy hour.

Exclusive free zoom talks just for Gold Class Book Addicts. From time to time, we'll have our own little online get together at happy hour when we'll chat about something bookish.



The Historical Novel, a book chat

Who wrote the first historical novel? Gold Class book addicts met recently to chat about historical novels and share our favourite titles. We discussed how the genre is defined, what sub-genres have grown from it, the history of historical fiction and our favourite authors. I've collected a great reading list from members' recommendations which is shared here.

Pour a refreshing beverage and prepare to step back in time to listen to a chat about favourite historical novels. How many of these have you read? Watch the video here: <https://youtu.be/qtY1uZoHQjE>

This reading list is comprised of books recommended by participants in this online chat. I have not read all of these books myself – but hope to do so soon! Hope you'll find at least one that interests you.

[*The Cottingley Secret* by Hazel Gaynor](#)

[*Hamnet* by Maggie O'Farrell](#)

[*Elizabeth and Elizabeth* by Sue Williams](#)

[*That Bligh Girl* by Sue Williams](#)

[*The Fair Botanists* by Sara Sheridan](#)

[*Katherine* by Anya Seton](#)

[*Wanting* by Richard Flanagan](#)

[*The Dictionary of Lost Words* by Pip Williams](#)

[*The Bookbinder of Jericho* by Pip Williams](#)

[Pip Williams hand-binding a copy of *The Bookbinder of Jericho*](#)

[*The Dovekeepers* by Alice Hoffman](#)

[*The Invisible Hour* by Alice Hoffman](#)

[*Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift](#)

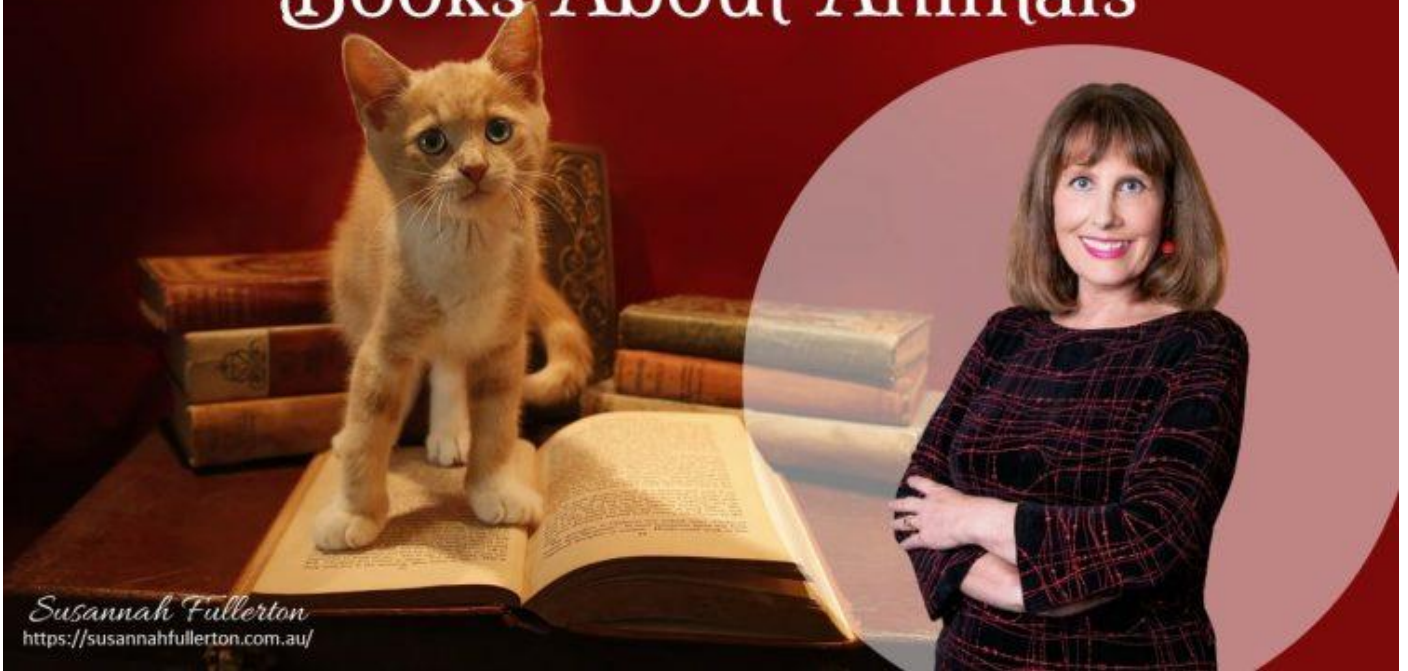
[*Gulliver's Wife* by Lauren Chater](#)

[books by Kate Forsythe](#)

[*The Birdman's Wife* by Melissa Ashley](#)

[*Galileo's Daughter* by Dava Sobel](#)

Books About Animals



Books About Animals, a book chat

In 1877 Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* was published and is still one of the best-selling books of all time. With a horse as narrator it broke new ground, and also taught young readers about treating animals with kindness. It was the forerunner of the thousands of pony club books available today. Many other wonderful books that feature animals as the main characters have followed – Beatrix Potter's classic tales for children, *Animal Farm*, *The Incredible Journey*, *Lassie Come Home*, *Watership Down* are just a few examples.

In a recent Zoom discussion, I shared a few of my favourite books that feature animals, Cheryl discussed a book about a well-travelled cat, and others in the room recommended their best-loved books about animals. It was such an interesting discussion! You'll see the book list below created from everyone's suggestions. There are enough books here to topple your to-read pile!

Pour yourself a refreshing beverage, get comfy and listen to our discussion about animal books. Watch the video here: https://youtu.be/d_ww0_Rofj4

This reading list is comprised of books recommended by participants in this online chat. I have not read all of these books myself – but hope to do so soon! Hope you'll find at least one that interests you.

[Susannah Fullerton: *Black Beauty*](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* is published](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Paul Gallico dies](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: *Charlotte's Web* is published](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: *Remarkably Bright Creatures*](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Cats in Books](#)

[Black Beauty by Anna Sewell](#)

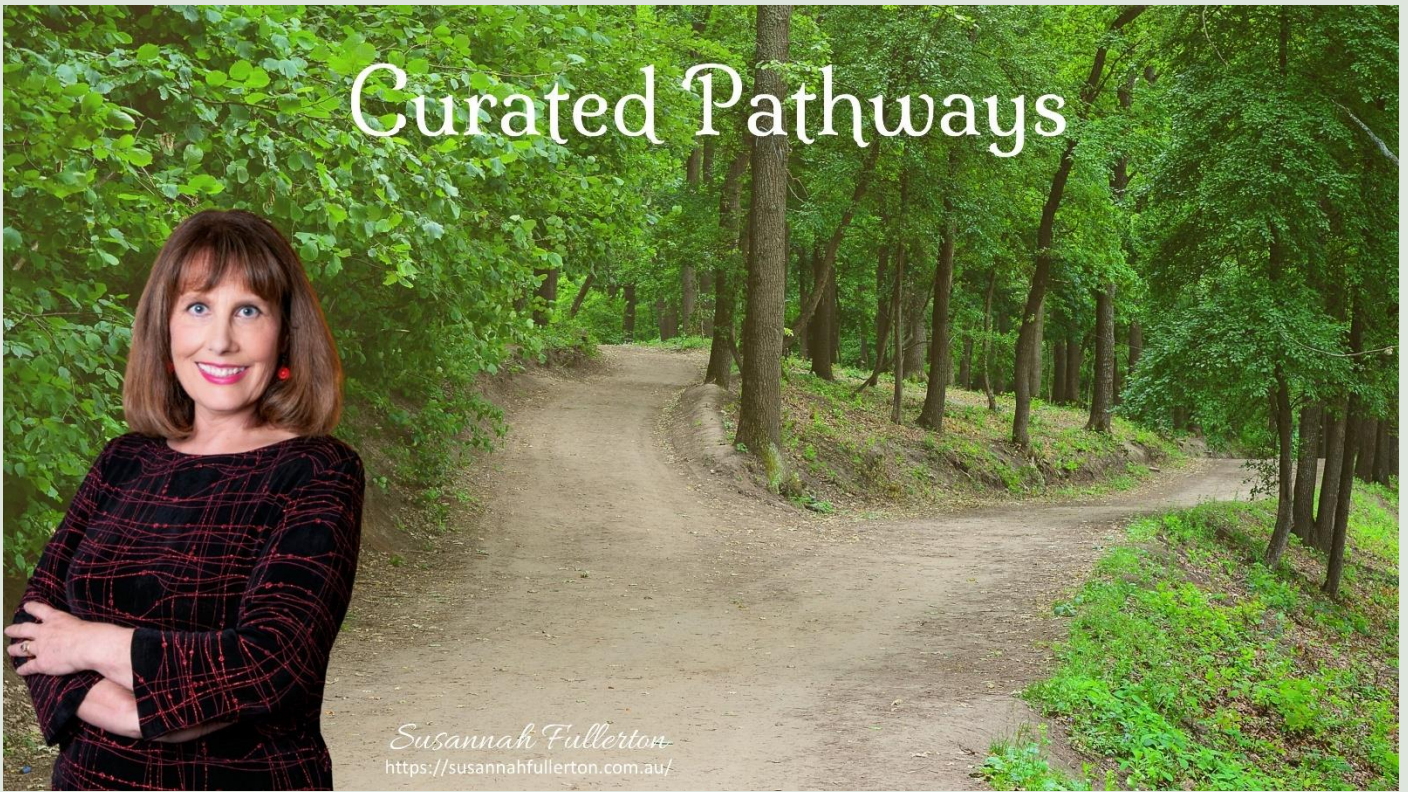
[Peter Rabbit by Beatrix Potter](#)

[The Call of the Wild & White Fang by Jack London](#)

[The Wind in the Willows by Kenneth Grahame](#)

[Lassie Come Home by Eric Knight](#)

The Half-Brothers by Elizabeth Gaskell
The Incredible Journey by Sheila Burnford
Jennie by Paul Gallico
Charlotte's Web by E.B. White
Watership Down by David Adams
Fantastic Mr Fox by Roald Dahl
Three Bags Full by Leonie Swann
The Cat Who Sniffed Glue by Lilian Jackson Braun
Remarkably Bright Creatures by Shelby Van Pelt
The Travelling Cat Chronicles by Hiro Arikawa
Peter Rabbit books by Beatrix Potter
The Call of the Wild by Jack London
White Fang by Jack London
The Wind in the Willows by Kenneth Grahame
Lassie Come Home by Eric Knight
The Half-Brothers by Elizabeth Gaskell
The Incredible Journey by Sheila Burnford
Trim, The Cartographer's Cat by Matthew Flinders, Gillian Dooley, Philippa Sandall
The Silent Meow by Paul Gallico
A Cat in the Window by Derek Tangye
My Friend Flicka by Mary O'Hara
Listening to the Animals by Noel Fitzpatrick
A Little Bush Maid by Mary Grant Bruce
Runt by Craig Silvey
Horse by Geraldine Brooks
The Life and Opinions of Maf the Dog by Andrew O'Hagan
The Dalai Lama's Cat by David Michie
A Street Cat Named Bob by James Bowen
Cold Coast by Robyn Mundy
Once There Were Wolves by Charlotte McConaghy
The Last Migration by Charlotte McConaghy
Animal Farm by George Orwell



Curated Pathways

I've curated a collection of online sites, videos, presentations and more that promise to inform, inspire, and engage your curiosity. What are the literary world's curiosities, outstanding people or books and where can you find out more about them online?

Here are some interesting places to start.



Jane Austen's *Emma*

It won't be news to you that I believe Jane Austen's, *Emma* to be "the greatest novel the world has ever known." (You'll hear these very words in my Art Gallery link.) Here are some of my links to content about this iconic piece of literature. Please note that these links may contain archived stories, so references to promotions or events in them have all expired and are not current.

Emma at the State Library of New South Wales

In May 2018, I was fortunate enough to be asked to host an event at the [State Library of New South Wales](#) to celebrate the Library's acquisition of a first edition copy of *Emma*. I couldn't believe my good fortune in being able to handle and look closely at this incredible book – see the photo above. In the attached excerpt from the Jane Austen Society of Australia's [Chronicle](#) magazine, Maggie Patton, Manager of Research and Discovery, discusses the publication history of Austen's novels, and the provenance of the Library's extremely important acquisition.

[Susannah Fullerton: Emma at the State Library of New South Wales](#)

Lecture podcast, Art Gallery of NSW

Several years ago I presented a series of lectures at the [Art Gallery of NSW](#). This link is an audio recording of my talk, 'Jane Austen's *Emma*', which runs for about 100 minutes. Listen for free here.

[Susannah Fullerton: Jane Austen's Emma](#)

A small incident with big impact

In this article, I write about the encounter Harriet Smith and her school friend Miss Bickerton have with gypsies — such a small incident in the novel, and yet it achieves so much. Published in 2016 by [Sarah Emsley](#) in her blog series marking the 200th anniversary year of *Emma*.

[Susannah Fullerton: The Gypsies in Emma](#)

ABC Nightlife: The enduring legacy of Jane Austen

Jane Austen's brilliant satire of the morals and manners of 18th century England has withstood the test of time, with books such as *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* providing inspiration for an endless stream of bonnet dramas and modern interpretations. Susannah Fullerton from the Jane Austen Society of Australia, and Margot Riley from the State Library of New South Wales talk fans, flirting, manners and majesty with Sarah Macdonald.

[ABC Nightlife: The enduring legacy of Jane Austen](#)

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Emma by Jane Austen](#)

[Emma by Jane Austen](#)

[Emma by Jane Austen, narrated by Elizabeth Klett](#)

[Streaming Guide from JustWatch: Emma various versions](#)

[YouTube playlist featuring the 1972 BBC TV Movie adaptation](#)

[Emma. \(2020\) Official Trailer](#)

[Streaming Musicals: Emma The Musical](#)



To be or not to be ...

The phrase “To be or not to be” is the opening line of one of the most famous soliloquies in William Shakespeare’s play *Hamlet*. In what is, quite possibly the most famous speech in literature, Hamlet contemplates the nature of existence and the human condition. The soliloquy, from Act 3, Scene 1, begins as follows:

*To be or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And, by opposing, end them.*

You can read [the rest of the soliloquy here](#).

Hamlet is grappling with profound philosophical and existential questions. He is contemplating whether it is better to endure the suffering and challenges that life presents (to be), or to end one’s own existence (not to be). Hamlet is torn between these two options, and he is reflecting on the idea of suicide as a way to escape the difficulties and pain of life.

This monologue explores themes of life, death, suffering, and the unknown, that run throughout the play. It is a reflection of Hamlet’s inner turmoil and his struggle to make sense of the world around him. The soliloquy is often quoted and studied for its deep philosophical and psychological insights into the human condition.

Did you know?

Some ‘To be or not to be’ trivia.

1. The opening line of this soliloquy is [the most searched-for Shakespeare quote](#) on the internet – many times more than all other *Hamlet* quotes.
2. Prince Hamlet has [358 speeches](#) – the most of any Shakespearean character.

3. *Hamlet* is Shakespeare's longest and [most critically acclaimed play](#). It has been produced more than any play in world history and it has been calculated that a performance begins somewhere in the world every minute of every day.
4. The castle, Elsinore, where 'To be or not to be' is spoken, really exists. It is called [Kronborg Castle](#) and is in the Danish port of Helsingør. It was built in 1423 by the Danish king, [Eric of Pomerania](#).
5. The first actor to perform the 'To be or not to be' soliloquy was [Richard Burbage](#) (1567-1619), the famous Elizabethan tragic actor, for whom Shakespeare wrote most of his tragic roles.
6. It is frequently said that the storyline of [Disney's *The Lion King*](#) is based on *Hamlet*. While this is [not entirely accurate](#), the similarities are undeniable.
7. The two most iconic moments in the play — the Act III, scene 1 'To be or not to be' speech and the Act V, scene 1 image of Hamlet contemplating a skull — are often linked when the play is remembered, but [the two moments occur in different acts](#) of the play.

Let's View

Some performances of the soliloquy I think you might enjoy, and Dame Judi Dench makes an interesting discovery.

1948 Olivier To Be or Not to Be <https://youtu.be/MiWf4l6bOcA>

Hamlet "To be or not to be" – Richard Burton (1964) <https://youtu.be/lSrOXAY1arg>

"To Be or Not To Be" Unsolicited Advice <https://youtu.be/34ykFlfn1X4>

Rowan Atkinson & Hugh Laurie – Shakespeare and Hamlet (1989) <https://dai.ly/x33wjt3>

Dame Judi Dench's connection to Shakespeare – BBC <https://youtu.be/HzbVOc1LkfU>

Sesame Street: Patrick Stewart Soliloquy on B <https://youtu.be/hA7lv1SDzno>

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Susannah Fullerton: William Shakespeare](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Happy Birthday, William Shakespeare](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: William Shakespeare marries](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: William Shakespeare dies](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: *King Lear* is performed for the first time](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: First performance of *Macbeth* \(perhaps\)](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: April 1616 was a Seriously Bad Month](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Death by Shakespeare](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: The Globe Theatre is destroyed](#)

[Shakespeare's First Folio](#)

[Open Source Shakespeare](#)

[Mr. William Shakespeares comedies, histories, tragedies by William Shakespeare](#)

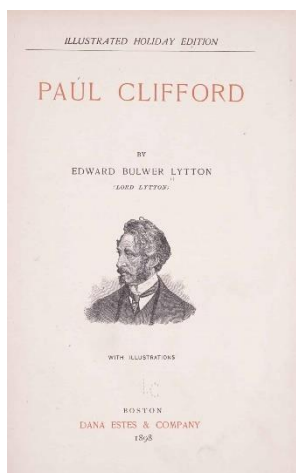
[Project Gutenberg: Shakespeare's First Folio by William Shakespeare](#)



“It was a dark and stormy night”

“It was a dark and stormy night” is the quintessential opening purported to be found in gothic novels and ghost stories. Overused and mocked, it is humorously associated with poor, melodramatic writing and you will have seen it a million times. So, when did it first appear?

Origin



“It was a dark and stormy night”, is often traced back to a novel written in the 19th century. English novelist, playwright, and politician [Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton](#) used the line to open his 1830 book, [Paul Clifford](#). The full opening sentence reads:

“It was a dark and stormy night; the rain fell in torrents—except at occasional intervals, when it was checked by a violent gust of wind which swept up the streets (for it is in London that our scene lies), rattling along the housetops, and fiercely agitating the scanty flame of the lamps that struggled against the darkness.”

Although the phrase had been in existence before Bulwer-Lytton used it in his book, it is his melodramatic usage to begin his 58-word sentence that has turned it into a shorthand for bad, clichéd writing. *Paul Clifford* tells the story of a young man who leads a double life as a both a gentleman and a highwayman. The book was successful upon its release and a popular book in its time but is now only

remembered for its opening.

Elsewhere

These words can also be found in the 1757 journal of the shipwrecked [East Indiaman, *Doddington*](#), which was eagerly read throughout England, and Washington Irving included it in his 1809 satirical book, [Knickerbocker's *History of New York*](#). More recently, Madeleine L'Engle used it in her young adult science fantasy novel, [A Wrinkle in Time](#), first published in 1962.

[Charles M. Schulz](#), the creator of the [Peanuts](#) comic strip, famously incorporated this phrase in a humorous and self-referencing way through his character Snoopy, who, perched on top of his doghouse with a typewriter, imagines himself to be a writer.

Snoopy's manuscript begins with the line, "It was a dark and stormy night." Over the years, and through the course of many strips, Snoopy's manuscript eventually becomes [his magnum opus](#), a story that brilliantly captures the tone of every bad piece of writing in existence.

You can browse [Peanuts](#) comic strips at GoComics and here are [Snoopy's "It was a dark and stormy night"](#) strips. Enjoy the unique humour of Charles Schulz.

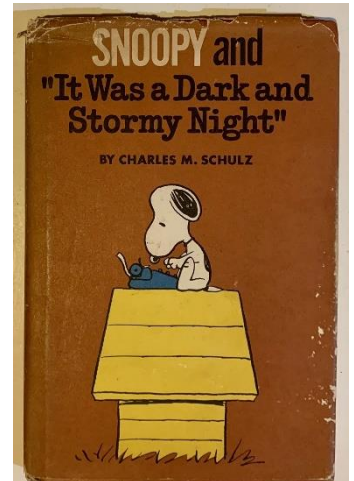
In 1971, Schulz published a book compiling these Snoopy writing strips named [Snoopy and "It was a dark and stormy night"](#). It's out of print but you can get a used edition.

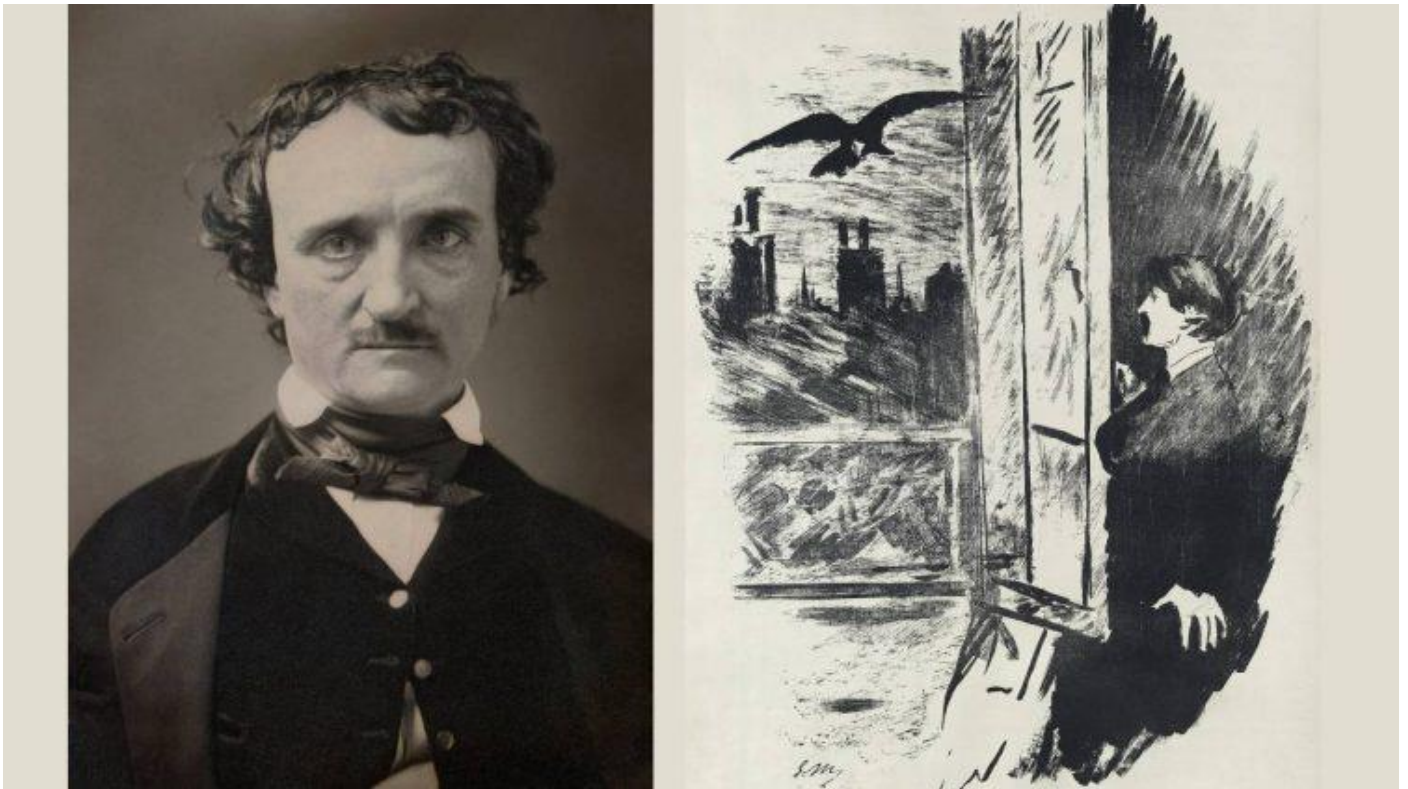
You can read a compilation [Snoopy's "Dark and Stormy Night" manuscripts at this site](#) and decide for yourself whether you think it is some of the world's worst fiction.

"It was a dark and stormy night" [has been described](#) as "the archetypal example of a florid, melodramatic style of fiction writing".

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

- [Paul Clifford by Edward Bulwer-Lytton](#)
- [Gutenberg: Paul Clifford by Edward Bulwer-Lytton](#)
- [Edward Bulwer-Lytton](#)
- [books by Charles M. Schulz](#)
- [Charles M. Schulz Museum](#)
- [GeoComics: Peanuts](#)
- [The World's Shortest Novel?](#)





Legacy of *The Raven*

The Raven by [Edgar Allan Poe](#), first published on [29 January 1845](#), is one of the most well-known and influential poems in literature.

Poe's exploration of the human mind, particularly its darker aspects, resonated with both readers and critics. The poem explores themes of grief and loss as it tells of a raven's appearance and repeated utterance of the word "Nevermore" which drives the author to madness.

The Raven was an instant success. Its popularity grew, and it became one of Poe's most famous works. It has been translated into many languages and adapted into plays, films, operas, songs, and comics. Today *The Raven* is considered a classic and is studied in schools and universities. This popularity, of course, has led to countless readings, retellings, parodies and tall tales. Here is a small sample for you to enjoy.



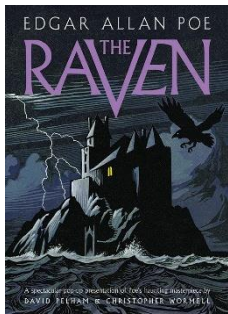
[Gustave Doré](#) was one of the busiest, most in-demand artists of the 19th century. He made his name illustrating works by authors such as Rabelais, Balzac, Milton and Dante. Just before his death in 1883, he produced 26 steel engravings for an illustrated edition of *The Raven*. Have a [look at these amazing illustrations here](#).

<https://poestories.com/gallery/the-raven-dore>



In 1875 poet, [Stéphane Mallarmé](#), translated *The Raven* into French. Mallarmé's friend, Édouard Manet (who later became a famous painter) created illustrations. Sadly, the New York Public Library reports, "the publication was not a commercial success." Read [The Raven here in a dual language](#) edition, with all the original illustrations.

<https://poestories.com/gallery/the-raven-dore>



The Raven: a Pop-up Book, was created by illustrator Christopher Wormell and paper engineer David Pelham. They adapted Poe's work into this unexpected format. Sadly it appears to be out of print, but you can [see it in this video](#).

<https://youtu.be/oExppcd0TOU>

Soon after *The Raven* was published it proved to be imitable. People began using its form and scenario for their own ends – comic, satiric, or serious. The website, [Quaint and Curious](#) has collated an impressive list of parodies and pastiches of *The Raven* from the 19th century. [Read them here](#), and enjoy.



<https://www.murrayewing.co.uk/raven/index.php>

Actor [Vincent Price](#) (who died back in 1993) proved his versatility throughout his long career, but history has remembered him first and foremost for his work in the horror genre, no doubt thanks in large part due to his voice which is perfectly suited to the elegantly sinister. Enjoy his rendition of the poem (poor picture quality, but oh, his voice!): <https://youtu.be/znOfeel26Y0>

With an authoritative voice and calm demeanour, multi award-winning actor, Morgan Freeman reads a haunting version of the poem: <https://youtu.be/krrZ2IV7n6Y>

Iconic horror actor [Christopher Lee](#), who passed away in 2015, played Dracula, Saruman, and Count Dooku among other roles and was famous for his deep and theatrical voice. In this video, enjoy his reading of Poe's classic poem. <https://youtu.be/MyxsPHWSxly>

In 1909 director D.W. Griffith and cinematographer Billy Bitzer released a seven-minute silent short film named *Edgar Allan Poe*. It depicts Poe composing *The Raven* even as his wife lies dying of tuberculosis. In real life, the young Virginia Eliza Poe passed away two years after the poem's publication, but D.W. Griffith, like a true craftsman of his medium, knew the potential for extra drama when he saw it.

https://archive.org/details/EdgarAllanPoe_201411

Do you remember the 1960's TV series [The Addams Family](#)? It's fitting that the head of this unique family would have a lifelong obsession with Edgar Allan Poe. John Astin was the first actor to bring the fictional character [Gomez Addams](#) to life. <https://youtu.be/ACUxJ6fq2IY>

In this video, humourist [Jordan Monsell](#) has created a solo, but vocally collaborative reading of *The Raven* in 100 different celebrity, and mostly human, voices. https://youtu.be/wfg_IHzA6WI

In 1990, [The Simpsons](#) adapted *The Raven*. Read by James Earl Jones, the poem remains more or less intact, with Homer Simpson as the narrator. Marge makes an appearance as the long departed Lenore, with hair so tall it needs an extra canvas to contain it in a portrait. Maggie and Lisa are the seraphim and Bart, of course, is the annoying raven that drives Homer insane. Enjoy this treasure: <https://youtu.be/bLiXjaPqSyY>

British Rock Band, [The Alan Parsons Project](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YA1XTvKLXA) recorded a rock version of *The Raven* in 1976 as a tribute to the author. It is an almost verbatim recital of the lyrics of the poem and is credited to be the first rock song to feature a digital [vocoder](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YA1XTvKLXA) to distort vocals. <https://youtu.be/YAE1XTvKLXA>

Visual interpretations of the poem abound ...



Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Poetry Foundation: *The Raven*](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43543/the-raven)

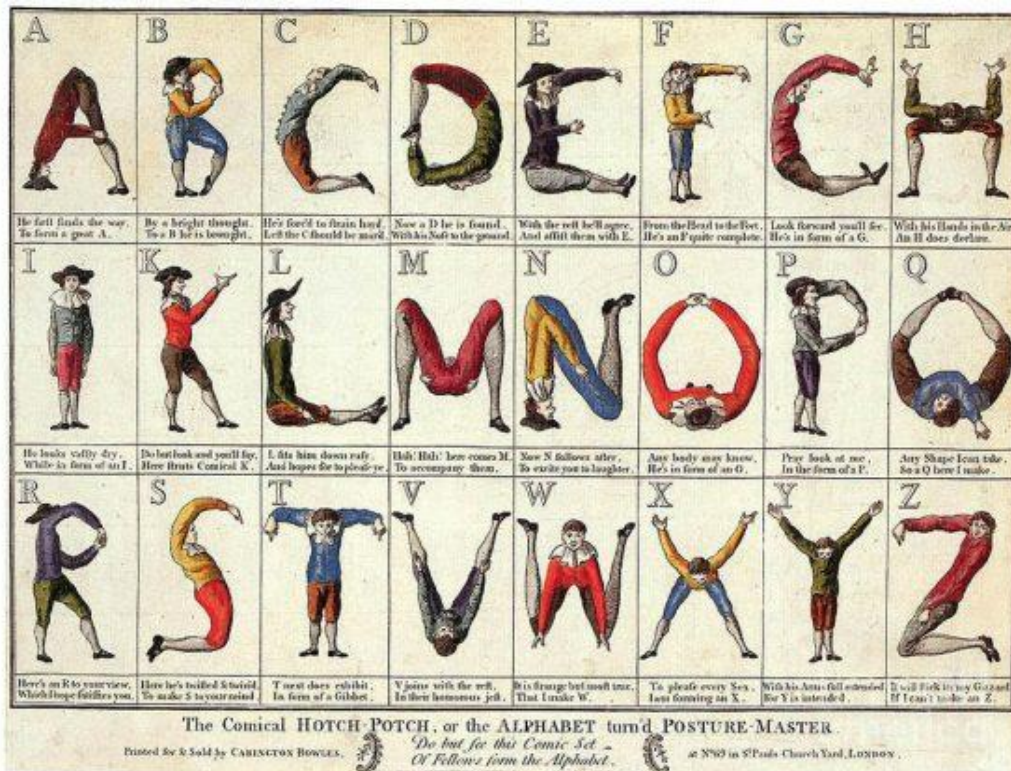
[Susannah Fullerton: Edgar Allan Poe is born](https://www.susannahfullerton.com.au/edgar-allan-poe-is-born)

[Susannah Fullerton: Edgar Allan Poe marries Virginia Clemm](https://www.susannahfullerton.com.au/edgar-allan-poe-marries-virginia-clemm)

[Susannah Fullerton: Book Addict Admires a Literary Statue – Edgar Allan Poe](https://www.susannahfullerton.com.au/book-addict-admires-a-literary-statue-edgar-allan-poe)

[Edgar Allan Poe National Historic Site](https://www.edgarallanpoe.org/)

[The Poe Museum](https://www.edgarallanpoe.org/)



What is a Lipogram?

Do you know what a lipogram is? The image above might give you a hint if you look closely. Cheryl has been investigating.

This literary device must be unbelievably hard to use, and the examples I've found are very interesting to read and study. I've included a couple of books that I haven't read yet, so some information here is based on research, but there are plenty of links for you to [check for yourself](#). I'm keen to give them a try, though.

Poems by Gottlob Wilhelm Burmann

You probably haven't read any of [Gottlob Wilhelm Burmann's](#) poetry. Most people haven't. But this German Romantic poet isn't remembered for his poetry, he is actually best known for his obsessive dislike of the letter 'R'.

Burmann not only wrote 130 poems without using that letter, but he also omitted the letter 'R' from his daily conversation and refused to say his own last name for over for 17 years. How on earth would you be able to do that!

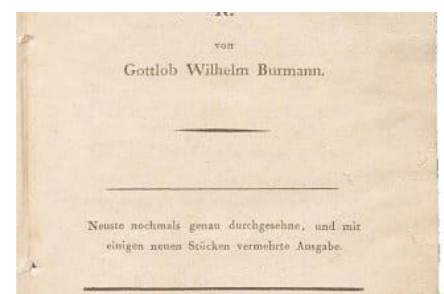
Click here to browse his 1796 book, [Some poems without the letter R](#).

It's written in German, but you'll be able to search for 'R's.

The Fate of Nassan

'E' is the most commonly used letter in the English language, typically taking first place regardless of which analysis method is used. This makes it pretty much indispensable when writing anything in English, French and other languages. Unless, of course, you are this anonymous poet.

The Fate of Nassan, dates from pre-1870, but who penned it is lost in the annals of history. In this extremely clever piece of writing, each stanza contains every letter of the entire alphabet...



The Fate of Nassan affords another example, each stanza containing the entire alphabet except *e*, and composed, as the writer says, with *ease* without *e*'s.

Bold Nassan quits his caravan,
A hazy mountain-grot to scan;
Climbs jaggy rocks to spy his way,
Doth tax his sight, but far doth stray.

Not work of man, nor sport of child,
Finds Nassan in that maze wild;
Lax grow his joints, limbs toil in vain—
Poor wight! why didst thou quit that plain?

Vainly for succor Nassan calls.
Know, Zillah, that thy Nassan falls:
But prowling wolf and fox may joy
To quarry on thy Arab boy.

... with one exception – the letter ‘e’ is completely absent. One thing we do know is that it was composed “with ease without E’s”.

*Bold Nassan quits his caravan,
A hazy mountain grot to scan;
Climbs jaggy rocks to find his way,
Doth tax his sight, but far doth stray.*

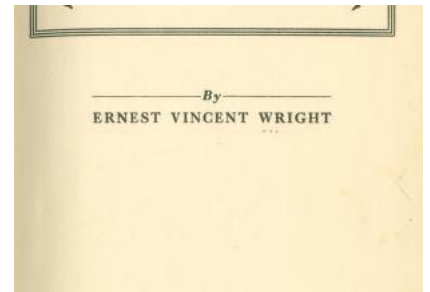
*Not work of man, nor sport of child
Finds Nassan on this mazy wild;
Lax grow his joints, limbs toil in vain—
Poor wight! why didst thou quit that plain?*

*Vainly for succour Nassan calls;
Know, Zillah, that thy Nassan falls;
But prowling wolf and fox may joy
To quarry on thy Arab boy.*

Gadsby

[Ernest Vincent Wright’s](#) novel, *Gadsby*, written in 1939, has over 50,000 words, but not one of them contains a single letter ‘E’.

Wright’s self-imposed rule prohibited such common English words as *the* and *he*, plurals ending in *-es*, past tenses ending in *-ed*, and even abbreviations like *Mr* (since it is short for Mister) or *Rob* (for Robert). Yet the narration flows fairly smoothly, and the book was praised by critics for its literary merits.



“The entire manuscript of this story was written with the E type-bar of the typewriter tied down; thus making it impossible for that letter to be printed. This was done so that none of that vowel might slip in, accidentally; and many did try to do so!” says [Wright in the introduction](#).

The full book is available in the [Public Domain](#), so you can easily read it online. Here is a small sample.

Upon this basis I am going to show you how a bunch of bright young folks did find a champion; a man with boys and girls of his own; a man of so dominating and happy individuality that Youth is drawn to him as is a fly to a sugar bowl. It is a story about a small town. It is not a gossipy yarn; nor is it a dry, monotonous account, full of such customary ‘fill-ins’ as ‘romantic moonlight casting murky shadows down a long, winding country road.’ Nor will it say anything about tinklings lulling distant folds; robins caroling at twilight, nor any ‘warm glow of lamplight’ from a cabin window. No. It is an account of up-and-doing activity; a vivid portrayal of Youth as it is today; and a practical discarding of that worn-out notion that ‘a child don’t know anything.’

The Wonderful O

The Wonderful O by [James Thurber](#) is the last of five fairy tales he wrote for children and was published in 1957. This is a book I’m yet to read myself, so I’ve included lots of [links](#).

In this book, the island of Ooroo was inhabited by gentle people who did not resist when pirates, unable to find a treasure of jewels, decided to get rid of all words with the letter ‘O’ in them. They demolish everything containing the letter – from [cellos and mandolins](#) to calico and clocks.



A man named Otto Ott, when asked his name, could only stutter, and lady Ophelia Oliver, when asked for her name, is forced to reply, ‘Feel Yer Liver’. Cnfunin and chas reigns.

The islanders decided that the words with ‘O’ must not be lost, three of the most important being “[Hope](#)” & “[Love](#)” & “[Valor](#).”

I’ll build you a better man of firmer flesh and all complete, from hairy head to metatarsal feet, using As and Is and Us and Es with muscular arms and flexible knees; eyes and ears and lids and lips, neck and chest and breast and hips;...

“It is such a fun book to read aloud, intelligent, witty, filled with not only Thurber’s wordplay but with his internal rhythm. I cannot recommend it enough,” reviews [The Mookse and the Gripes](#)

La Disparition

[La Disparition](#) (*The Disappearance*) is a novel by [Georges Perec](#), written in 1969. The entire 300-page novel completely omits the letter ‘E’ from this French language book.

An English translation titled, [A Void](#) written by [Gilbert Adair](#) was completed in 1995. Gilbert Adair’s translation – naturally – doesn’t have any ‘E’s in it either.

This book is lots of fun. The plot is full of wordplay, puzzles, and a mystery that needs solving. The missing ‘E’ as a structuring principle for the novel.

There are 26 chapters, well 25, once you notice that there is a blank page between the end of chapter 4 and the start of 6. Where is Chapter 5? Think about it for a moment. But wait, there’s more! The novel’s central character is a man named Anton Vowl, who, of course, goes missing. And what happens when a character is missing eggs, or is unable to remember his name because it needs ‘e’ in the spelling?

This masterful story, chock-full of plots and subplots, demonstrates the advanced literary skill of both Georges Perec and Gilbert Adair.

You can read a large number of [sample pages at Google Books](#).

Anu Garg of [A.Word.A.Day](#), writes: “Though it may be hard to believe considering the restriction under which it is written, the novel is said to be quite engrossing. Apparently, many reviewers were not even aware that a special constraint was used in writing it.”

Oh, and in case you haven’t already noticed, both the titles, *La Disparition* and *A Void* only have A, I, and O in them.

Ella Minnow Pea: A Novel in Letters

[Ella Minnow Pea](#) written in 2001 by Mark Dunn is an epistolary novel – one told through letters. Or is that letters?

Yes, a series of letters and notes sent between the various characters forms the structure of the novel, but there are so many more letters involved.

Set on the fictional island of Nollop, the island’s Council is banning the use of certain letters of the alphabet as they fall from a memorial statue. As letters disappear, the novel becomes more and more phonetically or creatively spelled, and the messages grow progressively quirkier and inventive. Alternatives begin to dominate such as “yesters” for “yesterday”, and “yellow sphere” for “sun”.

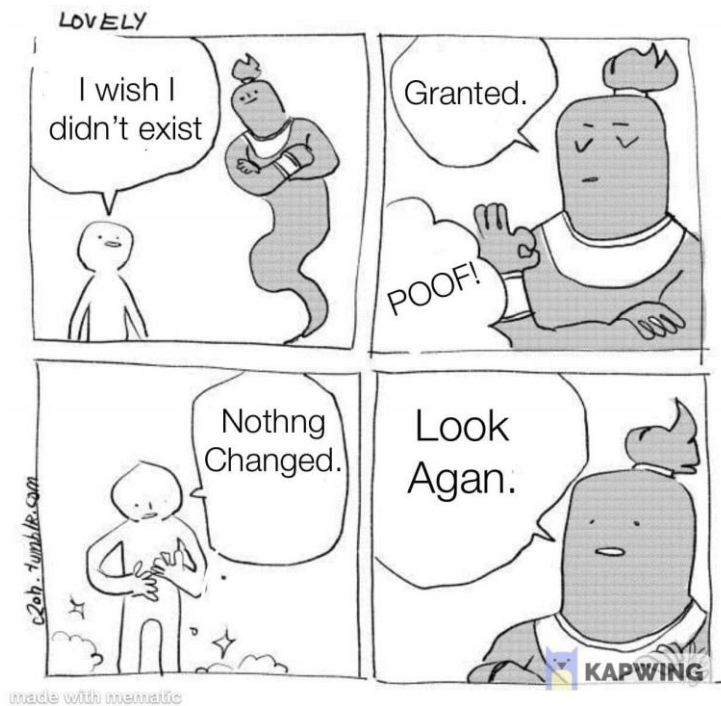
Ella Minnow Pea is reviewed as a [charming and clever fable](#) of unlikely design, full of anything but idle wordplay. Dunn has fashioned a real novel and the characters do come alive, even as the language is deadened. There’s suspense, love, and a great deal of affection for language and people.



This is the other book I've yet to read myself, but [reviews are good](#), and it is said to be a very enjoyable book, somewhere between a game and a political allegory, a testament to the beauty of language, and the importance of freedom of speech.

If you say the title of this book quickly, can you hear a series of letters in the alphabet?

What's missing?



Mary Had a Lipogram

Just to round things off, here is one last example from the GateWorld Forum. Enjoy the story of Mary, who had a ... lipogram.

[Mary Had a Lipogram by A. Ross Eckler](#)

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Gleanings for the curious from the harvest-fields of literature by Charles C Bombaugh](#) (page 28)

[Gadsby by Ernest Vincent Wright](#)

[The Wonderful O by James Thurber](#)

[A Void translated by Gilbert Adair](#)

[Ella Minnow Pea by Mark Dunn](#)

[Gleanings for the curious from the harvest-fields of literature by Charles C Bombaugh](#) (page 28)

[Gadsby by Ernest Vincent Wright](#)

[Google Books: A Void by Gilbert Adair](#)

[Gottlob Burmann](#)

[Georges Perec](#)

[Gilbert Adair](#)

[Ernest Vincent Wright](#)

[James Thurber](#)

[Mark Dunn](#)

[Wikipedia: *The Wonderful O*](#)

[The Mookse and the Gripes: *The Wonderful O*](#)

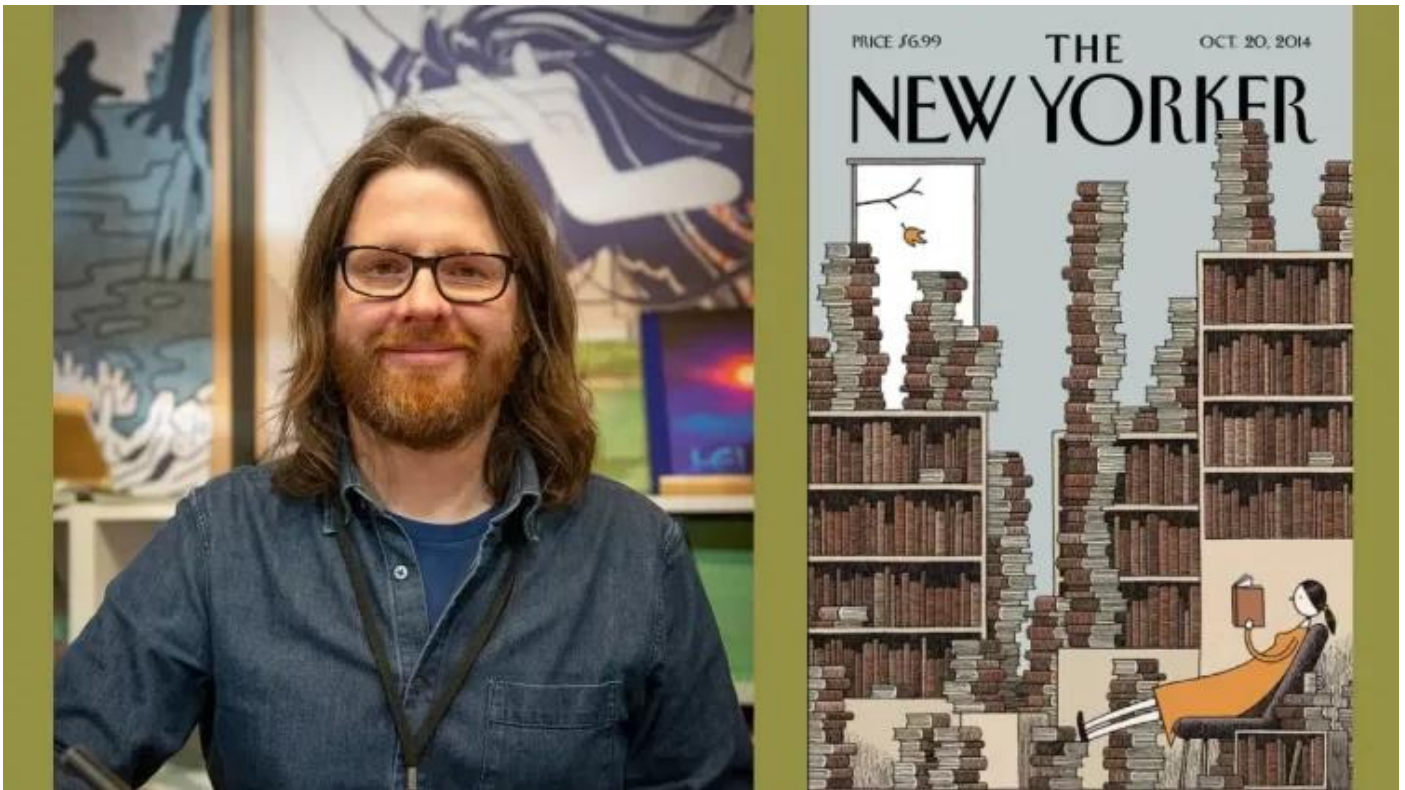
[Michigan Quarterly Review: However Obliquely: Georges Perec's *La Disparition*](#)

[A.Word.A.Day: lipogram](#)

[Wikipedia: *Ella Minnow Pea: A Novel in Letters*](#)

[Why *Ella Minnow Pea* is an Unlikely Perfect Dystopia](#)

[Ella Minnow Pea: A Novel in Letters](#)



Literary Wit and Whimsy

I bet you have seen the work of [Tom Gauld](#), but perhaps don't recognise his name. Gauld is a cartoonist who produces instantly recognisable work by his clever, clean drawings. He uses a blend of deadpan humour and sharp wit to take a playful poke at the literary world, and his cartoons and illustrations are regularly seen in publications such as *The New Yorker*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times* and *New Scientist*.

Gauld's work explores the human condition. His humour, while sharp, is never cruel, and his ability to marry the complex with the comical makes readers chuckle at life's small absurdities.

Born in Aberdeen in 1976, Gauld studied illustration at the Edinburgh College of Art and the Royal College of Art in London, a background that sharpened his distinctive style.

Books such as [Revenge of the Librarians](#) showcase his love for literary parody, cleverly poking fun at the intellectual world with his smart, often absurd punchlines.

Gauld's cartoons offer not just laughs, but also keen insights into our modern world. Enjoy his genius here: [Tom Gauld's cultural cartoons](#) and here: [Tom Gauld Instagram](#).

Does Tom Gauld's humour appeal to you? Do you own any of his books? Let me know by leaving a [comment](#).

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Official website: Tom Gauld](#)

[The Guardian: Tom Gauld](#)

[Revenge of the Librarians by Tom Gauld](#)

[Books by Tom Gauld](#)



Do you know Edward Bulwer-Lytton?

Do you know Edward Bulwer-Lytton? Even if you don't recognise the name, I'm sure you'll recognise his words.

[Edward Bulwer-Lytton](#) (1803–1873) was an English novelist, playwright, and politician, best remembered for his contributions to literature and popular culture. He was a prolific and versatile writer, producing works across various genres. His most famous novels include [Paul Clifford](#) (1830), [The Last Days of Pompeii](#) (1834), and [Zanoni](#) (1842).

Apart from his literary output, Bulwer-Lytton also had a significant career in politics. He served in Parliament and held the title of 1st Baron Lytton after being elevated to the peerage. During his political career, he became the Secretary of State for the Colonies and was responsible for overseeing Britain's colonies in a period of expansion.

While his books are not widely read today, Bulwer-Lytton did leave a [lasting literary mark](#). You'll recognise these phrases:

- “It was a dark and stormy night”
- “the pen is mightier than the sword”
- “the great unwashed”
- “pursuit of the almighty dollar”

Edward Bulwer-Lytton is one of those fascinating figures in literary history known for his lush, melodramatic writing and his significant role in shaping Victorian culture. While his reputation today may have its share of critics—after all, some see his style as overwrought and florid—there's no denying the lasting impact he had on the language we use. From his famous phrase, “The pen is mightier than the sword,” to the wittily condescending “the great unwashed,” his words have seeped into our everyday vocabulary.

And then, of course, there's the annual [Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest](#). It's hard not to smile at the idea: a competition to craft the worst possible opening sentence for a novel, all inspired by his notorious first line, “It was a dark and stormy night.” Despite the good-natured mockery, this contest is also a reminder of how deeply his influence continues.

Do you know Edward Bulwer-Lytton? Have you ever entered this fiction contest?

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[*Paul Clifford* by Edward Bulwer-Lytton](#)

[*The Last Days of Pompeii* by Edward Bulwer-Lytton](#)

[*Zanoni* by Edward Bulwer-Lytton](#)

[*Paul Clifford* by Edward Bulwer-Lytton](#)

[*The Last Days of Pompeii* by Edward Bulwer-Lytton](#)

[*Zanoni* by Edward Bulwer-Lytton](#)

[Quotes attributed to Edward Bulwer-Lytton](#)

[The Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest](#)



The Longest Books

I love getting stuck into a huge doorstopper of a book. Spying a monster volume of prose whets my appetite to lose myself in an epic tale. Thinking about this, I decided to check the web for lists of the longest novels written in, or translated into, the English language. As you'd expect, the debate starts with how to measure a book's length. Should it be by chapters, pages, words, or characters? Do illustrations count?

So, for this list, I've only considered single novels by one author (not a series of books or a collaboration), and they must have been written before the end of the 20th century. I've ranked them by word count since page numbers can vary greatly depending on how the book is printed. My list is far from exhaustive, and maybe not even accurate, so, as always with things like this, it allows room for debate and differing opinions. I give you my top ten:

1. *In Search of Lost Time* by Marcel Proust

- **Word Count:** Approximately 1.2 million words
- **Description:** This modernist masterpiece, originally published in French and first translated into English in 1922, is a complex narrative of memory, time, and society, spanning seven volumes. The novel has had a great influence on twentieth-century literature. [More here.](#)

2. *Clarissa, or, the History of a Young Lady* by Samuel Richardson

- **Word Count:** About 969,000 words
- **Description:** Published in 1748, this epistolary novel is one of the longest in English literature. It tells the tragic story of Clarissa Harlowe's life and struggles with her family and suitors. In 2015, the BBC ranked *Clarissa* 14th on its list of the 100 greatest British novels and in 2013 *The Guardian* included *Clarissa* among the 100 best novels written in English. [More here.](#)

3. *Poor Fellow My Country* by Xavier Herbert

- **Word Count:** About 850,000 words
- **Description:** This 1975 Miles Franklin Award-winning novel, set in Australia, explores the complexities of Australian society and indigenous issues over several decades. It is the longest Australian work of fiction ever written and was Herbert's final novel. [More here.](#)

4. *Sironia, Texas* by Madison Cooper

- **Word Count:** Approximately 840,000 words
- **Description:** Released in 1952, this novel offers a detailed depiction of life in a fictional Texas town from the late 19th to the early 20th century. The book won the Houghton Mifflin Literary Award and sold 25,000 copies in its initial printing but quickly faded from public view. [More here.](#)

5. *Miss MacIntosh, My Darling* by Marguerite Young

- **Word Count:** Approximately 750,000 words
- **Description:** Published in 1965, Marguerite Young described her novel as “an exploration of the illusions, hallucinations, errors of judgment in individual lives, the central scene of the novel being an opium addict's paradise.” [More here.](#)

6. *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo

- **Word Count:** About 655,000 words (English translation)
- **Description:** First published in French in 1862 and translated into English, this novel covers the lives of several characters in post-revolutionary France, focusing on themes of justice, love, and redemption. It is considered to be one of the greatest novels of the 19th century and has been popularised through numerous adaptations for film, television and the stage, including a musical. [More here.](#)

7. *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand

- **Word Count:** About 645,000 words
- **Description:** Published in 1957, this novel presents Rand's philosophical ideas through a dramatic story of a dystopian United States. It is Rand's final book published during her lifetime, and the one she considered her magnum opus in the realm of fiction. *Atlas Shrugged* received largely negative reviews but achieved enduring popularity and ongoing sales in the following decades. [More here.](#)

8. *A Suitable Boy* by Vikram Seth

- **Word Count:** Approximately 591,000 words
- **Description:** Published in 1993, the English-language book is one of the longest novels published in a single volume. This novel covers post-partition India, focusing on the efforts of a mother to arrange a marriage for her daughter. In 2019 BBC News included *A Suitable Boy* on its list of the 100 most inspiring novels. [More here.](#)

9. *Infinite Jest* by David Foster Wallace

- **Word Count:** About 543,000 words
- **Description:** This 1996 postmodern epic dives into themes of addiction, entertainment, and life in contemporary America, using a vast array of characters and intricate plotlines. This bestseller sold 44,000 hardcover copies in its first year of publication and has since sold more than a million copies worldwide. [More here.](#)

10. *The Recognitions* by William Gaddis

- **Word Count:** About 540,000 words
- **Description:** A dense and complex work published in 1955 and the debut novel of US author William Gaddis. The novel was initially poorly received. However, after Gaddis won a National Book Award in 1975 for his second novel, his first work gradually received new and belated recognition as a masterpiece of American literature. It examines themes of art, forgery, and identity through an elaborate narrative structure. [More here.](#)

You may disagree with this list, or have other books that you think should be included.

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[*In Search of Lost Time* by Marcel Proust](#)

[Internet Archive: *In Search of Lost Time* by Marcel Proust](#)

[*Clarissa, or The History of a Young Lady* by Samuel Richardson](#)

[Gutenberg: *Clarissa, or The History of a Young Lady* by Samuel Richardson](#)

[*Poor Fellow My Country* by Xavier Herbert](#)

[*Sironia, Texas* by Madison Cooper](#)

[Internet Archive: *Sironia, Texas* by Madison Cooper](#)

[*Miss MacIntosh, My Darling* by Marguerite Young](#)

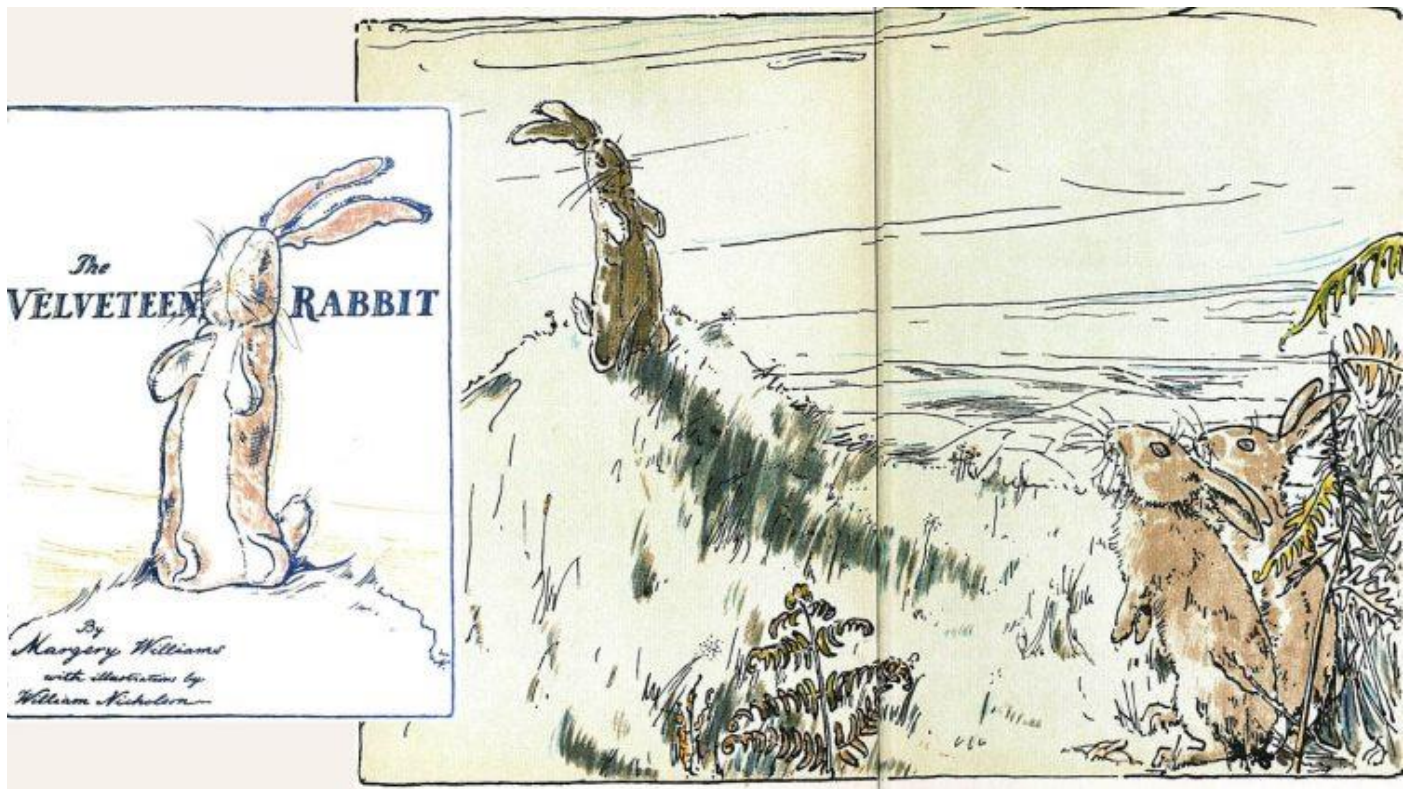
[*Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: *A Suitable Boy* by Vikram Seth, a video talk](#)

[*A Suitable Boy* by Vikram Seth](#)

[*Infinite Jest* by David Foster Wallace](#)

[*The Recognitions* by William Gaddis](#)



The Velveteen Rabbit

In this occasional series, I'll be looking at children's books that feature sentient toys – loved playthings that gain the ability to think, feel, and interact independently. The concept of toys coming to life, or becoming real, has always been a popular theme in literature and we have been given many stories of toys leaving their inanimate states to develop personalities, emotions, and a sense of agency. Here is a favourite to begin with.

Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand. – Margery Williams

The Velveteen Rabbit is a British children's story written by [Margery Williams](#). The story first appeared in *Harper's Bazaar* magazine in 1921 featuring illustrations from Williams' daughter Pamela Bianco. In 1922 it was published as a book illustrated by William Nicholson and has been republished many times since then. Williams wrote numerous other children's books, but this one remains her most well-known.

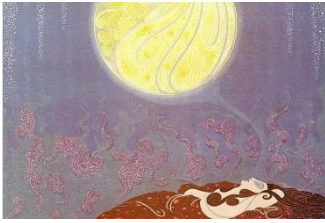


The Velveteen Rabbit is a heartwarming children's story that explores the transformative power of love and the magic of becoming real. The story begins when a toy rabbit sewn from velveteen is given to a young boy as a Christmas present. The boy puts the rabbit aside and plays with his other new presents. The other toys are sophisticated and mechanical, and they snub the old-fashioned velveteen rabbit.



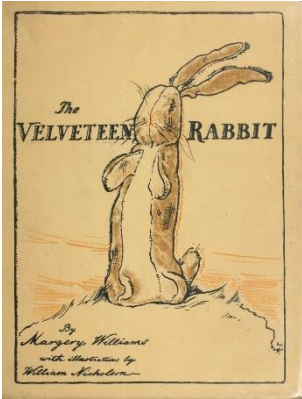
However, as time passes the boy forms a special bond with the rabbit, making it his constant companion, and the Velveteen Rabbit becomes older and shabbier but their bond grows stronger. The toy learns about the concept of becoming "real" from the wise Skin Horse, an old nursery toy, and longs to become "real" himself. Realness, in the context of this story, is achieved through the deep and genuine love of a child.

There have been numerous books, audio books, adaptations and videos of *The Velveteen Rabbit*. I've got just a few to share here, but you can find a [list of them all here](#).



The story was first published in *Harper's Bazaar* in **1921** featuring illustrations from Williams' daughter Pamela Bianco.

You can read it here. https://archive.org/details/sim_harpers-bazaar_1921-06_56_6/page/72/mode/2up



The Velveteen Rabbit, was first published in book form in **1922** in New York by Doubleday & Company, Inc.

Read it and enjoy the original illustrations by William Nicholson in full here. <https://archive.org/details/velveteenrabbito00bian>

Watch these videos:

In **1973**, LSB Productions made a 16 mm live-action film version that won multiple awards.

https://youtu.be/MFddEXaKJ_g

In **1984**, it was part of the *Enchanted Musical Playhouse* series, where Marie Osmond played the part of the Velveteen Rabbit. Songs were composed by the Sherman Brothers. https://youtu.be/MFddEXaKJ_g

In **1985**, an animated adaptation narrated by Christopher Plummer, was produced in Canada by Atkinson Film-Arts for CTV. In this version, the boy is given the rabbit for his birthday instead of Christmas.

<https://youtu.be/cKJLrgJ8B-U>

In **1985** an album by pianist George Winston and narrated by Meryl Streep was produced by Mark Sottnick and Clay Stites. (This was nominated for a Grammy Award.) <https://youtu.be/cKJLrgJ8B-U>

In **2023**, a 40-minute Christmas special was produced by Magic Light Pictures and released by Apple TV+. It features Phoenix Laroche and the voices of Alex Lawther, Helena Bonham Carter and Nicola Coughlan.

<https://youtu.be/49R6Ri6oV3E>

This poignant story beautifully illustrates the transformative power of love, emphasising the idea that true worth comes from the genuine connections we form with others. One hundred years after it was written, *The Velveteen Rabbit* remains a timeless tale cherished by readers of all ages today.

Have you just revisited this charming story now? Did you read this book as a child? Do you think that today's children with sophisticated toys will appreciate this tale?

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[The Velveteen Rabbit by Margery Williams](#)

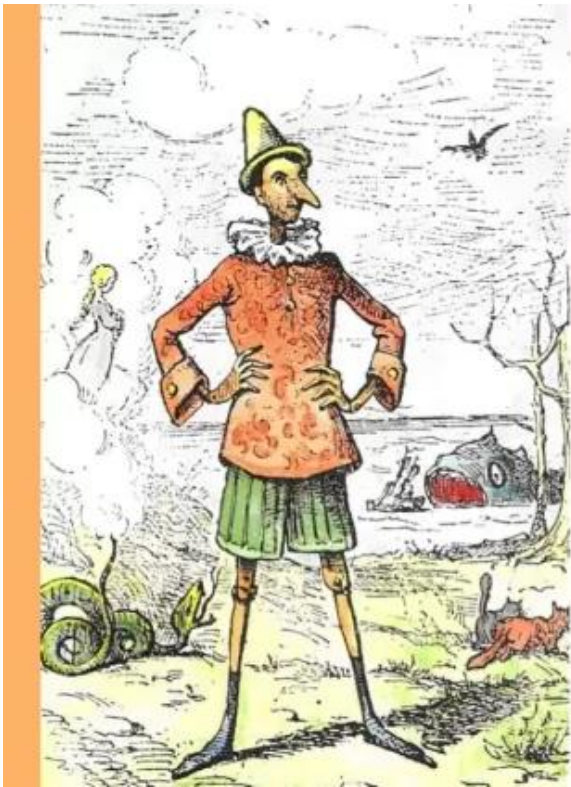
[The Velveteen Rabbit by Margery Williams](#)

[The Velveteen Rabbit by Margery Williams](#) audio recording

[The Velveteen Rabbit Was Always More Than a Children's Book](#)

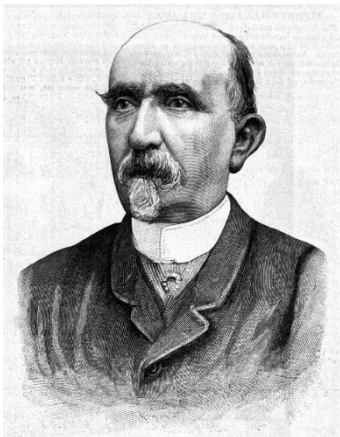
[As The Velveteen Rabbit turns 100, its message continues to resonate](#)

[Literary Ladies Guide: Margery Williams Bianco, Author of The Velveteen Rabbit](#)



Pinocchio's Story

Today, whenever the name Pinocchio is mentioned most people immediately think of the wide-eyed puppet with a curious spirit and ever-growing nose. But the 1940 Disney animated film is not how this story was originally told.



The Adventures of Pinocchio by [Carlo Collodi](#) is an Italian classic story that was first published [in serial form](#) in 1881 as *The Story of a Puppet* in the children's newspaper, [Giornale per i bambini](#).

In February 1883 it appeared in a single book and went on to become the first Italian children's story to gain international fame.

Collodi's [original story](#) is quite dark, with moments of real peril and serious moral weight. In it, Pinocchio is selfish, unreliable and rebellious, and lying is just one aspect of his mischief. He runs away from Geppetto the moment he is carved out of the enchanted block of wood and refuses to return home. He has encounters with thieves and several near disasters, all while dreaming of becoming a real boy – he even causes a series of events that result in Geppetto's arrest. Pinocchio's

encounters shape his development, taking readers on a moral journey where he learns that fulfilling his dream of becoming human requires inner transformation, not just a magical wish.

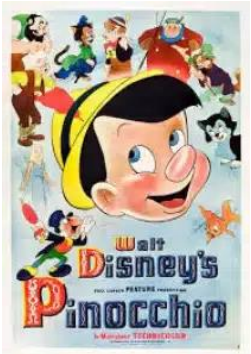
Disney's [1940 animated film](#) softened some of the darker elements of Collodi's tale and made Pinocchio a lasting cultural icon. Here, Pinocchio is a more innocent character, whose curious spirit leads him astray, but not in the same calculating way as Collodi's puppet. While the novel leaves Pinocchio to face a harsher reality for his mistakes, Disney presents a more forgiving and enchanted world, where Pinocchio's quest for self-improvement is rewarded more swiftly and gently than in the novel.

There are at least 14 English-language films based on the story, and Italian, French, Russian, German, Japanese and other versions for the big screen and for television, and several musical adaptations.



[*The Adventures of Pinocchio*, 1911](#) is an Italian live-action silent film directed by Giulio Antamoro and starring Ferdinand Guillaume. It is the first movie based on Collodi's novel and one of the first ever Italian feature films.

[watch now](#)



[*Pinocchio*, 1940](#), is the well known American animated musical fantasy film produced by Walt Disney Productions and released by RKO Radio Pictures. Only loosely based on Collodi's novel, *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, was the studio's second animated feature film.

[watch now](#)



The song [*When You Wish Upon a Star*](#), featured in Disney's 1940 adaptation. Written by Leigh Harline and Ned Washington specifically for the movie, it was performed by Cliff Edwards, who voiced Jiminy Cricket. First heard during the opening credits and as a musical theme throughout, it weaves magic and possibilities before returning in the final scene.

[watch now](#)

The song won the 1940 Academy Award for Best Original Song and was the first Disney song to win an Oscar. It is now [the signature song](#) of The Walt Disney Company and is often used in the production logos at the beginning of Disney films since the 1980s, becoming a symbol of hope and enchantment.

Have you read Carlo Collodi's book? It's easy to [find free online](#).

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

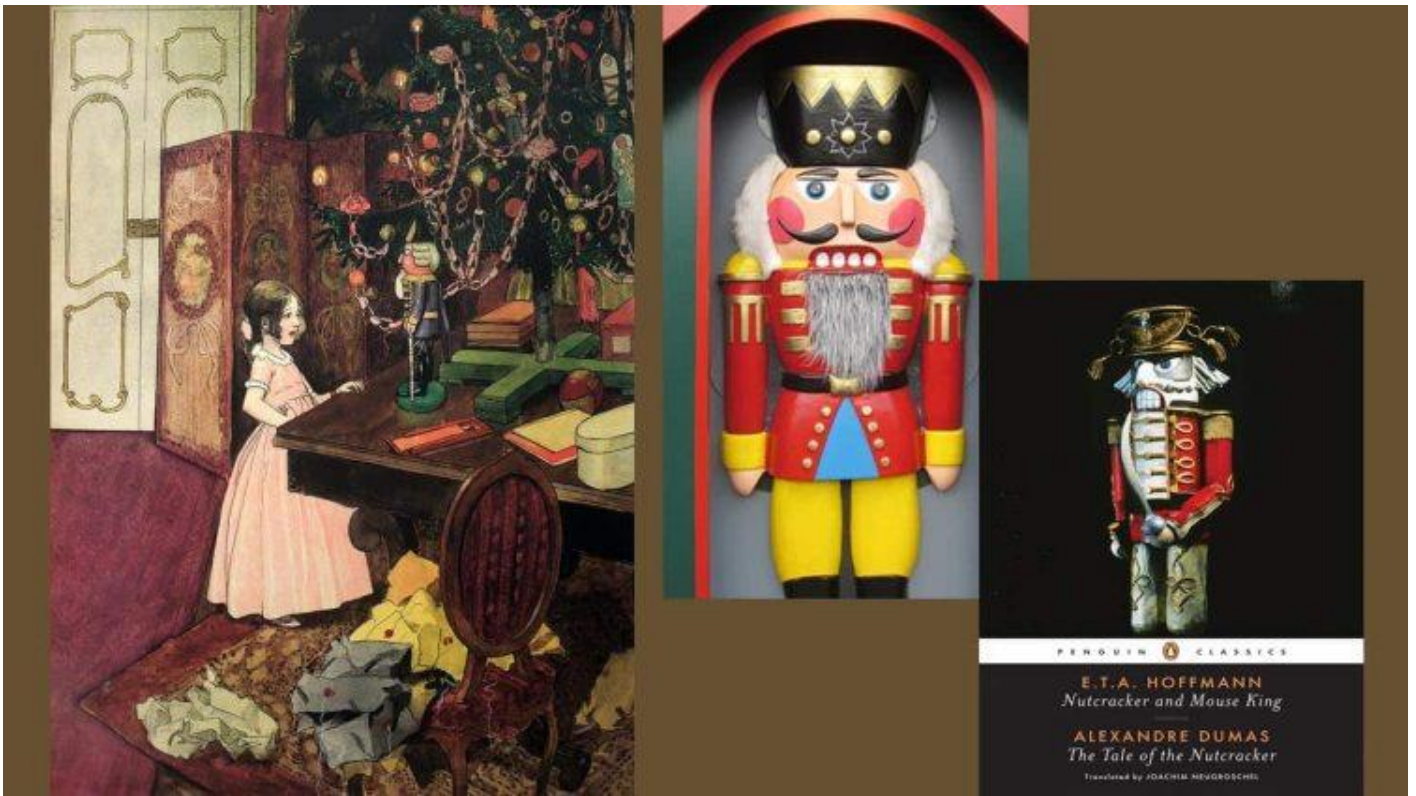
[The Adventures of Pinocchio by Carlo Collodi](#)

[Internet Archive: The Adventures of Pinocchio by Carlo Collodi](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Pinocchio is first published](#)

[Carlo Collodi: the Florentine Father of Pinocchio](#)

[The Walt Disney Company](#)



The Nutcracker

Marie still had the wounded Nutcracker wrapped in her handkerchief, and she carried him in her arms. Now she placed him cautiously on the table, unwrapped him softly, softly, and tended to the injuries. Nutcracker was very pale, but he beamed so ruefully and amiably that his smile shot right through her heart."

– E.T.A. Hoffmann

The Christmas story of *The Nutcracker* with its magical narrative of the Nutcracker Prince's triumph over the Mouse King is well-loved. But this charm-filled fable was not how the tale was originally told.

Composed in 1816, E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Nutcracker and Mouse-king* is a much darker tale that delves into the fears of childhood and the lines that separate what is real from what is imagined. Hoffmann's complex gothic fairy story starkly contrasts the more approachable, familiar version we recognise today.



E.T.A. Hoffman's Nutcracker

Nutcracker and Mouse-king, written by German author E.T.A. Hoffmann, is a classic fairy tale first published in 1816. The story begins on Christmas Eve, as young Marie receives a gift of a beautifully crafted nutcracker that looks like a soldier. As the clock strikes midnight, Marie discovers that her beloved nutcracker comes to life, along with the rest of the toys in the household.

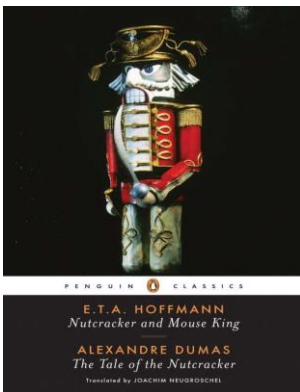
The Nutcracker leads a battle against the sinister Mouse King and his army of mice. After a fierce struggle, the nutcracker defeats the Mouse King with Marie's help, breaking an ancient curse that had transformed him into a wooden toy. The Nutcracker is revealed to be a prince under an enchantment, and he takes Marie to his magical kingdom where they are greeted with splendid festivities and a grand celebration. The story concludes with Marie waking up, holding her nutcracker, and wondering if it was all a dream.



Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann (1776–1822) was a German writer, composer, and artist. He was a prominent figure of the Romantic movement and is best known for his fantastical and often dark tales, which blend reality with supernatural elements. Hoffmann’s literary work frequently explores the depths of human psychology.

Hoffmann was also a jurist and a composer, and his middle name, Amadeus, was adopted in homage to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. His diverse talents and interests allowed him to fill his stories with rich musical, artistic, and legal references, making his works multidimensional and engaging.

The story was first published in 1816 in German in a volume entitled *Kinder-Mährchen*, (*Children’s Stories*), which also included tales by Carl Wilhelm Contessa and Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué. In 1853 it was published in the U.S. in a translation by Mrs St. Simon in New York with illustrations by Albert H. Jocelyn. [This version can be found here.](#)



Dumas’ Nutcracker

Story of a Nutcracker (Histoire d’un Casse-Noisette) by [Alexandre Dumas](#) was first written in 1844 as an adaptation of E.T.A. Hoffmann’s tale. Dumas crafted his version at the request of a publisher seeking to simplify Hoffmann’s complex and darker narrative for a broader, more family-friendly audience.

Dumas’s retelling retained the core elements of Hoffmann’s story but infused it with a lighter tone and a more straightforward plot. Dumas’ story can be [found in this book](#).

This adaptation ultimately made the tale more accessible and laid the foundation for the enchanting version that would inspire Tchaikovsky’s 1892 ballet, *The Nutcracker*.

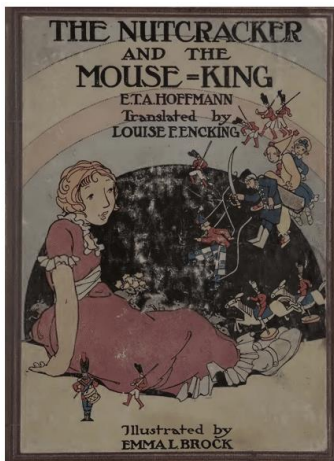
Marie’s name is usually changed to Clara in most subsequent adaptations.



Tchaikovsky’s Nutcracker

Tchaikovsky’s *The Nutcracker* ballet, premiered in 1892 and has become an iconic Christmas tradition, celebrated for its enchanting music and magical storytelling.

The ballet was commissioned by the Russian Imperial Theatre and choreographed by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov. Tchaikovsky’s rich, emotive music lifted the story’s enchanting scenes and includes one of the most iconic compositions of our time, the ethereal “Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy”. Despite a lukewarm reception at its debut, the ballet eventually grew in popularity and is now celebrated worldwide for its vibrant melodies, intricate compositions and enchanting choreography. [Watch the ballet here.](#)



Other Nutcrackers

1930 A new edition of *The Nutcracker and the Mouse-King* was published by Albert Whitman and Company in Chicago, translated by Louise F. Encking with illustrations by Emma L. Brock. It is [available in full here](#).

1973 *The Nutcracker*: A Soviet animation film set to Tchaikovsky’s score. Watch it here <https://youtu.be/roIToz-5NKg>

1977 *The Nutcracker Ballet* with Mikhail Baryshnikov and Gelsey Kirkland. Watch it here <https://youtu.be/jJF5U-C4qlw>

1999 *The Mickey Mouse Nutcracker* is an adaptation of this tale, with Minnie Mouse playing Marie, Mickey playing the Nutcracker, Ludwig Von Drake playing

Drosselmeyer, albeit very briefly, and Donald Duck playing the Mouse King. Playlist here.
https://youtu.be/9Dx_jJqK5Ew

2001 *Barbie in The Nutcracker* (Official Trailer) Barbie appears in an animated version of *The Nutcracker*. Watch it here <https://archive.org/embed/barbie-in-the-nutcracker>

Dumas' whimsical retelling of The Nutcracker story and Tchaikovsky's enchanting ballet have enriched Hoffmann's original dark and intricate tale. The story's legacy has been preserved, and these adaptations paved the way into mainstream storytelling ensuring an enduring appeal and adaptability.

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[*The Nutcracker and The Mouse King* various versions](#)

[*Story of a Nutcracker* by Alexandre Dumas](#)

[*Nutcracker and Mouse-king* by E.T.A. Hoffman & *Story of a Nutcracker* by Alexandre Dumas](#)

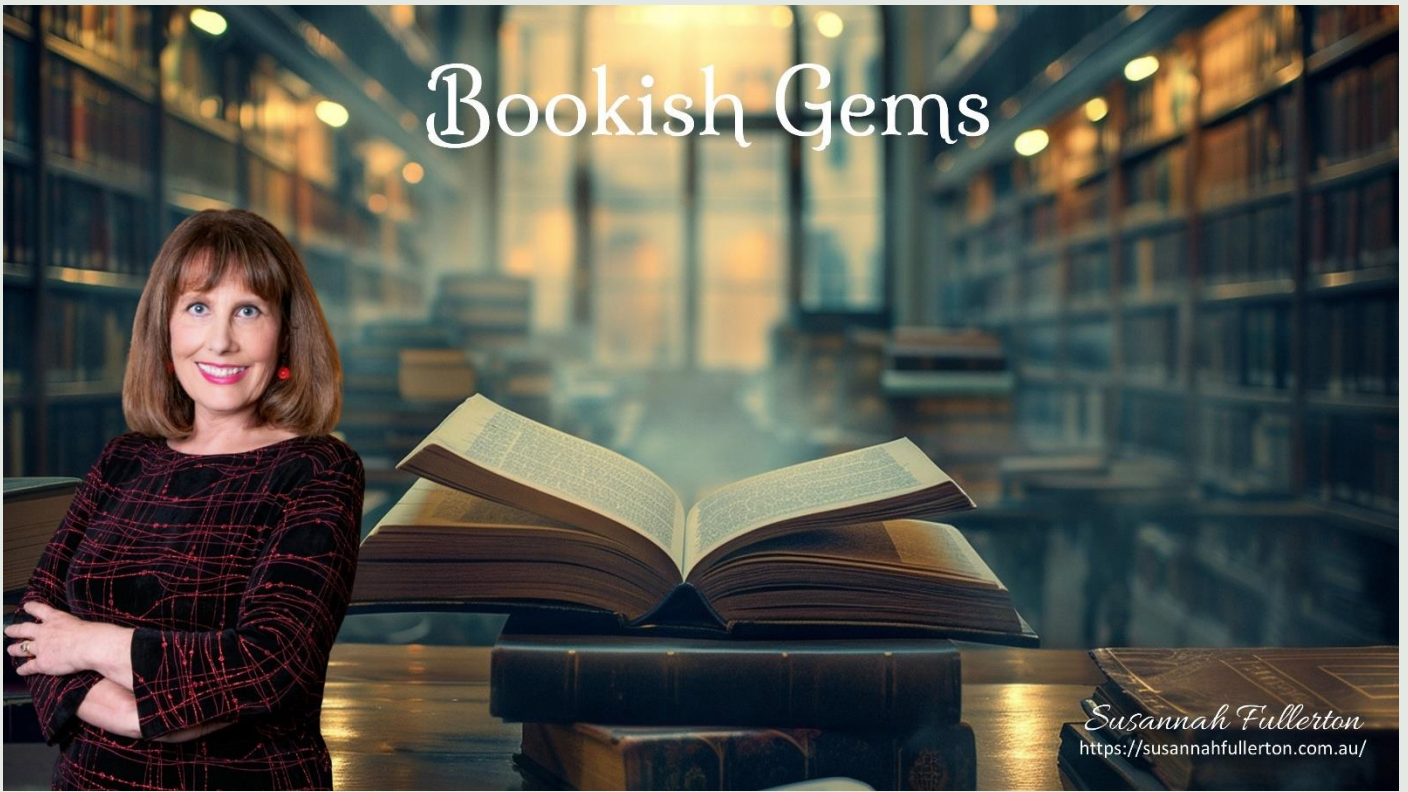
[*Nutcracker and Mouse King* by E.T.A. Hoffmann audio recording](#)

[*Nutcracker Ballet* by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky](#)

[E.T.A. Hoffman](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Alexandre Dumas is born](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Alexandre Dumas dies](#)



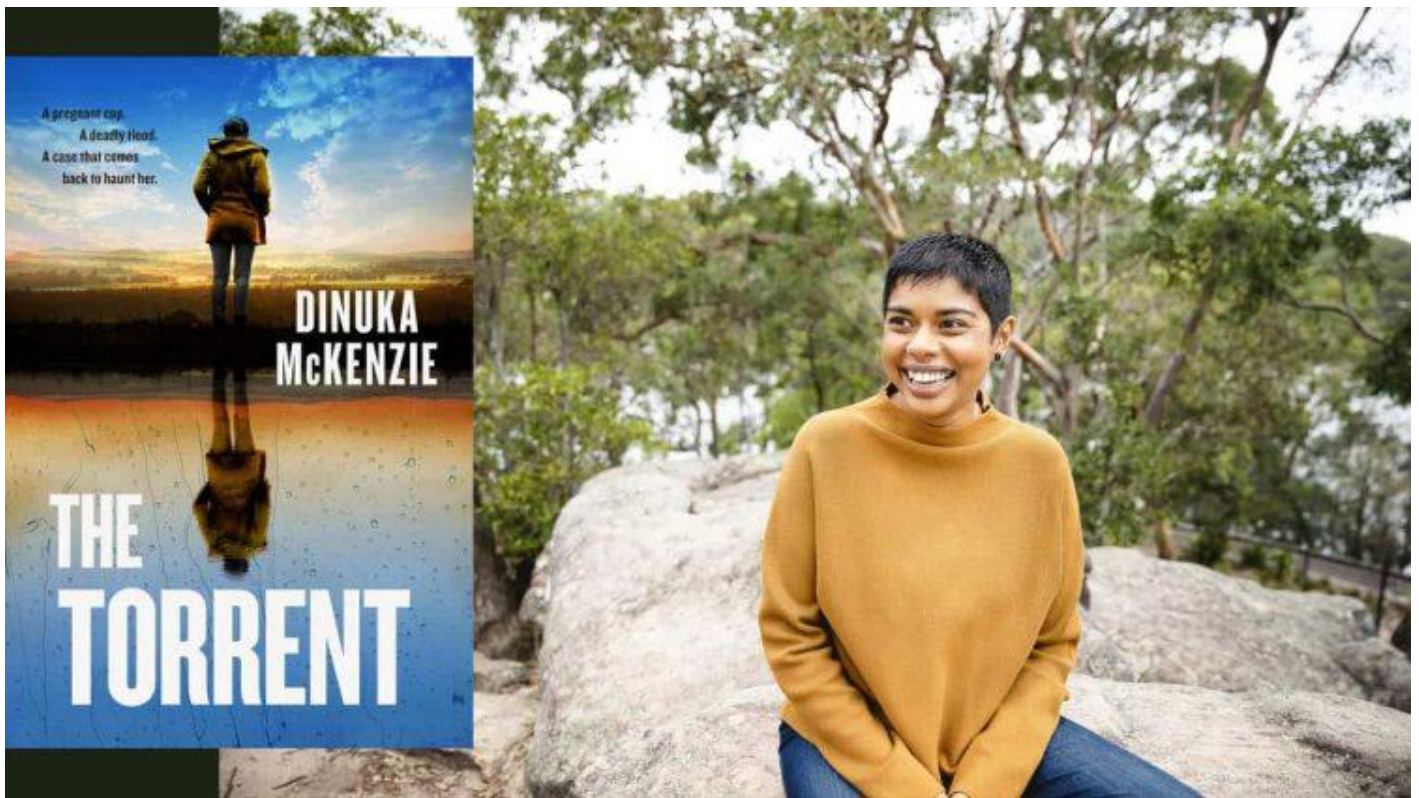
Bookish Gems

Susannah Fullerton
<https://susannahfullerton.com.au/>

Bookish Gems

Elevate your to-read list today and embrace the joy of discovering exceptional books hand-picked by me to ignite your imagination.

Get comfortable in your personal seat in my library and make your choice from the smorgasbord of my personal reading recommendations.



A New Aussie Crime Writer

Are you a fan of crime novels? And do you love to read murder mysteries set close to home? Aussie crime has never been so popular, with [Chris Hammer](#), [Jane Harper](#), [Sulari Gentill](#) and others making ‘bush noir’, ‘beach noir’ and ‘outback noir’ producing international bestsellers.

Now there’s a new Aussie crime writer whose works I’ll be following with interest – [Dinuka McKenzie](#). Her first book is [The Torrent](#), set in northern NSW and featuring Detective Kate Miles. To add to the interest of the story, Kate is heavily pregnant and only a week away from maternity leave, when a closed case is dumped on her desk. It concerns a man drowned in a flood, and Kate soon realises that the case is not as ‘closed’ as her colleagues thought. Kate is a likeable character, struggling to juggle the needs of a small child and husband along with her career, and the characters are all well drawn and interesting. The book is vivid, pacy and original and the novel held my interest from beginning to end. It won the [2020 Banjo Prize](#).

I see that Dinuka, who is an avid reader and who arrived from Sri Lanka when she was 12, has produced sequels. *Taken* was published in 2023, and her latest, *Tipping Point*, also featuring Kate Miles, has just come out this year. I’ll be getting both from my local library. I love discovering good new crime writers, so I hope you too enjoy Dinuka McKenzie’s books.

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[The Torrent by Dinuka McKenzie](#)

[Dinuka McKenzie](#)

[Australian Writer’s Centre: Dinuka McKenzie on her highly anticipated crime novel ‘The Torrent’ – podcast](#)

[The Banjo Prize](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Bush Noir](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: A Burning Dilemma for Chris Hammer](#)



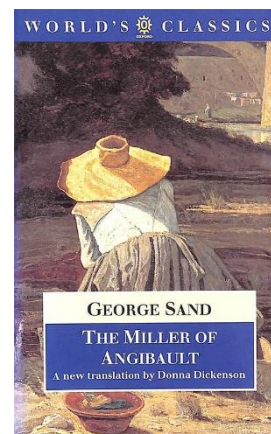
The Miller of Angibault

The [Angibault Mill](#) at Montpouret is in a lovely setting of ancient oak trees and the Vauvre River valley in France. The mechanism of the mill has been lovingly restored and it is still a working mill today.

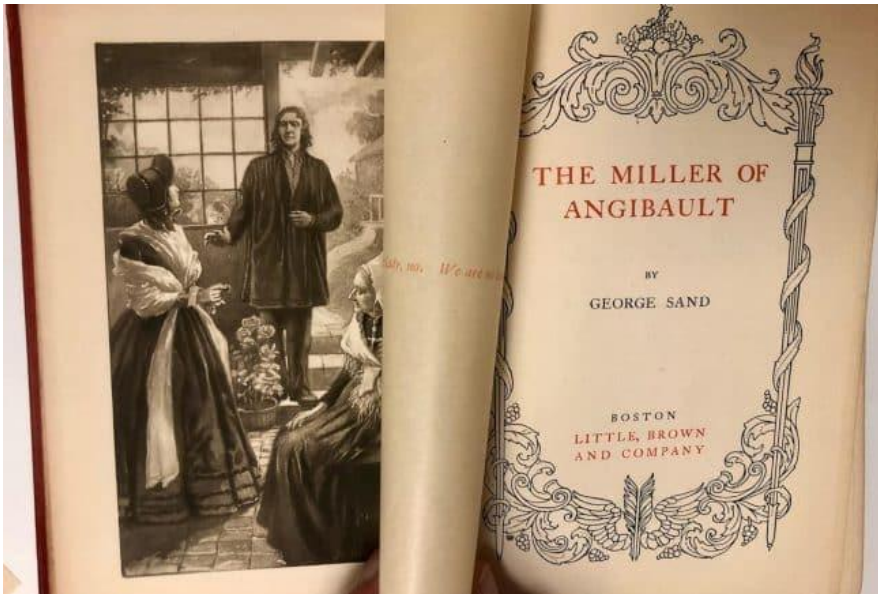
George Sand loved this mill, writing, “for there is in our valley a pretty mill which goes by the name of Angibault ... a wild corner of paradise that I and my children discovered in 1844.” She uses the mill as the setting for her 1845 novel *Le Meunier d’Angibault* (*The Miller of Angibault*), a book which she herself described as her “arch-socialist” novel. Her publisher actually rejected it as too violent an attack on property.

The story is about the widow Marcelle de Blanchemont who comes to the area to investigate what is left of her husband’s property. She has one son, and is in love with Henri Lémor, who has no money of his own and refuses to marry her while she is rich. In trying to reach her castle, Marcelle gets lost and spends the night at the Mill of Angibault: “At the outskirts of the mill, this stream, slender but powerful, forms a lake of considerable breadth, still, deep, and harmonious as a mirror, in which the ancient willows and mossy roofs of the dwelling are reflected. Marcelle sat in contemplation of this peaceful, pleasant spot, which spoke more to her than she knew. She had seen more beautiful scenes; but there are places which leave us open to some inexplicable and powerful affinity, where it seems that fate draws us so as to prepare us to accept certain joys, griefs or duties.”

She becomes friendly with the miller, Grand-Louis, and his mother. The miller is in love with Rose Bricolin, daughter of a greedy local squire. The Bricolin’s eldest daughter fell in love with a poor man and was not allowed to marry him, and she went mad, and roams the fields seeking her lost lover. Rose seems set for a similar fate, but Marcelle assists Rose and eventually helps arrange things so that she and the miller may marry. She and Grand-Louis share a contempt for greed and feel that money is to be shared. The communist conversations they have throughout the book are remarkably radical for a novel published in 1845.



The novel influenced Dostoevsky who called George Sand “a Russian idealist of the 1840 generation”. Also influenced were Thomas Hardy, Walt Whitman, [Matthew Arnold](#) and Henry James.



Many socialist writers concentrated on the urban poor, but George Sand wanted to show the plight of the rural poor, and she does so very effectively in this novel. She depicts the ruin of an aristocratic family, due to gambling and debauchery, the insecurity of the landless farm worker, and also the machinations of ambitious new money, the crushing of an old beggar under the wheels of a smart new carriage not fit for country roads, the madness of an unhappy woman. The proceeds of the novel went into establishing a printing commune run by a socialist. George Sand gave

generously to aid such local projects and was much loved by the local people.

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Susannah Fullerton: George Sand is born](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Chopin's Piano and George Sand](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: George Sand dies](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Escape to Nohant, France](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Literary France – Susannah's Top Ten Places to Visit](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: In Search of Literary France](#) free to watch on YouTube

[Susannah Fullerton: Join my tour of Literary France](#) and visit Angibault Mill



The Almond Picker

I have been reading a lot of books set in Sicily recently. Many have been on the sad side, describing poverty, the Mafia, and mass emigration from the island. But one recent read, although it began with a death, was quirky and at times very funny.

The Almond Picker by [Simonetta Agnello Hornby](#) is the story of Mennulara, a maid who once worked on an old estate picking almonds. She has just died, and the family who employed her are left in a mess, because Mennulara had gradually taken over control of their money and many aspects of their lives. As the gossipy villagers discuss her life and character, the true story of Mennulara gradually emerges. She was an intelligent, frustrated woman, who had faced trauma and yet had taken control of her life, learned new things and loved deeply.

The novel has a fabulous cast of greedy relatives, there are some eccentric village personalities – the doctor, the priest, the lawyer etc, and one gets a strong sense of the fictional village of Roccacolomba where the tale is set. Finding out who the almond picker really was, was like peeling layers off an onion. One came to really want to know the absent heroine of this book.

It was a tender, surprising and sensitive novel. I can recommend it. It was published in 2002 and translated into English in 2005.

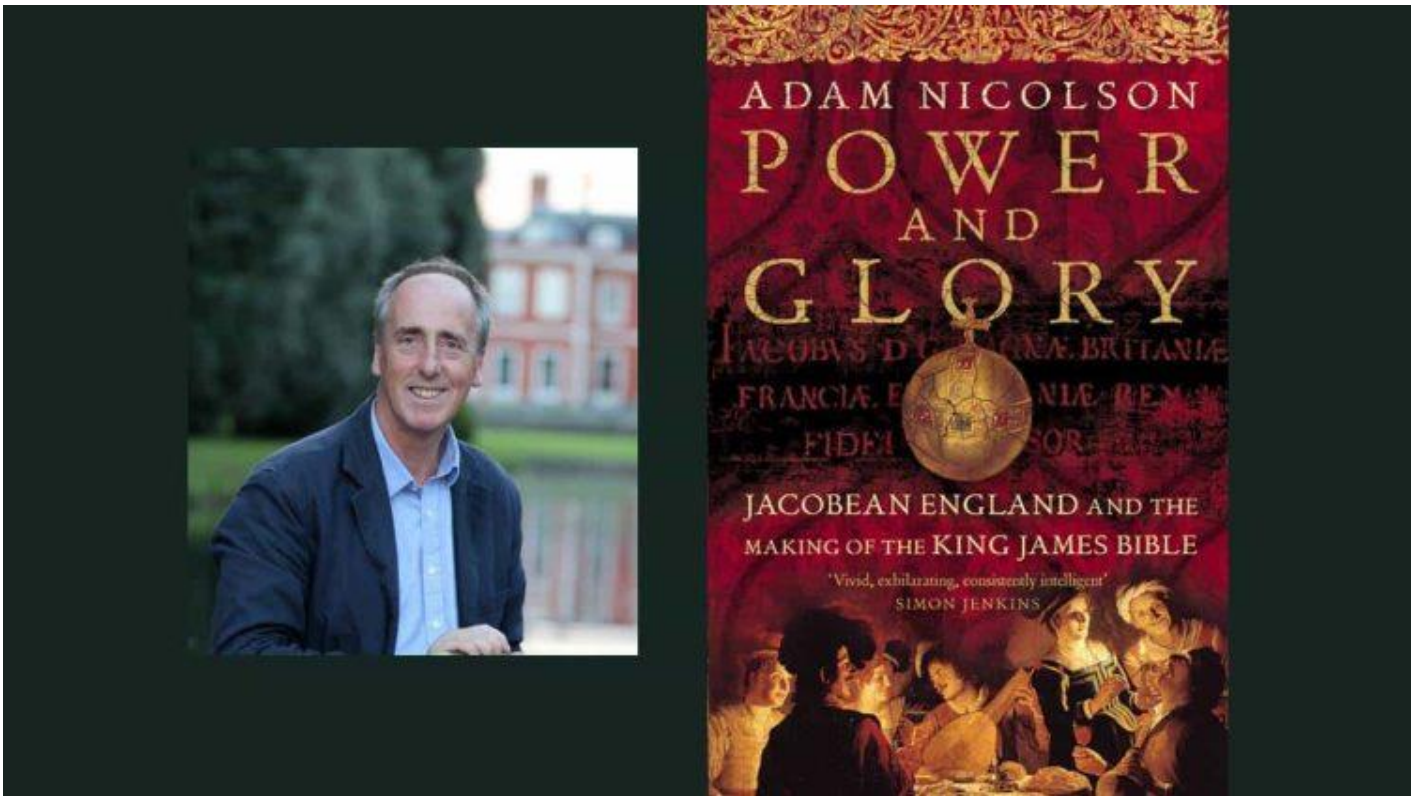
Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[The Almond Picker by Simonetta Agnello Hornby](#)

[Simonetta Agnello Hornby](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: The Leopard video talk](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Join my tour of Literary Sicily](#)



Power and Glory

[Adam Nicolson](#) is the grandson of writers [Vita Sackville-West](#) and [Harold Nicolson](#), and son of author and publisher Nigel Nicolson, so it is hardly surprising he too turned to writing. He has written some personal memoirs, biographies and history books. He is the author of one of the best history books I have ever read! *Power and Glory: Jacobean England and the Making of the King James Bible* was published in 2004. Its American title was *God's Secretaries: The Making of the King James Bible*.

I am not religious, but whether you believe its contents or not, the [King James Bible](#) contains superb prose and really beautiful language and memorable phrases. And yet, astonishingly, it was a book created by a committee. Adam Nicolson gives the reader the background of the Jacobean age – with the Gunpowder Plot, the plague, split by religious factions, murderous and intense – and shows how the age explains the book.

The sponsor and guide of the whole Bible project was the King – [King James VI of Scotland and King James I of England](#). Intelligent, peace-loving, ugly and charmless, he saw a new translation of the Bible as a way of unifying his kingdom. The work of translation was done by about 50 scholars from Oxford, Cambridge and London. Some were clergymen, some were often drunk or muddled, others were ruthlessly ambitious and self-serving. They worked for 7 years to complete the project, and Nicolson shows us their personalities, ambitions, problems and beliefs. Somehow it all came together into a great work of prose.

Nicolson is also scathing about the modern translations that are used in most churches today. “The flattening of language is a flattening of meaning. Language which is not taut with a sense of its own significance, which is apologetic in its desire to be acceptable to a modern consciousness ... is no longer a language which can carry the freight the Bible requires. It has, in short, lost all authority.” He says of the modern translators, “Wanting timelessness, they achieved the language of the memo.” I agree!

I love a good history book and this is one of the very best. It brings the era alive, makes you know the people involved, and keeps you gripped from the first page to the last. I lent my copy to so many friends after I read it and somehow it has never come back to me. I think it's time I ordered another one. I hope you enjoy it too.

Have you read this book? How do you think the Bible stands as a work of literature, regardless of your beliefs?

Susannah Fullerton, © 2024

<https://susannahfullerton.com.au/>

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

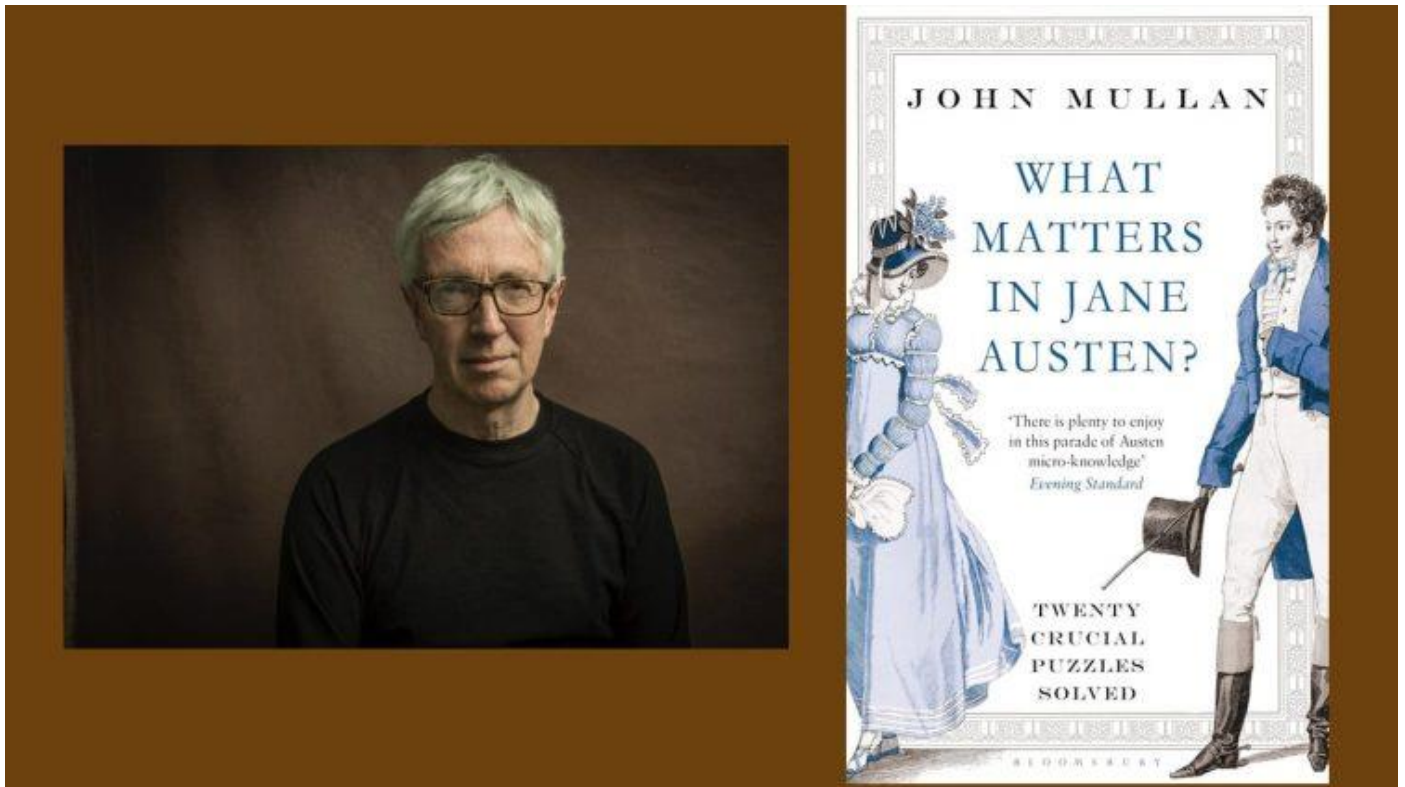
[*Power and Glory* by Adam Nicolson](#)

[Adam Nicolson](#)

[the King James Bible](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: The Nicolson family](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Vita Sackville-West](#)



What Matters in Jane Austen?

I recently wrote about my favourite history book, [Power and Glory](#). This month I would like to discuss my favourite work of literary criticism.

Some literary criticism can be extremely dry and academic. The author seems to feel that he or she should never use a few clear and simple words when they can instead construct a long and convoluted sentence, full of such words as 'hermeneutics' and 'exegesis'. But really good literary criticism does not need to be obscure. This is the case with Professor John Mullan's wonderful book, published in 2012, called [What Matters in Jane Austen?: Twenty Crucial Puzzles Solved](#).

Mullan examines some of the puzzles that Jane Austen sets her readers, helping us notice the little tricks she uses as a novelist, the ways in which she manipulates her readers, and the extraordinary depths of her genius as a writer. His chapters are a delight to read – clear, insightful, thought-provoking and rich in detail. He's the very best sort of literary critic.

The twenty puzzles include a variety of themes within Austen's fiction, and examine, through the small details, just how daring she was as a novelist and what virtuosity she displayed. Chapters examine the games her characters play, where we might find scenes where only men are present, what names the characters use with each other (for example, there's only one married woman in all the novels who addresses her husband by his Christian name – Mary Musgrove of *Persuasion*), which characters share bedrooms or coaches, why the weather is important, the risks of travelling to the seaside in Jane Austen's world, how much money is enough, and what blunders are made and when. Virginia Woolf once stated of Jane Austen that "of all great writers she is the most difficult to catch in the act of greatness". Well, John Mullan attempts to do just that, and he succeeds magnificently.

Sometimes I read a book and feel truly envious of the author who wrote it. I am very proud of [my own critical books](#) about Jane Austen but, oh how much I wish I had written this book! It is an essential purchase for anyone who hopes to really understand Austen's novels and is a book I return to again and again.

John Mullan's most recent book is also one I can recommend. [*The Artful Dickens: The Tricks and Ploys of the Great Novelist*](#) illuminates Dickens for us with dexterity and clarity. I hope John Mullan will continue to produce books of literary criticism. He is the best!

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

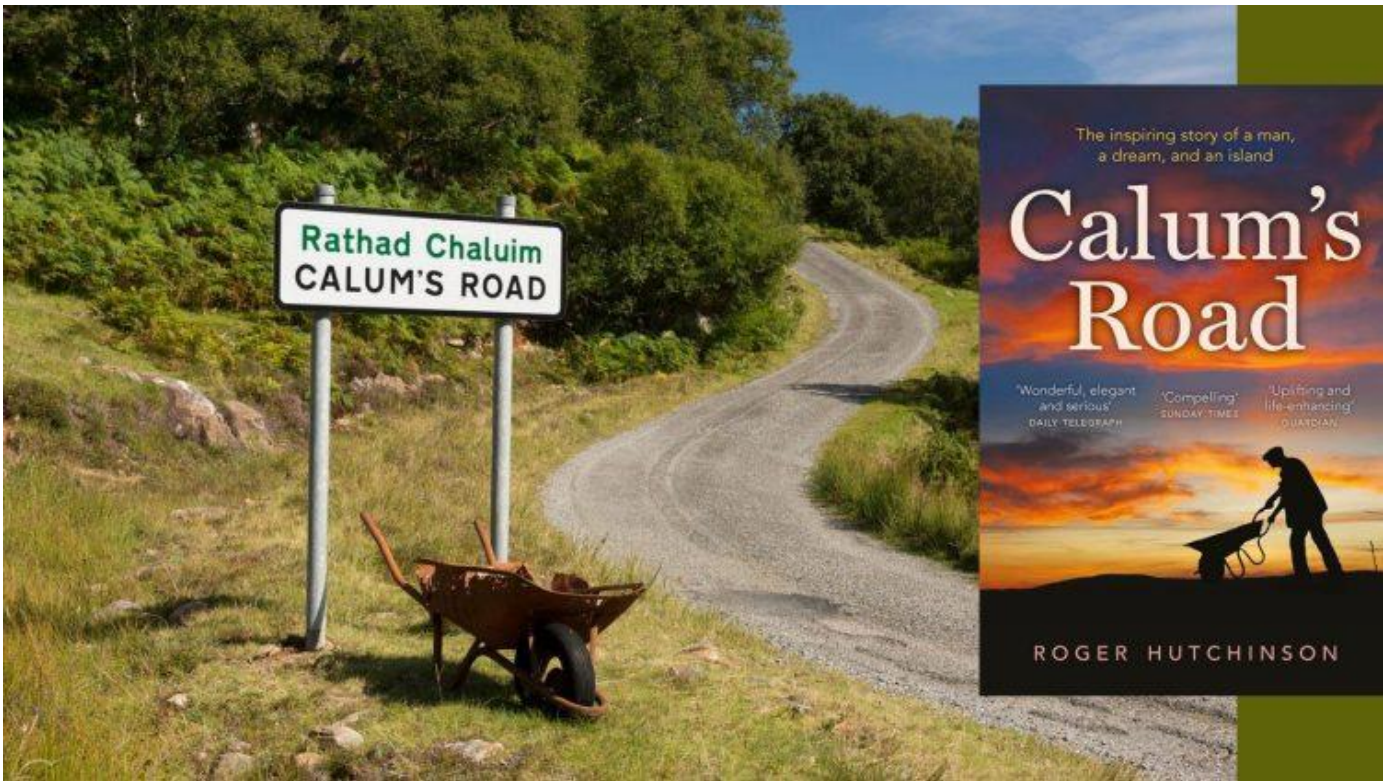
[*What Matters in Jane Austen?* by John Mullan](#)

[*The Artful Dickens* by John Mullan](#)

[John Mullan](#)

[JASA: "Offstage Austen" – Professor John Mullan](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: The Best Books about Jane Austen](#)



Calum's Road

[Calum MacLeod](#) (1911 – 1988) grew up on the Isle of Raasay in Scotland and lived on the island all his life, at the very tip of the archipelago. He tended the local lighthouse, worked his farm and, gradually, saw his neighbours leave the island for lives in other more prosperous places with more amenities. It worried him that so many people were uprooted from the beautiful island their families had lived in for generations. It distressed him that his daughter had to go to boarding school on Skye and couldn't come home at weekends, because there was no road to bring her to the croft. And so, in the mid-1960s, he set about doing something to stop the exodus, as he was the only man left living in northern Raasay. [He built a road.](#)

The inhabitants who lived north of Brochel simply had to walk if they needed to go places. Calum had campaigned and applied for grants, but nothing succeeded and finally, he decided he would have to build the road himself, in the hopes that it would attract residents back to the island. Over a period of about ten years, he constructed a road, using wheelbarrows, pickaxes and shovels. Some initial blasting work was funded, but everything else was done by Calum who purchased a useful book on road-making and used that. He cleared and cut the terrain, planned the route with its switchback and ups and downs and, with incredible determination, he was out in all types of weather, creating his road. It's a work of art, superbly sited and built. It will be there for a long time to come.

Today there is a cairn beside the road near Brochel Castle which commemorates his achievement. Several years after he completed the road, the local authorities accepted its existence and paved it over, so that all vehicles could use it. He was awarded a British Empire Medal for his achievement, and the road has been commemorated in songs, documentary film, a dance and plays.

Calum MacLeod was a writer, as well as a crofter and road-builder. He wrote in Gaelic and had several articles and local history pieces published in Gaelic periodicals.

I loved reading [Roger Hutchinson's book](#) telling of this one man's fight against officialdom and then his decision to fix the problem himself. This Hebridean story was moving and well told. Today people come from around the world to see Calum's Road. I'd love to walk its length (less than two miles) and take a pilgrimage in memory of one remarkable man, who wanted to save his community and his way of life.



You can watch Calum at work and hear from Roger Hutchinson in this 5 minute film:

<https://fb.watch/tWylGxff2d/>

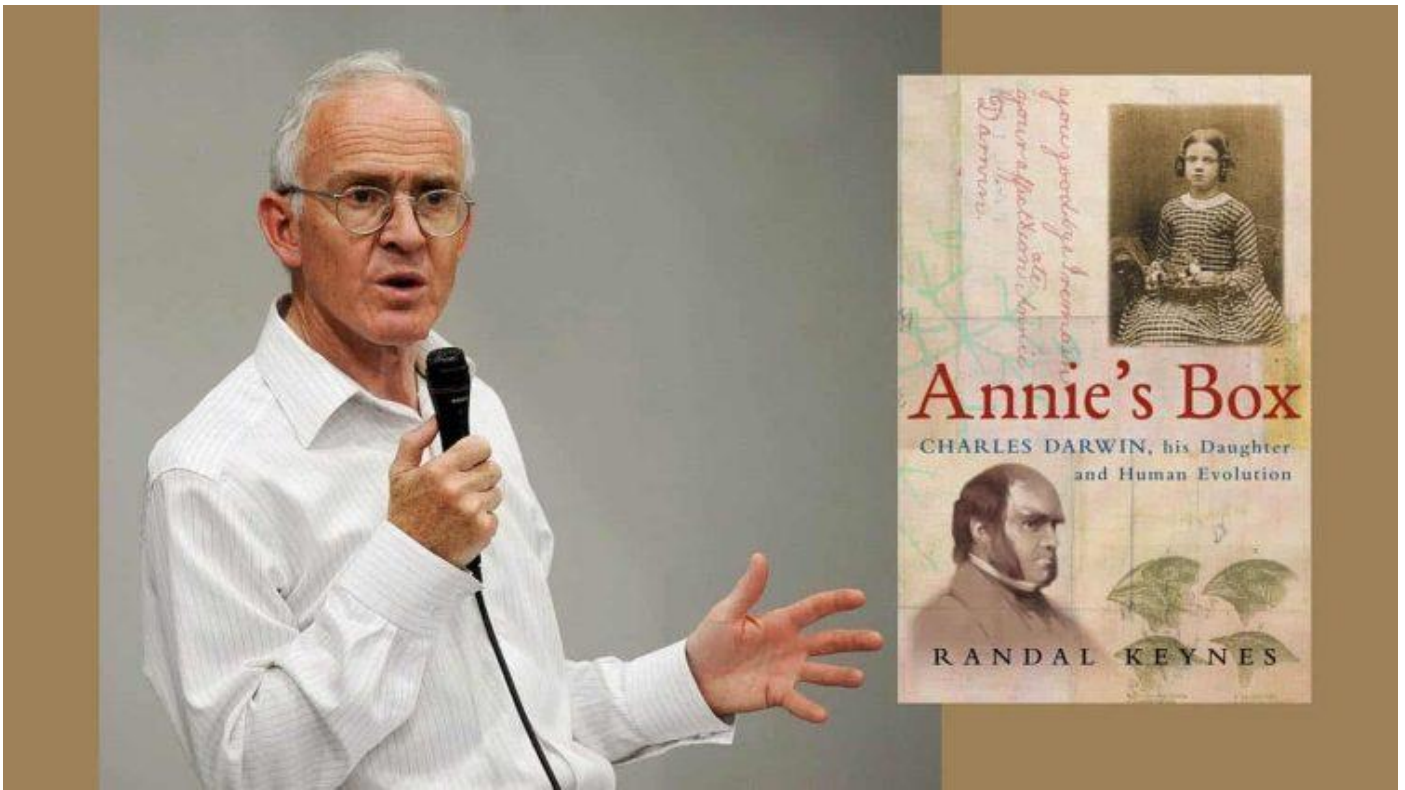
Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Calum's Road by Roger Hutchinson](#)

[Isle of Raasay: Calum's Road](#)

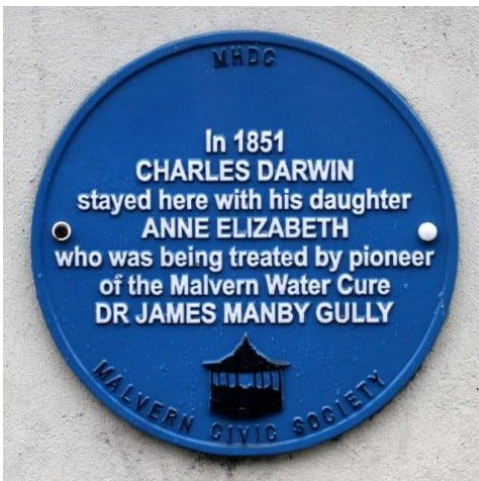
[Pressreader: The Story of Calum's Road](#)

[Roger Hutchinson](#)



Annie's Box of Keepsakes

About two years ago I visited the lovely English town of Malvern and went seeking a grave in the churchyard of [Great Malvern Priory](#). It was the grave of Annie Darwin, eldest daughter and second child of Charles Darwin and his wife Emma (she was also his cousin). Annie was born in 1841, but in 1849 she caught scarlet fever which greatly weakened her and she might also have been suffering from tuberculosis. Emma was expecting another baby in 1851.



Charles took his beloved daughter to Malvern, a spa town, in the hopes of finding a cure, but Annie died there, aged only ten. The house where she died is today marked with a plaque.

[Charles was devastated by the death](#) of his daughter – he ceased attending church after that sad time and began to totally doubt the idea of religious consolation and of a benevolent God who could cause the deaths of innocent infants. Annie had been a very affectionate child, very neat and tidy, and she loved making things for her dolls.

Darwin's great-great-grandson [Randal Keynes](#) found a box of keepsakes connected with Annie, which Charles and Emma had saved as a memento of their lost child. This workbox became the focus of Keynes's excellent book, [Annie's Box: Charles Darwin, His Daughter and Human Evolution](#) which was published in 2001. In this book, he examines the various keepsakes and shows how they cast light on Darwin's personality and his work. He paints a rich portrait of Darwin's domestic life, as husband and father of a large family (the Darwins had ten children). Emma had a strong religious faith and was deeply worried by her husband's growing scepticism. He tells the poignant story of the loss of an adored child. Darwin, always the keen observer, had fixed his scientific eye on his children, observing their development in the nursery, and connecting it with the theories that were developing in his mind. Darwin was a keen novel reader all his life. It is not surprising that, after Annie's death, he avoided sad books and turned instead to happier and much-loved novelists, such as Jane Austen.

This book is a biography of one of the greatest men of all time, but it is also the story of the Victorian era, of a father who was more involved than were most Victorian papas, and it is a story about loss and how we come to terms with death. It is hardly surprising that a book written by a direct descendent should present a rather saintly portrait of Darwin, but he does seem to have been a genuinely nice man, so I didn't find that aspect overdone. I can really recommend this book, which I found intriguing and moving.

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

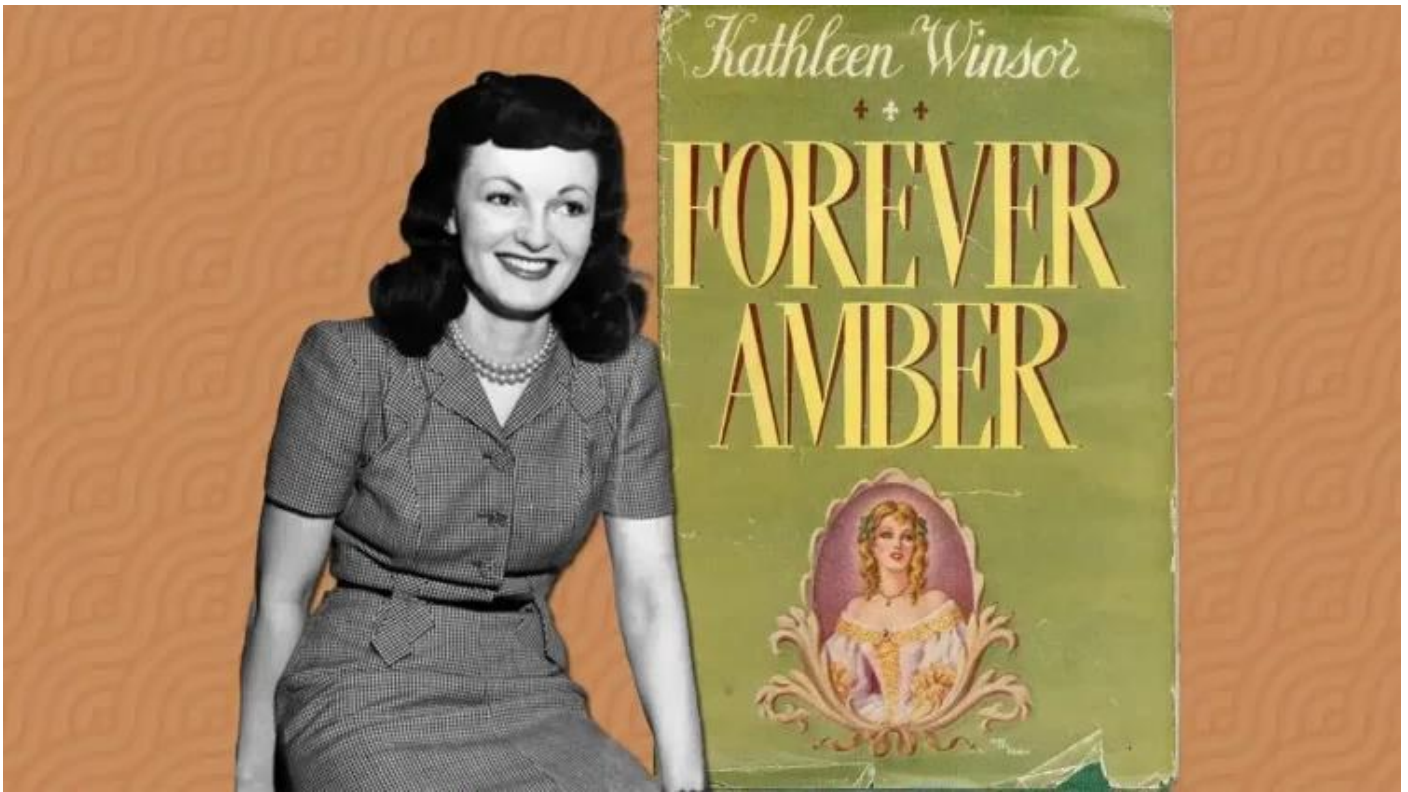
[Annie's Box: Charles Darwin, his Daughter and Human Evolution by Randal Keynes](#)

[Darwin Correspondence Project: The death of Anne Elizabeth Darwin](#)

[Darwin Correspondence Project: Interview with Randal Keynes](#)

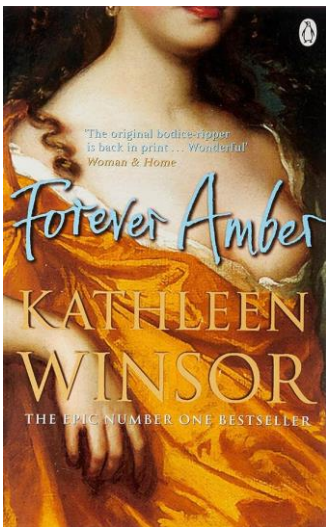
[A Visit to Great Malvern and Annie Darwin's Grave](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Charles Darwin is born](#)



Forever Amber

I think I was about 14 years old when I was attracted by a book in my local library.



The title, the picture on the cover of a Restoration beauty with plunging neckline, and the many pages which promised days of reading pleasure, made me pick it up.

My mother's eyebrows went up when she saw the copy, but she allowed me to read it. I still remember how gripped I was by the sexy tale of Amber St Clare and her adventures and misadventures in Restoration London. She was a feisty, often badly behaved heroine, deeply in love with Royalist Lord Bruce Carlton, and she flings herself at him with abandon throughout many of the 972 pages (and that was after an editor had reduced the manuscript to one fifth of its original size).

It's an historical novel which contains many real figures from history. Amber becomes mistress to King Charles II, fights with his established mistresses, meets gentlemen of the court such as the Duke of Buckingham and Samuel Pepys. The book paints a vivid picture of the English court once the King returned from exile in Europe.

[Kathleen Winsor](#) (1919 – 2003) was an American author. She grew interested in that historical period when her husband was working on a paper about Charles II and, out of boredom, she read one of the books he was using for research. She then read hundreds of other books about the era. Her novel was finally accepted for publication after it went through five drafts and it appeared in 1944. It was a runaway bestseller, selling over 100,000 copies in its first week. It popularised the name Amber for girls, and in 1947 a movie version was made, starring Linda Darnell and Cornel Wilde. 20th Century Fox paid \$200,000 for the rights, one of the largest sums ever paid up until that time.

The film reduced the number of Amber's lovers from over thirty to only five, and toned down much of the content. It was hugely costly to make, but was a box office hit. Today you can easily find the movie on [YouTube](#).



The book's success was probably helped by the fact that it was banned in many US states and other countries, [including Australia](#) where the Minister for Customs, Richard Keane, stated "the Almighty did not give people eyes to read that rubbish". Most disapproval was of the fact that the novel contains adultery, 70 references to sex, 39 illegitimate pregnancies, 7 abortions and far too many descriptions of women undressing in front of men who were not their husbands – shock, horror! The Catholic Church condemned it for indecency. [Forever Amber](#) became a bestseller in sixteen countries. It's important to remember that it came out during WWII. Women had to display resilience and

fortitude, divorces skyrocketed as couples spent too long apart and the threat of war made many people live for the moment. Amber's determination to succeed, although a defenceless woman, in the face of hardship and plague (the descriptions of the Great Plague are some of the most vivid scenes in the book) resonated with 1940s women, while descriptions of Amber's gorgeous clothes with ruffles and lace must have seemed like a fantasy to females managing on clothes coupons. In many ways, it is an English version of *Gone with the Wind* and you can see why women in war-torn Britain loved it. I should think it raised their spirits no end and provided much-needed escapism.

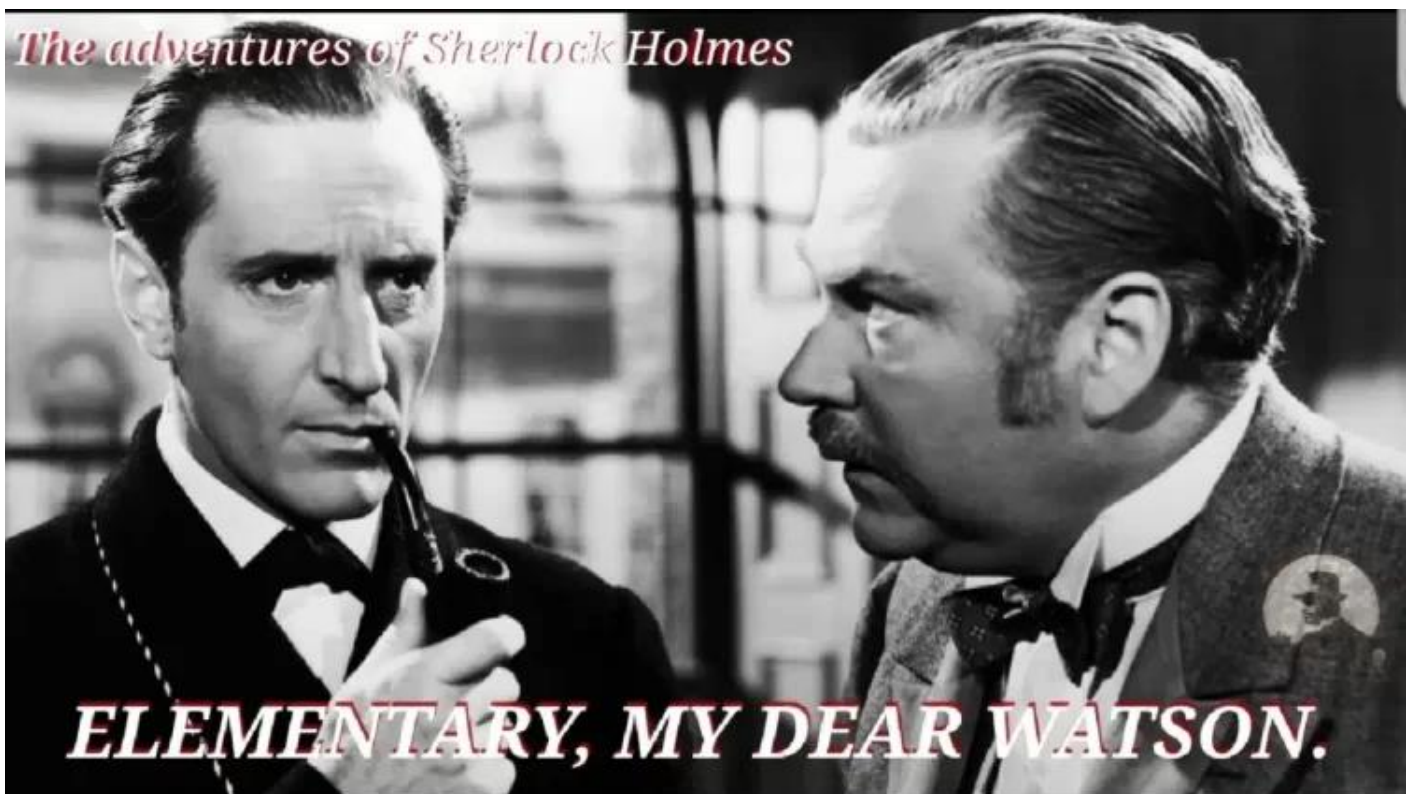
I have never gone back to reread *Forever Amber*. I loved it so much that I'm afraid I'd be disappointed as an adult reader, though I do remember feeling that Amber had gone too far when she appeared almost naked at a ball. Have you ever read it? Is it a book for impressionable teenage girls and bored housewives or is it, as critic Elaine Showalter claims, "a modern classic"?

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[The Guardian: Kathleen Winsor](#)

[YouTube: Forever Amber 1947 20th Century Fox](#)

[Forever Amber by Kathleen Winsor](#)



It's Elementary

“Elementary, my dear Watson” is one of the most iconic phrases associated with Sherlock Holmes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s legendary detective. It instantly conjures images of Holmes’s brilliant deductions and playful interactions with his loyal companion, Dr Watson.

But did you know that this phrase, although widely attributed to Holmes, never actually appears in its complete form in any of Conan Doyle’s original stories? Instead, it emerged as a popular catchphrase through various adaptations of Sherlock Holmes in [stage, film and radio](#), cementing its place in the public imagination.

The closest seems to be in the story titled [The Adventure of the Crooked Man](#):

*“I have the advantage of knowing your habits, **my dear Watson**,” said he. “When your round is a short one you walk, and when it is a long one you use a hansom. As I perceive that your boots, although used, are by no means dirty, I cannot doubt that you are at present busy enough to justify the hansom.”*

“Excellent!” I cried.

*“**Elementary**,” said he. “It is one of those instances where the reasoner can produce an effect which seems remarkable to his neighbour, because the latter has missed the one little point which is the basis of the deduction.*

Or maybe in [The Hound of the Baskervilles](#):

*“Interesting, though **elementary**,” said he, as he returned to his favourite corner of the settee. “There are certainly one or two indications upon the stick. It gives us the basis for several deductions.”*

The word “elementary” reflects Holmes’ methodical approach to solving mysteries. To him, the most complex cases often boiled down to simple, logical steps that only required careful observation and reasoning. When he says, “my dear Watson,” it reflects the affectionate yet sometimes condescending tone Holmes adopts toward

Watson, who, though intelligent, usually serves as the everyman who cannot follow Holmes' intricate line of thought.

Together, the phrase captures the essence of Sherlock Holmes: the detective's unmatched brilliance, his casual manner in solving the unsolvable, and the camaraderie between him and Watson that has charmed readers for more than a century.

The word "elementary" reflects Holmes' methodical approach to solving mysteries. To him, the most complex cases often boiled down to simple, logical steps that only required careful observation and reasoning. When he says, "my dear Watson," it reflects the affectionate yet sometimes condescending tone Holmes adopts toward Watson, who, though intelligent, usually serves as the everyman who cannot follow Holmes' intricate line of thought.

Are you a lover of Sherlock Holmes mysteries? Have you ever visited the [Sherlock Holmes Museum](#) in Meiringen, Switzerland?

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Quote Investigator: Elementary, My Dear Watson](#)

[The Adventure of the Crooked Man by Arthur Conan Doyle](#)

[The Adventure of the Crooked Man by Arthur Conan Doyle](#)

[The Hound of the Baskervilles by Arthur Conan Doyle](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson first appear](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Arthur Conan Doyle is born](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Arthur Conan Doyle dies](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: The Hound of the Baskervilles Reader's Guide](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Brief Encounters, Literary Travellers in Australia 1836-1939](#)



Cheryl chatting with Sherlock Holmes in Meiringen, Switzerland, 2024



My Favourite Biographer: Claire Tomalin

My favourite living biographer is [Claire Tomalin](#), whose books about great writers have instructed and delighted me over the years.

Claire (born 1933 in London, with an English mother and a French father) worked as a journalist before turning her hand to biographies and even a memoir of her own life. Her first book appeared in 1974, *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft*. That has been followed up with many award-winning biographies, including *Shelley and his World* (1980), *Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life* (1987), *The Invisible Woman: The Story of Nelly Ternan and Charles Dickens* (1990), *Mrs Jordan's Profession* (the story of actress Dorothea Jordan and her royal lover, published in 1994), *Jane Austen: A Life* (1997), *Samuel Pepys: The Unequalled Self* (2002), *Thomas Hardy: The Time-Torn Man* (2006), *Charles Dickens: A Life* (2011) and *The Young H.G. Wells: Changing the World* (2021). Her memoir, *A Life of my Own*, came out in 2017 and was deeply moving, especially when she wrote of the suicide of her daughter Susanna.

I love Claire Tomalin's style as a biographer. She mixes all the needed facts and information, with analysis of what makes that author great, all in an easy-to-read way that keeps you gripped from the first page to the last. In her book about Thomas Hardy, she was particularly good at weaving in Hardy's poems, showing how they illuminate what was happening in his life at the time. She includes pictures and maps, full bibliographies and is a meticulous scholar in all her writing.

I once had the very great pleasure of meeting Claire. She came to Australia and I persuaded her to come and give a talk to the Jane Austen Society of Australia. After the meeting, I got to drive her back to her hotel in the city and I'll never forget that precious half hour in the car. I wanted to drive via Brisbane so we could just keep talking. Of course, we discussed Jane Austen and the talk she had just given, but she was at the time working on her Pepys biography and I loved hearing what she had to say about my favourite diarist. I was intrigued when she told me that she always tries to walk in the footsteps of whichever author whose life she is writing – she

said it was essential to see the places they saw, experience the landscapes that inspired them, and get a good idea of how much time they spent wearing out shoe leather.

Claire was kind enough to write words of high praise about my book, *Jane Austen and Crime*, and we have kept some contact over the years. She is now in her 90s, but I hope she is keeping busy with another book, and staying healthy. She has set new standards in biography and has done so much to enrich our knowledge of classic authors.

If you have yet to read any of Claire Tomalin's biographies, you have such a treat in store.

Biography is the only true history. – Thomas Carlyle

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Claire Tomalin](#)

[Books by Claire Tomalin](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Claire Tomalin and Biographies](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Of Claire Tomalin and Katherine Mansfield](#)

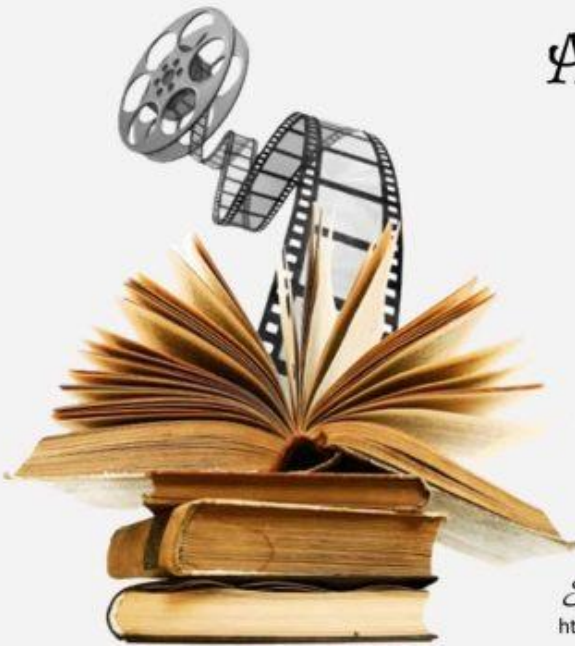


5 Favourite Things

I think we all love lists. Lists of our best loved books, or the most controversial books. Books that worked well in movie or TV adaptations of just our favourite stories.

Here are a few of my favourite fives.

My 5 Favourite Movie Adaptations of Novels



Susannah Fullerton
<https://susannahfullerton.com.au/>



5 Favourite Movie Adaptations of Novels

When a great novel becomes a movie, it is a very different art form. Visual images replace words, cutting of plot or characters becomes necessary, and vital choices have to be made by directors and actors. I love seeing a beloved novel turned into a really good film, but get terribly upset when a book is mangled by being made into a movie.

Join me for a look at my Five Favourite Movie Adaptations from Novels, and discover which films based on books I love the most. I wonder what your choices would be? Watch my video on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/xnSQdhUxysE>

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite TV Adaptations of Novels](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite Short Stories](#)

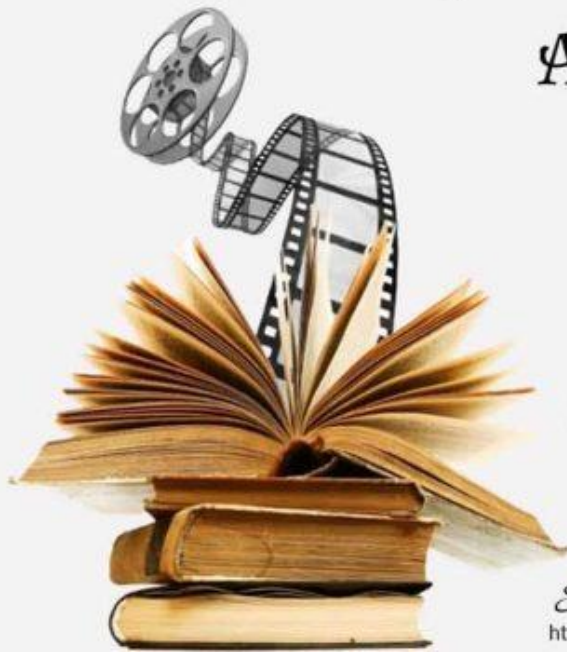
[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite Family Sagas](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite Christmas Scenes](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Unpopular 19th Century Novels that Became Classics](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Remarkable 20th Century Books Penned Behind Bars](#)

My 5 Favourite Television Adaptations of Novels



Susannah Fullerton
<https://susannahfullerton.com.au/>



5 Favourite TV Adaptations of Novels

In days gone by, Sunday night TV viewing was a big treat for so many of us readers. There was usually some excellent BBC adaptation of a loved novel to watch week after week which kept us glued to our televisions and eagerly anticipating next Sunday's instalment.

So, when I sat down to try and work out my five absolute favourite TV series based on novels of all time, my mind took me back to those faithful adaptations and all that Sunday evening enjoyment of long ago. It became an incredibly challenging task to choose just five only, there have been so many wonderful TV series created. Watch my video on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/3zLxLFxM1os>

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite Movie Adaptations of Novels](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite Christmas Scenes](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite Short Stories](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite Family Sagas](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Unpopular 19th Century Novels that Became Classics](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Remarkable 20th Century Books Penned Behind Bars](#)

My 5 Favourite Family Sagas



Susannah Fullerton
<https://susannahfullerton.com.au/>



5 Favourite Family Sagas

How do you define a ‘family saga’ as a literary genre? What makes such sagas enjoyable to read, how did they come to be so called, and what are some beloved examples of the genre? I discuss some of my favourites and hopefully will also inspire you to read some of the ones you have perhaps never read. Families – so complex, sometimes challenging, and yet how could we do without them?

Join me for a look at my Five Favourite Family Sagas from Novels, and discover which books I love the most. I wonder what your choices would be? Watch my video on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/mAy3Y9hZlpM>

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite Movie Adaptations of Novels](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite TV Adaptations of Novels](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite Short Stories](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite Christmas Scenes](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Unpopular 19th Century Novels that Became Classics](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Remarkable 20th Century Books Penned Behind Bars](#)

My 5 Favourite Christmas Scenes



Susannah Fullerton
<https://susannahfullerton.com.au/>



5 Favourite Christmas Scenes

Many novels and short stories feature Christmas. There can be miserable Christmas days with terrible presents and an ill-assorted group of relatives (as Harry Potter experiences), or Christmas can even be banished from the land as happens in Narnia, or Christmas can be a joyful celebration of love, good food and reunions. There are many memorable Christmas scenes in literature.

I have chosen five favourites to share with you. I hope you enjoy the Christmas messages they convey, and that they bring back memories of happy Christmases for you. Watch my video on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/cfy9Lc82y6c>

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite Movie Adaptations of Novels](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite TV Adaptations of Novels](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite Short Stories](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite Family Sagas](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Unpopular 19th Century Novels that Became Classics](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Remarkable 20th Century Books Penned Behind Bars](#)

My 5 Favourite Short Stories

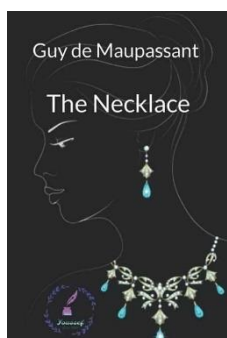


Susannah Fullerton
<https://susannahfullerton.com.au/>



5 Favourite Short Stories

The writing of a fine short story is such a very different art from writing a novel. I am not a huge reader of short stories. Generally, I prefer more ‘meat’, a story that will last me for days, but I admire the conciseness, skilled choice of every single word, and the ability to rapidly pin down a character and situation, which are the requirements of a great short story. Here are some of my top favourites:



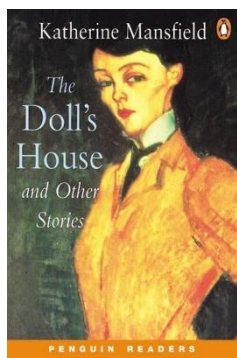
***The Necklace* by Guy de Maupassant**

This is often given as the ‘perfect example’ of a short story. It quickly sets the scene – 19th century Paris, introduces the characters, Mathilde Loisel and her husband, a lowly clerk. She longs for a better life – balls, fine clothes and jewels. When the chance comes to attend a grand ball, she buys a new dress but has to borrow a necklace from a friend. The story ends with a classic ‘twist in the tale’ and leaves you pondering for days.

I will never forget my first experience of reading this story – I felt I’d been transported to Paris and was there with the Loisels and their misfortune. Characters, plot and words are all finely chiselled. They sparkle with a hard brilliance, just like the diamonds in the story. It really is quite brilliant!

Here is a full copy of this short story for you to enjoy, [please download it now](#).

I’ve previously written about this superb short story, its author, and even my first encounter with it. You can read more, or purchase my Reader’s Guide at my [Guy de Maupassant & *The Necklace* page](#).



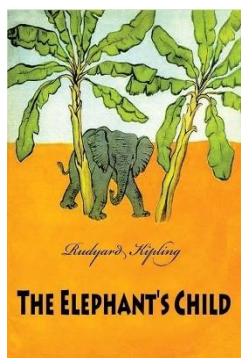
***The Doll's House* by Katherine Mansfield**

Every NZ schoolchild gets this short story to read. It is set in Wellington, at the Karori school Mansfield had herself attended, and it concerns the gift of a doll’s house to the family of the story.

The three little girls select which of their school friends will get to see the treasured doll’s house first. But two little girls will NOT be invited, the Kelvey sisters whose mother is a

washerwoman. The story is a real indictment of the snobbery and class divisions that existed in late 19th century Wellington. I find the last line almost unbearably moving.

Here is a full copy of this short story for you to enjoy, [please download it now](#) and you can learn more about Katherine Mansfield from my free YouTube talk

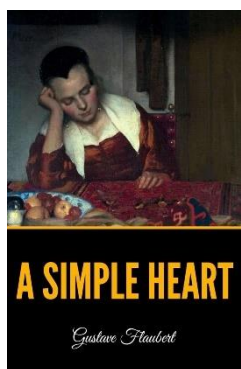


***The Elephant's Child* by Rudyard Kipling**

Anyone who becomes an adult without having encountered Kipling's "great, grey-green, greasy Limpopo River, all set about with fever trees", has had a deprived childhood.

Kipling created this story for his daughter Josephine. Later it became one of *The Just-So Stories*, so named because she insisted he tell it 'just so' every night, without changing a word. It's an 'origin story', showing how the elephant got its trunk.

Here is a full copy of this short story for you to enjoy, [please download it now](#). I've previously written about this short story too, including my first encounter with it, which is different this time. You can read more, or purchase my Reader's Guide at my [Rudyard Kipling & *The Elephant's Child* page](#).



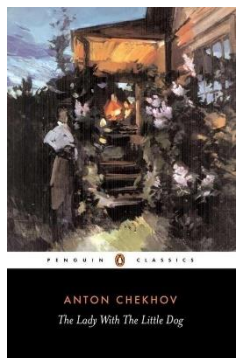
***A Simple Heart (Un Coeur Simple)* by Gustave Flaubert**

One of his *Three Tales*, this is the story of a maid, Felicité, who has hardly anyone to love.

She is given a parrot, Loulou, which she adores. When Loulou dies, she is stuffed and continues to provide company. Julian Barnes' excellent novel [Flaubert's Parrot](#) was inspired by this story. It's a moving, sad, and beautifully written short story by a writer who was an absolute master of French prose.

Here is a full copy of this short story for you to enjoy, [please download it now](#).

I've written about Gustave Flaubert, his interesting life and his extraordinary novel, *Madame Bovary*. You can read more, or purchase my Reader's Guide at my [Gustave Flaubert & *Madame Bovary* page](#).



***The Lady with the Little Dog* by Anton Chekhov**

Published in 1899, this tells of the affair between a married man and a married woman who are holidaying at Yalta. Their affair has unexpected consequences.

No real resolution is reached, but Chekhov paints so vividly both characters, their developing feelings for each other, and the petty intrigues of the Black Sea resort town.

Today a [statue of the 'lady'](#) with her little dog stands in Yalta, but I've never been to see it.

Here is a full copy of this short story for you to enjoy, [please download it now](#).

Do you have any favourite short stories? I hope you will feel inspired to read these stories and gain a greater appreciation of the art of writing one.

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite Movie Adaptations of Novels](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite TV Adaptations of Novels](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite Movie Adaptations of Novels](#)

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[*The Necklace* by Guy de Maupassant](#)

[*The Doll's House* by Katherine Mansfield](#)

[*The Elephant's Child* by Rudyard Kipling](#)

[*A Simple Heart \(Un Coeur Simple\)* by Gustave Flaubert](#)

[*The Lady with the Little Dog* by Anton Chekhov](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Guy de Maupassant & *The Necklace*](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Guy de Maupassant is born](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Katherine Mansfield & *The Doll's House*](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Literary Statue, Katherine Mansfield](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Rudyard Kipling & *The Elephant's Child*](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Rudyard Kipling is born](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Gustave Flaubert & *Madame Bovary*](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Anton Chekhov is born](#)

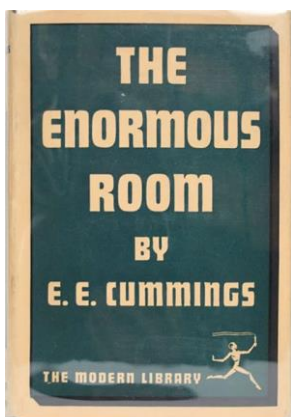


5 Remarkable 20th Century Books Penned Behind Bars

Books written while an author is in gaol can offer a unique reading experience. Prison forces introspection and provides fertile ground for creative honesty, with works often featuring personal struggle, societal injustice, or political defiance. These books frequently carry a raw sense of urgency, and become not only literary achievements but historical reflections of resilience.

The books created connect readers to the minds of the authors and the moments in which they lived and are not only literary accomplishments but also historical artifacts that document resilience and resistance. What do you think of these titles?

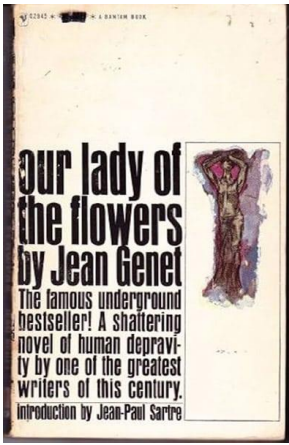
***The Enormous Room* by E.E. Cummings (1922)**



The Enormous Room, published in 1922, is a novel that recounts the author's experience in a French detention camp during World War I. Cummings finds himself confined in a large, barren room along with a variety of eccentric fellow prisoners. Rather than focusing on the hardships of imprisonment, he writes with sharp wit and modernist style to explore the strange, diverse personalities he encounters, blending dark humour with reflections on human nature.

What makes this book unique is its modernist approach, with free-form structure and experimental language and it stands as both a personal meditation on his experiences and a critique of the absurdities of war and confinement. He went on to write many poems, plays and short stories and died in 1962.

***Our Lady of the Flowers* by Jean Genet (1943)**

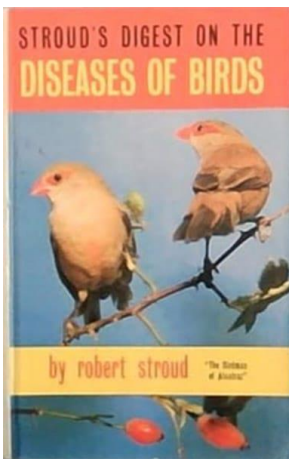


Our Lady of the Flowers is the debut novel of French writer Jean Genet. Written during his time in prison for burglary, this 1943 novel draws heavily from the author's life as a criminal and outsider. Genet's prose challenges conventional beauty and morality, celebrating the lives of those society often deems unworthy, and presenting them in a manner that is both reverent and provocative.

The story unfolds through the eyes of a fictional narrator who recalls the experiences of a cast of characters including criminals, drag queens, and prostitutes in the outcasts in Paris. Its highly erotic, often sexual structure mirrors the chaotic lives of its characters and explores themes of identity, sexuality, and gender fluidity.

Genet later became a writer and playwright, publishing five novels, three plays, and numerous poems and died in Paris in 1986.

***Digest of the Diseases of Birds* by Robert Franklin Stroud (1943)**



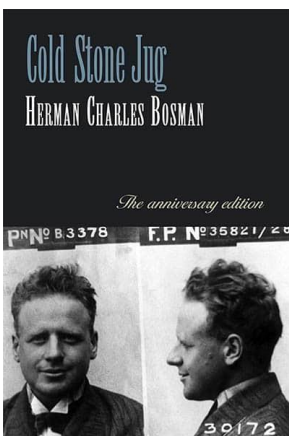
Digest of the Diseases of Birds, by Robert Franklin Stroud, was written while the author served a life sentence in solitude for his violent unruly behaviour at Leavenworth Penitentiary.

Stroud, known for his expertise as a biologist and ornithologist, had many years of experience caring for birds, and the prison thought it would be a "productive use of his time."

Stroud's meticulous and extensive research provides detailed insights into various diseases affecting birds, including symptoms, diagnoses, and treatment options. It is over 500 pages long, including illustrations by Stroud himself and was an astounding success when it was published in 1943. Stroud was transferred to Alcatraz in 1942, where he was allowed to continue his research gaining the title, "The Birdman of

Alcatraz." He was denied further right of publication and he died in 1963.

***Cold Stone Jug* by Herman Charles Bosman (1949)**



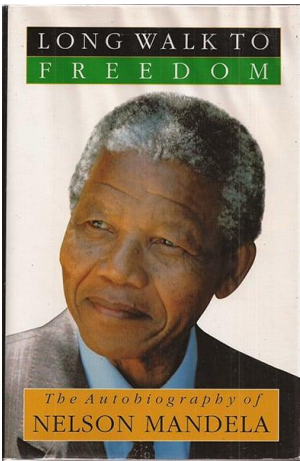
In 1926, South Africa's renowned short story writer, Herman Charles Bosman, found his life forever altered when, in the heat of an argument, he shot and killed his step-brother. Sentenced to death, his story truly begins there. He was granted parole for good behaviour after serving about four years. *Cold Stone Jug* is Bosman's gripping account of his years behind bars in the infamous Pretoria Central Prison during the late 1920s.

Amidst the brutal and bleak conditions, Bosman's sharp wit and masterful storytelling illuminate the lives of fellow prisoners and the grim reality of prison life. By turns poignant, darkly humorous, and deeply moving, *Cold Stone Jug* offers a rare glimpse into a forgotten world, with Bosman's dry humour serving as a lifeline through the horrors of his captivity. Ultimately, it is his personal journey, layered with reflection and

resilience, that lingers long after the final page is turned.

Bosman was released on parole in 1930 after serving half of his sentence. He took up a career as a journalist and was part of the literary set in Johannesburg, publishing six books during his lifetime with many more works published posthumously. He died in 1951.

Long Walk to Freedom by Nelson Mandela (1970)



Nelson Mandela started writing his autobiography [*Long Walk to Freedom*](#) in the 1970s, during his incarceration on Robben Island, in Table Bay, near Cape Town, South Africa, but prison authorities confiscated the manuscript so the book itself was not completed until much later. However, much of the material and memories he gathered during his time in prison became the foundation for the book.

After his release in 1990, Mandela resumed work on the autobiography, and it was published in 1994. *Long Walk to Freedom* chronicles Mandela's life, including his early years, political involvement, the struggle against apartheid, and his 27 years of imprisonment. The book won the Alan Paton Award in 1995 and has been published in many languages, including Afrikaans. In 2013 it was adapted into a film titled *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom*. Nelson Mandela died in 1999.

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[*The Enormous Room* by E.E. Cummings](#)

[*Our Lady of the Flowers* by Jean Genet](#)

[*Digest on the Diseases of Birds* by Robert Stroud](#)

[*Cold Stone Jug* by Herman Bosman](#)

[*Long Walk to Freedom* by Nelson Mandella](#)

[*The Enormous Room* by E.E. Cummings](#)

[*Our Lady of the Flowers* by Jean Genet](#)

[*Digest of the Diseases of Birds* by Robert Stroud](#)

[*Cold Stone Jug* by Herman Bosman](#)

[*Long Walk to Freedom* by Nelson Mandela](#)

[Alcatraz History: Robert Stroud](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Writers in Prison](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: The Mount Nelson Hotel](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite Movie Adaptations of Novels](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite TV Adaptations of Novels](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite Short Stories](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite Family Sagas](#)

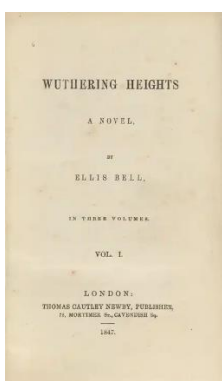
[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Unpopular 19th Century Novels that Became Classics](#)



5 Unpopular 19th Century Novels that Became Classics

Just because a book is praised today, doesn't mean this was always so. Many beloved classic novels were ignored or criticised when they were initially released.

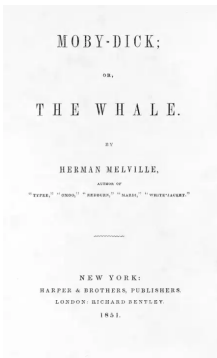
I've found five works of fiction from the 19th century that struggled to find an audience when first published, but are now considered to be classics. Each of these novels challenged the conventions and sensibilities of the time and was poorly received. Yet, as the years passed, readers and critics began to recognise their groundbreaking themes, innovative structures and lasting impact, elevating each one to its rightful place as a masterpiece. What do you think of these titles?



***Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë (1847)**

Published in under the pseudonym Ellis Bell, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, was met with mixed reviews and modest sales of only about 2,000 copies in its first year.

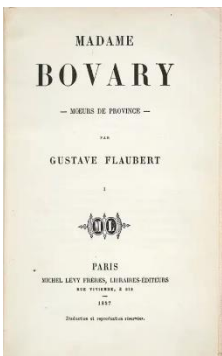
Wuthering Heights' dark atmosphere, complex structure, and exploration of destructive relationships confused many Victorian readers who were used to more moralistic literature. Consequently, the novel did not achieve significant commercial success, and Emily Brontë passed away unaware of its future impact. It was only years after her death that *Wuthering Heights* was recognised as a pioneering classic of English literature.



***Moby-Dick* by Herman Melville (1851)**

Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*, now hailed as a masterpiece of American literature, was a commercial failure when it was first published, selling only a few thousand copies during Melville's lifetime.

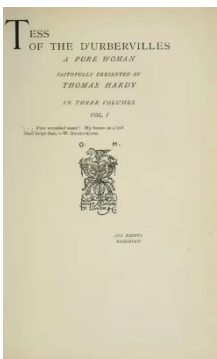
Moby-Dick's complex narrative, philosophical depth, and unconventional structure confused many early readers who were expecting a simpler adventure story. Its exploration of obsession, fate, and the human condition was not widely appreciated at the time and the novel's initial reception was lukewarm, with some critics finding it overly complex. It wasn't until decades after Herman Melville's death that *Moby-Dick* was acknowledged for its great literary significance to become one of the greatest novels in English literature.



***Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert (1857)**

Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, published in 1857, initially faced significant controversy and criticism, selling only around 6,000 copies in its first year.

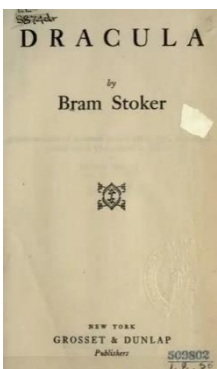
The novel's unflinching portrayal of adultery, bourgeois dissatisfaction, and the moral decay of its protagonist, Emma Bovary, shocked the conservative French society of the time. Flaubert's realistic depiction of Emma's life, devoid of the romantic idealism prevalent in literature then, was seen as scandalous and immoral by many readers and critics. The exploration of a woman's sexual desires and disillusionment with provincial life was seen as an attack on the social and moral values of the era, leading to a highly publicised obscenity trial against Flaubert, which, despite his acquittal, further fuelled the book's notoriety. It was only later, as literary tastes evolved, that *Madame Bovary* was recognized for its groundbreaking realism psychological insight, securing its place as one of the greatest novels ever written.



***Tess of the d'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy (1891)**

When Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, was first published it faced considerable controversy and a poor reception. In its initial year it only sold about 1,000 copies.

Tess of the d'Urbervilles faced significant criticism for its frank exploration of sexuality and critique of Victorian moral standards. Its depiction of a tragic heroine and social injustices shocked many contemporary readers, leading to its limited commercial success and mixed reception during Hardy's lifetime. It wasn't until later that the novel was recognised as a groundbreaking critique of its era and an important literary work.



***Dracula* by Bram Stoker (1897)**

Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, published in 1897, initially sold only about 3,000 copies. It struggled to find commercial success during Stoker's lifetime, with its true influence and legacy only becoming apparent years later.

Although *Dracula* introduced the iconic Count Dracula and set the standard for vampire fiction, its epistolary format and themes of sexuality, immigration, and fear were controversial in its time. The novel received mixed reviews and sold modestly, overshadowed by other Gothic literature. Stoker did not live to see its impact, which only became evident in the 20th century with film adaptations and a growing fascination with the vampire myth, solidifying *Dracula* as a cornerstone of horror literature.

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[*Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë](#)

[*Moby Dick* by Herman Melville](#)

[*Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert](#)

[*Tess of the D'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman* by Thomas Hardy](#)

[*Dracula* by Bram Stoker](#)

[*Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë](#)

[*Moby Dick* by Herman Melville](#)

[*Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert](#)

[*Tess of the D'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman* by Thomas Hardy](#)

[*Dracula* by Bram Stoker](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Video Talk – *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: *Madame Bovary* Reader's Guide](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite Movie Adaptations of Novels](#)

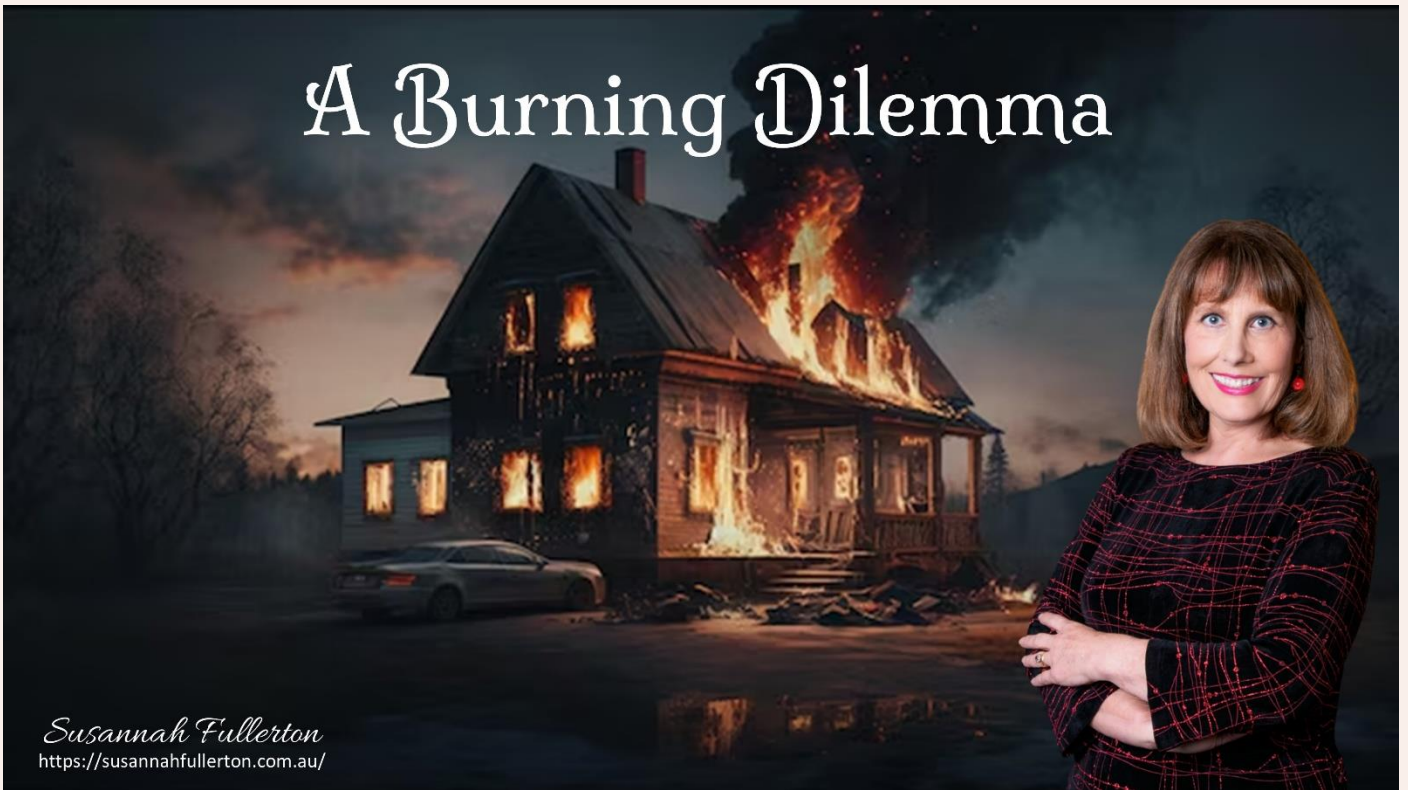
[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite TV Adaptations of Novels](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite Short Stories](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Favourite Family Sagas](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: 5 Remarkable 20th Century Books Penned Behind Bars](#)

A Burning Dilemma



Susannah Fullerton
<https://susannahfullerton.com.au/>

A Burning Dilemma

If there was a fire in your home, which book would you rush to save from the flames? Do you have a much loved volume from childhood, a book that was a gift from someone special, or simply a copy of an adored novel that always falls open at the right page?

Join me as I ask my special guest this question. Find out what their choice is and why they would save their very special copy in the case of disaster.



A Burning Dilemma for Jocelyn Harris

If there was a fire in your home, which book would you rush to save from the flames? Do you have a much loved volume from childhood, a book that was a gift from someone special, or simply a copy of an adored novel that always falls open at the right page?

I asked my first distinguished guest, Prof Jocelyn Harris, this very question. She chose an intriguing and influential novel from the 18th century, one written when the novel was still a very new or 'novel' thing. At over a million words, it is one of the longest novels in the English language.

Join me as I discuss this book with Jocelyn and find out why she would save her very special copy in the case of a fire. Watch my video on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/O9Alcm30Pf4>

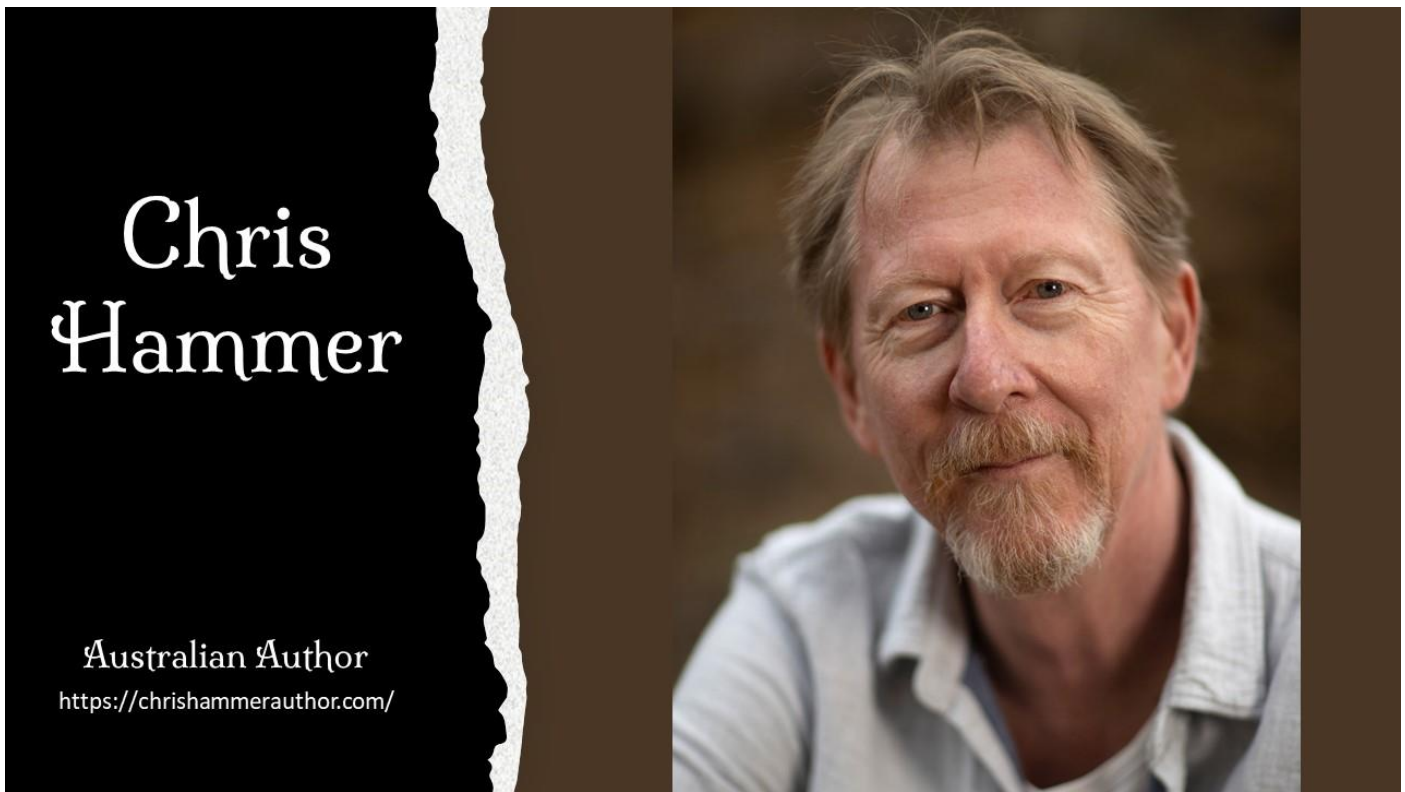
Do you agree with Jocelyn?

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Satire, Celebrity, and Politics in Jane Austen by Jocelyn Harris](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: How long should a work of fiction be?](#)

[Professor Emerita Jocelyn Harris](#)



A Burning Dilemma for Chris Hammer

If there was a fire in your home, which book would you rush to save from the flames? This time, I put this question to best-selling Australian writer Chris Hammer.

You might be surprised at his response. Was it a crime novel? Or something set in Australia in the sort of landscapes he so vividly describes in his own fiction? Or was it a childhood favourite? Watch my video on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/VlyxMWtqyfQ>

Chris Hammer is a leading Australian crime fiction novelist, author of the internationally bestselling of crime novels featuring journalist Martin Scarsden: *Scrublands*, *Silver* and *Trust*. Chris's newest award-winning series of novels features homicide detectives Nell Buchanan and Ivan Lucic: *Treasure & Dirt*, *The Tilt*, and most recently *The Seven*. Chris has also written two non-fiction books, *The River* and *The Coast*.

Scrublands was an instant bestseller upon publication in 2018, topping the Australian fiction charts. It was shortlisted for major writing awards in Australia, the UK and the United States. In the UK it was named the Sunday Times Crime Novel of the Year 2019 and won the prestigious UK Crime Writers' Association John Creasey New Blood Dagger Award. In 2023 a [TV adaptation](#) was released in Australia which has been well received.

All of Chris's books have atmospheric Australian settings, a range of colourful characters, intricate plots, descriptive language and emotional depth. They are, in short, a ripping read.

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Books written by Chris Hammer](#)

[Chris Hammer](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Bush Noir](#)

Jennifer Kloester

Australian Author &
Biographer

<https://jenniferkloester.com/>



A Burning Dilemma for Jennifer Kloester

If there was a fire in your home, which book would you rush to save from the flames? Join me as I ask my special guest this question. This time, I put this question to Australian biographer and author, Jennifer Kloester, the world authority on the novels of Georgette Heyer.

Jennifer Kloester first read Georgette Heyer's novels while living in the jungle in Papua New Guinea and re-read them while living in the desert in Bahrain. In 2004, she completed a Doctorate on Georgette Heyer and her Regency novels. Since then she has [written extensively](#) about Heyer and the Regency and has given writing workshops and public presentations in the UK, USA, Australia and New Zealand. Watch my video on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/AxeXDJW4Mbo>

Jennifer Kloester has also written fiction in her own right. Her books include two Young Adult novels, *The Cinderella Moment* and *The Rapunzel Dilemma*, published in 2013 and 2014, followed by her novel *Jane Austen's Ghost* in 2019. Her latest work is the study *The Novels of Georgette Heyer – A Celebration* published in 2023.

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Georgette Heyer's Regency World by Jennifer Kloester](#)

[Georgette Heyer by Jennifer Kloester](#)

[Jane Austen's Ghost by Jennifer Kloester](#)

[The Novels of Georgette Heyer – A Celebration by Jennifer Kloester](#)

[Novels by Georgette Heyer](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: The inimitable Georgette Heyer – A tour of her Regency England](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Georgette Heyer is born](#)

[Georgette Heyer: Complete to a Shade by Susannah Fullerton, Amanda Jones & Joanna Penglase](#)



A Burning Dilemma for Kate Forsyth

If there was a fire in your home, which book would you rush to save from the flames? Join me as I ask my special guest this question. This time, I put this question to award-winning and best-selling Australian writer, Kate Forsyth.

Kate's most valuable book is one that is very close to her heart. One that she'll treasure for ever. It's the first adult book that she ever read and is the first retelling of a myth that she read. Listen to Kate explain why this book is just so special to her. You're sure to be moved by this tale. Watch my video on YouTube:

https://youtu.be/ZuOa2d_QTLI

Dr Kate Forsyth is an award-winning author, poet, and storyteller whose work spins together art, folklore, history and myth into spellbinding new tales. Kate has been called one of 'the finest writers of this generation', and 'one of the best storytellers of our modern age.'

Kate has a BA in literature, a MA in creative writing, and a Doctorate of Creative Arts in fairy tale and mythic studies, focusing on the history, science and purpose of storytelling. She is an acclaimed teacher of creative writing and lectures on creativity, fairy tales, myths, and around the world.

You can read more about Kate on her website or connect with her on social media: Facebook: @kateforsythauthor, Twitter: @KateForsyth, Instagram: kate_forsyth_

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Kate Forsyth](#)

[Psykhe by Kate Forsyth](#)

[books by Kate Forsyth](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: *The Necklace* by Guy de Maupassant](#)

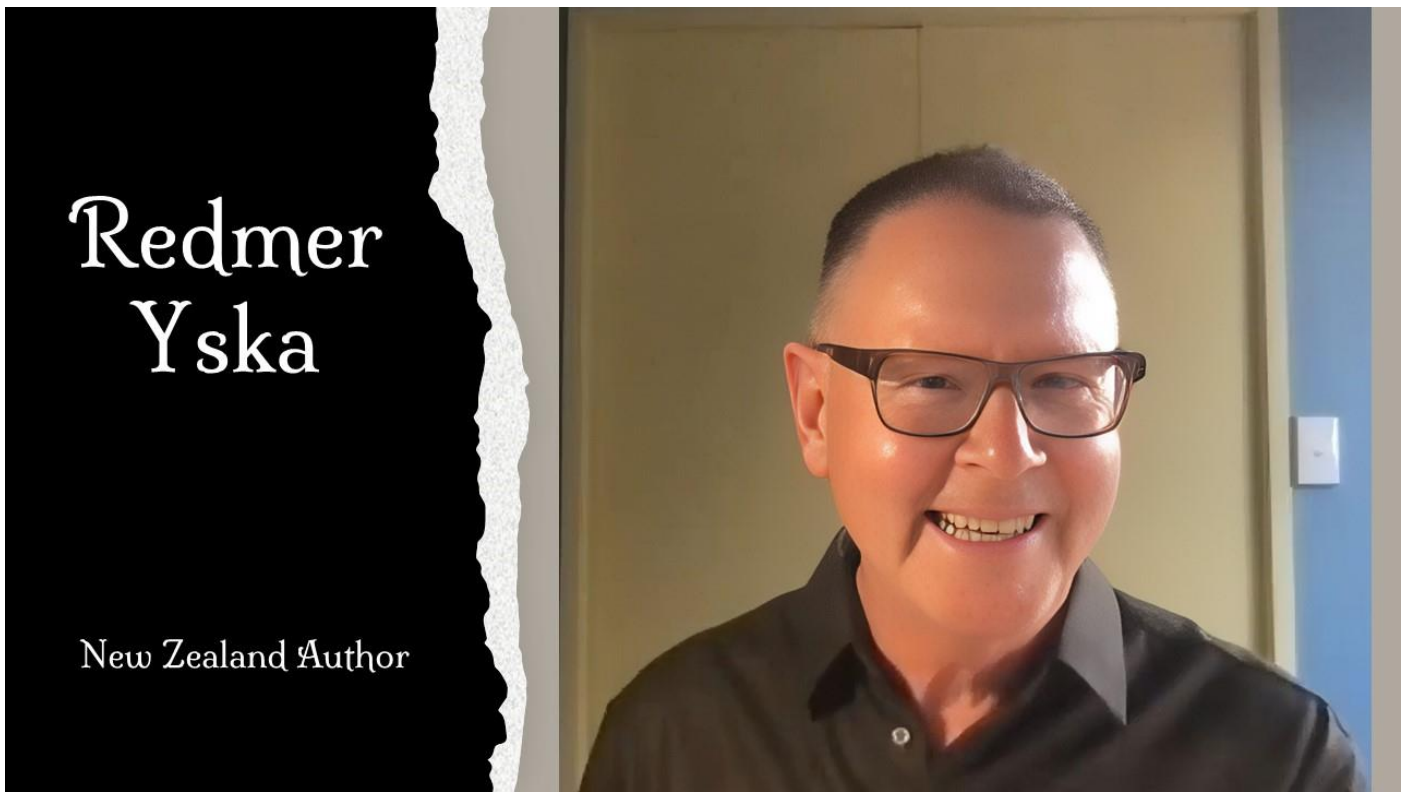
[Susannah Fullerton: Georgette Heyer video talks pack](#) featuring two presentations by Kate Forsyth

[Kate Forsyth: *Til We Have Faces, A Myth Retold* by C.S. Lewis](#)

Susannah Fullerton, © 2024

<https://susannahfullerton.com.au/>

- 119 -



A Burning Dilemma for Redmer Yska

If there was a fire in your home, which book would you rush to save from the flames? Join me as I ask my special guest this question. This time, I put this question to best-selling Kiwi writer Redmer Yska.

Redmer's most valuable book also happens to be one of my own. It is this book that directly inspired his approach to research for his highly acclaimed biographies of New Zealand's best-known short story writer, [Katherine Mansfield](#). Enjoy this short conversation and discover our common literary interest. Watch my video on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/aRPgMXjD2uQ>

Redmer Yska is a prominent New Zealand writer and historian known for his insightful exploration of New Zealand's cultural, historical, and social landscapes. His work spans various genres, including non-fiction, essays, and poetry, but he is perhaps best known for his meticulously researched historical narratives. He has a knack for uncovering forgotten or overlooked stories and bringing them to life in a compelling and accessible manner.

One of Yska's notable works is [A Strange Beautiful Excitement: Katherine Mansfield's Wellington 1888-1903](#). In this book, he delves into Katherine Mansfield's formative years, exploring how her experiences growing up in Wellington shaped her as a person and as a writer. Yska vividly portrays the vibrant cultural milieu of late 19th and early 20th century Wellington, weaving a rich understanding of the social and intellectual currents that influenced Mansfield's work. Taking out a N.Z. History Trust Fund Award in 2014 allowed him to write *A Strange Beautiful Excitement* which traces Mansfield's journeyings in France, Italy, Switzerland and Germany.

Yska's writing is characterized by its depth of research, engaging storytelling, and thoughtful analysis. His talent for blending personal narratives with broader historical contexts, allows readers to connect on both an emotional and an intellectual level.

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[*Katherine Mansfield's Europe: Station to Station* by Redmer Yska](#)
[*Strange Beautiful Excitement: Katherine Mansfield's Wellington* by Redmer Yska](#)
[*Footsteps* by Richard Holmes](#)
[Susannah Fullerton: Katherine Mansfield, *The Doll's House* video talk](#)
[Susannah Fullerton: Finding Katherine Mansfield, Audio CD](#)
[Susannah Fullerton: A Cracking Start to 2018](#)
[Susannah Fullerton: Cassandra and Katherine](#)
[Susannah Fullerton: Quality, quirkiness and reading satisfaction](#)
[Susannah Fullerton: Katherine Mansfield marries \(briefly\)](#)
[Susannah Fullerton: Katherine Mansfield dies](#)
[Susannah Fullerton: Katherine Mansfield Statue](#)
[Susannah Fullerton: Of Claire Tomalin and Katherine Mansfield](#)
[Katherine Mansfield Society](#)
[Victoria University of Wellington: Works by Katherine Mansfield](#)

Sir Roger Hall

New Zealand
Playwrite



A Burning Dilemma for Sir Roger Hall

If there was a fire in your home, which book would you rush to save from the flames. Join me as I ask my special guest this question. This time, I put this question to New Zealand's most successful playwright, [Sir Roger Hall](#). Watch my video on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/bJ9ikVrT4gk>

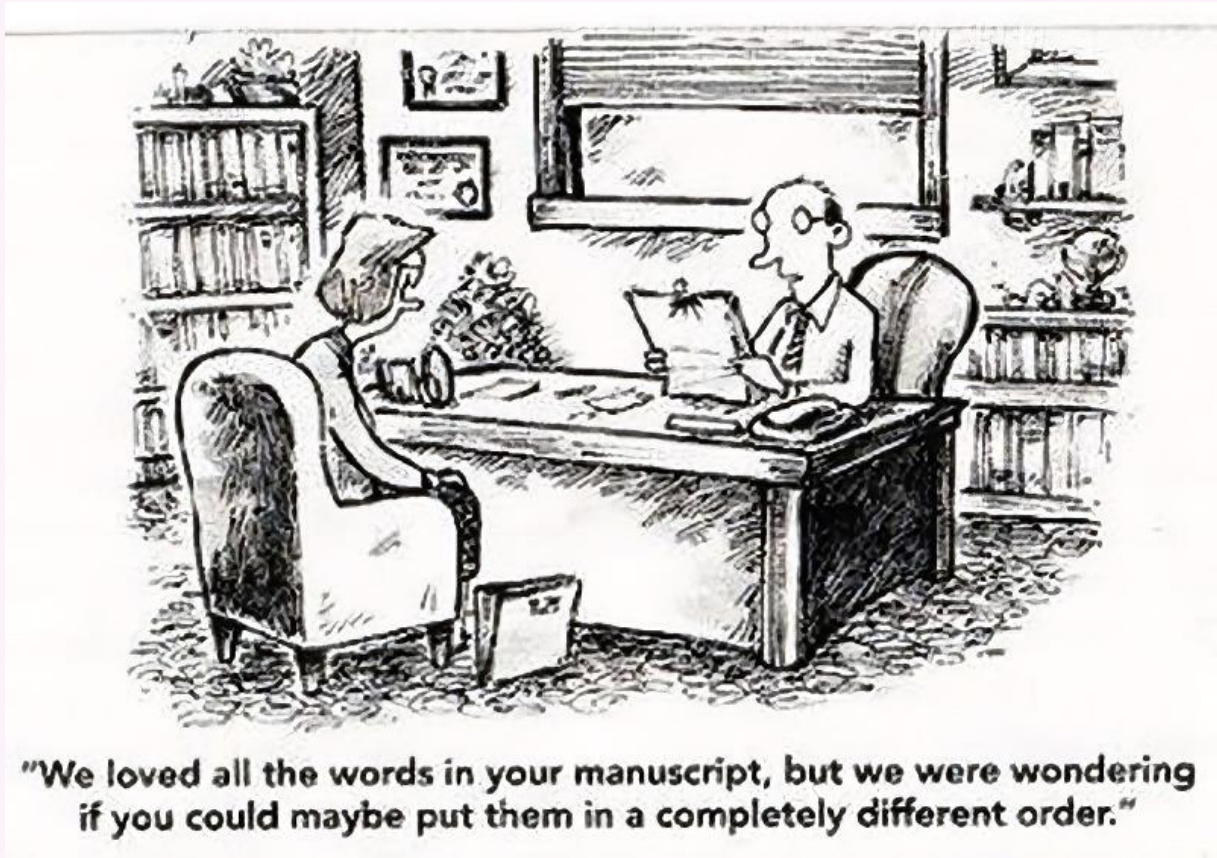
Since 1976 Hall's plays have been box office sensations. His first play for the stage was the smash hit *Glide Time* in Wellington, NZ. It went on to become a popular TV series [Gliding On](#), lampooning the office foibles of the civil service, long before similar TV series became popular.

Hall has written for the stage, alongside scriptwriting for film and television and brings a comedic edge to his writing. His best-known works internationally are *Middle-Age Spread* (1978) and *Conjugal Rites* (1991).

In the 2019 Queen's Birthday Honours, Hall was promoted to Knight Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit, for services to theatre.

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[NZ on Screen: Roger Hall](#)



The Playground

Explore my treasure trove of bookish mind-benders that will challenge your wits and tickle your brain. Here is your passport to quizzes, humour, and jigsaw puzzles, where every piece tells a literary story (often more than first meets the eye).



Heroes in Literature

In literature, a hero is usually a character with noble qualities such as courage, selflessness, and resilience. They undertake extraordinary journeys or challenges to overcome adversity and achieve a higher moral purpose. They can inspire readers and serve as a symbol of hope and the triumph of good over evil within the story.

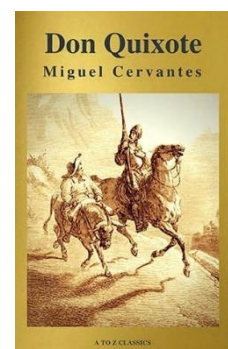
How well do you know your literary heroes? How many questions can you answer?

- 1) Which literary hero rejoices in the Christian name of Lemuel?
- 2) Which young hero is bashed over the head with a slate?
- 3) In which novel do you meet a hero named Angel Clare?
- 4) In which country would you find Hans Castorp?
- 5) Philip Carey was created by which novelist?
- 6) Which hero eats a gorgonzola sandwich and drinks a glass of burgundy for his lunch?
- 7) Which hero is the Knight of the Doleful Countenance?
- 8) In which novel do you find Sir Percy Blakeney?
- 9) In which George Orwell novel is Winston Smith a hero?
- 10) Who created Henry Tilney?

How well do you know your heroes in literature? [You can check your answers here.](#)

A Spanish hero

Don Quixote is a Spanish novel by Miguel de Cervantes, originally published in two parts, in 1605 and 1615. Considered a founding work of Western literature, it is often labelled as the first modern novel and one of the greatest works ever written. It is also one of the most-translated books in the world and one of the best-selling novels of all time.



The title character, Don Quixote, is driven by a strong sense of idealism and the chivalric code of knights-errant from medieval romances. He believes in justice, honour, and the protection of the helpless, making him a true literary hero.

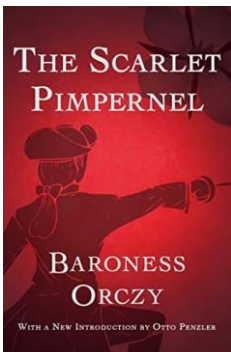
In 1955, artist Pablo Picasso made a sketch of the Spanish literary hero for the French weekly journal *Les Lettres Françaises* in celebration of the 350th anniversary of the publication of the first part of the novel *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes.

Complete this jigsaw puzzle to reveal the sketch which is very different from Picasso's other works. [Go here](#), or just click the image. Come back here and post your time in a comment if you like. How fast will you be?

<https://jigex.com/TMAY5>



A French hero



The Scarlet Pimpernel, published in 1905, is the first novel in a series of historical fiction by Baroness Orczy. It was written after her stage play of the same title enjoyed a long run in London, having opened in 1903. It is credited with popularizing the concept of a hero with a secret identity and a double life.

The protagonist, Sir Percy Blakeney, appears to be a foppish and clueless English aristocrat, but in reality, he is a clever and daring rescuer of French aristocrats during the Reign of Terror in the French Revolution. This dual identity theme has since become a popular trope in literature, particularly in the superhero genre. *The Scarlet Pimpernel* is

considered one of the earliest examples of this literary motif and has had a lasting influence on subsequent works in various mediums.

The Scarlet Pimpernel (1934 London films adaptation) starring Merle Oberon and Leslie Howard. Watch in full here. <https://dai.ly/x21we7l>

The Scarlet Pimpernel cartoon short was released by Warner Bros on 4 March 1950 featuring Daffy Duck. In a story within a story, Daffy Duck despairs of being typecast in comedic roles and pitches a script to Warner Bros' chief called 'The Scarlet Pimpernel', which he wrote under the name "Daffy Dumas Duck". There really isn't much of a connection with the Baroness Orczy novel, but it's classic Looney Tunes and so much fun to watch. <https://youtu.be/Ei6RYJWw5Q>

The Scarlet Pimpernel is a 1950 Warner Bros. Looney Tunes theatrical cartoon short, directed by Chuck Jones and written by Michael Maltese. Watch (most of) it here. <https://youtu.be/Ei6RYJWw5Q>



Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

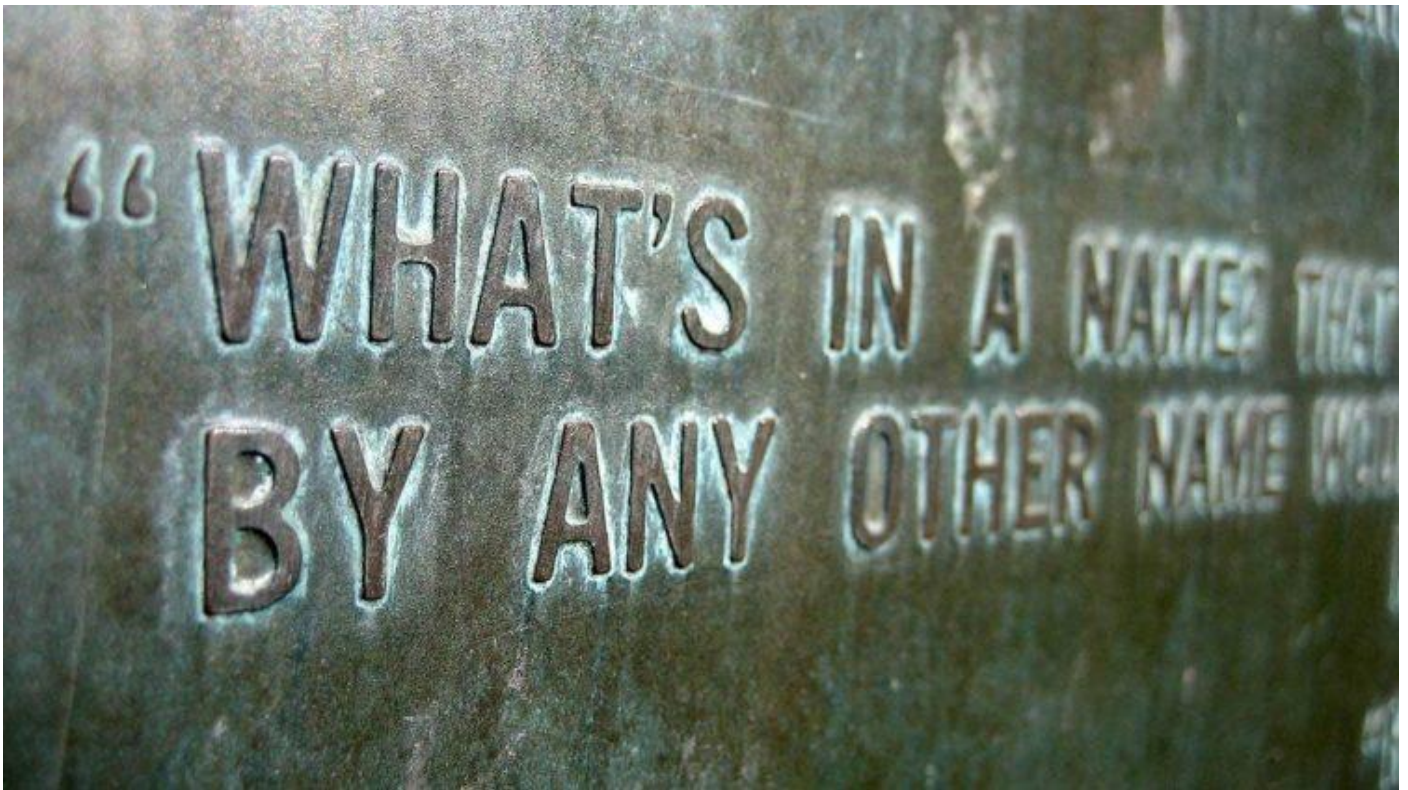
[Project Gutenberg: *The Scarlet Pimpernel* by by Baroness Orczy](#)

[Project Gutenberg: *Don Quixote* by Miguel De Cervantes](#)

[Project Gutenberg: *The Scarlet Pimpernel* by by Baroness Orczy](#)

[The Scarlet Pimpernel by Baroness Orczy](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: *Don Quixote* is first published](#)



What's in a name?

Great names in fiction can come from anywhere. Sometimes they are accidental, sometimes they are taken from real life people, places, or jobs, and often they serve the purpose of providing depth to a character or describing a place. In fact, there's even a name for literary names like this – they are known as [Cratylic names](#).

Names that are unexpected and funny usually add to our enjoyment of reading a story. Try these games with literary names.

Test your names knowledge

Let's begin with a quiz. How many can you answer?

- 1) What is the only train station in the world named after a novel?
- 2) Which author invented the girl's name Wendy?
- 3) Which village in England was named for a novel and is also the only place name in Britain to include an exclamation mark?
- 4) Which 18th century writer invented the girl's name Vanessa?
- 5) The town of Illiers in northern France added what to its name because of Marcel Proust?
- 6) Which girl's name was invented by poet Sir Philip Sidney and then popularised by novelist Samuel Richardson?
- 7) A 'gamp' is a type of umbrella. After which fictional character was it named?
- 8) The town of Pippa Passes in Kentucky was named for a poem by which poet?
- 9) What chain of discount stores in Japan was named for a famous fictional character?
- 10) The suburb of Tarzana in the Los Angeles region was named for which writer who once had a ranch there?

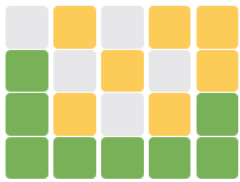
Ready to check your answers? [Look here](#).

The master of naming

Charles Dickens was a master of storytelling whose meticulously crafted characters have endured through generations. Renowned for his keen observational skills and acute understanding of human nature, the names of his characters serve as a window into his fictional worlds.

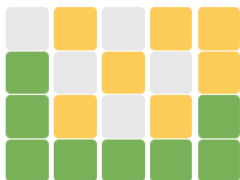
From the eloquent to the eccentric, names such as Oliver Twist, Uriah Heep, Nicholas Nickleby, Philip Pirrip, and Pumblechook, Dickens' characters are etched in the annals of literature with names that often carry deeper significance and symbolic weight.

Most people are familiar with the word game, [Wordle](#). Here I've got 2 Wordle games for you to try. Once you've found the correct answer in both of them you will have revealed the name of one of Dickens' most memorable characters, a street-smart pickpocket.



Round 1

[Solve this Wordle Game](#) to discover the first name of a Charles Dickens character.
[Click here.](#)



Round 2

[Solve this Wordle Game](#) to discover the second name of a Charles Dickens character.
[Click here.](#)

Not sure how to play Wordle? [Watch this short video.](#)

Ready to check your answers? [Look here.](#)

Bond Girls

Fictional British Secret Service agent, James Bond, was created in 1953 by writer Ian Fleming, who featured the character in twelve novels and two short-story collections. After Fleming's death in 1964, eight other authors have written authorised Bond novels or novelisations. There has been a total of 27 James Bond movies beginning in 1962 with the release of *Dr No*, until *No Time to Die* in 2021.

The films are renowned for Bond's relationships with women, who are popularly referred to as "Bond girls". Bond girls vary from scantily clad mistresses, those who entertain 007 for one night, and those who act as henchmen and villains, fighting Bond at his own game. The best-known characteristic of Bond girls, apart from their beauty, is their double-entendre names, such as Pussy Galore, Plenty O'Toole, Holly Goodhead, or Xenia Onatopp.



Pippi Longstocking has a seriously interesting name



Pippi Longstocking was named by Astrid Lindgren's daughter Karin, who asked her mother for a get-well story when she was off school. In the original Swedish language books her full name is given as **Pippilotta Viktualia Rullgardina Krusmynta Efraimsdotter Långstrump**.

Although Pippi's surname Långstrump – literally long stocking – translates easily into other languages, her personal names are less easily translated, and one of them, *Efraimsdotter*, (meaning a personal name based on the given name of one's father) is unfamiliar in many cultures.

As of 2017, the Pippi books had been translated into 100 languages. Here are the character's names in some [languages other than English](#).

Have you seen my 60-minute video talk about [Astrid Lindgren and Pippi Longstocking](#)? Learn more about the unconventional, strong woman who created Pippi, and how the beloved tale came into being.

Have you successfully solved these puzzles about literary names? [You can check your answers here](#).

Selected links for relevant websites, books, movies, videos, and more.

[Pippi Longstocking by Astrid Lindgren](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Charles Dickens](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: Meet A Book Addict – Ian Fleming](#)

[Ploughshares: A Knack for Names](#)

[The Charles Dickens Page: Charles Dickens Characters](#)

[007 James: List of All James Bond Girls](#)

[Pippi Longstocking character at Astrid Lindgren official site](#)



Literary Love and Lust

Throughout literary history, countless stories have captured the essence of romance, weaving unforgettable narratives around the lives of iconic couples. On this page, you can test your knowledge of some of literature's most famous pairs of lovers. Get ready to match names to their beloved counterparts and discover how well you know these timeless literary couples!

Who was it?

Let's begin with a quiz. You can enter your answers in the fields, or grab a pen and paper and write them down. Check yourself with the [answer sheet](#). How many can you answer?

- 1) Who was enchanted by Sarah Woodruff?
- 2) Who wrote these lines: "Then worms shall try / That long preserv'd virginity: / And your quaint honour turn to dust; / And into ashes all my lust."
- 3) Whose passion for Daisy Buchanan ended up as a case of murder?
- 4) Which writer claimed that "older women are the best because they always think they may be doing it for the last time"?
- 5) "Reader, I married him." Who married whom?
- 6) Which poet wrote: "Man's love is of man's life a part; / It is a woman's whole existence."
- 7) David Copperfield falls in love at first sight with Dora Spenlow. In whose modernised version of the novel does a character fall in love at first sight with Dori?
- 8) Who had an incestuous affair with his sister Franny?
- 9) Who has a passionate affair with Philip Bosinney?
- 10) In which Shakespeare play is the line: "Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight?"

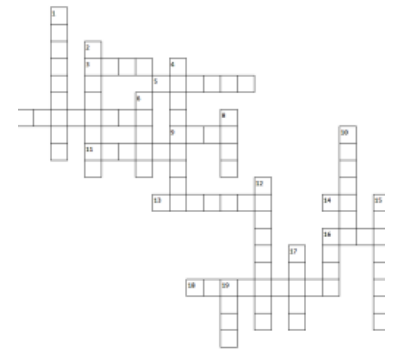
Ready to check your answers? [Look here](#).

Who does he love?

When the name Mr Darcy is mentioned, almost anyone can immediately name his love interest, who, of course is Elizabeth Bennet from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Likewise Romeo's lover is named Juliet.

To complete this crossword puzzle the answer to each clue will be the first name of the female lover in each of these famous literary couples. Can you get them all?

This puzzle can be solved online by clicking in the answer square and typing directly into the puzzle. If your answer is correct the word will turn green. Have a [look here for the online puzzle](#) or click this image.



But if you'd rather use a pen and paper, here is a [printable version for you to solve offline](#).

Ready to check who they are? [Look here](#).

Star-crossed lovers

In the bustling streets of Verona, a clandestine romance ignites amidst the bitter feud between two noble families, threatening to unravel the fabric of their society. As passion clashes with tradition, secrets are unveiled, and loyalties are tested, culminating in a tumultuous tale of love, betrayal, and the inexorable march of fate. It's a story that we all know well.

Complete this jigsaw puzzle to reveal a painting of the star-crossed lovers who find themselves ensnared in a whirlwind of passion and tragedy. [Go here](#), or just click the image.



Ready to check your answers? [Look here](#).

Some like it spicy

A surge of interest in steamy reads on TikTok's community of book lovers, [BookTok](#), highlights a liberating truth: indulging in the world of erotic novels is not only enjoyable but also entirely normal. Lusty literature can take a reader into a place where sensuality and literature intertwine seamlessly, and many of these novels straddle the line between genre fiction and literary masterpieces.

So, I've found some lists to help you delve into this world and discover books where passion meets prose and the boundaries of desire are only bound by the limits of imagination. I'm not admitting to having read all of these books, so they are not my personal recommendations – read them only if you dare ...

[Seven of literature's lustiest lovers](#)

[36 of the best erotic novels of all time](#)

[The 30 Best Erotic Novels to Curl Up With](#)

Have you successfully solved these puzzles about literary lovers? [You can check your answers here](#).



Children's Books

Like me, you probably have fond memories of your favourite childhood books, but how well do you **really** know them? Use this page to test your knowledge of the beloved characters and classic adventures that have captivated generations of children.

General Knowledge Quiz

Let's begin with a general knowledge quiz. How many can you answer correctly?

- 1) Which orphan heroine is adopted by the Cuthberts?
- 2) Name the Famous Five?
- 3) What was the name of the main family in the *Mary Poppins* books?
- 4) Which author created an ugly sand-fairy called a Psammead?
- 5) Which fictional bear is usually seen wearing checked trousers?
- 6) Who wrote *Little House in the Big Woods*?
- 7) What are the *Where's Wally* books called in the USA?
- 8) Which book is considered to be the first picture book to feature a black child?
- 9) To whom does George give his marvellous medicine?
- 10) In which country is *The Good Master* set?

Ready to check your answers? [Look here](#).

Eagle Eye Challenge

There are six differences in these two pictures. Can you spot them? Click on the image to enlarge it, or you can download [a printable version here](#).

This image is from the cover of a classic children's book that was printed in 1998, although the book was originally published in 1950.



Now that you've done the fun bit, validate your smarts by answering these questions.

- 1) Name the book. 2) Name the author. 3) What are the girl's names?

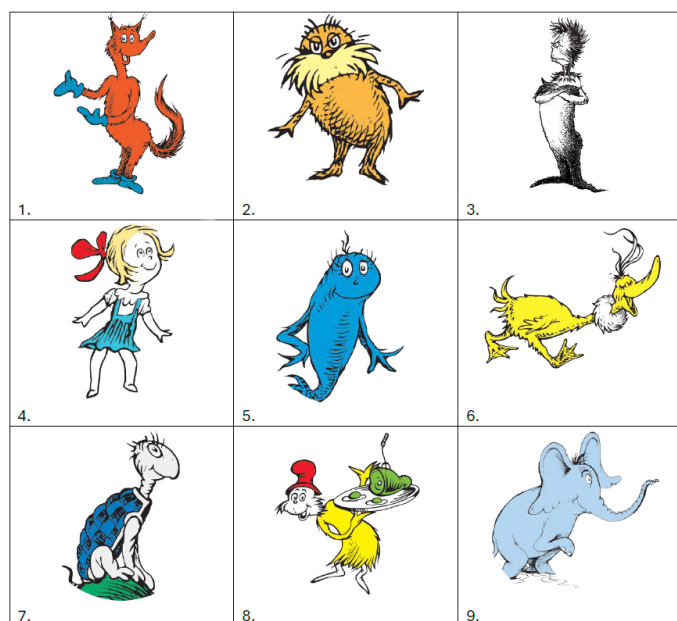
Ready to check your answers? [Look here.](#)

Name These Nine

You only need to look once to recognise where these characters live – deep within the pages of the books of Dr Seuss, aka Theodor Seuss Geisel. Dr Seuss wrote and illustrated 44 children's books that have become staples for many children and their parents. His rhyming text and his outlandish creatures have become instantly recognisable. So, do you recognise these nine characters? Your job here is to Name the Nine.

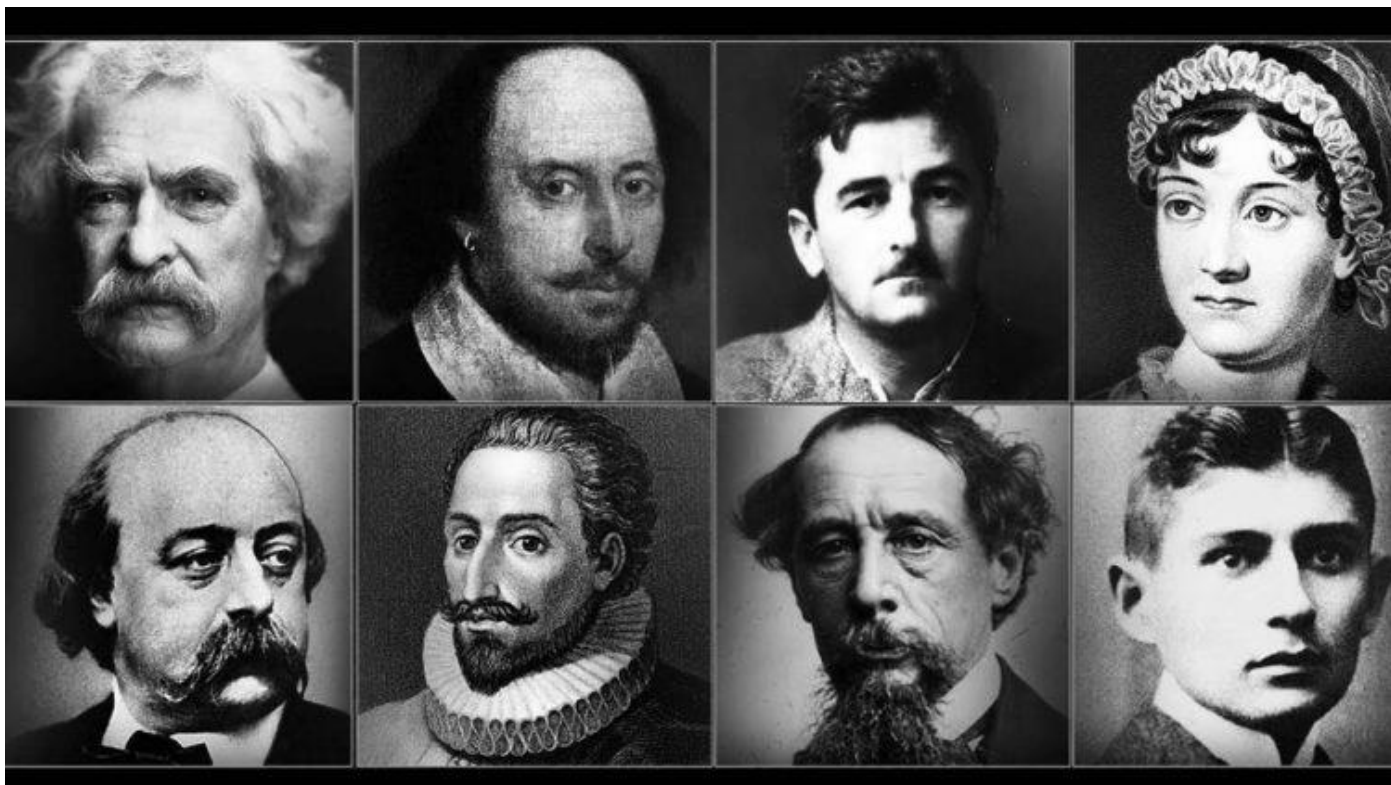
To help, a names list is below. You can click the image for a larger version or download [a printable version here.](#)

- Blue Fish
- Going-North-Zax
- Duck-Dog
- Fox in Socks
- Mack
- Sam I Am
- Horton
- The Lorax
- Sally



Have you successfully solved these puzzles about children's literature? [You can check your answers here.](#)

[Susannah Fullerton: The Cat in the Hat is first published](#)



Acclaimed Authors

Let's test your knowledge of literature's legendary luminaries. I give you three tantalising quizzes, each dedicated to testing your knowledge about classic literary titans. How well do you know them? Solve online or download the printable versions, ready your pens, and prepare your minds to recall the authors whose names are etched in history.

Classic writers quiz

Let's begin with a general knowledge quiz. How many can you answer correctly?

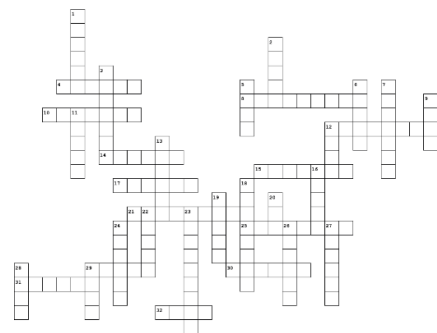
- 1) Which Victorian novelist was responsible for introducing the pillar post box into Britain?
- 2) Name four English poets whose first name was John.
- 3) Which famous author grew up in Merrion Square, Dublin?
- 4) Which realist novelist was friendly with Cézanne, then ruined the friendship by putting him into a novel?
- 5) Whose mother was a poor laundress in Odense?
- 6) Who wrote *The Faerie Queene*?
- 7) What nationality was poet Phillis Wheatley?
- 8) For which novel did Edith Wharton win the Pulitzer Prize?
- 9) Who was the youngest author ever to win the Nobel Prize for Literature?
- 10) Whose difficult marriage has recently been examined in a book by a popular Australian writer?

Ready to check your answers? [Look here.](#)

What's their given name?

How well do you know your authors? The clues to this puzzle are all surnames of well known authors. To complete the grid, all you need to know are their given names. Can you name them all?

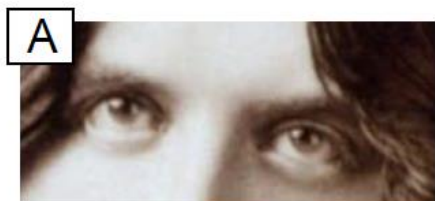
This puzzle can be solved online by clicking in the answer square and typing directly into the puzzle. If your answer is correct the word will turn green. Have a [look here for the online puzzle](#) or click this image.



But if you'd rather use a pen and paper, here is a [printable version for you to solve offline](#). Ready to check who they are? [Look here](#).

The eyes have it

They say that people are recognisable by their eyes. All of the eyes on this page belong to authors who are frequently mentioned on my website. Can you identify them? I have provided all the names to help you. You can click the image for a larger version or download [a printable version here](#).



Names list:

? Alcott
? Austen
? Christie
? Dickens

? Dumas
? Fullerton
? Gaskell
? Hugo

? Keats
? Mansfield
? Pepys
? Stevenson

? Thackeray
? Waugh
? Wilde

Have you successfully worked out who's who with these classic writers? [You can check your answers here](#).

[Search this website for more about these writers](#)



Literary Houses

Houses can play a dramatic part in a novel. They can reflect the personality of the owner, create atmosphere, emphasise wealth and social standing, and they can provide shelter and comfort, or be horribly uncomfortable. Enjoy this selection of Literary Houses.

Quick quiz

Let's begin with a general knowledge quiz. How well do you know your literary houses and their owners? Enter your answers in the fields, and check yourself with the answer sheet. How many can you answer correctly?

- 1) Who lives at Thrushcross Grange?
- 2) Who lives at Tara?
- 3) Which story by Edgar Allan Poe deals with the fall of a house?
- 4) There are 16 novels about the Whiteoak family. What is the name of their house?
- 5) Where does Aunt Ada Doom live?
- 6) What is found by the children living at Misselthwaite Manor?
- 7) Charles, a British officer, finds himself on a wartime billet at which palatial home?
- 8) Who lives at Hartfield?
- 9) What is the name of Maxim de Winter's home?
- 10) Which family lives at Misrule?
- 11) Whose home is on Privet Drive?
- 12) Who wrote about her home on the prairie?

Ready to check your answers? [Look here.](#)

Which house is this?

Complete this jigsaw puzzle to reveal a property that was used in a 2021 movie adaptation of one of literature's most famous stories where the house is a major player in the narrative.

Do the puzzle here: <https://jigex.com/mKM44> , or just click the image.

Can you name this literary house? [You can check your answer here.](#)



Two literary houses

Taking the theme of literary houses one step further, here are two different “book houses”.

From Grand Designs, UK ... it was just an unloved farm building until it was transformed into the ultimate home library: <https://youtu.be/7TSKuQOvpP8>

Now, from a spectacular house made “for” books, here is one made “of” books: <https://youtu.be/C6Ar8Nhl0QA>

How did you go with the quiz and the puzzle? [You can check your answers here.](#)

Susannah's 'Notes From A Book Addict'

Your premier guide to exploring the literary world

scan me



Susannah Fullerton

<https://susannahfullerton.com.au/>

