



30 Facts About Books for National Trivia Day

By Bianca Smith • January 04, 2018



We love the random silly holidays in the ThriftBooks office. And today's is especially fun. It's **National Trivia Day**. That one day of the year where we get to geek out over knowledge tidbits.

Here are 30 facts about books to share and show how smart you are.

When **E.B. White** was asked why he wrote **Charlotte's Web**, he responded with a two and a half page letter. It ended with "I haven't told why I wrote the book, but I haven't told why I sneeze, either. A book is a sneeze." Yeah, we don't know either.

Winnie-the-Pooh, **Mrs Piggie-Wiggle's Farm**, and **The Hobbit** were all written as bedtime stories for each authors' respective children. I'm not sure how effective **The Hobbit** was to get children to sleep. Scary dragons and cave chases would have many keeping the light on.

Green Eggs and Ham contains only 50 unique words. It was written for a bet with **Dr Seuss'** editor, who lost.

We're curious who worked out the math on this one. Since it was first published in 1969, a copy of **The Very Hungry Caterpillar** has sold every minute.

Fahrenheit 451 was named after the temperature paper burns. **Ray Bradbury** called a local fire station to ask. He was put on hold while the firemen burned a book, then reported back the temperature. While we don't condone burning books, this was clever. And we don't know the name of the burned book.

The **bestselling novel of all time** is **Don Quixote** by **Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra** with more than 500 million copies sold. The bestselling book of all time is the Bible.

Susan Eloise Hinton embraced the idea **"to write the book you want to read."** She was 15 and frustrated with the lack of relatable pop culture being produced for teens when she wrote **The Outsiders**. Bonus fact: she used her initials to avoid any gender bias from a woman writing novels.

Have you ever seen a melancholy parrot? **Edgar Allan Poe** originally wanted a parrot in his poem. We agree that a raven repeating "nevermore" is a better fit.

Vladimir Nabokov's novel, **Lolita**, has always been shrouded in controversy. Only one press was willing to publish his book in 1955. After the novel became a hit in the United States, Putnam changed its mind and published the novel.

We all knew that **C.S. Lewis** and **J.R.R. Tolkien** were BFFs, but did you know the protagonist in **Out of the Silent Planet** was **modeled after J.R.R. Tolkien**?

The dog ate John Steinbeck's homework. No, really, it did. The original manuscript for **Of Mice and Men** was **eaten by John Steinbeck's puppy**. He (John, not the puppy) said, "I was pretty mad, but the poor little fellow may have been acting critically."

We've heard some crazy reasons why authors won't adapt their books into movies, but Gabriel García Márquez's is one of the best. He refused to allow **One Hundred Years of Solitude** to be adapted because **"they would cast someone like Robert Redford and most of us do not have relatives who look like Robert Redford."** He had a point.

To Kill a Mockingbird is Harper Lee's only novel, even though it won a Pulitzer Prize and spent 88 weeks on the bestseller list. **Go Set a Watchman** was published months before Harper's 2016 death, but while being called a sequel was actually a first draft of **To Kill a Mockingbird**, thus the one novel.

Ernest Hemingway hated the original cover of F. Scott Fitzgerald's **The Great Gatsby**. Scott essentially **told Ernest to not judge a book by its cover**—our paraphrasing.

The original title of **Pride and Prejudice** was First Impressions. It was changed (along with many other edits) when publishers first rejected the novel. **Jane Austen made the revisions** between 1811 and 1812.

Do you know the monster in **Frankenstein's** name? No, it's not Frankenstein, but many mistakenly think it is. He's never given a name, but during a reading of the book, **Mary Shelley once referred to him as Adam**.

Singer Carly Simon's dad is the Simon of **Simon and Schuster**. He co-founded the company. It's a talented family.

Have you wondered how **Curious George** got to America? He was captured in Africa by The Man with the Yellow Hat —with his yellow hat.

Do you think you could read every book that's been published? In 2010, **Google estimated 129,864,880 million books had been published**. That was eight years ago, and the rise of self-publishing would further increase the number. The Mental Floss team ran some numbers and estimates another **755,755 new titles are published annually worldwide**.

Bill Gates is said to have **paid \$30.8 million** for a copy of **Codex Leicester** by **Leonardo Da Vinci**. It's the most expensive book sold.

There's enough **Harry Potter** trivia to fill a seven book series, but a rarer fact that has changed many lives involves **The Tales of Beedle the Bard**. J.K. Rowling hand-wrote seven copies of the short stories collection and had them bound with jewel-encrusted covers. Six went to people who helped her with Harry's journey, and the **final copy was auctioned for £1.95m (\$3.98 million)**. Proceeds went to a Romanian orphanage.

The longest sentence ever printed is 823 words. We don't recommend using it to justify your run-on sentences, but it's a legit sentence that exists in **Victor Hugo's Les Misérables**.

Reports show adults who read literature on a regular basis are more than two-and-a-half times as likely to do volunteer or charity work, and over one-and-a-half times as likely to participate in sporting activities. Who says we hide away in books?

Many authors have used pen names over the years. **Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy's** author **John le Carré**, is actually named David John Moore Cornwell.

When Scott Kelly left for a year on the International Space Station, a copy of **Endurance** by **Alfred Lansing** was in his luggage. Other books in the NASA library include **A Tale of Two Cities** by **Charles Dickens**, **20,000 Leagues Under the Sea** by **Jules Verne**, and **London Bridges** by **James Patterson**.

We did say we'd just give one Harry Potter fact, but we couldn't resist. Because, wizards. The Harry Potter books are said to be the **most banned books in America because of religious complaints**. This includes a Georgian mom taking the fight to the Gwinnett Superior Court on appeal despite having never read the books. Discover more Banned Books at the **American Library Association**.

Books mentioned in this article



Charlotte's Web

E.B. White
from: **\$3.59**



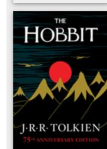
Winnie-the-Pooh

A.A. Milne
from: **\$3.99**



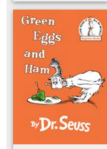
Mrs. Piggie-Wiggle's Farm

Betty MacDonald
from: **\$3.59**



The Hobbit

J.R.R. Tolkien
from: **\$3.59**



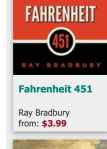
Green Eggs and Ham

Dr. Seuss
from: **\$3.59**



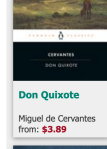
The Very Hungry Caterpillar

Eric Carle
from: **\$3.59**



Fahrenheit 451

Ray Bradbury
from: **\$3.99**



Don Quixote

Miguel de Cervantes
from: **\$3.89**



The M6 toll road in the United Kingdom was built on two-and-a-half million copies of pulped **Mills & Boon romance novels**. Some say it's a better use for pulp fiction.

On the list of things we're not going to question, the **record for most people balancing books on their heads at the same place and time** is 998 in Sydney, Australia, in 2012.

There's a chance the copyright on **J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan** will never expire. In 1929, he gifted his rights to the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children, which have benefited the organization ever since. As an organization, there's no natural life to calculate the copyright period from.

On a Dear Hank and John podcast episode, author **John Green** admits to writing fan fiction and publishing it online. He refuses to divulge his pen name.

Alas, a mass of book trivia won't help you win a Trivia Contest at the pub. Here's a **hilarious list of trivia facts** that aren't book related for that.

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