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BOOK BREAK

Here's some literary trivia tidbits



VICTORIA DIAZ

I'm forever coming across bits of literary fact that, while not exactly earth-shattering, nevertheless give me pause in the crazy hours of my day. Here's an odd assortment I've encountered recently:

- Poet Maya Angelou was the first African-American and the first female conductor of a San Francisco cable car.
- In first drafts of Margaret Mitchell's "Gone With the Wind," Scarlett O'Hara was named Pansy.
- Though he "died" at the bottom of the Reichenbach Falls more than 100 years ago, Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes not only lived to sleuth another day, but still receives sacks of mail addressed to him at 221-B Baker Street, London. All of the mail is answered by a full-time secretary.
- Conan Doyle named his famous detective after Oliver Wendell Holmes, who, in addition to his literary accomplishments, was a physician and a criminal psychologist.
- Zane Grey was a dentist.
- Henry Miller once worked as a gravedigger.

- "Stones for Ibarra," her highly lauded first novel, was published in 1983 when Harriet Doerr was 73 years old.
- The phrase, "not a creature was stirring not even a mouse," first appeared in Alexandre Dumas's "The Three Musketeers" — not in Clement Clarke Moore's "A Visit From St. Nicholas."
- Shakespeare and Cervantes died on the same day — April 23, 1564.
- The Lilly Library at Indiana University owns some of poet Sylvia Plath's hair. It's part of a large archive purchased from her mother in 1978.
- Robert Louis Stevenson wrote "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" in three days.
- "It casts the most horrible shadow upon me, and it is as much as I can do to keep moving. Nobody will miss her like I shall," wrote Charles Dickens on the demise of the beloved fictional character he had created, Little Nell.
- In the early '80s, Jove published what they called "no frills" books. Each was titled "Western," "Science Fiction," "Romance," or "Mystery." Covers were white, and the generic titles in plain black letters. No author's name appeared on the books, and each book was, in a sense, a collection of clichés peculiar to the genre. Customers paid \$1.50 for each sixty-page story.

- When the legendary Pulitzer Prize-winning Red Smith began his career as a sportswriter (with the St. Louis Star) in 1927, his salary came to \$40 per week.
- Edgar Allan Poe received \$10 for his immortal poem "The Raven," when it first appeared in the New York Mirror.
- Madeleine L'Engle's well-loved children's book, "A Wrinkle in Time," was rejected by more than 30 publishers before it finally found a home. It went on to win the coveted Newbery medal in 1963.
- "I came closer to doing what I had in mind there than I've come in anything else," says James Michener of his novel, "The Bridges at Toko-Ri." "It's my purest writing."
- In L. Frank Baum's "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz," the magic slippers were not ruby-red (as in the movie), but silver. According to some film sources, silver photographed poorly.

LAST WORDS: Borders Novi will host a birthday celebration honoring Mozart on Saturday, Jan. 27, beginning at 1 p.m. Music will be provided by several members of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and authentic Viennese sweet treats will add to the merriment. For more details call 810-347-0780.

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