

"Books and doors are the same thing. You open them and you go through into another world"

19

BOOK STUFF

Some stolen questions

From *The Guardian's* quizzing look back at 2020

1. Lee Child announced his retirement but said the Jack Reacher books would continue to be written by his:

- i. Daughter ii. Sister iii. Brother iv. Son

2. Which author's 1981 bestseller apparently 'predicted' the pandemic with its plot of a Wuhan-virus?

- i. Colleen McCullough ii. Dean Koontz
iii. Stephen King iv. Michael Crichton

3. 2020 marked 50 years since the publication of Len Deighton's novel *Bomber*. Was it the first:

- i. ebook ii. novel written on a word processor
iii. interactive novel iv. audiobook

4. Craig Brown's prize-winning study of the Beatles, *One Two Three Four*, includes the story of a police officer who turned to music after retrieving a guitar from Eddie Cochran's crashed car. Was the policeman:

- i. Marty Wilde ii. Dave Dee
iii. Freddie Garrity iv. Dave Davies

5. The North Peckham estate in south London inspired a recent collection of poetry that explores its people and environment. Is it:

- i. *Don't Call Us Dead* by Danez Smith
ii. *The Perseverance* by Raymond Antrobus
iii. *Poor* by Caleb Femi
iv. *Life on Mars* by Tracy K Smith

2020

Poem of the week

Good Riddance, But Now What?

Come, children, gather round my knee;
Something is about to be.
Tonight's December thirty-first,
Something is about to burst.
The clock is crouching, dark and small,
Like a time bomb in the hall.
Hark! It's midnight, children dear.
Duck! Here comes another year.

Ogden Nash (1902 – 1971)

Bad puns to get you groaning in 2021

Never trust an atom - they make up everything.

Authorities at the nursery charged a toddler with resisting a rest.

Two boulders got married but divorced a short time later. He claims she took him for granite.

You never see photons carrying a suitcase because they're always travelling light.



'THE ARRRRRGH RATE IS UP'

K.J. Lamb

Bullhead

Every story is true and a lie. My mother tells a story about the love of her life. It's a simple one but she always cries when she tells it and looks right through me, as though I hadn't been born. Something about the detail makes me feel there's a sadness in the world that will last until the rushing crack of doom.

It goes like this: in the 40s, when she was a teenaged girl in Tennessee, my mother fell in love with the boy next door. That same year the government decided to build dams all over the state. As if some crazy rainstorm had come and gone, pristine new lakes puddled the landscape from Knoxville to Memphis. One lake formed right over my mother's hometown – people lost their homes, lost their businesses, their graveyards, their farmland and, in some cases, their hearts. On the night before the government moved everybody out of her hometown my mother and the love of her life, this boy next door, made love in my mother's bedroom. Her parents were at a prayer meeting, praying for dry land, I guess, like Noah. This boy was sweet, was kind, was smart and generous and lovely to look at; this boy was the love of her life. He moved with his family to Texas the next day and she never saw him again.

Except: once a year she rents a rowboat and goes out onto the lake that has drowned her old hometown. She drops a penny over the side, right over the place where her old house must be. Fifty years, fifty pennies. She imagines them drifting downward, all those pennies, drifting through the murky lake water, startling the catfish and bullhead, each penny listing into the open window of her bedroom and falling at last onto the pillow where she once lay with her head against the love of her life, the boy next door. She imagines their ghost love showered by pennies; she imagines this love beyond all loves glittering with gold. Then she rows back to shore and back to my father and me and the life that can't compete with memory.

Every story is true and a lie. The true part of this one is: love and the memory of love can't be drowned. The lie part is that this is a good thing.

Leigh Allison Wilson

Reading in the New Year (geddit?)

All of these books feature New Year prominently. Match the titles and authors:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| a. White Teeth | i. Nick Hornby |
| b. Bridget Jones's Diary | ii. anonymous |
| c. The Children of Men | iii. Henrik Ibsen |
| d. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight | iv. Charles Dickens |
| e. A Long Way Down | v. Zadie Smith |
| f. The Chimes | vi. Helen Fielding |
| g. A Doll's House | vii. P D James |



ANSWERS

Some stolen questions

1. brother
2. Dean Koontz
3. first published novel written on a word processor
4. Dave Dee
5. *Poor* by Caleb Femi

ANSWERS

Reading in the New Year

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| a. Zadie Smith | e. Nick Hornby |
| b. Helen Fielding | f. Charles Dickens |
| c. P D James | g. Henrik Ibsen |
| d. Anonymous | |

