

BOOK STUFF

#37

'I have always imagined that Paradise will be a kind of library.' Jorge Luis Borges

A February quiz

- The February Revolution was the first of two that took place in Russia in which year?
- What happened in Britain on February 15, 1971?
- On February 16, 1659 what was used for the first time in Britain to settle a debt?
- In DC comics which date in February is Superman's birthday?
- Which country's leader once said, *'I have two generals who will not fail me: Generals January and February'*?
- Which star sign are you if you were born in early February?
- In leap years, February starts on the same day of the week as which other month?
- In February 1818 from which country did Chile declare its independence?
- Which astronomer, born in the Kingdom of Poland in February, 1473, proposed that the planets revolved round the sun?
- In February 1975 which cricketer was knighted by the Queen in Barbados?



Letter by Hugh McMillan

Here is a letter
come across the ocean
over the back of a world
curved like a whale.
I unwrap it, like tissue,
and sentences spill out,
as though the seal on a jar has broken,
coils of cornflower blue
on paper thin as shell.

I saw a sailor's valentine once
in a museum in Nantucket Sound,
a mosaic of broken scallop
glued in a compass rose.
'Writ from the heart' it said.
Words come best like that:
in ink or blood,
when the source is from a major vein.



The morality of saving ourselves

Scenario 1

Two explorers, one lean and fit, the other older and slower, are in the mountains when they become aware of a bear in the distance, clearly hungry and looking for its next meal. It starts towards them, picking up speed as it moves. 'We'd better run for it,' says the younger man. 'What's the point?' says the older one, 'there's no way we can outrun a bear.' 'There's no need for us both to outrun it,' says the first, 'just for me to outrun you.'

Scenario 2

'A runaway tram hurtles towards you. You are trapped on the tracks, but you have a wireless points' control, so you are able to divert the tram onto a siding, thus saving yourself. Unfortunately, you can see there is a worker on the siding track with his back to the tram and headphones on. He may not see or hear the tram. By diverting it, you will save your life but may cause the death of the other person. Is the faster runner's action more justifiable than the track switcher's? If so, why?

Adapted from Peter Cave, *The Big Think Book, Discover Philosophy through 99 Perplexing*

A story with a sting?

Love Poems

He has written her a St Valentine's Day love poem. It is very beautiful, it expresses, embodies a passionate, genuine emotion, emotion of a sort he hardly realised himself capable of, tenderness that is like the tenderness of a better man. At the same time, the imagery is hard, diamond clear, the form intricate yet unobtrusive. He says the poem out loud to himself over and over. He cannot believe it, it is so good. It is the best poem he has ever written.



He will mail it to her tonight. She will open it as soon as it arrives, cleverly timed, on St Valentine's Day. She will be floored, she will be blown away by its beauty and passion. She will put it away with his other letters, loving him for it, as she loves him for his other letters. She will not show it to anyone, for she is a private person, which is one of the qualities he loves in her.

After he has mailed the poem to her, written out in his interesting hand, he types up a copy for his own files. He decides to send a copy to one of the more prestigious literary magazines, one into which he has not yet been admitted. He hesitates about the dedication, which could lead to embarrassment, among other things, with his wife. In the end he omits the dedication. In the end he decides to give a copy also to his wife. In the end he sends a copy also to a woman he knows in England, a poet who really understands his work. He writes out a copy for her, dedicated to her initials. It will reach her a few days late, she will think of him thinking of her a few days before Valentine's Day.

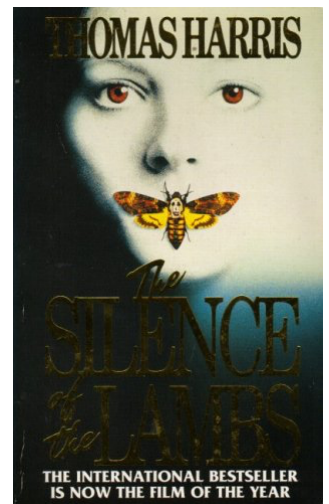


Lon Otto

Books in 3 words

Match the book with the three trigger words:

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|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Lord of the Flies | i. Revolution, Napoleon, Boxer |
| 2. Animal Farm | ii. Calpurnia, Atticus, Maycomb |
| 3. The Old Man and the Sea | iii. Hannibal, Buffalo Bill |
| 4. Fahrenheit 451 | iv. Okies, dust, California |
| 5. Great Expectations | v. Salem, Tituba, witches |
| 6. To Kill a Mockingbird | vi. Boys, Piggy, Island |
| 7. Frankenstein | vii. Fire, books, Montag |
| 8. The Silence of the Lambs | viii. Magwitch, Pip, Estella |
| 9. The Crucible | ix. Scientist, experiment, creature |
| 10. The Grapes of Wrath | x. Cuba, marlin, Manolin |



Answers

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|----------------------------|---------|
| a. 1917 | 1. vi |
| b. decimalisation | 2. i |
| c. a cheque | 3. x |
| d. Feb 29 th | 4. vii |
| e. Russia, Tsar Nicholas I | 5. viii |
| f. Aquarius | 6. ii |
| g. August | |
| h. Spain | |
| i. Copernicus | |
| j. Gary Sobers | |



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