

MANORAMA

TELL ME WHY

50



100

GREAT WRITERS

100 + FACTS ABOUT THE GREAT WRITERS OF THE WORLD

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Tel : 0481 - 2563721 - 22-23,
Fax: ++91- 481 - 2564393
E mail: subscription@mmp.in
childrensdivision@mmp.in

NEW DELHI: M.M. Publications Ltd.,
68/ 61st Floor, Tolstoy Lane, Janpath,
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MUMBAI: Malayala Manorama,
A-404 Marathon Innova, A Wing 4th Floor,
Off. Ganpat Rao Kadam Marg, Opp. Peninsula
Corporate Park, Lower Parel (West),
Mumbai- 400013. Tel: 022 - 24911693 /
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KOLKATA: Malayala Manorama,
No. 43/2 -B, Suhasini Ganguli Sarani, 1st Floor,
Kolkata - 700 025. Tel: 033 - 24556995,
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PATNA: Malayala Manorama,
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Patna-800 001. Tel: 0612 - 2233809

HYDERABAD: Malayala Manorama,
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Tel: 040 - 23314168, 23324692
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Tel: 22247735 / 36

CHENNAI: Malayala Manorama,
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Tel: 28542607 (Circulation-Direct),
28542601 to 06 (Board Line)
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COIMBATORE: Malayala Manorama,
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CHANDIGARH: Malayala Manorama,
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COCHIN: P.B. No. 5008,
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Great Writers of the World

Ever since letters were invented, Man tried to put down his feelings and impressions of the world. This was how the first seeds of literature were sown. They sprouted, and grew to become an integral part of human culture and history.

The medium of writing evolved from rock carvings and clay tablets, through papyrus scrolls and palm leaves, to paper and printing on a mass scale. The content of writing changed too, to encompass many different forms and styles.

World literature is vast as well as diverse. Thousands of writers have lived and contributed to the development of culture, across the world and through the centuries. Many have been forgotten. Some have stood the test of time and are still remembered in reverence. This issue of *Manorama Tell Me Why* presents to you some of these great writers from the history of literature.

Obviously, this is not a complete list, and many names had to be left out for lack of space. We have not included living writers either, since they will be fea

**FROM THE HOUSE OF MAGIC POT, MANORAMA YEAR
AND THE MALAYALA MANORAMA DAILY**

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An illustration on the left side of the page. At the top, a winged cherub is shown in a dynamic pose, holding a scroll. Below, a landscape features a large, gnarled tree with many leaves. In the foreground, a man with long blonde hair, wearing a simple white robe, stands looking towards the right. He is holding a small book or tablet. In the background, there are rolling hills and a body of water. A small orange fox is depicted jumping into a pond, with a thought bubble above it showing the fox's head.

ANCIENT WRITERS

Why is Aesop popular with children all over the world?

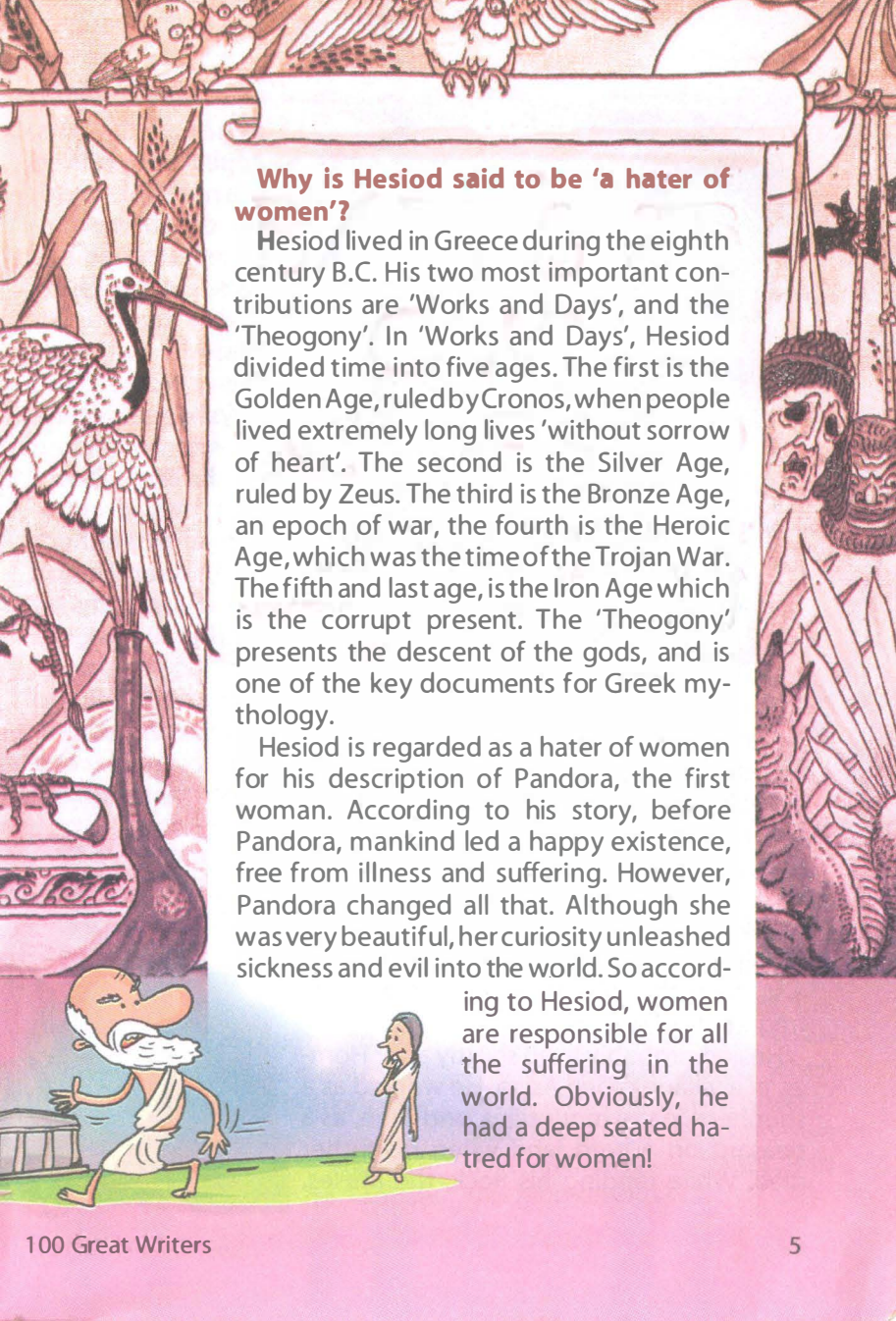
You must have heard and read many of Aesop's fables, like 'The Fox and the Grapes' and 'The Tortoise and the Hare.' But do you know who Aesop was? He was a Greek slave who lived about 2,500 years ago. He was a great storyteller, and his master delighted in hearing his tales. In fact, it was his learning and his wit that earned him his freedom.

After he was free, Aesop travelled to several countries, and met many wise men with whom he held long discussions. Once he was asked by the king to distribute a large sum of gold amongst the citizens of Delphi. However, he found them to be very greedy and unworthy of such a gift, and so he sent the money back to the king. This enraged the citizens of Delphi, and they had him publicly executed like a criminal.

This was a sad end for such a great man. But it is said that the Gods punished the citizens of Delphi for their crime. Calamity after calamity befell them until they were forced to repent having killed Aesop. Thus the phrase 'the blood of Aesop' came to mean that the deeds of those who do wrong will surely be punished.

Aesop never wrote any of his stories down. However, many years after his death, people started to write down his fables. Over the centuries, Aesop's fables have been translated into almost every language in the world. His stories remain popular to this day because each one teaches us a moral in an interesting and unique way.

Tell Me Why

The background of the page is a large, stylized illustration of a scroll. On the left side of the scroll, there is a large white swan with a long neck and a small black spot on its head. Above the swan, there are several small, round, white figures with large eyes, possibly representing birds or spirits. On the right side of the scroll, there is a large, dark, winged figure, possibly a demon or a god, with a human-like face. Below this figure, there are several smaller, dark, winged figures. The scroll itself is a light pink color with a darker pink border. The text is written in a simple, sans-serif font. The title is in a larger, bold font. The paragraphs are separated by small gaps. The illustration is done in a simple, cartoonish style with a limited color palette of pinks, whites, and greys.

Why is Hesiod said to be 'a hater of women'?

Hesiod lived in Greece during the eighth century B.C. His two most important contributions are 'Works and Days', and the 'Theogony'. In 'Works and Days', Hesiod divided time into five ages. The first is the Golden Age, ruled by Cronos, when people lived extremely long lives 'without sorrow of heart'. The second is the Silver Age, ruled by Zeus. The third is the Bronze Age, an epoch of war, the fourth is the Heroic Age, which was the time of the Trojan War. The fifth and last age, is the Iron Age which is the corrupt present. The 'Theogony' presents the descent of the gods, and is one of the key documents for Greek mythology.

Hesiod is regarded as a hater of women for his description of Pandora, the first woman. According to his story, before Pandora, mankind led a happy existence, free from illness and suffering. However, Pandora changed all that. Although she was very beautiful, her curiosity unleashed sickness and evil into the world. So according

to Hesiod, women are responsible for all the suffering in the world. Obviously, he had a deep seated hatred for women!



Greek currency note portraying the epic poet Hesiod

Why was Hesiod a great author of the Greek classical era?

Hesiod was a Greek epic poet who flourished in Boeotia around 700 B.C. He, alongside Homer, was the most respected of the old Greek poets. His epic poem 'Theogony' describes the origins of the gods, and his 'Works and Days' deals with subjects like farming, morality and country life. He was also the author of a large number of lost or fragments of poems.

Hesiod probably lived shortly after Homer, in a village called Ascra. He worked as a shepherd in the mountains, and then, as a peasant on a hard land when his father died. While tending his flock, the Muses,

who were the goddesses of the Arts, appeared to Hesiod in a mist. This mystical experience impelled Hesiod to write epic poetry.

The reason for Hesiod's writing of the 'Works and Days' was a dispute between him and his brother Perses over the distribution of his father's land. After Hesiod lost a lawsuit to his brother Perses, he left his homeland and moved to Naupactus. According to the legend about his death, he



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Why is Sappho important amongst ancient Greek poets?

Sappho is the most famous of the ancient Greek women poets. She lived on the island of Lesbos, and taught young women there. She is thought to have been born around 610 B.C., and to have died in about 570.

Sappho wrote her poems primarily as a tribute to the private world of women, something which was very rare in Greek literature. Therefore, the poems provide us with a valuable and remarkable glimpse into the lives and aspirations of Greek girls. Sappho wrote moving lyric poetry. A poetic meter was named in honour of her. She wrote odes to the goddesses, especially Aphrodite, and sang joyfully of the beautiful deity. In fact, her poems are like graceful gifts to this golden goddess of love.

Sappho also wrote about herself, her women's community, and her times. Her writing about her times was very different from her contemporary male writers, whose poetry was more political. Thus, Sappho's importance lies in that she gave us a woman's point of view at a time when men dominated the literary world.

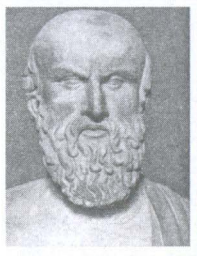
was murdered by the sons of his host in Oeneon. Later, his bones were brought to Orchomenus where a monument was erected in the marketplace in his honour.

Hesiod's works are very important because he spoke

about his experiences through his poetry. He lived during the Classical Era of Greece, which was an exciting period when Greek civilization flourished in all its glory. Hesiod's works give us a meaningful insight into this momentous era.



*Statue of
Sappho*



A modern Greek theatre group performing one of the great plays of Aeschylus; Aeschylus (shown in inset)

Why did Aeschylus' work become a part of the history of Greek drama?

Aeschylus was born in 525 B.C. in the city of Eleusis, and is often called the 'Father of Tragedy'. He is also considered to be the person who practically invented drama as we know it today.

When Aeschylus first began writing, the theatre had only just begun to evolve. A chorus danced and exchanged dialogue with a single actor, who portrayed one or more characters by using masks. Most of the action took place in the circular dancing area or 'orchestra', which still remained from the old days when drama had been nothing more than a circular

dance around a sacred object.

It was a huge leap for drama when Aeschylus introduced the second actor. He also attempted to involve the chorus directly in the action of the play. Although Aeschylus is said to have written over ninety plays, only seven have survived. He directed many of his own productions, and one of his plays 'The Persians' contains the first ghost scene in drama!

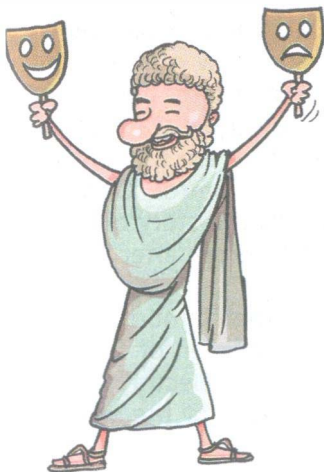
Legend has it that Aeschylus met his death when an eagle mistook his bald head for a rock and dropped a tortoise on it! Whatever the cause of his death, his life laid the groundwork for drama to flourish, and his works have become a part of the history of Greek drama.

Why is it said that Sophocles restructured Greek drama?

Sophocles came from a rich family that lived in Colonus, a small town near Athens. As an adult, Sophocles was active in Athenian politics. Sophocles took part in many drama competitions. In his first competition, Sophocles took first prize—defeating none other than Aeschylus himself! More than 120 plays were to follow. He would go on to win eighteen first prizes, and he would never fail to take at least second.

One of the great innovators of the theatre, he was the first to add a third actor. He also abolished the trilogic form. Aeschylus, for example, had used three tragedies to tell a single story. Sophocles chose to make each tragedy a complete entity in itself. As a result, he had to pack all of his action into the shorter form, and

this clearly offered greater dramatic possibilities. Many authorities also credit him with the invention of scene-painting. Sadly, of Sophocles' more than 120 plays, only seven have survived in their entirety.

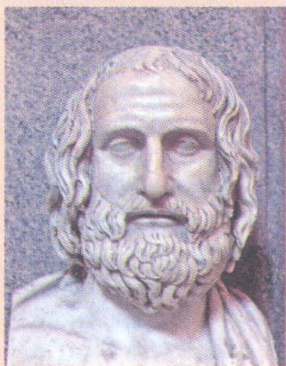


Poet of Athletics

Pindar was the great lyric poet of ancient Greece, who is believed to have lived between 518 to 438 B.C. He gained fame for his poems that celebrate triumphs in various Hellenic athletic games. His poems are noted for their complexity, rich metaphors, and intensely emotional language. In fact, Pindar's name will, forever, be connected with the Isthmian, Pythian, Nemean, and Olympic Games. Did you know that the 2004 Olympic medals presented on one side the eternal flame, framed by a verse by Pindar, along with the logo of the Athens Games?

Euripides

Euripides was an ancient writer of Greek tragedy - the third of a trio that included Sophocles and Aeschylus. Euripides wrote about women and mythological themes like Medea and Helen of Troy. He enhanced the importance of intrigue in tragedy. Euripides also created the love-drama, and is considered to have had a significant influence on the Greek creation of New Comedy. Euripides was the most popular of the three great tragedians for generations after his death.



Euripides



*A Greek painting of Agamemnon
based on the Trojan War*

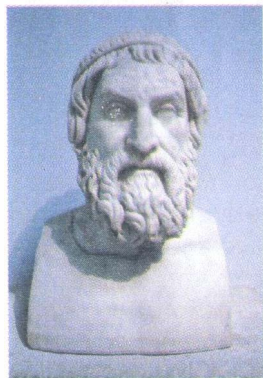
Which are the famous plays of Sophocles?

Sophocles' most famous plays are 'Antigone', 'Oedipus Rex', and 'Oedipus at Colonus'. 'Antigone' tells the story of Antigone, the daughter of Oedipus. 'Oedipus Rex' is mainly about fate, and how men do not control their own fate, no matter how much they try. It's about accepting that there are things that are beyond your control. 'Oedipus at Colonus' tells the story of what happened to Oedipus after he left Thebes.

Sophocles' other famous works are 'Ajax', 'The Women of Trachis', 'Philoctetes' and 'Electra'. 'Ajax' chronicles the fate of the warrior Ajax after the events of the Iliad, but

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before the end of the Trojan War. The 'Women of Trachiniae' is an Athenian tragedy, while Philoctetes takes place during the Trojan War. It describes the attempt by Neoptolemus and Odysseus to bring the disabled Philoctetes with them to Troy. Finally, 'Electra' is set in the



*Marble Statue of
Sophocles*

city of Argos a few years after the Trojan War. It is based around the character of Electra, and the vengeance that she and her brother take on their mother and stepfather for the murder of their father, Agamemnon.

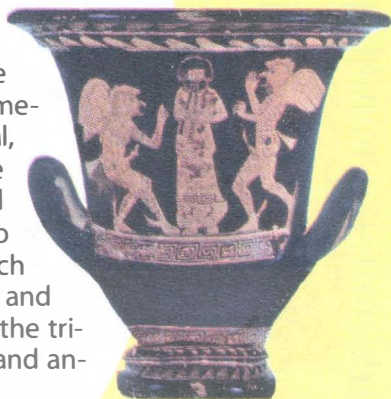
Sophocles' plays are full of the spirit of Athens in the

classical period. He sees men - and sometimes women - as powerful, rational, creative beings, the masters of the world around them, and the proud creations of the gods. Sophocles also remembers the terrors of war, which can sometimes overcome men and women. He pleads, in his plays, for the triumph of reason over wild emotion and anger.

Aristophanes

Aristophanes was the greatest comic writer of his day. His literary activities covered a period of forty years. During that time, his sharp wit targeted prominent men, political trends, and social foibles.

Of the forty plays known to be genuine products of his genius, eleven remain for posterity. But these easily prove that for wit, rollicking humour, invention, and skill in the use of language, Aristophanes has never been surpassed.

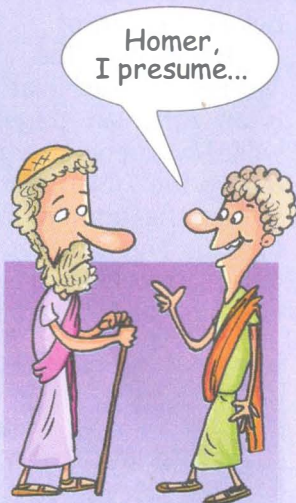
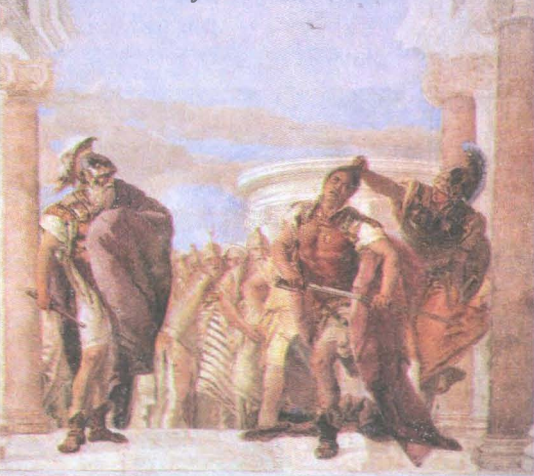


Why is Homer regarded as one of the greatest of Greek poets?

Homer lived around 700 B.C in Greece. We don't know where exactly in Greece he lived. People said he was blind, but we don't know that for sure either. When Homer was born, the Greeks had just recently learned how to use the alphabet from the Phoenicians. Homer used the alphabet to write down two long epic poems called the 'Iliad' and the 'Odyssey'.

The Iliad and the Odyssey contain incomparable tales of the Trojan War, brave Achilles, Ulysses and Penelope, the Sirens, the Cyclops, the beautiful Helen of Troy, and the angry gods. They are perhaps the most influential works in the history of Western literature. These

A Wall Painting based on the Trojan War



two poems, written nearly three thousand years ago, have captured the hearts of generations throughout the world.

Homer didn't make up these stories, or even the words, himself. Poets or bards had been going around Greece telling these stories for hundreds of years. But Homer wrote them down, polished them, and gave them their final form, and therein lies his greatness.

Philemon

Philemon was a poet of the Athenian New Comedy. He was noted for his neatly contrived plots, vivid description, dramatic surprises, and moralizing. By 328 B.C., he was producing plays in Athens, where he

eventually became a citizen. Of the 97 comedies he wrote, some 60 titles survive in Greek fragments and Latin adaptations. Philemon was a contemporary and rival of Menander, whom he is said to have vanquished in poetical contests.

Why is Menander considered a social writer?

Menander is the most famous writer of what is described as Athenian new comedy. Unlike the classical writers who wrote mythical plots or political commentary, Menander was a social writer. He chose aspects of daily life as topics for his plays with happy endings and themes.

Menander wrote about stern fathers, young lovers, crafty slaves, and other people who were part of the social fabric of Greece in those days. The everyday life of his countrymen,

as well as the manners and characteristics of ordinary people were at the heart of his stories. His characters spoke in the contemporary dialect, and concerned themselves not with the great myths of the past, but rather, with the everyday affairs of the people of Athens.

By the end of his career, Menander had written more than 100 plays and had won eight victories at Athenian dramatic festivals. Menander's plays were held in high esteem in the literature of Western Europe for over 800 years. At some point, however, his manuscripts were lost or destroyed, and what we now know of the poet is based primarily on ancient reports, a few manuscripts which have been recovered in the last hundred years, and adaptations by the Roman playwrights.

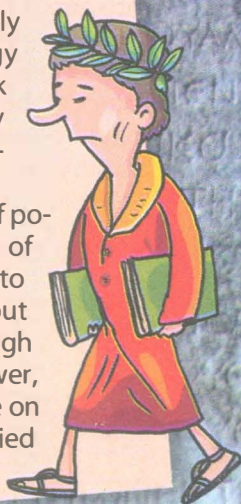


Why are the poems of Ovid remarkable?

Ovid was from a rich family that lived near Rome. Ovid's full name was Publius Ovidius Naso. His father wanted him to become a lawyer, but Ovid decided to be a poet. He published his first book of poetry about 18 B.C., when he was 25 years old. It was called the 'Amores', or Love Poems. This book was remarkable, because in those days, people were not allowed to write about love outside of marriage, and Ovid did just that.

Ovid's second book was also remarkable, but in a different way. He wrote the *Metamorphoses*, or the Changes, which he published probably about 8 B.C., when he was 35 years old. This is a long poem telling lots of short stories about the changes in the world from the time of creation to the death of Julius Caesar. It tells nearly every story from Greek mythology that we know - in fact, many Greek stories are known today mainly because they are in the *Metamorphoses*.

Ovid also wrote another book of poems, the 'Ars Amatoria' - the Art of Love. These poems gave advice to rich Roman men and women about love. However, his poems, though popular, offended those in power, and he was banished to a village on the shores of the Black Sea. He died there, a sad and lonely man.





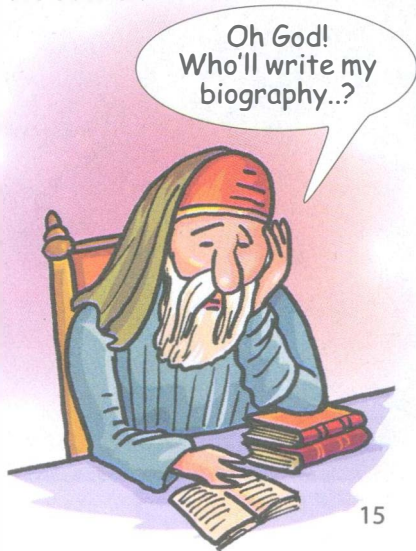
Plutarch

Why do we say that Plutarch was one of the leading thinkers of his times?

Plutarch lived a long and fruitful life with his wife and family in the little Greek town of Chaeronea. For many years, he served as one of the two priests at the temple of Apollo at Delphi - the site of the famous Delphic oracle - twenty miles from his home. Through his writings and lectures, Plutarch became a celebrity in the Roman Empire, yet he continued to reside where he was born, and actively participated in local affairs, even serving as mayor.

Plutarch's most important work is 'Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans', which is a

series of biographies of famous men that illustrates their common moral virtues or failings. The 'Parallel Lives', as they are also called, contain 23 pairs of biographies, each pair containing one Greek life and one Roman life; as well as four unpaired single lives. Plutarch was interested in exploring the influence of character - good or bad - on the lives and destinies of famous men. His essays and his lectures established him as a leading thinker in the Roman Empire's golden age. Later on, at the beginning of the Italian Renaissance, it was the rediscovery of Plutarch's 'Lives' that stimulated popular interest in the classics.



Why is Virgil called a legend?

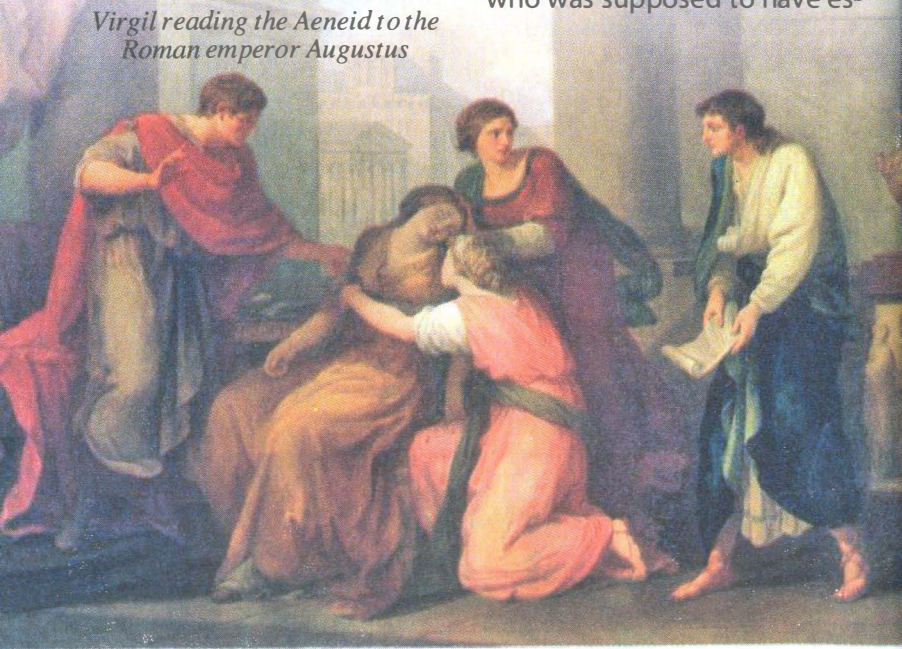
Virgil (70-19 B.C.) was a poet who lived during the civil wars in Rome, and during the reign of the Roman Emperor Augustus, just before the birth of Jesus Christ. He is regarded as the greatest Roman poet, and is known for his epic, 'The Aeneid'. It was written in around 29 B.C., and was inspired by Homer's epic poems, the Iliad and Odyssey.

Between 42 and 37 B.C., Virgil composed pastoral poems

known as 'Eclogues' or 'rustic poems' and he spent years on the 'Georgics' which dealt with farming and presented a townsman's view of the country.

It was Augustus Caesar, the Roman Emperor who pressed Virgil to write of the glory of Rome under his rule. So, from 30 to 19 B.C., Virgil devoted his time to writing 'The Aeneid', the national epic of Rome. It is a long poem in twelve books, like the Iliad or the Odyssey. The hero is Aeneas who was a Trojan who was supposed to have es-

Virgil reading the Aeneid to the Roman emperor Augustus

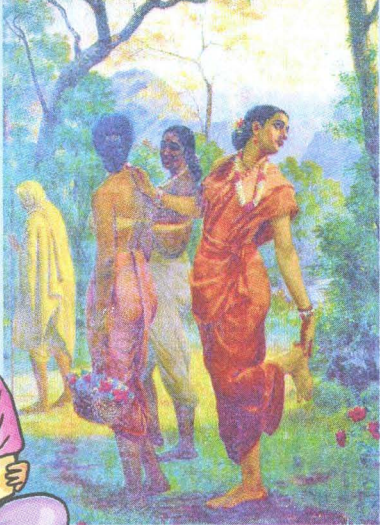
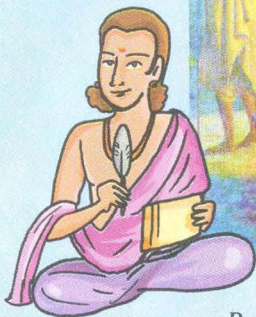


Why is Kalidasa hailed as the greatest of ancient Indian writers?

Kalidasa was India's greatest Sanskrit poet and dramatist who lived during the fifth century. His most famous works are the dramas 'Abhijnanashakuntalam' or The Recognition of Shakuntala, 'Vikramorvashiyam' or Urvashi Won by Valour

and 'Malavikagnimitram' or Malavika and Agnimitra. He also wrote the epic poems 'Raghuvansham' and 'Kumarasambhavam' and the lyric 'Meghadutam'.

According to legend, Kalidasa was so handsome that he caught the attention of a princess who married him. However, as legend has it, Kalidasa had grown up without much education, and the princess was ashamed



A famous painting of Raja Ravi Varma, based on Abhijnanashakuntalam

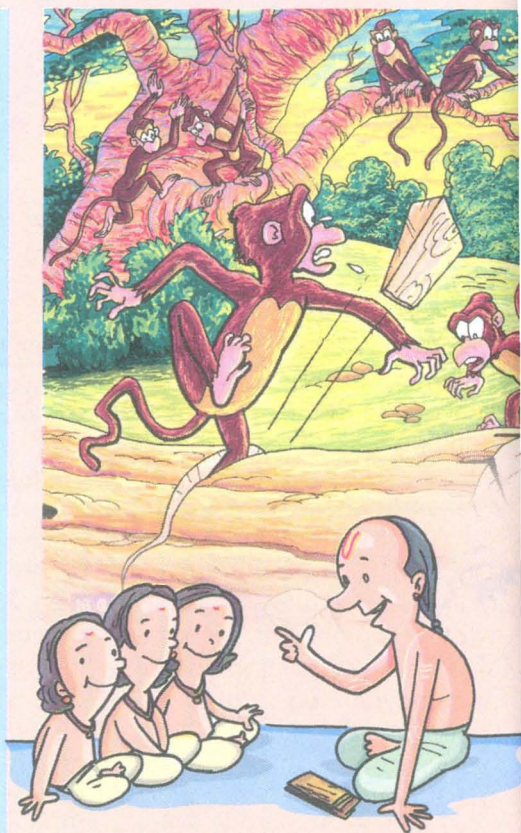
of his ignorance and coarseness. A devoted worshipper of the goddess Kali - his name means literally Kali's slave - Kalidasa is said to have called upon his goddess for help and was rewarded with a sudden and extraordinary gift of wit. He is then said to have become the most brilliant of the 'nine gems' at the court of the fabulous king Vikramaditya of Ujjain.

caped from Troy when the Greeks captured it during the Trojan War. It is the story of how Aeneas and his men travelled from Troy to Italy to found the city of Rome. This makes the

valiant fighting Trojans the ancestors of the Romans. The Aeneid achieved the status of a classic even before it was finished, making Virgil a legend in his own lifetime.

Bhavabuti

Bhavabhuti was an eighth century scholar of India noted for his plays and poetry, written in Sanskrit. He is best known as the author of three plays. The first is 'Mahaviracharitam' or the 'Exploits of the Great Hero', which gives in seven acts the main incidents in the Ramayana upto the defeat of Ravana and the coronation of Rama. His second great work is 'Malatimadhavam', which is a domestic drama in 10 acts and the third is 'Uttararamacharitam' which deals with Rama's later life. Bhavabuti's plays are noted for their suspense and vivid characterization and they rival the outstanding plays of the great writer Kalidasa.



Why did Vishnu Sharma write the Panchatantra?

You must be familiar with the Panchatantra fables, but did you know that they were written around 200 B.C. by a great Hindu scholar called Vishnu Sharma? He was asked by Amarasakti, the ruler of a South Indian kingdom to teach his three sons politics and diplomacy. But unfortunately,

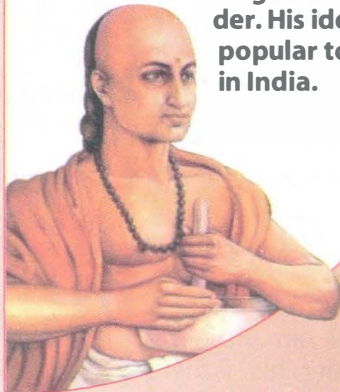
Tell Me Why

the princes were not interested in learning at all! Vishnu Sharma quickly realized that it would not be easy to teach them through conventional methods. He had to find a more creative way of teaching them, and he hit upon the idea of writing short stories that contained a lesson. This collection of stories is the Panchatantra.

The Panchatantra is the oldest collection of Indian fables. The word 'Panchatantra' means 'the five books'. The collection is also known as a 'Nitishastra' which means book of wise conduct in life. The moral and philosophical themes of these stories of Vishnu Sharma have stood the test of time and hold true even in the modern age.

Chanakya - A Man of Foresight

Chanakya, also known as Kautilya or Vishnugupta, was a teacher of political science at the Takshashila University and later the prime minister of the emperor Chandragupta Maurya. He is regarded as one of the earliest known political thinkers, economists, and king-makers. His vision was to create an Indian Empire by uniting the numerous kingdoms of the Indian sub-continent so that they could fight together against Alexander the Great. His foresight and wide knowledge, coupled with his shrewd politics helped to found the mighty Mauryan Empire in India. He compiled his political ideas into the 'Arthashastra', one of the world's earliest treatises on political thought and social order. His ideas remain popular to this day in India.





Why is Veda Vyasa considered to be immortal?

The 'Mahabharata' is one of

the greatest marvels in the literature of the world. Veda Vyasa was the sage who gave the world this storehouse of realism, wisdom, and compassion. He is also the author of the Brahma Sutras, and is considered an incarnation of Lord Vishnu himself.

Veda Vyasa was a genius by birth. He performed rigorous penance and practiced austerity

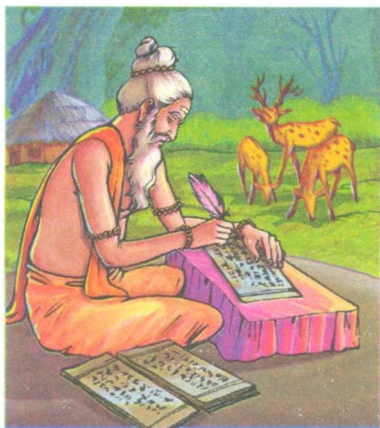
How did Ratnakara become Valmiki?

The great sage Valmiki has the distinction of being the author of the holy epic 'Ramayana', consisting of 24,000 verses. He is also believed to be the author of 'Yoga Vasistha', a text that elaborates on a range of philosophical issues. But did you know that Valmiki's real name was Ratnakara, and that he was a robber before he became a sage?

Maharishi Valmiki was born as Ratnakara. He was the son of the sage Prachetasa. At a very young age, Ratnakara went into the forest and got lost. A hunter, who was passing by, saw Ratnakara and took him under his own care. Under his father's

guidance, Ratnakara turned out to be an excellent hunter. Later, he started robbing people because he found it impossible to feed his large family.

One day, Ratnakara tried to rob the great sage Narada. However, Narada was a divine



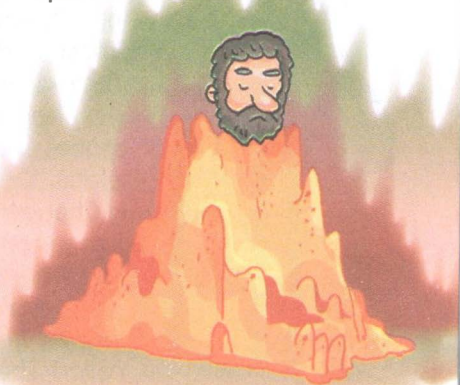
in the Himalayas in order to realize the Supreme Truth that he explained in the Vedas and Upanishads. There is a very interesting event associated with the writing of the Mahabharata. Veda Vyasa needed to concentrate on the composing, and he needed someone to write it down as he recited the verses. It was Ganesha, who agreed to do so.

The Mahabharata is the longest epic in the world, longer than the Odyssey and Iliad put together! It is the narrative that contains all narratives. A verse from the epic reads, 'What is found here may be found elsewhere. What is not found here will not be found elsewhere'. Is it any wonder that the Mahabharata - and Veda Vyasa - are considered to be immortal?

sage, and he made Ratnakara understand that robbing and killing was wrong. He advised Ratnakara that by chanting Lord Rama's name, he could wash away all his sins. Ratnakara at once started chanting the name of the Lord without stopping even for food or to sleep. He went on and on with his chanting, and as days turned into years, his body was covered by an anthill. Still he did not stop his chanting! Finally, Narada appeared again, removed the anthill and blessed Ratnakara, declaring that Ratnakara would become famous as a great sage called Valmiki, as he was reborn from an ant hill or 'Valmika'.

Valmiki had the great good

fortune to receive Lord Rama, his wife Sita, and brother Lakshmana at his ashram. Later, Narada visited him again and related the story of Rama to him. Valmiki then had a vision in which Lord Brahma himself asked him to write the Ramayana, and thus, a great and sacred epic was born.



MEDIEVAL WRITERS

Why is Geoffrey Chaucer sometimes called 'The Father of English Literature'?

Geoffrey Chaucer was an English author, philosopher, diplomat, and poet. He was the son of a prosperous wine merchant. Little is known of his early education, but his works show that he could read French, Latin, and Italian.

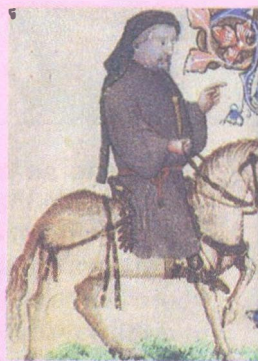


When he grew up, Chaucer worked in the government, helping out various rich men and kings. For a while, he was in the English army. He travelled to Italy many times on government business, and became familiar with Italian poetry and stories.

The first thing that Chaucer wrote that we know about is 'The Book of the Duchess', which he wrote when he was about thirty years old. But the most famous stories Chaucer wrote are 'The Canterbury Tales'. The idea of the Canterbury Tales is that a group of people are travelling together to Canterbury on a pilgrimage to pray at the shrine of St. Thomas Becket.

These people agree that to pass the time they will each tell a story. There are 24 stories altogether in The Canterbury tales. The stories are by turns bawdy, comical, and pious.

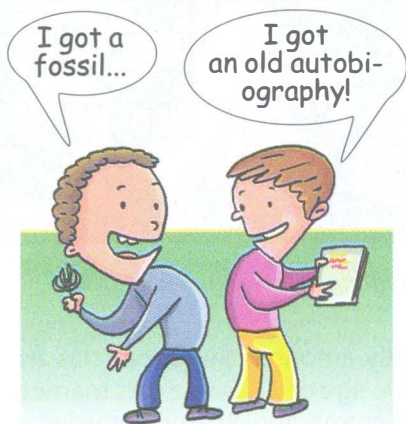
Chaucer was among the first to use English to create a great work of poetry, in an age when languages like Latin and French were typically favoured for poetry and stories. Because of this, he is sometimes called 'The Father of English Literature'.



*A painting of
Geoffrey
Chaucer as a
pilgrim*

Otomo no Yakamochi

Otomo no Yakamochi was a Japanese statesman and poet who lived from 618 to 785 AD. He was one of the compilers of 'Man'yōshū', which was one of the first poetry anthologies created in Japanese history. Born in the prestigious Otomo family, Yakamochi served as a Kokushi or provincial governor while creating many waka poems. Waka poems are a special type of Japanese verse. He was the most prolific and prominent writer of his time, and is counted as one of the thirty-six poetry immortals of Japan.



Why is Margery Kempe's book special amongst English biographies?

Margery Kempe is famous for her mystic and spiritual beliefs and for her autobiography, 'The Book of Margery Kempe' which has great significance because it is the earliest known autobiography in English. In her book, Kempe portrays herself as an honest and devoted human being.

Margery Kempe was born in Lynn, a town in Norfolk, England. Though she grew up in a wealthy family, Mary Kempe was never given a chance to be educated. Her mysticism began as a child. She married merchant John Kempe in the year of 1393, and had fourteen children. When Margery was in her twenties, it is believed that she began to have visions in which she talked to Jesus, Mary, and the saints. Margery Kempe dedicated herself to the Lord, and she became so involved with religion that she set out on a long pilgrimage that ended up in Jerusalem.

The book discusses every aspect of Margery's life - from her marriage, religious conversion, and many pilgrimages. It is, without doubt, one of the most astonishing documents of late medieval English life.

Why is it said that Dante's works were inspired by a lady?

Dante was an Italian Florentine poet. His greatest work, 'La Divina Commedia' or The Divine Comedy, is considered the greatest literary masterpiece produced in Europe in the Medieval Period, and the basis of the modern Italian language.

Dante was nearly nine years old when he first set eyes on Beatrice Portinari, in a gathering at her father's palace in Florence. She was a few months younger than Dante, and dressed in a crimson dress. She captivated him completely. For the next nine years he remained madly in love with her, but only from a distance. It was only in 1283, when he was 18, that she spoke to him as they passed each other in the street.

In 13th century Florence, arranged marriages were the norm,



A painting of the Italian poet Dante

especially amongst the upper classes. So, at the age of 21, Dante was married off to Gemma and Beatrice married a year later too. She died three years after that, at the tender age of 24. Dante was devastated. He remained devoted to Beatrice for the rest of his life, and she was his principal inspiration for much of his well known work, such as 'La Vita Nuova' or The New Life as well as The Divine Comedy.

Dante was one of the first great poets to write in the ordinary language of the people, and he used the local dialect to write one of the most beautiful poems ever created.

Why do we say that Boccaccio had a great influence on world literature?

Giovanni Boccaccio was an Italian writer, humanist, and one of the founders of the Renaissance. In one of his works, he relates that, in his seventh year, before he had ever seen a book of poetry, he began to write verse in his childish fashion, and earned for himself amongst his friends the name of 'the poet'!

Boccaccio became a great scholar of the classics, and a great writer too. He wrote about actual people and their real lives. Some of his stories are love sto-

ries, some of them are horror stories or ghost stories, and some are funny, but all of them are the kinds of things that might happen to real people.

Boccaccio's most famous work is undoubtedly the 'Decameron' which is a lot of short stories strung together. There are a hundred tales in the Decameron, which Boccaccio published in 1371, when he was 58 years old. Centering mostly on relationships between people, these stories give us valuable glimpses into medieval life.

Many later writers, including Chaucer were inspired by Decameron, because of the compelling way in which these stories were written.

*Giovanni Boccaccio monument
in Italy*





Why does Du Fu remain alive in the hearts of the Chinese to this day?

Du Fu was a prominent Chinese poet of the Tang dynasty. He received a traditional Confucian education. Du Fu spent much of his life travelling, and during his travels, he won renown as a poet. He also met other poets of the time who influenced him. The major turning points in

his life were his meeting and friendship with Li Po, and the civil war, which opened his eyes to the sufferings of the common people.

Du Fu's early poetry celebrated the beauty of the natural world, and bemoaned the passage of time. He soon began to write bitingly of war-as in 'The Ballad of the Army Carts', a poem about conscription-and with hidden satire-as in 'The Beautiful Woman', which speaks of the luxury of the court. Of his poetic writing, nearly fifteen hundred poems have been preserved over the ages. He has been called the 'Poet-Historian' and the 'Poet-Sage' by Chinese critics.

Du Fu's strengths were his strong sense of history, his moral principles, and his technical excellence. Above all, it was Du Fu's compassion, for himself, and for others that has kept him alive in the hearts of the Chinese to this day.

Why is Ferdowsi considered to be a great Persian poet?

The Persians - or modern day Iranians-regard Ferdowsi as the greatest of their poets. He was the author of 'Shahnamah' or the 'Book of Kings', which is the Persian national epic. It is one of the great classics of the world, and tells heroic tales of ancient Persia. The contents and the poet's style in describing the events take the reader back in time to another world that had been shrouded in the mists of mystery and antiquity. Ferdowsi worked for thirty years to finish this masterpiece.

An important feature of this work is that



during the period that Arabic language was known as the main language of science and literature, Ferdowsi, however, used only Persian in his masterpiece. As Ferdowsi himself says 'Persian language is revived by this work'.

For nearly a thousand years, the Persians have continued to read and to listen to recitations from his masterpiece in which the Persian national epic found its final and enduring form.

It is the history of Iran's glorious past, preserved for all time in sonorous and majestic verse. Though written about 1,000 years ago, this work is as intelligible to the average, modern Iranian, as it was in the times in which it was written.

Why is Marie de France famous?

Marie de France was the first female French poet who wrote for the Norman-ruled British court in the 12th century. She is one of those authors whose work is well known but whose life remains largely a mystery. Marie wrote in a dialect that is found in Normandy on the border of the Île-de-France. Her name is known from a line in one of her published works which translates as 'My name is Marie, I am from France'.



Marie de France

Her written works include 12 'Breton lais', which is a short lyric or narrative poem. Marie also wrote the 'Ysopet' fables, and the 'Legend of the Purgatory of St. Patrick.' One of her works is dedicated to a 'King Henry', the other to a 'Count William'. Marie de France, creator of verse narratives on romantic and magical themes, was without doubt, one of the most popular of authors with the nobles of the court- and her popularity with the ladies of the court was even greater!

How does Laura inspire Petrarch's poetry?

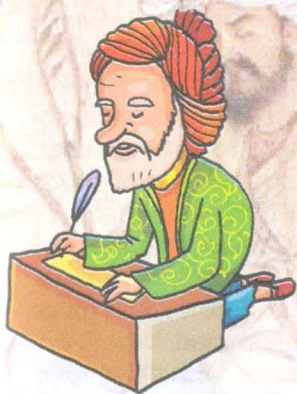
Francesco Petrarch was born shortly after 1300. He lived through the harshest bouts of the plague, and lost nearly everyone he knew to it. His mother and father had died in his early years but his son, his grandson, numerous friends, and a woman named Laura who was his inspiration, all died as victims of the disease.



Statue of Francesco Petrarch

Laura was the love of Petrarch's life. But who she was has remained a bit of a mystery. It is believed that she was the daughter of a Knight and that Petrarch fell in love with her at first sight. But being already married, she turned down all his advances. However, Petrarch would be haunted by her beauty for the rest of his life. She died at the age of 38 in the year 1348, on April 6, Good Friday, exactly 21 years to the very hour that Petrarch first saw her. His work 'Canzoniere' is a series of poems mostly about Laura and his love for her. However, some believe that Laura did not exist at all, and that the 'laura' of Petrarch's writings is play on the name 'laurel' - the leaves which Petrarch was honoured with for being the poet laureate.

Petrarch was a passionate writer, and his writings would go on to influence countless other writers. In fact, centuries later, Shakespeare would study his works and copy his sonnets. He was the greatest scholar of his age, but his passion was for antiquity, and he once confessed that he disliked the age in which he lived!



Why is Omar Khayyam regarded as a great scholar?

Omar Khayyam lived in a time that did not make life easy for learned men, unless they had the support of a ruler at one of the many courts. However, Omar Khayyam was an outstanding

Persian poet, mathematician, and astronomer who died in AD 1123. Khayyam did write several works including 'Problems of Arithmetic', a book on music, and one on algebra before he was 25 years old. In fact, one of his books is considered a masterpiece in algebra. Khayyam also worked on compiling astronomical tables and contributed to calendar reform in 1079. Khayyam measured the length of the year as 365.24219858156 days! In addition to these achievements, Omar Khayyam was also a great philosopher and physician.

Outside the world of mathematics, Omar Khayyam is best known for nearly 600 'Rubaiyat', or quatrains (short four line poems), that form the 'Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam'. The major theme in this book is the fragility of human life, and many of his Rubaiyat got worldwide acclaim. His Rubaiyat are viewed as meditations on the mysteries of existence and celebrations of worldly pleasures.

Imru al Qays ibn Hujir
Imru al Qays was the most distinguished poet from the Arabia of pre-Islamic times. He was the youngest son of the last king of an ancient tribe. His father banished him twice from his court, and he spent this time wandering in the desert, composing poetry. He wrote beautiful love poems, and is believed to have invented the classical Arabic ode. He is also considered the greatest poet of the 'Mu'allaqat', which is a collection of seven pre-Islamic Arabic odes, each considered to be its author's best piece.



*Statue of Nizami
Ganjavi*

Why is Nizami Ganjavi remembered to this day?

Nizami Ganjavi was a classical poet of the

12th century whose home was in Ganja, the capital of Arran in Transcaucasian Azerbaijan. He lived in an age of both political instability and intense intellectual activity, which his poems reflect. However, little is known about his life, his relations with his patrons, or the precise dates of his works. Nizami Ganjavi was married three times, and in his poems, he laments the death of each of his wives, and gives advice to his son Muhammad.

Nizami is best known for his five long narrative poems, of which the 'Haft Paykar', completed in 1197, is his acknowledged masterpiece. He will always be remembered for being the first poet in Eastern literature to describe women as having high human qualities. He proved that women can participate in many fields on equal terms with men, and according to him, only a hardworking man is worthy of respect and love!

Yoshida Kenko

Yoshida Kenko, who started his career as a Japanese court official, also emerged as a celebrated poet. At the age of 41, he became a Zen Buddhist monk. Kenko's Essays contain 243 sections of various lengths. In Kenko's writings, we see the Buddhist ideals of naturalness, humility, simplicity, and meditation worked out in relation to daily affairs. Kenko wrote on a wide range of subjects, from ardent love, social etiquette, house design, drunkenness, to the brief span of life.



Tell Me Why

RENAISSANCE WRITERS

Why is Shakespeare considered the uncrowned king of English literature?

Who has not heard of William Shakespeare? He was an English poet, dramatist and actor, and considered by many to be the uncrowned king of English literature. Nothing is known for certain about Shakespeare's early years. There are stories that he joined a theatrical company, or that he worked as a schoolteacher. Whatever the case, Shakespeare had become known as a dramatist and an actor in London by 1592. Some of his early works include 'Titus Andronicus', and 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona'.

Shakespeare published his first work in 1593, which was the narrative poem Venus and Adonis. Later, he earned great praise for his sonnets. A sonnet is a type of poem that has three four-line sections with a pair of lines at the end, all following a special rhyming scheme.

He worked with a group as a dramatist, an actor, and a part-owner for many years. In 1599, the company built the Globe, a

theatre near London. Shakespeare wrote some of his greatest tragic and comic works around this time. He created Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth, as well as Twelfth Night, and Measure for Measure here. Shakespeare's works were so popular that even Queen Elizabeth I of England had them performed for her. Despite having been written hundreds of years ago, Shakespeare's work remains popular because of his engaging characters, interesting plots, and artful dialogues.

Shakespeare is credited with 39 plays, including Romeo and Juliet, and Julius Caesar. He also wrote 154 sonnets, and several major poems, some of which are considered to be the most brilliant pieces of English literature ever written. His writings have been translated into more languages than those of any other author, and his plays and poems have been read by people all over the world for generations.



The Renaissance

Renaissance means rebirth. The Renaissance Era is generally regarded as the revival of art and literature under the influence of classical models in the 14th-16th centuries. It was a period of artistic freedom that began in Florence, Italy. During the period, new printing techniques, music, and musical ideas reached the people.

What was Shakespeare's influence on English language and literature?

William Shakespeare is one of the greatest poets and playwrights of the world. He changed the way plays were written by creating new styles of writing. His stories combine conflicts with which both kings and peasants could identify. His plots mirror the everyday lives of people, and encourage the audience to choose good over evil. He blended common issues into histories, seriousness into comedies, and humour into tragedies. This was a revolutionary concept in Shakespeare's time.

Shakespeare influenced the

English language more than any other writer in the world. He created over 2,000 new words and phrases. They include - schoolboy, shooting star, puppy-dog, football, bandit, partner, downstairs, upstairs, leapfrog, alligator, and mimic. He introduced new phrases, experimented with different kinds of verse, and introduced new poetical and grammatical structures. Above all, his quotations have stood the test of time, and many words



William Shakespeare

and phrases from his works have become a part of our every day speech.

William Shakespeare's works sometimes appear to have a language of its own. While most



English speakers can boast of a 4000-word vocabulary, Shakespeare's vocabulary spanned over 29,000 words. In fact, Shakespeare coined many of the terms that are now used in everyday speech. Words like 'amazement', 'gloomy', 'zany', and 'equivocal' were first used by none other than Shakespeare.

Why is there a controversy about William Shakespeare?

Some people have suggested that Shakespeare didn't really write 'his' plays. The idea that in fact, someone else wrote Shakespeare's plays has been around for hundreds of years, and has become known as the 'authorship controversy'. People have argued that Shakespeare was a simple country boy who could not possibly have written in such detail about life in court. Moreover, in his hometown of Stratford, no one seems to have known that Shakespeare was a

writer at all - and none of his plays seemed to have been put on in Stratford during his life, which seems rather odd.

Finally when he died, Shakespeare didn't leave any letters or diaries that referred to his writing career at all. No one has ever found any early drafts of a play, or indeed any play of his writings either.

So then, who did write his plays? Many names have been suggested, including Queen Elizabeth I, Christopher Marlowe, the Earl of Oxford, Roger Manners and the Earl of Rutland. But remember, these are just doubts raised by a few people. To the world at large, William Shakespeare was undoubtedly, one of the giants of English literature.

Stratford-Upon-Avon, the birthplace of Shakespeare



What was Christopher Marlowe's greatest contribution to English literature?

Christopher Marlowe was born in Canterbury in 1564, the same year as his great rival William Shakespeare. Marlowe was a short-tempered man, quick to anger, and to make enemies. He spent two weeks in Newgate jail in 1589, charged with murder, though he was later acquitted.



A stone monument of William Shakespeare

Marlowe's dramatic career spanned only six short years. In that time, he wrote 'The Jew of Malta', 'The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus', 'The Queen of Carthage', 'Edward II', and 'The Massacre at Paris'. His work ranged from tragedy to historical drama. He also

wrote popular poetry such as 'Hero and Leander', and 'The Passionate Shepherd'.

His greatest contribution to English theatre was his influential use of blank verse in writing his dramatic works. Blank verse is verse in which the lines do not rhyme as they do in conventional poetry. However, the lines are set to a regular beat or metre. Marlowe was the first to use blank verse in drama, but William Shakespeare soon followed his example to great acclaim.

Shakespeare and Plutarch

Plutarch had a tremendous influence on the writings of William Shakespeare. This is especially true in the case of 'Julius Caesar', and 'Antony and Cleopatra'. Shakespeare based these plays on what he had read from Plutarch's 'Lives of Noble Greeks and Romans'. Though he based the events in these plays mostly on Plutarch's biography, he also made additions to Plutarch's story for his own dramatic purposes. We can say that he sometimes gave a twist to history in order to develop character and theme.

Why is Ben Jonson renowned?

Ben Jonson was a poet, essayist and playwright. In 1598, Jonson wrote what is considered his first great play, 'Every Man in His Humour'. Did you know that Shakespeare acted in one of Jonson's plays in 1616? His plays were comedies that had eccentric characters in them, and were very popular. Jonson presented a tragedy, too, in 1603, titled 'Sejanus'. However, the play was unpopular, and it



Ben Jonson

also got him into trouble with the authorities.

Ben Jonson was also a great writer of masques, which involved music and dancing, singing and acting, and elaborate stage settings.

In 1616, Ben Jonson was appointed Poet Laureate which was a prestigious position with a substantial pay. He is generally regarded as the second most important dramatist after William Shakespeare during the reign of James I.

Why is Thomas Wyatt's name associated with sonnets?

Thomas Wyatt was a member of the court circle of Henry VIII. He was popular and admired for his attractive appearance and skill in music, languages, and arms. He served on a number of diplomatic missions and was knighted in 1537, but his real fame was as a poet. None of Wyatt's poems were published during his lifetime, excepting a few poems in a collection called 'The Court of Venus'.

Wyatt, along with Surrey, was the first to introduce the sonnet into English. Did you know that Wyatt and another poet Surrey share the title "father of the English sonnet?"



Why is Ihara Saikaku famous in Japan?

Ihara Saikaku was a poet and novelist and one of the most brilliant figures of the 17th century revival of Japanese literature.

Saikaku began his literary career as a haikai poet. A haikai is a comic linked Japanese verse form. Saikaku astonished his contemporaries with his skill at

composing sequences of thousands of stanzas in a single sitting.

His writing captures the way of the townspeople, which was slowly replacing the ways of the warriors.

At the age of 40, Saikaku published his first work of fiction, 'The Life of an Amorous Man', which was a great success. This was followed by about two dozen books during the last decade of his life.



Why is Matsuo Basho regarded as the master of haiku poetry?

Matsuo Basho was a Japanese poet and writer who lived in the 17th century. He took his pen name Basho from his 'basho-an', which was a hut made of plantain leaves, to where he would go to write his poems in peace. Born of a wealthy fami-

Matsuo Basho



ly, Basho was a Samurai, or warrior, until the age of 20, at which time he devoted himself to his poetry.

Basho was the main figure in the development of haiku, which is a short three line poem consisting of 17 syllables. He is considered to have written the most perfect examples of this form of poetry. His poetry explores the beauties of nature, and is influenced by Zen Buddhism.

Basho's most famous work was 'Oku no Hosomichi' (Narrow Road to the Deep North). This was published in 1702 after his death.

100 Great Writers

Why is William Tyndale called 'the architect of the English language?'

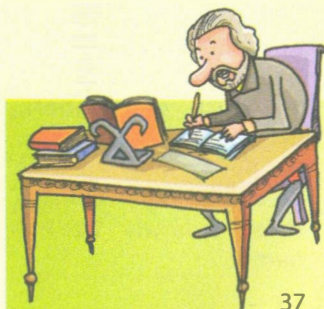
William Tyndale was a preacher and scholar who translated the Bible into an early form of modern English. He was skilled in eight languages—Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Spanish, French, Italian, English, and German! Both the king and the Church were against his idea of a Bible translation, and he had to leave the country.



William Tyndale

The printing of the English New Testament was begun at Cologne in 1525. Tyndale was the first to use Gutenberg's movable-type press for printing the scriptures in English.

The commentaries in his translation promoted views that were opposed by the Church. Tyndale's translation was banned, and Tyndale himself was burned at the stake in 1536. He was a true scholar and is called the 'architect of the English language' as so many of the phrases that he invented are still in our language today





Thomas Campion

Thomas Campion

Thomas Campion was a physician, a composer, and a poet. His first published works were five songs, which appeared in 1591, and his first collection of poems, was published in Latin in 1595. By 1597, Campion had focused his attention almost completely on writing the words and music for songs. The lyrics in his works are distinguished by their fine musical quality. Campion died on March 1, 1620, in London, probably of the plague. He never married and died with only twenty-three pounds to his name!

Why was Thomas More executed?

Thomas More was a successful lawyer and scholar who wrote a popular book called 'Utopia', about an imaginary world that was perfect in every way. Henry VIII appointed him to many high posts and missions, and finally, made him Lord Chancellor in 1529. However, he resigned in 1532, when he disagreed with Henry's opinions regarding marriage and the supremacy of the Pope.

Thomas More



Tell Me Why



Thomas More spent the rest of his life in writing, mostly in defense of the Church. In 1534, he refused to accept the King as the Head of

the Church of England and was confined to the tower. Fifteen months later, he was tried and convicted of treason. He told the court that he could not go against his conscience, and told his judges that he hoped they would meet again in heaven! He was beheaded on July 6, 1535.

Why is Nicholas Udall associated with English comedy?

Nicholas Udall, an English schoolmaster, was a translator, playwright and author.

Udall's play 'Ralph Roister Doister' is regarded as the first complete English comedy. The play is distinguished by its elements of native English humour. It is about a braggart soldier-hero who is finally shown to be a coward. The play was remarkable because it marks the emergence of comedy from the medieval morality

plays and farces. Sadly, 'Ralph Roister Doister,' was not published until after the author's death.



John Skelton

John Skelton

John Skelton's birth and rank are unknown, yet he rose to become one of the closest advisors of King Henry VII. He made fun of the Catholic Church, but the king appointed him to its clergy. He was praised as the most gifted poet in England, yet soon after his death, he was almost entirely forgotten. Only in the twentieth century was Skelton rediscovered, after nearly 500 years!

What were the Earl of Surrey's contributions to poetry?

Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey was a mighty soldier. In 1537, he fell out of favour at the court. He was imprisoned in Windsor, and his famous poem 'Prisoned in Windsor' in which he recalls his boyhood days in Windsor, was written in the same year. He was later released, and came back into favour. But by 1546, he had fallen out of favour again, and



Earl of Surrey - a painting

was executed on January 19, 1547 on Tower Hill.

Surrey's works consist primarily of sonnets and poems. Along with Sir Thomas Wyatt, he was responsible for bringing the sonnet from Italy into English poetry in his translations of Virgil. Surrey was also the first English poet to publish in blank verse. Most of his poetry was published posthumously in 1557, ten years after his death.

How is Shakespeare linked to George Gascoigne?

George Gascoigne was a soldier and poet and was the most versatile writer belonging to the first half of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. He translated from



Ariosto, the prose comedy 'Gli-Suppositi' under the title of 'The Supposes'. It is the first comedy written in English prose.

He also translated from the Italian the prose tale of 'Jeronimi', which was perhaps the first novel printed in English. He wrote the mock heroic poem of Dan-Bartholomew, and wrote three acts of 'Jocasta', the



*George
Gascoigne*

first adaptation of a Greek tragedy performed on the English stage. George also prepared masques for Queen Elizabeth and the 'The Steel Glass', the first extensive English satire.

Perhaps his greatest tribute is the fact that William Shakespeare used George's comedy 'The Supposes' as a source for his play 'The Taming of the Shrew.'

What was John Lyly's contribution to English Literature?

John Lyly was the first English writer who wrote several comedies. He produced no fewer

er than nine pieces. He became famous with the publication of the prose romance 'Euphues' or 'The Anatomy of Wit.' He also wrote a sequel, and he started a writing style known as Euphuism, from the word 'Euphues' which means 'graceful' in Greece. This style has two distinct features. The sentences are very elaborate, and there are plenty of proverbs, similes and incidents from history adorning the prose. He also wrote several prose comedies for children.

Lyly had a strong influence on other writers of his time, including William Shakespeare whose 'Hamlet', 'Love's Labour Lost' and 'Much Ado about Nothing' all show the impact that Lyly had on him.





Edmond Spenser

Which work was Edmond Spenser's masterpiece?

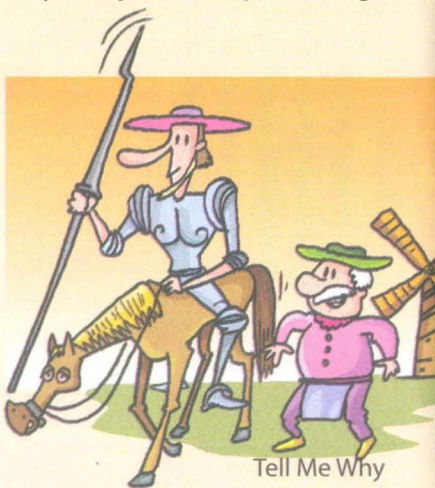
Born around 1552, Edmund Spenser was known as 'the prince of poets'. His masterpiece is undoubtedly 'The Faerie Queen', a romantic epic.

Since Spenser was not born into a wealthy family, he needed a patron to provide for his support while he worked. Patrons expect that the artists they supported to write flattering words. This was certainly the case with Spenser's work, 'The Faerie Queen', which flatters Elizabeth I. In this work, Spenser presents his ideas of what constitutes an ideal England. Spenser greatly influ-

enced the other writers of his time. Generations of readers, students, and scholars have admired him for his unbounded imagination, his immense classical and religious learning, his keen understanding of moral and political philosophy, and ultimately, his ability to delight.

Why is Miguel Cervantes' work the origin of the word 'quixotic'?

Miguel Cervantes was a novelist, playwright, and poet and the creator of Don Quixote, the most famous figure in Spanish literature. As a child, Cervantes led an adventurous life, travelling around Spain with his father, who sold medicines. When he grew up, he went to Italy and joined a Spanish reg-



Tell Me Why

iment in Naples. He was once captured by pirates, and spent five years as a slave until his family could raise enough money to pay his ransom. His first play was based on his experiences as a captive. He suffered bankruptcy and was imprisoned at least twice. However, it is generally believed that Cervantes was honest, but a victim of circumstances.

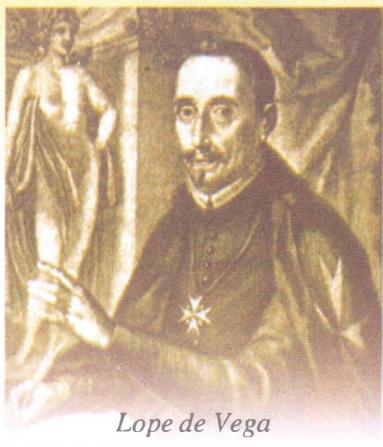
His greatest work is 'Don Quixote' that he wrote while in prison. His idea was to give a picture of real life and manners and to express himself in clear language, in simple words and everyday forms of speech. The book gives a panoramic view of the 17th century Spanish society. The central characters are an elderly, idealistic knight, who sets out on his old horse to seek adventure, and a materialistic squire Sancho Panza, who accompanies his master from one failure to another. In fact, the book inspired the word 'quixotic' which means 'foolishly impractical though inspired by high ideals.'

The book was a great success. According to a story, King Philip III of Spain once saw a



Miguel Cervantes

man reading beside the road and laughing so much that the tears were rolling down his cheeks. The king said, "That man is either crazy or he is reading Don Quixote!" Is it any wonder that the book's been around for four hundred years, and has inspired virtually every literary movement from the eighteenth-century onwards?



Lope de Vega

Why was Lope de Vega considered to be a prodigy?

Lope de Vega was a prolific playwright, pioneer of Spanish drama. He was the author of as many as 1800 comedies and several hundred shorter dramatic pieces, of which about 500 have been printed. His life was as dramatic as his plays.

As a child, Lope was considered to be a prodigy. He started to compose verses at an early age, before he could use a pen. At the age of ten he started to translate poems from Latin, and at twelve Lope wrote his first play!

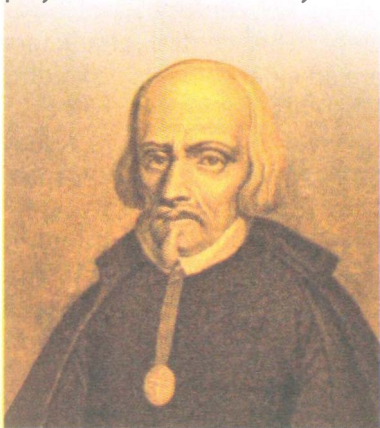
He joined the Spanish Armada, but escaped the fate of many of his fellow soldiers in the war against Britain. He

returned home safely, and even composed an epic poem during his six month voyage.

Lope was the first Spanish dramatist to make his living as a playwright. He wrote romances, verse histories of recent events, verse biographies of saints, prose tales, and poems. Most of Lope's plays revolve around the conflicting claims of love and honour. His most popular work is 'The Sheep Well'.

Why is Calderon famous as a Spanish dramatist?

Pedro Calderon was a dramatist and poet who succeeded Lope de Vega as the greatest Spanish playwright of the Golden Age. He wrote his first play when he was only thir-



Pedro Calderon

teen. Calderon was still very young when he was commissioned by Philip IV to write a series of plays for the roy-



al theatre in the Buen Retiro. Calderon's early plays had been of a secular nature. However, his later dramas were deeply religious in theme and treatment. In fact, many commentators think that Calderon was at his best as a writer of 'autos,' which are religious plays that resemble the English Mystery plays of the Middle Ages.

Calderon's works are marked by intense devotion to the church, absolute loyalty to the king, and a highly developed sense of honour. Probably the best known of his dramatic works is the secular play, 'Life is a Dream'.



Francisco de Quevedo

Francisco de Quevedo was a writer of the Spanish Golden Age. Quevedo's style relied on the use of wit and elaborate metaphors. It reflected of his own somewhat cynical attitude towards literature as a whole. Quevedo was fiercely distrustful of complicated literature, and he attempted to introduce a style of poetry that was, for his time, remarkably clean and concise. A gifted novelist as well, Quevedo was notorious as a master satirist, and he used his considerable talent for mockery to make fun of other writers.



Francois Villon

Why was the poet Francois Villon different from other writers of his day?

Francois Villon was a poet

and scholar who led the life of a criminal. He killed a priest in 1455, then joined a criminal organization and became involved in robbery, theft, and brawling. Imprisoned several times, he received a death sentence in 1462, which was changed to banishment.

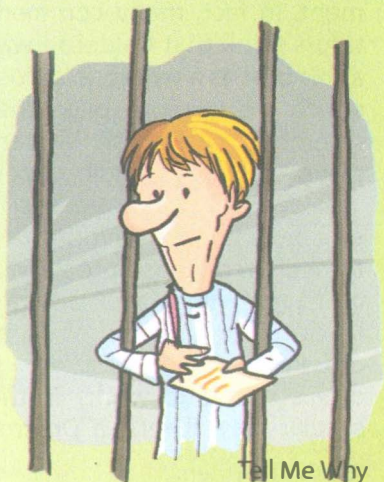
His works were published after his death and they were in the form of bequests to friends and acquaintances. His famous work 'The Testament' reviews his life with great emotional and poetic depth.

Why did one of Moliere's comic plays have a tragic end?

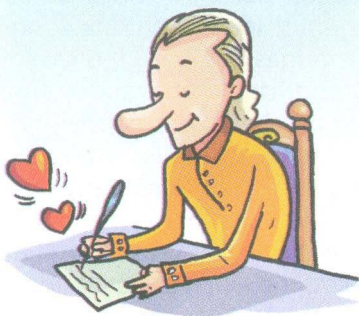
Moliere, whose real name was Jean Baptiste Poquelin, composed twelve of the most famous full-length comedies of all time. He was also the leading French comic actor and stage director in the 17th century. Moliere established comedy as a serious, flexible art form.

Moliere's troupe was given a permanent theatre in Paris by King Louis XIV. From that time onwards, His plays attacked human weaknesses such as snobbishness, hypocrisy and meanness. On Feb 17, 1673, Moliere collapsed of a

lung ailment while performing the play and died. a truly tragic end to a comic playwright!



Tell Me Why



How did John Donne's poetry reflect his life?

John Donne trained as a lawyer, but his first job was as a government official. He secretly married his employer's niece, and his earliest poems are some of the most passionate love poems ever written. Later on, he became a priest, and his poetry changed too. He now dealt mostly with religious themes.

His most famous poem, 'Death be not Proud' remains one of the all time classics of English Literature.

Why is 'Paradise Lost' one of the greatest amongst English poems?

John Milton was one of the greatest of English poets. His powerful prose and the eloquence of his poetry had an immense influence, especially on

the 18th century verse. Besides poems, Milton published pamphlets defending civil and religious rights. In 1651, Milton became blind. However, blindness helped him to stimulate his verbal richness. Milton's masterpiece is 'Paradise Lost,' which tells the biblical story of Adam and Eve, who were tempted by Satan into disobeying God. It is an extremely long poem, and amazingly, it was composed entirely in Milton's head, and dictated to members of his family. This epic poem in blank verse was divided into twelve books, and Milton declared that his aim in writing it was to justify the ways of God to men.



John Milton



How did Francois Rabelais make his readers laugh?

Francois Rabelais was a Franciscan monk, humanist, and physician, whose comic novels 'Gargantua' and 'Pantagruel' are among the most hilarious classics of world literature. These books describe the adventures of a giant father and son, both of whom have enormous appetites. Rabelais made his readers laugh by having his rude but funny giants travel in a world full of greed, stupidity, violence, and grotesque jokes.

Rabelais mixed in his books elements from different narra-

tive forms, and peppered them with broad popular humour. With his flood of outrageous ideas and anecdotes, Rabelais emphasized the physical joys of life – food, drink, and bodily functions– and mocked asceticism and oppressive religious and political forces. In fact, though Rabelais constantly made his readers laugh, his books are also important, because they brought to light and attacked the worst political, educational and political abuses of his time.

Why is Thomas Nashe's 'The Unfortunate Traveller' called a picaresque novel?

Thomas Nashe belonged to a circle of writers who came to London during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I and wrote for the stage and the press. Using the pen name 'Pasquil' Nashe wrote several pamphlets, and was also involved in several literary controversies.

Francois Rabelais





In 1592 Nashe wrote 'Pierce Pennilesse', a short book about a writer so sick of being broke he decides to try a new patron - the Devil. It was an instant hit. In 1593, he was jailed by the London authorities for criticizing them in a religious pamphlet, 'Christ's Tears'. Four years later, Nashe co-wrote a play called 'The Isle of Dogs.' It caused such uproar that all the theatres were closed and Nashe himself had to clear out of London, barely escaping arrest.

During his career, Nashe tried different types of writing, and his novel 'The Unfortunate Traveller' is thought to have been the first picaresque novel. A picaresque novel was an early form of novel which was a first person account of the adventures of a rogue as he drifts from place to place. Nashe wrote about the wild overseas adventures of a youngster called Jack Wilton. Nashe

Thomas Kyd

Thomas Kyd was one of the most important of the English Elizabethan dramatists who preceded Shakespeare. Kyd's best known play, 'The Spanish Tragedy', was the most popular and influential tragedy of Elizabethan times. In its day, 'The Spanish Tragedy' was even more popular than Shakespeare's plays, and it continued to be performed throughout the Elizabethan period. The only other play which can be attributed to Kyd with certainty is 'Cornelia', which he adapted from a French play by Robert Garnier.



is admired for his fire and independence, and his new way of handling words. Nashe's lively style survived him and has had a big effect on subsequent writers.



John Webster

John Webster

John Webster was to be the last of the great Elizabethan playwrights. It was mankind's anguish and evil which captured his imagination. But his verse is poetry of the highest order, and holds its own with the best poets of the period. His most famous works are 'The White Devil' and 'The Duchess of Malfi'. After 'The Duchess of Malfi' Webster lapsed into mostly second-rate work. He died in the 1630's, and after his death, Elizabethan theatre began to decline.

Why is John Fletcher considered a great comedy playwright?

John Fletcher came from a family which has given many distinguished names to English literature. He collaborated with Francis Beaumont and other dramatists on comedies and tragedies between about 1606 and 1625. Fletcher seems to have preferred comedy and this is certainly what he is best-known for.

The first of the plays that Fletcher wrote in collaboration with Francis Beaumont was 'The Woman-Hater' but their most famous play was the uproariously-funny 'Knight of the Burning Pestle'. They even made fun of the audience, especially people who liked to sit on the stage and interfere with the play. After the immense success of this play, Beaumont and Fletcher never looked back. It was



John Fletcher

a sad day for English theatre when Francis Beaumont died prematurely of a fever in 1616.

Fletcher's first recorded sole-authorship play was 'The Faithful Shepherdess', and he continued to write plays on his own. These included a historical tragedy, comedies, a political drama and a tragedy. His plays are fast-moving, well-constructed, and, in the case of the comedies, still funny.



Virginia Woolf

Why is Virginia Woolf credited with re-inventing the novel?

The English novelist, critic, and essayist Virginia Woolf ranks as one of England's most distinguished writers of the middle part of the twentieth century. Her novels can perhaps best be described as impressionistic, which is a literary style which attempts to inspire impressions rather than recreating reality. In 1917, for amusement, she and her husband Leonard Woolf founded

MODERN WRITERS

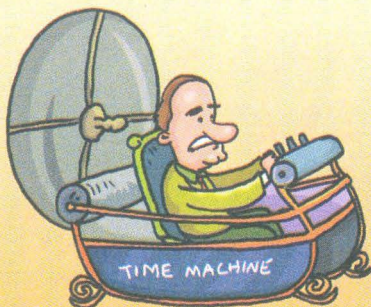
the Hogarth Press by setting and hand printing on an old press 'Two Stories' by 'L. and V. Woolf.' The volume was a success, and over the years they published many important books.

Hogarth Press published the best and most original work that came to its attention, and the Woolfs as publishers favoured young and unknown writers. Virginia Woolf herself was the author of about fifteen books. The last, 'A Writer's Diary', was published in 1953 after her death. Her most famous works are 'Mrs. Dalloway', 'To the Lighthouse', and 'Jacob's Room' as well as 'The Voyage Out,' and 'Night Out.' Virginia also wrote experimental novels and is credited with re-inventing the novel. She was also a champion of women's rights as is seen from her essay 'A Room of One's Own.'



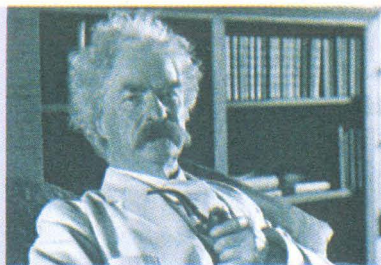
Why is H.G. Wells known as a writer of science fiction?

Herbert George Wells was not only an author; he was also a sociologist, journalist, and a historian. He was a fantastic and very descriptive writer, and gained fame as an author of science fiction, though he wrote on other themes like politics and history also. Some of H.G. Wells' most famous books are 'War of the Worlds' and 'The Time Machine.' He wrote many other books, such



as 'The World Set Free,' 'The Soul of a Bishop,' 'The Secret Places of the Heart' and many more.

In one of his books, 'War of the Worlds,' H.G. Wells writes about Martians attacking Earth.

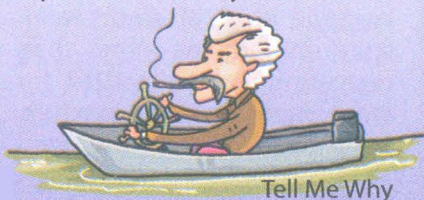


Mark Twain

How did Mark Twain's love for the Mississippi enrich English Literature?

Mark Twain is one of the all-time great American authors. Twain was raised in Hannibal, Missouri and as a young man held a series of jobs. His 'pen name', Mark Twain, was taken from Mississippi riverboat ter-

minology- it is the river man's term for water two fathoms deep. Twain's love of this great river inspired him and shines through all his works. His real name was Samuel Langhorne Clemens. His humorous tales of human nature, especially 'The Adventures of Tom Sawyer' and 'Huckleberry Finn' remain standard texts in high school and college literature classes. Through these two most popular and loved novels, Twain captured his boyhood esca-



In another book, 'The Time Machine,' the main character builds a time machine, in which he could travel into the future. Wells' books made people interested in science and space. In his time not many people believed in the sort of technology used in his books. The people who were alive then would probably be amazed at our technology now. Wells' books were somewhat like predictions, and therein lies his greatness.

pades along the Mississippi River. The stories are full of adventure and humour. In his own day, Twain was a tremendously popular figure and a celebrated public speaker who toured widely. Other Twain classics include 'Life on the Mississippi', 'A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court', and the short story 'The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County'. He is also known for his travel book 'The Innocents Abroad.' Considered the greatest humourist in American literature, Twain's varied works include novels, short stories, and essays.

Who wrote Dracula?

Do you like horror stories? Well, one of the greatest horror stories was written by Bram Stoker, the author of the classic 1897 vampire novel Dracula.

Abraham 'Bram' Stoker was a sickly child, and his mother told him a lot of horror stories which may have influenced his later writings. Stoker later became an outstanding athlete. He was in the civil service for 10 years and the manager of actor Henry Irving for 27 years, writing letters for his employer and accompanying him on tours. During this period, he wrote many fantastic stories and novels, cementing his fame with Dracula. Stoker's tale made vampires famous, and his Count 'Dracula' became the model for the popular movie Draculas of the 20th century.





Edith Wharton

What was Edith Wharton's contribution to English Literature?

Edith Wharton was an American author, best-known for her stories and novels about upper class people. She was born into a wealthy and socially prominent family, and was an unusual child. She learned to read by herself.

Her early writings did not deal with New York high society, but with urban poverty. Ghost stories also attracted her. Wharton had a lifelong passion for travel, and wrote travel books as well.

Wharton first gained success with her book 'The House of Mirth', a story of a beautiful but poor woman, Lily Bart, trying to survive in the pitiless New York City. This work was followed by several other novels set in New York. Through her hero-

ines, Wharton draws a revealing picture of social behaviour inside the doors of upper-class America. Among Wharton's most famous novels is 'The Age of Innocence', which was filmed in 1993.

Why was Robert Lewis Stevenson called 'tusalala'?

Robert Louis Stevenson was a Scottish essayist, novelist, and poet. He prepared for a career in law, but never practiced. His immensely popular novels 'Treasure Island', 'Kidnapped', 'Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde' and 'The Master of Ballantrae' were written over the course of a few years. 'A Child's Garden of Verses', which he wrote in 1885 is one of the most influential children's works of the 19th century.

Stevenson's popularity is based primarily on the exciting

Robert Louis Stevenson



Tell Me Why



P. B. Shelley

Percy Bysshe Shelley was one of the major English romantic poets widely considered to be among the finest lyric poets in the English language and the husband of Mary Shelley. He combined powerful poetic gifts with a questioning mind and made an emotional and passionate appeal for the social improvement of society. His greatest works were 'Prometheus Unbound', 'To a Skylark', and 'Adonais.' He drowned while sailing off the Italian coast.

Mary Shelley

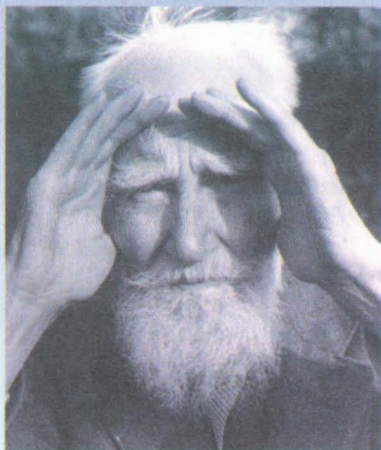
Mary Shelley was an English romantic novelist, biographer, and editor who is best known as the writer of 'Frankenstein'. When she was just nineteen she visited the poet Lord Byron with her lover Percy Shelley- and she wrote the story after Byron dared his guests to write ghost stories. Mary wrote a really scary tale about a scientist who created a monster out of body parts, and the monster was so terrifying that Mary and Frankenstein became immortal!



subject matter of his adventure novels and stories of the fantastic. 'Treasure Island' is a swiftly paced story of a search for buried gold. Having suffered from tuberculosis for much of his life, Stevenson spent many years travelling in search of a climate that would suit his illness. He finally settled

in Samoa, where he died in 1894, and was buried. He was called 'tusitala' by the local people because he was such a great storyteller - and the word 'tusitala' means 'storyteller' in their language.

Why was Bernard Shaw so controversial?



George Bernard Shaw

George Bernard Shaw was a superstar playwright and sharp-tongued literary personality of the early 20th century. After moving to London in 1876, he worked for years as a music and art critic, wrote book and theatre reviews, and was an active member of the Fabian Society, which was a socialist political organization. In his first play, 'Widowers' Houses' he emphasized social and economic issues instead of romance. In fact, many of his plays forced the spectator to face unpleasant facts. He also wrote comedies like 'Major

Which author has a football team named after him?

Walter Scott was a famous novelist of the early 19th century, and a pioneer in the art of the historical novel.

It was the success of 'Waverley', that established Scott in the career of a novelist. This historical novel was so popular that a railway station and football team was named



Walter Scott

after it! However, Scott didn't even claim credit for the 'Waverley' novels, until several years after they were first published.

His first successes were largely in the realm of Scottish history. Then at a critical point of his career, Scott turned to English history for his subject matter.

Barbara' and 'Doctor's Dilemma.' His comic masterpiece was 'Pygmalion', which was a sharp criticism of the rigid British class system of the day and a comment on women's independence, packaged as a romantic comedy

Shaw's subjects offended many playgoers and critics, especially in the early years. He considered war a tragic waste of young lives and he wrote a series of antiwar articles after the outbreak of World War I that turned public opinion against him. He was treated as an outcast, and there was even talk of trying him for treason. However after the War was over, he regained his reputation, and became an international celebrity. He died at the ripe old age of 94 after falling off a ladder.



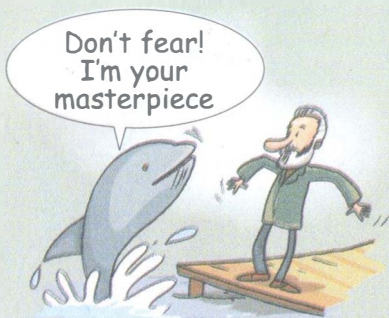
George Orwell

George Orwell was a British novelist, essayist, and critic. He served for five years in the Burmese police, and also lived for some time as a tramp and dishwasher! His most famous book was 'Animal Farm' in which he attacked the Russian Revolution. His other famous book 'Nineteen Eighty Four', describes the horrors of dictatorship.

George Orwell

He began with 'Ivanhoe' which was a complicated romance set in 12th century England, and then wrote three other

novels set in the period of the Crusades.



Why is 'Moby Dick' considered Herman Melville's masterpiece?

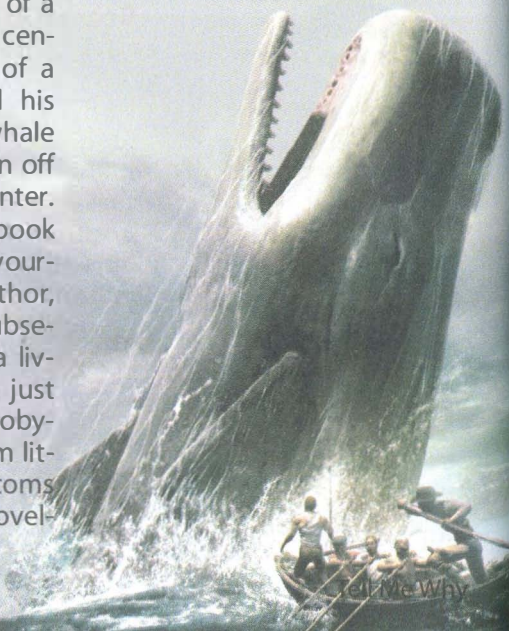
Moby Dick is now considered one of the great novels in the English language and has secured Herman Melville's place among America's greatest writers.

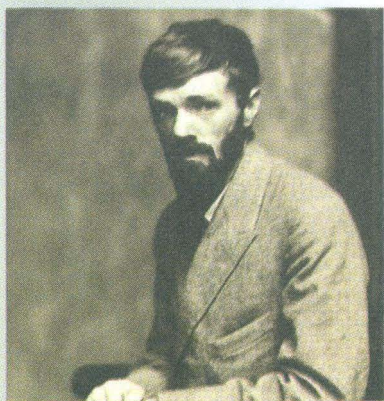
'Moby Dick' is the story of a whaling voyage. The plot centres around the captain of a whaling ship, Ahab, and his obsession with a huge whale Moby Dick, that had bitten off his leg in a previous encounter. Strangely enough, the book was published to unfavourable reviews, and its author, Herman Melville, was subsequently unable to make a living as a writer. He wrote just three more novels after 'Moby-Dick' and then retired from literary life, working as a customs officer, writing poems, a novel, and a few short stories.

Why did D. H. Lawrence travel extensively?

D. H. Lawrence was an English novelist, storywriter, critic, poet and painter and one of the great figures in 20th century English literature. Lawrence's childhood was dominated by poverty and friction between his parents.

The appearance of his first novel 'The White Peacock' launched Lawrence into a writing career. Lawrence's novel 'Sons and Lovers' appeared in 1913 and was based on his childhood. Lawrence's best





D. H. Lawrence

known work is 'Lady Chatterly's Lover', first published privately in Florence in 1928.

He died in France of tuberculosis.

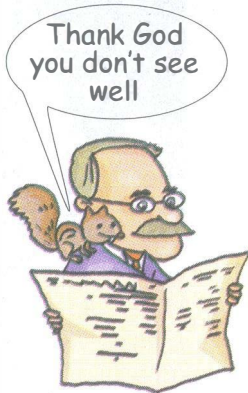
Why did Rudyard Kipling's poor eyesight prove a blessing in disguise?

You must have seen or heard about the movie 'Jungle Book' with its famous characters like Mowgli, Baloo and Bagheera. But did you know that it is based on a book written by a great English writer, Rudyard Kipling?

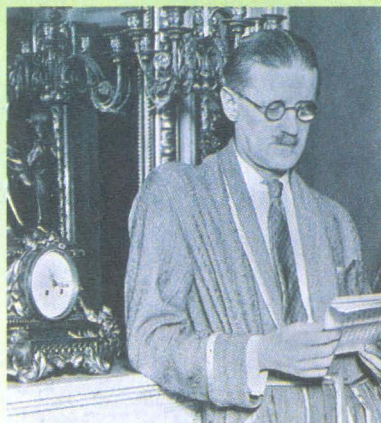
Rudyard Kipling was born in Bombay, but educated in England. In 1882 he returned to India, where he worked for Anglo-Indian newspapers. Kipling enjoyed early success

with his poems but soon became known as a gifted short story writer. He glorified the British Empire and the common soldier in many of his works. 'Kim' (published in 1901) is widely considered his best novel. Kipling was the first Englishman to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Kipling had poor eyesight, which proved a blessing in disguise. He had hoped to enter the army, but his mediocre results as a student dashed these hopes- and the military's loss proved to be literature's gain!



Rudyard Kipling



James Joyce

Why was James Joyce regarded as an innovator in 20th century writing?

James Joyce was an Irish writer and poet who was known for his experimental use of language. He used many technical innovations in his works including invented words, puns and illusions, and also complex and symbolic parallels drawn from mythology, history and literature. He was a rebel, and his writing was often strange and fantastic.

How's my new style?



His most famous works were 'Ulysses' and 'Finnegan's Wake', 'Dubliners' and 'Portrait of the artist as a Young Man'.

During his career Joyce suffered from rejections from publishers, suppression by censors, attacks by critics, and misunderstanding by readers.

Why did Henry James write such detailed descriptions?

Henry James was an American-born writer, gifted with talents in literature, psychology, and philosophy. James wrote 20 novels, 112 stories, 12 plays and a number of literary criticisms.

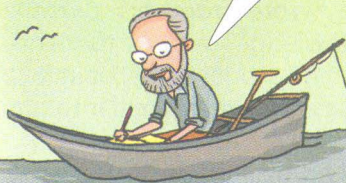
He wrote his first novel 'Watch and Ward' while he was travelling through Venice and Paris.

Later James moved to England and wrote novels that portrayed Americans living abroad. He aimed to create characters that were so lifelike that readers would feel that



Henry James

I'll name my new book "The Old Man and the Sea"



they were real people. As a result, he wrote long descriptions that also made his books very long!

Why did Ernest Hemingway's writings reflect his adventurous life?

Ernest Hemingway is one of the greatest American writers of all time. In 1916, Hemingway began his writing career as a reporter. Six months later, he joined the Ambulance Corps in World War I and worked as an ambulance driver on the Italian front, picking up human remains. In July 1918, he was seriously wounded by a mortar shell that left shrapnel in both of his legs. Hemingway participated in the Spanish Civil War and in the World War II, by taking part in the D-day invasion of France. He loved bull fighting and was also a big game

hunter and deep sea fisherman. He killed himself with a shotgun in 1961.

He published his first books, called 'Three Stories and Ten Poems' in 1923, and 'In Our time' in 1924. His military experiences were reflected in 'For Whom the Bell Tolls' and in several other stories. He settled near Havana, Cuba, where he wrote 'The Old Man and the Sea' for which he won a Pulitzer Prize, and the Nobel Prize for Literature. The book is about an aged fisherman who is trying to catch a huge fish. His love for bullfighting is reflected in his book 'Death in the Afternoon.' In short, his life was a colourful and adventurous one- and all the colour and adventure is captured in his writings.



Ernest Hemingway

Why did Nathaniel Hawthorne write about witchcraft?

Nathaniel Hawthorne was an American novelist and short-story writer. He is best known for the novel 'The Scarlet Letter', set in colonial New England, which is considered to be one of the best American novels, and 'The House of the Seven Gables,' which is the story of a family that lives under a curse for generations.

Hawthorne's family had been involved in religious persecution for generations, and one of his ancestors was a judge who had ordered the execution of

innocent people for being witches. As a young man, Nathaniel had been fascinated and deeply moved by the family story that this ancestor was cursed by one

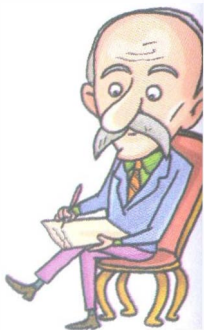
of the convicted witches. This greatly troubled Hawthorne, and he wrote about the harsh attitude of the early American people towards witchcraft.

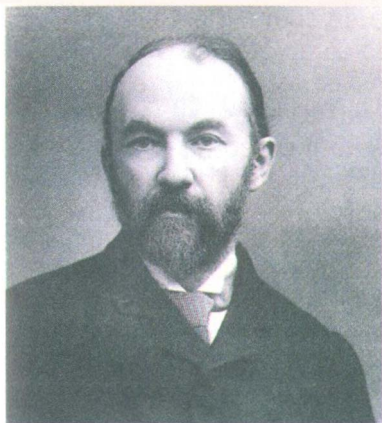
Why is Thomas Hardy considered immortal?

Thomas Hardy is one of the immortals of English literature. He wrote from his personal knowledge and experience, and his stories were set in locations that were familiar to him. Hardy started by writing poetry, but later, he switched to writing novels. At first, he published anonymously, but when people became interested in his works, he began to use his own name.

Hardy's novels were published in serial form in magazines that were popular both in England and America. His first popular novel was 'Under the Greenwood Tree', published in 1872. The next great novel, 'Far from the Madding Crowd' was a huge success and other popular novels followed in quick succession.

After a long and highly successful life, Thomas Hardy died on January 11, 1928, at the age of 87. His ashes were





Thomas Hardy

buried in Poets' Corner at Westminster Abbey. His works will live on forever.

Why did Mary Anne Evans write under the name George Eliot?

Did you know that the famous writer George Eliot was actually a lady named Mary Anne Evans? She used a male pen name, she said, to ensure that her works were taken seriously, for in those days it was believed that women could write only light hearted romances. She chose 'George' as her first name as it was the name of her lifelong companion, George Lewes, and 'Eliot' because 'it was a good mouth filling word'!

George Eliot was one of the leading writers of the Victorian era. Mary Anne Evans's transformation into the fiction writer George Eliot began in 1856, when she decided to try her hand at writing novels. Her first novel 'Adam Bede', was a success and it was followed by two more popular novels 'The Mill on the Floss' and 'Silas Marner'.

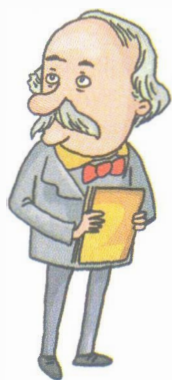
Mary Anne Evans lived a controversial and unconventional life that has been the subject of much scholarly debate, and the study of many biographers. Her works stand on their own making her one of the best of the Victorian writers.



Mary Anne Evans

Why is 'Madame Bovary' considered Gustave Flaubert's masterpiece?

Flaubert was French novelist of the realist school. He abandoned his law studies at age 22



for a life of writing. As a writer, Flaubert was a perfectionist, and he believed that a novelist should not judge, teach, or explain, but remain neutral.

Flaubert is known best for his sensational 'Madame

Bovary'. Written in 1857, it is a classic tale of romance and retribution. The novel created a storm, and its subject matter and realistic treatment outraged French society. Flaubert was brought before the court and acquitted- on charges of obscenity

'Madame Bovary' remains one of the most frequently taught works of French literature both in France, and in universities across the world. The novel took five years to complete. During this time, Flaubert worked in sullen soli-

tude, sometimes taking a week to complete one page. He was never satisfied with what he had composed, and violently tormented his brain for the best turn of a phrase, the most absolutely final adjective. His other novels include the exotic 'Salamambo', 'A Sentimental Education', 'The Temptation of Saint Anthony' and 'Trois Contes'. But there is no doubt at all that 'Madame Bovary' was his masterpiece.

Why were the novels of Charles Dickens so popular?

Charles Dickens was one of the most influential and greatest writers of the Victorian era.

From 1837 till 1841, Charles took to writing novels, but his novels were published in small parts instead of at one time.

He wrote novels like 'Oliver Twist', 'Nicholas

Nickelby', and 'The Old Curiosity Shop'. From 1841 to 1860, Charles wrote a few



Charles Dickens

more novels, which were very much based on his personal experience. 'David Copperfield', 'Bleak House', 'A Tale of Two Cities', and 'Great Expectations', are among his famous works during that period. Because his novels were published in instalments in periodicals, many more people could afford to read them, as periodicals were not as expensive as books. Moreover, each instalment would end with a hook that kept his readers wondering what was coming next, thus ensuring the sales of the next instalment!

Dickens also took part in protests and campaigns against social injustice, hypocrisy in the society and wrote stories, pamphlets, and plays in this context. Although Dickens's main profession was as a novelist, he continued his journalistic work until the end of his life

Dickens had the rare gift of being able to capture the imagination of the audience. His powers of observation were amazing, and he had a rare wit. His characters were unforgettable, and his command of the language incredible.

Dickens was a sympathizer of the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed and when he died, one of England's greatest writers was lost to the world.



Daniel Defoe

Daniel Defoe was an observant reporter, historian, humorist, and grand story teller. He is best known as the author of the famous book 'Robinson Crusoe.' It is the story of a shipwrecked sailor who is washed ashore on a deserted island. He spends 28 years on this remote tropical island encountering natives, captives, and mutineers before being rescued. The story is written in a simple narrative style, and is considered to be one of the most widely published books in history.



Lewis Carroll

Which famous children's author was also a brilliant mathematician?

Have you heard of the maths teacher who wrote children's novels? Lewis Carroll did just that. While working as a maths lecturer at Christchurch, Oxford, he wrote novels for children. He also wrote brilliant mathematical works!

'Lewis Carroll' was the pen name adopted by Charles Lutwidge Dodgson. Carroll was very shy, and hid his hands continually in a pair of grey-and-black gloves. He was troubled by a stammer, but he got along well with children. During a picnic in 1862, Carroll told a long story to a girl named Alice Liddell. His famous book, *Alice's Adventures*

in Wonderland,' was born out of this tale. Alice, a seven year old girl is the heroine of this story. She dreams that she plunges down a rabbit hole. She meets such strange creatures as the Cheshire cat, the Mad Hatter, the March Hare and the King and queen of hearts. The incidents in this novel are illogical and have a dream like quality. This story is continued in the novel, 'Through the Looking Glass,' which is even more famous. Lewis Carroll delighted his friends with games, puzzles and riddles and some of his novels have puzzled generations of readers.

Ripley's Five Books

You may be familiar with Robert L. Ripley's 'Believe it or Not'. Once an author asked him. "What five books would you take along if you were forced to spend five years in exile on a desert island?" Ripley replied. " I will take the Bible, The Good Earth by Pearl S. Buck, Les Miserables by Victor Hugo, Outline of History by H.G. Wells, and Believe it or Not!"

Why are the Bronte sisters famous?

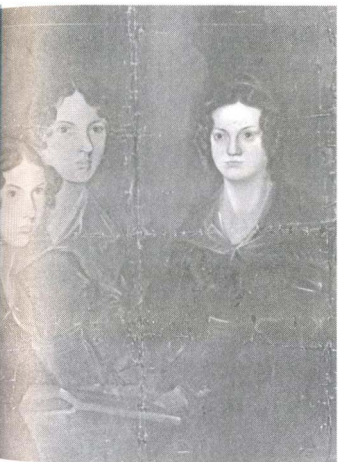
The Bronte sisters led a strange and troubled life. They lost their mother at an early age, and two of their sisters died while they were in school. They lived in a cold house by the Parish graveyard. Yet Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Bronte wrote some of the finest

novels in the English language.

A simple present from their father, a box of toy soldiers, changed the course of their life. Charlotte seized a toy soldier and declared him to be her hero. This sparked their imagination, and they began to write.

In 1846, the three sisters published a collection of poems

at their own expense. Just two copies were sold. This failure did not defeat them. Each one started writing a novel, but all the three novels were later rejected by publishers. Finally in 1847, Charlotte Brontë's novel, 'Jane Eyre,' was published. It became an immediate success. The same year saw the publication of Emily Brontë's novel 'Wuthering Heights' and Anne Brontë's, 'Agnes Grey'. Curiously, all the three Bronte sisters wrote under male pen names! Thus the Bronte sisters made literary history.



Bronte Sisters

Famous Pen Names
Instead of their real names, some writers used pen names. Here are some famous pen names. Their real names are in brackets:
Boz (Charles Dickens), Lewis Carroll (Charles Lutwidge Dodgson), George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans), Maxim Gorki (Aleksei Peshkov), Knut Hamsun (Knut Pedersen), O. Henry (William Sydney Porter), George Orwell (Eric Arthur Blair), Saki (Hector Hugh Munro), Mark Twain (Samuel Langhorne Clemens), Voltaire (Francois Marie Arouet).



Enid Blyton

Why is Enid Blyton a legend in children's literature?

Enid Blyton lit up

the world of children with her books. She was the eldest of three children. Her father Thomas Carey Blyton painted, wrote poetry, played the piano, and was a photographer too. Enid Blyton was brought up to be a musician. Her family thought her writing was a waste of time!

In 1917, her first published poem appeared in Nash's Magazine. She edited 'Sunny Stories', a new magazine for children. Many of her stories, plays, and songs were well received.

Blyton's first full-length children's adventure book, 'The Secret Island' was published in 1938. This was a fast moving story woven around loveable characters. This led to such series as 'The Famous Five', 'The Secret

Why is it said that Jane Austen's novels mark the transition in English literature from neoclassicism to romanticism?

Jane Austen, the noted English novelist made romanticism fashionable. In romanticism, the author's feelings, tastes, and opinions find their way into the writing. This is called subjectivity. For instance, Jane Austen loved dancing, and it is

frequently featured in her novels. Romanticism also gave importance to inspiration. Jane Austen's novels were brilliantly witty and beautifully structured.



Jane Austen

Unlike most other writers, Jane Austen had a happy childhood. She was the seventh child of Reverend George Austen and his wife Cassandra. She was born in Hampshire, England. At the age of fourteen, she wrote her

Seven', 'The Adventure Series', 'The Mystery Series' and the 'Barney' mystery books. Her works celebrate good food, the spirit of friendship, and honesty.

Blyton could write 10,000 words a day! In 1940, eleven books were published in her name. Blyton's books have sold over 60 million copies!



first novel, 'Love and Friendship'. In her early twenties, Jane Austen wrote three novels. They were later re-worked and published as 'Sense and Sensibility', 'Pride and Prejudice,' and 'Northanger Abbey'. 'Sense and Sensibility' and 'Pride and Prejudice' were published in 1811 and 1813 respectively. 'Mansfield Park' came out in 1814, and 'Emma', in 1816. Jane Austen died at the age of forty one. Northanger Abbey was published in 1818, the year after her death. None of the books published in her lifetime had her name on them - they were described as being written 'By a Lady'!

Somerset Maugham's Best Ten



The world famous writer Somerset Maugham (in picture) selected

the following as the 10 best novels of the world:

- 1. War and Peace (1866) by Leo Tolstoy**
- 2. Pere Goriot (1834) by Honore de Balzac**
- 3. Tom Jones (1749) by Henry Fielding**
- 4. Pride and Prejudice (1813) by Jane Austen**
- 5. The Red and the Black (1831) by Stendhal**
- 6. Wuthering Heights (1848) by Emily Bronte**
- 7. Madame Bovary (1857) by Gustave Flaubert**
- 8. David Copperfield (1849-1850) by Charles Dickens**
- 9. The Brothers Karamazov (1880) by Fyodor Dostoevsky**
- 10. Moby Dick (1851) by Herman Melville**

Why is Dostoevsky regarded as the father of Russian realism and the master of psychological realism?

First things first. Realism refers to the representation of things in a way that is true to life. Fyodor Dostoevsky was a master of realism. His life reads like a story. Dostoevsky was born in Moscow, Russia, to Mikhail Dostoevsky, an army surgeon, and Maria Nechaeva. His father was an alcoholic, and his family lived in fear. His best friend was murdered when Dostoevsky was nine years old. In 1846, he published 'Poor Folk'. This book launched his writing career.

However, Dostoevsky started attending meetings of a group which was interested in reforming Russian society. He was thrown into prison, and sentenced to death. Minutes before his execution, he was pardoned, and his sentence reduced to five years of hard labour in Siberia. 'The House of the Dead' published in 1862 was a fictional account of prison life



Fyodor Dostoevsky

based on his experience in Siberia.

Dostoevsky's fiction is notable for its deep and intense understanding of human psychology. In his novel 'Crime and Punishment', the young Raskolnikov murders a pawnbroker, and under-

goes mental suffering. In his novel, 'The Idiot', Dostoevsky criticised materialism, the tendency to consider belongings, and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values. 'The Brothers Karamazov' was Dostoevsky's last novel. Love, hate and the search for God were the subjects of this novel.

It is the first major work in psychological realism. In spite of poor physical health and epileptic attacks, Dostoevsky went on to become the father of Russian realism, and master of psychological realism.



Tell Me Why

Why is James Fenimore Cooper considered to be the first true American novelist?

A badly written novel sparked off James Cooper's writing career. After reading the novel, he boasted to his wife that he could write better than that. His wife challenged him to prove it. Thus, the gentleman farmer who had inherited a mountain of debt, unexpectedly turned into a successful writer.

However, Cooper's first book, 'Precaution', was a failure. His second, 'The Spy' published in 1821 became an instant success. It was published both in the U.S and Europe. Most of his novels tell the tale of American settlers and their conflict with the native Red Indians. His love for the wild was reflected in his works. Cooper was prolific. He produced book after book. His 'Leatherstocking Tales' were well loved. These featured the adventures of Natty Bumppo, the resourceful American settler. As a mark of respect to his dead mother, he took Fenimore as his middle name.

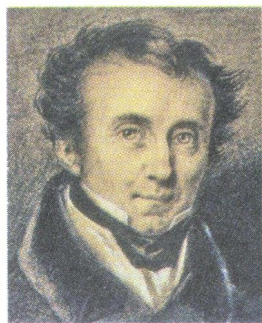
Cooper came from a wealthy family which founded Cooperstown, New York, but it had fallen on bad days. His famous novel, 'The Last of the Mohicans', published in 1826, has discontinuation of both a way of life and a family line as its theme. In 1834,

Best Sellers

Do you know which are the best selling books of all time?

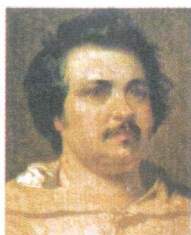
'The Bible,' comes first and 'Quotations from the Works of Mao Tse-tung' comes second in this list.

he published 'A Letter to His Countrymen', which criticized American culture. American newspapers made him out to be a villain! James



James Fenimore Cooper

Fenimore Cooper, the first true American novelist died on September 14, 1851 at his home, one day short of his sixty second birthday.



Alexander Dumas

Why does Alexander Dumas enjoy a special place among French writers?

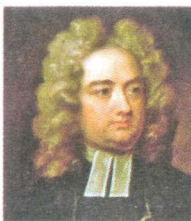
Alexander Dumas, the great French writer, never wrote a complete novel by himself! He would come up with the plot, characters, and often some of the important passages, but the main writing was done by a changing group of assistants!

He is famous for creating the characters of D'Artagnan, Athos, Aramis and Porthos in 'The Three Musketeers'. A musket is a gun with a long barrel. Further adventures of the musketeers followed in 'Twenty Years After',

and 'The Vicomte de Bragelone'. His other famous creation was 'The Count of Monte Cristo'. He also wrote many plays and stories.

Why is 'Gulliver's Travels' known as Jonathan Swift's the masterpiece?

Imagine being trapped in a land of tiny people. In 'Gulliver's Travels', Gulliver is washed on to the shore of Lilliput, following a shipwreck. For the tiny people of Lilliput, Gulliver is a giant. Then he lands up in Brobdingnag, a land of giants. There he is seen as tiny, and is even put into a bird cage!



Jonathan Swift



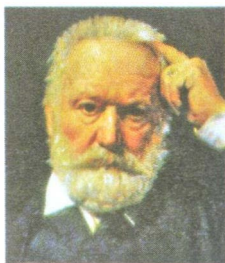
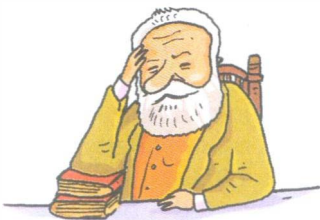
Washington Irving

Have you heard about the fictional character, 'Rip Van Winkle'? He slept for so many years that when he got up his clothes had grown out of fashion! Well, Washington Irving created Rip Van Winkle. He appears in Irving's most famous work, 'The Sketch Book', published in 1819. Washington Irving was also the first American to make a living solely out of writing.

Gulliver escapes, and arrives at a country of gentle talking horses. The genuine affection they have for each other moves Gulliver so much so that he longs to stay with them. 'Gulliver's Travels' is the masterpiece of Jonathan Swift, the English-Irish author. Try to get a copy of Gulliver's Travels. You are sure to enjoy it!

Why are the books of Victor Hugo still very popular?

Victor Hugo's funeral was a national event attended by two million people. His characters live on one hundred and thirty two years after his death. Jean Val Jean, the hero of 'Les Misérables' is labelled a criminal for life because he stole a loaf of bread. The novel throws light on the social conditions in Hugo's France. Hugo wrote this novel while in exile. The hunchbacked bell ringer Quasimodo, and his tragic love for Esmeralda, the beautiful gypsy girl are portrayed in his novel 'Notre-Dame de Paris'. It was published in 1831. With this novel, Hugo gained lasting fame. In 1841, Victor Hugo was elected to the prestigious Académie Française. Victor Hugo also published several volumes of lyric poetry.



Victor Hugo

BEST SELLERS BORN IN PRISONS

Some best sellers came from prisons. Authors wrote them while they were in jail. Here are some Examples: (The author's name is given in brackets)

- **Henriade** (Voltaire)
- **Pilgrim's Progress** (John Bunyan)
- **Don Quixote** (Miguel De Cervantes)
- **Hymn to the Pillory** (Daniel Defoe)
- **Glimpses of World History** (Jawaharlal Nehru)
- **The Gentle Grafter** (O. Henry)
- **History of the World** (Sir Walter Raleigh)
- **De Profundis and Apologia** (Oscar Wilde)

Why is Sherlock Holmes an immortal character?

Say the word detective, and the image of Sherlock Holmes springs to the mind. He was so life-like that readers forgot that they were reading about a character in a book. They even send mail to his fictional address in Baker Street! Sherlock Holmes was a quiet and intelligent character, but his creator Arthur Conan Doyle got tired of him. He wanted to write 'serious' novels. So in one of his later books, he killed him off. There was a public outcry, and Doyle was forced to bring Holmes back from the dead. Holmes formed a memorable partnership along with his unintelligent associate Dr. Watson.

Holmes first appeared in Doyle's story, 'A Study in Scarlet'. It was published as a serial in Strand Magazine. Holmes appeared in 'The Sign of the Four' (1889), 'Adventures' (1891) and 'The Hound of the Baskervilles' (1902). Collected Holmes stories appeared in 'Adventures of Sherlock Holmes'. It ran into five volumes. More than 175 films have been made on Sherlock Holmes.

Arthur Conan Doyle was Scottish by birth and a doctor by profession. He believed in ghosts, and played first class cricket. He also displayed his detective talent, in just the same manner of Sherlock Holmes!



Conan Doyle



Why is Maxim Gorky known as a 'writer of the people'?

Maxim Gorky was a Russian hero. He was deeply moved by the wretched conditions of his countrymen. He did a variety of difficult jobs to make ends meet. When Gorky toured Russia, the sufferings of its people melted his heart, and a revolutionary was born. He joined the Communist Party. In 1905, he was arrested by the

Tell Me Why

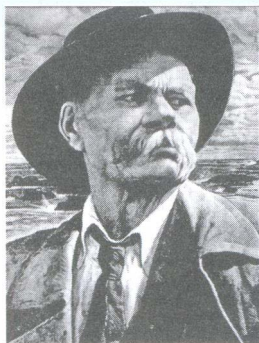
Reference Books

The authors Norris and Ross McWhirter are responsible for the internationally popular Guinness book of World Records. The following are their great reference books:

- Encyclopaedia Britannica
- Guide to Reference Books (American Library Association)
- The World Almanac
- Year Book of International Organizations
- Oxford English Dictionary
- National Geographic Society Atlas
- Ulrich's International Periodical Directory
- World of Learning (Europa, 2 vols.)
- U.N Statistical Yearbook
- 1,000,000 de Decimales de Pi (Guilloud et Bouyer)
- Dictionary of National Biography
- Halsbury's Laws of England

Czarist government, and exiled. 1917 was the year of the October Revolution. Following the revolution, Gorky was made head of the propaganda department in Russia.

Gorky means 'the bitter one' in Russian. Maxim Gorky is the pen name of Aleksei Peshkov. Gorky was a literary genius. 'Mother', his most famous novel has been translated into all the leading languages of the world. His novels, plays and autobiographies describe the woes of the Russians in the pre-revolutionary days. His other well known literary works are 'Lower Depths,' and 'My Childhood and Reminiscences'. Gorky occupied a place of honour in the hearts of his countrymen as a



Maxim Gorky

hero of the October Revolution. Gorky breathed his last in 1931.

Why is it said that unsuccessful love affairs made the great writer Goethe?

A tragedy that does not kill you makes you stronger. The writer in Johann Wolfgang Goethe was moulded by several unsuccessful love affairs. Failed love features prominently in his writings. His first major work, 'The Sorrows of Young Werther,' appeared in 1774. Werther's hopeless love for Lotte Buff, the wife of a close friend ends in mental breakdown and suicide. Young readers identified with this novel. Emotions and local colour are highlighted in this novel.

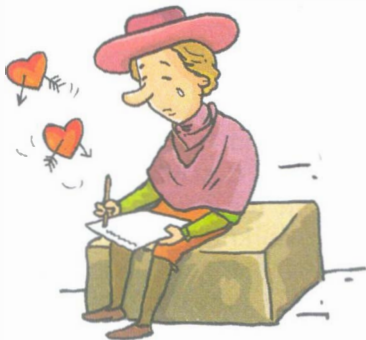
'The Sorrows of Young Werther' is among the most influential texts of German romanticism. Goethe's second novel, 'Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship' also revolves around failed love and the feeling of being alone in the world. Like Werther, Wilhelm suffers a tragic blow in love, but he gives himself up to work and becomes a playwright and an actor.

Goethe was an administrator in the court of Duke Karl August



of Weimar. Goethe supported freedom and progress, but believed that aristocracy had an important role to play in society. Young readers criticized him for his views on aristocracy.

'Faust' was Goethe's dramatic masterpiece. It first appeared in 1808. This drama became his passion, and he worked on it for more than thirty years. It is based on a play by English dramatist Christopher Marlowe. It tells the chilling tale of Faust, the man who sold his soul to the devil. The second part of 'Faust' appeared in 1838. The play brought Goethe international success, and had a great influence on modern drama.



Goethe on Kalidasa

"Wouldst thou the young year's blossom and the fruit of its decline,

And all by which the soul is charmed, enraptured, feasted, fed?

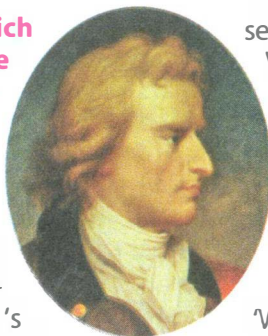
Wouldst thou the heaven and earth itself in one sole name combine,

I name thee, 'Shakuntala', and all at once is said". - These are the much quoted words in which Goethe praised India's great poet Kalidasa and his legendary work 'Abhijnanashakuntalam'.

Why is Friedrich Schiller known to be a great German poet?

Friedrich Von Schiller's passion for writing was labelled as foolish by his father. Schiller was forced to join his father's regiment in the army. He continued to write, and was almost arrested for neglecting his duties! The conflict with his father found its way into Schiller's writing. In Schiller's first play, 'The Robbers', Karl Moor, a noble outlaw violently rejects his father in his search for justice. It was warmly greeted in Germany and England. The play 'Don Carlos,' also depicts a conflict between a father and a son.

Schiller gained lasting fame as a poet. His 'Ode to Joy,' was later



set to music by Ludwig Van Beethoven. It is currently the anthem of the European Union.

Schiller also wrote historical plays such as 'Mary Stuart,' and the dramatic trilogy, 'Wallenstein'. His magnificent control and beautiful use of the German language inspired generations of poets, writers and readers.



How did Hans Christian Andersen become a writer?

Have you read the fairy tale of 'The Ugly Duckling', the one in which the ugly duckling turns into a beautiful swan? It was written by Hans Christian Andersen, and his life was similar to that fairy tale. His father was a poor Danish shoemaker. His paternal grandmother was a gardener in Greyfriars Hospital. Andersen listened to the traditional stories of Denmark told by the old women in the spinning rooms of the hospital.

Andersen set out to be an actor but failed. He wrote three novels between 1835 and 1837 - 'The Improvisator', 'O.T' and 'Only a Fiddler'. His novels were popular. However, his fame rests on his fairy tales. The first volume of his fairy tales was published in 1835. He was treated as an equal by Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas, famous writers in their own right. In Germany, he was so popular that German publishing companies engaged in bidding wars over the

rights to his books.

During the late 1840's, Andersen wrote some of his best fairy tales - these include 'The Nightingale', 'The Ugly Duckling', 'The Snow Queen,' and 'The Story of a Mother'. In these tales, common people took on the role of heroes. They were portrayed as intelligent, hard working, and brave. The popularity of his fairy tales lives on, and they have been translated into every major language. By the time of his death in 1875, Andersen was considered to be a national monument!



Hans Christian Andersen



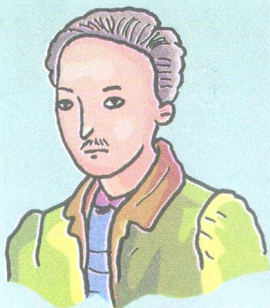
Georg Buchner

Why is Georg Buchner's 'Danton's Death' considered a masterpiece of German literature?

Have you heard of the French revolution? It began in France in 1789. King Louis XVI was overthrown, and a short lived republic was established. 'Danton's Death,' is a complex historical drama based on the French Revolution. It displays many levels of meaning in the study of the French Revolution and the purpose of history. It was written by Georg Buchner in 1835, and is considered to be a masterpiece of German literature.

Georg Buchner was born in the German village of Goddelau to Ernst Karl Buchner, a physician, and Caroline. When he was three, the family moved to Darmstadt.

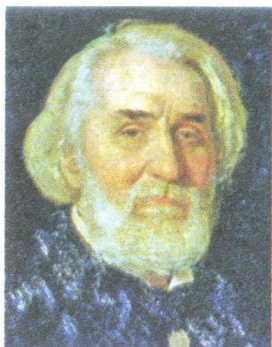
Buchner was sympathetic to the social misery of the peasant class. His writings had a note of sadness in them. They focus on the conflict between the ideals of human freedom and the circumstances of history. Buchner is considered to be a genius, who was gifted with a complex poetic vision. Apart from 'Danton's Death', all of Buchner's works were published after his death. The Georg Buchner prize for literature created by the city of Darmstadt in 1923 is one of the most coveted German literary awards.



Why is Ivan Turgenev considered to be a great Russian writer?

The pen is mightier than the sword, and Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev proved it with his writing. In 'A Hunter's Sketches', he criticized the established social custom of serfdom. The peasants or 'serfs' were equivalent to slaves. It is believed that Tsar Aleksander II read Hunter's Sketches. The book melted his heart, and he set the serfs free!

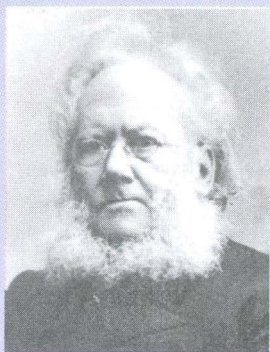
Turgenev published his first story, 'Khor and Kalinich,' in 1847. He travelled in Europe, and developed friendships with the famous writers, Flaubert and Zola. His novel, 'Fathers and Sons,' angered society. It deals with Nihilism. Nihilism believes that existing social systems must be totally destroyed but it offered no other alternative.



Ivan Turgenev

Why have Ibsen's plays been widely accepted in the world of literature?

Henrik Ibsen's play, 'A Doll's House,' created a sensation. In A Doll's House, Nora, the mother of three children is treated like a doll by her husband. She leaves her family to fulfil herself spiritually. Ibsen threw light on the thoughts and the complexities of the individual. His work was more focused on character than on plot. 'Peter Gynt' tells the story of Peter's immoral life and his fantastical journey through the world. Ibsen's most controversial play was 'Ghosts' - the story of an alcoholic's



Henrik Ibsen

wife who sacrifices herself to the marriage because of social

The hostile reception to his novel forced Turgenev to leave Russia and settle in Paris.

His novels 'Rudin' (1856), 'A Nest of Gentlemen' (1859) and 'On the Eve' (1860) were based on social and political issues. By the 1870's, Turgenev was recognized as one of the world's leading writers. Turgenev also wrote a number of plays. 'A Month in the Country' is noted for innovations in dramatic style. In the play, 'A Provincial Lady', he pokes fun at the beliefs of the country aristocrats. Turgenev was a great Russian writer whose fame spread throughout the world. He died in 1883.

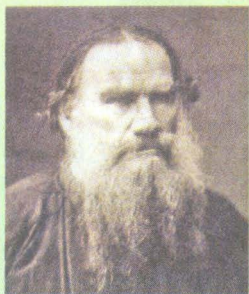
conventions.

Henrik Ibsen was born in Skein, Norway, to a wealthy merchant family. However, his father suffered financial losses and was unable to give Ibsen a good education. Ibsen developed a deep distrust for society, and this is reflected in his plays. Ibsen's plays have been universally praised, and he is among the most influential playwrights in the development of modern drama.



Antonio Dias

'My land has palm trees, where the night-ingale sings'... this is the first line of 'Song of Exile', Brazil's best known poem. It was penned by Antonio Goncalves Dias (pictured above) in 1843. Dias wrote on nature, and the glorification of the native people. He celebrates Brazil in his poetry collections, *Primeiros Cantos* and *Ultimos Cantos*. Antonio Dias is regarded as the national poet of Brazil.



Leo Tolstoy

Why do critics say that Tolstoy's writing reveals 'real life'?

If life could write its own story, it would write like Tolstoy. Even the minute details of his characters' lives

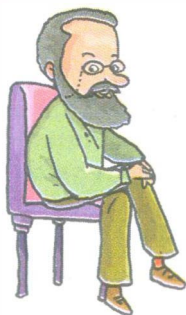
were recorded by Tolstoy - like a painter adding small brushstrokes to create a life-like painting. 'War and Peace,' is his masterpiece. The 'War' in the title refers to Napoleon's wars from 1805 to 1820. In the novel, Tolstoy rejects the theory that great men make history.

Tolstoy's 'Anna Karenina' tells the tale of the aristocratic Anna, and her love affair with a dashing army officer. 'The Death of Ivan Ilyich,' and 'The Kreutzer Sonata,' are his later novellas.

Tolstoy shared with Mahatma Gandhi, a belief in passive resistance towards evil - the principle which the Indian Independence movement successfully employed.

Leo Tolstoy was born in 1828. His mother died when he was two, and his father when he was nine. Raised by relatives, Leo Tolstoy went on to become a great Russian novelist - a writer of the 'real life'.

Why is Emile Zola considered a great writer?



Emile Zola, the great French novelist and critic had a dream. He wanted to be a published author. To that end, he started working in a publishing house and published works of fiction. But his early works went unnoticed. Then in 1865, he published 'Claude's Confession' - a scandalous autobiographical work. It caught the notice of his employers and they gave him notice to quit. Though he lost his job, Zola gained attention as an emerging author.

'Therese Raquin', his second novel was a modest success. He followed it with a series

of twenty works known together as the 'Rougon-Macquart cycle.' It revolves around the life of a family living under Napoleon.

Zola's style of writing was based on the accurate depiction of detail. This is called 'naturalism.' Zola is the founder of the 'naturalist movement.' 'The Drunkard,' which was published in 1877 made him famous.

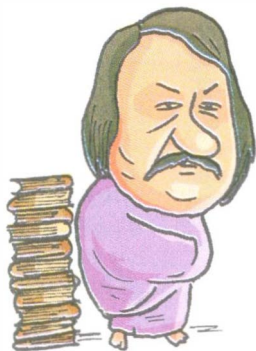
Why do we consider Balzac one of the creators of realism in French literature?

Honore de Balzac was neglected by his mother and, spent his early years in boarding school. In 1819, Balzac rented a shabby room in Paris and began to write.

Balzac spent up to 16 hours a day writing. He wrote on blue paper aided by large cups of Turkish coffee. By 1822, Balzac had written several novels and plays under various pen-names. All his writings were ignored but Balzac continued to put pen to paper.

In 1833, Balzac collected all of his novels, linked them together as a series, and published them under the title, 'The Human Comedy'. It included his well known works,

'Father Goriot', 'The Peasants' and 'Lost Illusions'. This collection of 90 novels portrayed more than 2000 life like characters. His characters were lifelike. Hence Balzac is regarded as a creator of realism in French literature.

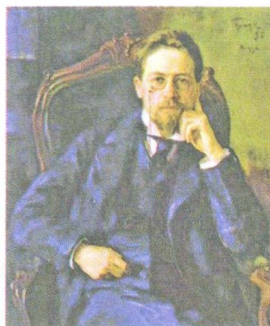


Katherine Mansfield
Katherine Mansfield was the first important writer to emerge from New Zealand. Virginia Woolf, the great writer, considered her as a serious rival. 'In a German Pension,' was her first complete volume of short stories. Her stories question traditional ideas about social class, family life, and marriage. They exerted a lasting influence on modern short story writers.

What makes Anton Chekhov a world famous writer?

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov began to write while studying medicine in Moscow University. His family was neck deep in debt, and desperately needed the money Chekhov got from writing. His first story appeared in 1880 in the comic magazine, 'Fragments'. Chekhov fine-tuned his descriptive technique during his five years at 'Fragments'.

Chekhov graduated in 1884, and began to practice medicine. 'New Time', one of Russia's most prestigious news papers, began to publish his work. In 1887, Chekhov bagged the coveted Pushkin prize for 'At



Anton Chekhov

Dusk', a collection of short stories, and completed his first play, 'Ivanov'. 'The Seagull', a tragic tale of love was his first great success in theatre.

Chekhov presented life as it was. His new descriptive technique led to

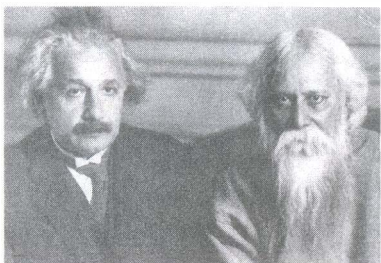
the development of modernism and influenced later generations of writers. His last play, 'The Cherry Orchard,' was a huge success. 'Uncle Vanya', 'The Three Sisters' are among his most famous works. Chekhov died in 1904.

Why is Tagore's 'Gitanjali' famous?

Like a diamond, Rabindranath Tagore's genius had many faces. He was a national poet, a leading political figure, a paint-

Samuel Joseph Agnon

Samuel Joseph Agnon was the greatest writer of modern Hebrew fiction. Born in Buczacz, which is now in Poland, he left home for Palestine in 1907. His folk-epic, 'The Bridal Canopy,' is a modern Hebrew classic. Agnon's greatest novel is 'The Day Before Yesterday' which is set in the second wave of Jewish emigration to Palestine. Samuel Joseph Agnon won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1965.



Einstein and Tagore

er, and an educational visionary. He was also a novelist. He wrote and composed India's national anthem. Rabindranath Tagore's works are a heady mixture of politics, poetry, and spirituality.

Tagore established Shanti Niketan - a school 'where the mind is without fear'. It blossomed into a meeting place for national and international scholars of music, painting,



singing, and languages. Tagore's union with nature is the cornerstone of his poetry. 'Gitanjali,' is a collection of his religious and spiritual poetry. It takes a new look at the relationship between Nature and God. In 1913, Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for his English translation of 'Gitanjali.'

Which famous German author won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1946?

Herman Hesse was a German writer, but was deeply influenced by Eastern thought. 'Siddhartha,' is his most popular novel. In his novel 'Demian', a young man is torn between a life of pleasure and an orderly middle class life. Herman Hesse won the Nobel Prize in 1946. He is one of the popular writers of the German speaking world.

Nikos Kazantzakis

In 1955, Nikos Kazantzakis was thrown out of the Greek Orthodox Church and his novel 'The Last Temptation of Christ,' was banned. 'Zorba the Greek', 'Askitki and Odyssey: a Modern Sequel' are his other well known works. Kazantzakis is better known as a philosopher than as a writer.



Why did Kafka often deal with domestic conflicts in his writing?

Have you heard of the word Kafkaesque? It refers to the Czech novelist Franz Kafka, or to the nightmarish fictional world he created. Franz Kafka's childhood was spent in fear of his father. So, Kafka's novels deal with the conflict between father and son. In some novels, his characters plead innocence before the powerful.

'The Metamorphosis,' is his best known story. In it, Gregor Samsa, a salesman wakes up one day and finds that he has changed into a giant, ugly insect! This is the most important work in 'modernism'. 'Modernism' breaks away from traditional forms and



ideas. 'The Trial,' revolves around the physical and mental suffering of Josef K., who is arrested without reason. 'The

Who wrote the popular Spanish poetry collection, 'Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair' at the age of twenty?

Pablo Neruda was a writer and a roaming politician. In 1924, Neruda published 'Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair'. It is one of the most popular poetry collections in the Spanish speaking world. Striking images and a sense of connection with the natural in human love sets it apart. Neruda's love poetry is original and vibrant.

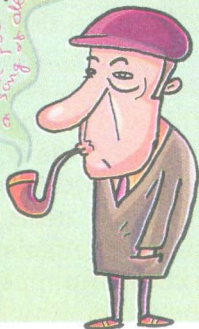
Neruda was appointed as the Chilean ambassador to the Burmese capital of Rangoon. He was deeply moved by the hardships of the workers in the nitrate mines of Chile. He served as a senator, and was once a candidate in the Chilean presidential elections.

Neruda changed his writing style repeatedly. His collection, 'Residence on Earth,' is written in a style which came to be known as 'Nerudaism.' It is filled with leaps of thought without reason, peculiar use of language, and powerful images

Castle,' is one of his most important works. Kafka's novels capture the strangeness of modern life and the feeling of being cut off from people and the world.

Kafka's genius was not recognized in his lifetime. He asked his friend and fellow writer Max Brod to destroy all his writings after his death. Luckily, Brod disobeyed his friend's last wish and the world discovered a genius.

presented without explanation. He used this style to represent the complexity of the human mind and modern life. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971.



Which famous author refused to accept the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1963?

Have you ever said no to a prize? Well, Jean-Paul Sartre said no to the biggest prize of them all - the Nobel Prize! He believed that the Nobel Prize represented traditional middleclass values, which went against his beliefs. Sartre was an existentialist. Existentialists believed in the supreme importance of human freedom.

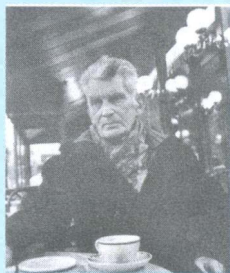
Sartre was born in Paris in 1905. Sartre's life and his works were influenced by his friend Simone de Beauvoir, the French philosopher, and writer and other existentialists. 'La Nausee' was his first novel. 'Being and Nothingness', his nonfiction work, lays down the foundations of his philosophy. His play, 'No Exit' presents three characters trapped in a room with no way out. They come to believe that 'hell is other people'. Sartre was plagued by blindness in the final years of his life, but he succeeded in opening the eyes of the world to his philosophy.



Jean-Paul Sartre

Why is Samuel Beckett regarded as a great playwright?

Samuel Beckett studied in the school which taught the great writer Oscar Wilde - the Portora Royal School in Ireland. Beckett came from an Anglo-Irish family, but he wrote mostly in French. He worked as a lecturer in Paris from 1928 to 1930, where the great writer James Joyce became his lifelong friend. He acted as one of Joyce's assistants while he was writing 'Finnegan's Wake'.



Samuel Beckett in a Paris Cafe

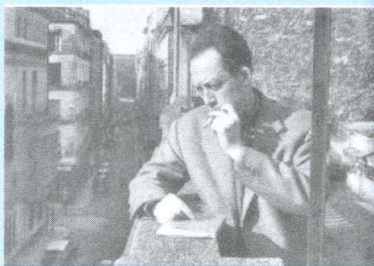
'Whoroscope', published in 1930, is his first poem. While working as a lecturer in Trinity College, Beckett wrote a series of stories about the life of a Dublin intellectual. These were later formed into the collection 'More Pricks than Kicks'. Beckett quit his job, and embarked on a career as a freelance writer. In 1932, he published his first novel, 'Dream of Fair to Middling Women'. It was drawn largely from his own experiences.

'Waiting for Godot', 'Endgame', 'Krapp's Last Tape' and 'Happy Days' are among his major plays.

How did Albert Camus attract readers?

Albert Camus was at the height of his popularity when he died. His life began in poverty in Algeria. The experience of poverty and the fear of death were reflected in his Algerian essays collected in the 'Wrong Side and the Right Side', 'Nuptials and Summer'.

Camus realized that the human mind had no capacity to understand death. Therefore, all things in life become meaning-



Albert Camus

less. This was the basis of his doctrine of the absurd or unreasonable. His novel, 'The Stranger,' deals with alienation - the feeling of being cut off from people and the world. 'The Myth

Patrick White

Patrick White is considered to be the most original Australian novelist. 'Happy Valley', 'The Tree of Man', 'Riders in the Chariot', 'A Fringe of Leaves and Voss' are among his major novels. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1973.

of Sisyphus', 'Cross Purpose', 'Caligula', 'The Plague' are among his most famous works. Albert Camus was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, and came to be known as the leading voice for morality in literature.

How was Saramago influenced by his grandfather?

Saramago is the most famous nickname in the writing world. Saramago was a wild radish eaten in Azinhaga, Portugal by the very poor. Jose Saramago was born to poor, landless farmers in Azinhaga. Young Saramago was very much attached to his grandparents. Years later, he began to write to preserve the memories of his grandparents. At 54, a jobless Saramago took up novel writing as a full time career.

Saramago's novels share some similarities with the magic realism of some Latin American

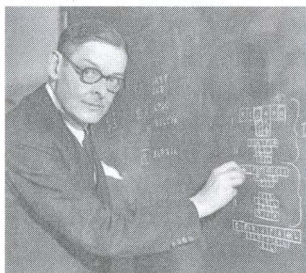


Jose Saramago receiving his Nobel Prize

novels - a technique in which realistic description is combined with elements of dream or fantasy. In his novel 'The Stone Raft', Portugal breaks off from Europe and floats south on the ocean. 'Blindness,' is his most widely read book in the English speaking world. It tells the tale of a mysterious blindness that strikes people in an unnamed country. In 1998, Saramago was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Julio Cortazar

Julio Cortazar was a writer who played the jazz trumpet. He was born in Brusselsto Argentinian parents. 'Bestario', a book of stories was his first major success. His novel 'Rayuela' won Cortazar many followers round the world.



T. S. Eliot

Why is T.S. Eliot famous?

Thomas Stearns Eliot had poetry in his blood. His mother Charlotte Eliot was a poetess with more than a drop of talent. At Harvard, he dis-

covered in Dante's poetry, a lifelong source of inspiration.

In 1914, Eliot moved to London, where he met the writer Ezra Pound. Pound played godfather to Eliot. 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,' appeared in the magazine, 'Poetry', on Pound's recommendation. Modern poetry begins with the third line of 'Prufrock'. Eliot's 'The Wasteland', a poem of more than four hundred lines, became the most famous example of modern poetry. The poem painted a picture of an ugly society sadly lacking in spiritual values.

'The Cocktail Party', a drama in verse, was seen by more than a million people in Eliot's lifetime. He also wrote a number of poems on cats!

Octavio Paz

Octavio Paz was born in 1914 in Mexico City, and was a poet and essayist. The revolution of the word was the revolution of the world for Paz. 'The Labyrinth of Solitude' is his fundamental study of Mexican identity. In 1962, Paz was appointed Mexican Ambassador to India. His stay in India gave birth to 'The Grammarian Monkey and East Slope'. Paz believed poetry to be the secret religion of the modern age. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1990.



Octavio Paz



Goldoni

Goldoni was the great reformer of Italian comedy. He freed Italian drama from the tradition of comedy made up on the spur of the moment.

Why is Jack London famous?

In 1897, Jack London sailed into the Klondike gold rush in Canada. A gold rush is the rapid migration of people to an area where gold is suddenly discovered. Jack London's famous novel 'The Call of the Wild,' is set in the Klondike gold rush. His novel, 'The Sea-Wolf,' was made into the first full length American movie. He was one of the first writers to build a large fortune from his fiction alone. Jack London wrote a lot of commercial magazine fiction, the first writer to do so. Sometimes, he purchased plots for his works from other writers!

Why did William Wordsworth's poems cause a sensation?

William Wordsworth's words were worth their weight in gold.

'He was the nearest of all writers to Shakespeare and Milton, and yet in a style perfectly unborrowed and his own', wrote his friend and fellow poet Coleridge. His intense love for nature lights up his poems. Wordsworth sensed the spirit that lives in nature. The perfect use of language, the freshness of his thought, and his magnificent imagination made his poems sensational. Yet they were simple.

In 1798, Wordsworth published his first collection of poems, 'Lyrical Ballads', together with Coleridge. This collection marks the birth of the Romantic school in English poetry. In 1843, he was appointed Poet Laureate on the death of Robert Southey, another Lakeland poet. 'Daffodils,' is one of his most famous poems.

Novalis

Novalis, the famous German author and philosopher is often known as the prophet of romanticism. 'We are near awakening when we dream that we dream', wrote Novalis.



Why is Ezra Pound known as 'the poet's poet'?

Pound, a restless rebel, is one of the founders of modern poetry. Born in Idaho in the U.S, he went to London, and worked as the secretary of the great poet, W.B Yeats. For a time he was an imagist. Imagists believed in the use of fresh language and a true understanding of nature. Pound's short poem, 'In a Station of the Metro' is an imagist masterpiece. Pound helped T.S Eliot and James Joyce to publish their works in the magazines, *Egoist* and *Poetry*. In 1914, he married the artist Dorothy Shakespeare. During that period, he wrote one of his most popular poems, 'Homage to Sextus Propertius'.

'Cathay', his English translation of



Ezra Pound

John Stuart Mill

'On Liberty,' is one of the smallest of the world's great books. It was written by the British philosopher John Stuart Mill in 1859. It deals with the power that society can exert on the individual.

Chinese works is among the most beautiful of his writings. 'Cantos,' is Pound's major poetic work. It was first published in ten sections, and later, as a single volume collection. It revolves around the poet's quest for worldly wisdom. His 'ABC of Reading' established the modernist poetic technique. Pound is known as the poet's poet for his influence on twentieth century poetry. He published over 70 books, and translated Japanese plays and Chinese poetry. According to Pound, great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree.

Which American poet was named the 'nun of Amherst'?

Emily Dickinson was born in Amherst, U.S.A. Her mother suffered from depression. She dressed in white, and spent most of her time shut up in her room. She never married. Though she wrote over



James Baldwin

James Baldwin was a Black American writer. He gained fame with his first novel, 'Go Tell it on the Mountain'. 'Giovanni's Room', 'The Fire Next Time', 'If Beale Street could Talk' and 'Just Above my Head,' are his other important novels.

1800 poems, only seven were published in her lifetime. Emily Dickinson was born in Amherst, U.S.A. Her mother suffered from depression.

Dickinson began writing poems in the traditional style. After years of practice, she started experimenting with her writing. Her poems dealt not only with death, faith and deathlessness, but also with nature, home, and the power and limits of language. Dickinson tailored many of her poems into packets with needle and thread.

The writer Thomas Higginson was her friend. She sent him four poems. 'The Famous Safe in their Alabaster Chambers,' was one of them. After Dickinson's death in 1886, her sister Lavinia brought out her poems. In her poetry, she frequently used dashes and capitalized

her nouns randomly. She also used off-rhymes, broken rhythm, and strange comparisons. The nun of Amherst changed the face of poetry forever.

Which famous English poet etched his poems on copper plates?

'Tiger, tiger burning bright, in the forests of the night'. These are the first lines of William Blake's poem, 'Tiger'. Blake etched his poems on copper plates and in the minds of his readers.



Harold Pinter

Harold Pinter (1930–2008)

was a great English playwright, actor, and director.

His plays are associated with the 'Theatre of the Absurd', and are typically marked by a sense of menace. Pinter was a master of dialogue. 'The Birthday Party', 'The Caretaker', and 'Party Time', 'Monologue and No Man's Land', 'The Homecoming' are some of his notable plays.

"I write because I want to write", said Harold Pinter.

Why is O. Henry known as 'the master of surprise endings'?

William Sydney Porter was accused of stealing money from a bank, and was thrown into prison. There, he started to write short stories.

He took the pen name, O. Henry, the name of his favourite warden.

'Cabbages and Kings,' was O. Henry's first collection of short stories. 'The Ransom of Red Chief,' is a typical O. Henry story. It tells the tale of two kidnappers who kidnap a boy, find that he is a real nuisance, and finally pay the boy's father to take him back!

O. Henry was a master of surprise endings. He wrote about the common folk and his humorous, energetic style was influenced by Mark Twain and Ambrose Bierce. In his lifetime, O. Henry published ten collections of over six hundred short stories.

Why is Oscar Wilde considered as a great writer?

"I have nothing to declare except my genius", said Oscar Wilde. A genius he was, yet authority hunted him. His behaviour was judged to be indecent, and he was thrown into prison. Interestingly, Wilde began life in the lap of luxury. His mother was a poet, and she opened his eyes to the wonders of poetry.

While studying in Oxford, Wilde became a leading light of The Aestheticism movement.



O. Henry

'Art for art's sake,' was their motto. They were known for shocking dialogue and strange way of dressing. Wilde's sensational lifestyle was parodied on the stage. His first collection of verse is titled, 'Poems'. Wilde's only novel 'The Picture of Dorian Gray', published in 1891, made him famous. Wilde is also regarded as a master playwright. 'The Importance of being Earnest,' is considered to be his best play. 'An

Ideal Husband', 'A Woman of no Importance' are among his other important plays. Oscar Wilde died in 1900.

Why is Robert Browning known as the 'master of dramatic monologue'?

Great writers are great readers too. In his teens, Browning discovered Shelley, who

had a lasting influence on his poetry. Some of Browning's best known lyrics appeared in his collection 'Bells and Pomegranates'.

Browning's greatest work is 'The Ring and the Book'. It has ten different descriptions, each from a different viewpoint, of the same murder. Browning is the master of dramatic monologue as evidenced by his poem 'The Last Duchess'. The words reveal not only setting and action, but the speaker's character as well. Browning used sudden openings, irregular rhythms and ordinary language.



Oscar Wilde



Alfred Tennyson

Alfred, Lord Tennyson was a great lyrical poet. He had a gift for writing musical lines of great beauty in simple and graceful language. 'Tears', 'Idle Tears', 'The Lady of Shallot', 'Idylls of the King,' and 'Ulysess,' are among his great poems. He contributed popular phrases to the English language such as "My strength is as the strength of ten, because my heart is pure".

How did Agatha Christie become a well known writer of detective stories?

Hercule Poirot was the Belgian detective with the egg shaped head created by Agatha Christie. He solved cases by using his brain. Miss Marple was Christie's another famous fictional detective. She was a spinster - atypical English character. Unlike Poirot, she used her feminine sense to solve crimes. Miss Marple featured in seventeen novels, the first being 'Murder at the Vicarage' and the last, 'Sleeping Murder'. Miss Marple is believed to be based on Christie's own grandmother!

In 56 years, Agatha Christie wrote 66 detective novels. Her play, 'The Mousetrap,' is London's longest running play. 'The Murder of Roger Ackroyd', 'Murder on the Orient Express', 'Death on the Nile,' and 'Ten Little Niggers,' are among her best known works.



Agatha Christie

Why is John Keats regarded as a great writer?

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever", wrote the English poet John Keats. He lived for only twenty-five years, but the beauty he created lives on.

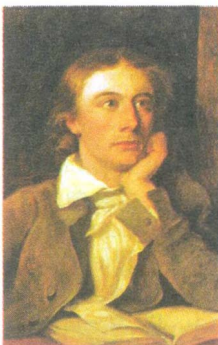
Keats was often scorned by critics in his lifetime because he came from a humble background.

Keats's first book of poems appeared in 1817. It was not very original. 'The Eve of St. Agnes,' was his first descriptive poem that was, in every sense, his own creation. Today, John Keats is known primarily for his odes. In 'Ode to a Nightingale', he is tempted to reject harsh

reality and find escape in the beauty of the nightingale's song. 'The Ode to Autumn' was perhaps his greatest work.

Why is Khalil Gibran famous all over the world?

Gibran's poetry is frequently read at foreign weddings.



John Keats

Gibran was Lebanese by birth, but his works influenced American popular culture. 'The Prophet', his most famous book, has been a best seller from the 1920's. Spirituality is much more precious than material wealth - that is the message of 'The Prophet'.

When Gibran's mother took her children to the United States, his father remained in Lebanon to water the family's



Khalil Gibran

walnut grove. Gibran's first works were in Arabic. They were central to the development of modern Arabic literature. Gibran wrote for New York's first Arabic

newspaper 'Al Magar'.

From 1918 onwards, Gibran wrote mostly in English. 'The Madman' is a slim volume of fables that fall somewhere between poetry and prose. He revolutionized the language of poetry in the twenties and the thirties. His style, a combination of beauty and spirituality came to be known as 'Gibranism'.

CLARIFICATIONS & CORRECTIONS

It is our policy to correct errors, and present differing views and clarifications about the contents in previous issues. Please send in your feedback, mentioning the title and page number.

Dr. N.S. Narayanan Nair, retired Professor of Ayurveda College, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala has made some important additions to our August issue, STORY OF FIRSTS. He quotes detailed descriptions from Ayurvedic classics like 'Ashtanga Hridaya', 'Charaka Samhita', and 'Susrutha Samhita' about many objects that were mentioned in our issue. For example, tables are mentioned in Ayurvedic texts, so are various surgical instruments like scissors, scalpel, etc. He writes that the Asavas and Arishtas mentioned in the Ayurvedic texts are self fermented alcohol, just like wine. For footwear, 'paduka' is the term used in Ayurveda. 'Mahanasa' is the word used for kitchen, and there are mentions about different types of cooking in Ayurveda.

Thank you Dr. Narayanan Nair.

- Editor

I Wonder Why? — The question of the month

Aren't there many little things you have wondered about, but didn't know whom to ask? Send us your questions, and we will give you the fascinating reasons behind the incredible mysteries of life.



Why does frozen food keep well?

You might have noticed frozen food, or food items that kept in freezers remain intact, or unspoiled for a long period of time. Do you know the secret behind this? It is because the freezing of the water inside the food forces the bacteria, which cause it to decompose, into inactivity.

Bacteria are microscopic organisms, or forms of life which occur in air, water and soil all over the world. They flourish and multiply particularly wherever organic matter is present. Most fresh food contains 75 to 90 per cent of water, which is ideal for the bacteria to flourish, and this results in the quick decomposing of food. If we cool the food several degrees below zero degree celsius, the water as well as the bacteria present

in it will get frozen, hence the food is saved from decomposing.

Modern discoveries have enabled sub-zero temperatures to be obtained by cooling air to about -300°C ! The temperature in the freezing compartment of a domestic refrigerator is about -4°C , and that of a deep-freezer about -15°C .



MANORAMA TELL ME WHY - 100 GREAT WRITERS

Editor: Ammu Mathew

Editor-in-Charge: N.M. Mohanan*

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