

BOOK STUFF

#47 'A book is a version of the world. If you do not like it, ignore it or offer your own version in return.' Salman Rushdie

Back to school

It's September and the start of the school year. Some adults remember schooldays as the best of their lives, for others they were living hell. Here's a poem we hope will make you smile either way.

Napoleon by Miroslav Holub

Children, when was
Napoleon Bonaparte born,
asks Teacher.

A thousand years ago, the
children say.

A hundred years ago, the children
say.

Last year, the children say.

No one knows.

Children, what did
Napoleon Bonaparte do,
asks teacher.

Won a war, the children say.

Lost a war, the children say.

No one knows.

Our butcher had a dog
called Napoleon,
says Frantisek.

The butcher used to beat him and
the dog died
of hunger
a year ago.

And all the children are now sorry
for Napoleon.

September quiz

1. Which two zodiac signs occur in the month of September?
2. True or false: September is the only month with the same number of letters as the number of the month.
3. The Anglo-Saxons called the month Gerstmonath, after which crop usually harvested then and used in the making of beer?
4. September's birthstone is which precious gem, a variety of the mineral corundum?
5. What did Robbie Williams switch on in Sept 2010, the Bee Gees in Sept 1995 and Red Rum in Sept 1977?
6. Who said: 'My favourite poem is the one that starts "Thirty days hath September" because it actually tells you something'?
7. On September 13, 1902 Harry Jackson became the first person in Britain convicted on what sort of evidence?
8. Which British Prime Minister announced on Sept 30, 1938: 'I believe it is peace for our time'?
9. Every year the Egremont Crab Fair in Cumbria is home to which face-pulling competition?
10. On September 9, 1513 James IV of Scotland was killed in which battle?



9/11

The terrorist attacks in the US on September 11, 2001 involved 4 planes. Two flew into the twin towers of the World Trade Center. One hit the Pentagon (headquarters of the Dept of Defense) in Arlington, Virginia and the fourth one crashed in a field in Shanksville Pennsylvania. The intended target is not known but theories include the White House, Camp David and one of the several nuclear plants along the eastern seaboard. It is believed that some of the passengers on the United 93 flight fought with the hijackers. One of them, Thomas Burnett Jr phoned his wife and said, 'I know we're all going to die.

There's three of us who are going to do something about it. I love you honey.'

A total of 2,996 people died.

Films and books about 9/11

Don de Lillo, *Falling Man* (novel)

Martin Amis, *The Second Plane: September 11: 2001-2007* (essays and stories)

Jonathan Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (novel and film with Tom Hanks and Thomas Horn)

The Report (film with Adam Driver and Annette Benning)

Mohsi Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (novel and film starring Riz Ahmed and Kate Hudson)

Zero Dark Thirty (film with Jessica Chastain)

Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (non-fiction study)



The Swan as a Metaphor for Love by Amelia Gray

A swan's foot, like a duck's, is a webbed claw. In traversing swan shit and mud, the claws gunk up and reek. Nobody in the history of the world, save another swan, has licked a swan foot while that foot was still attached to the swan. The feet resemble rabid bats in their sickly color and texture.

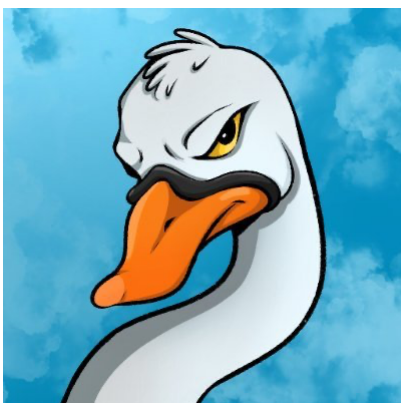
Moving north on the swan's undercarriage, one will find an eroded civilization of swan shit and pond scum. This is a banal phrase, "pond scum," one that is easily ignored, but look closer, take a more personal approach. Swans eat grasses, sedges and pond weed, each teeming with murk. The birds will also eat insects, snails and a fresh shrimp if they're near one.

(Pond scum is more of the same: swan shit, fish shit, frog shit, half a can of beer poured by some fuck teenager, plastic, photosynthetic residue, algae, permanent bubble, hexagon patch freed from its soccer ball, anthropod corpse. All attached to the swan in its idiot float in its stagnant little inland sea.)

Swans eat tadpoles. A swan will slurp up entire schools of larval amphibians, process them and shit them out, and sometimes then it will sit in the shit or walk through it, and here we are. Anyone who claims that a swan is a majestic and noble creature has never seen a swan up close or smelled its bacterial purge.

Swans will attack you if you are nearing their young or their nest, if you are trying to have a conversation with their mate. They have jagged points on their beak which resemble teeth but more closely resemble a plumber's saw, which plumbers call a Tiny Tim. If you try to take a swan's picture he will strike you with his beak. Too much attention enrages a swan. The swan has a long neck and will strike at you. The swan will bite you and tear your flesh.

Swans mate for life, which is maybe 10 or 15 years. Someone found a swan once that was 24 years old and probably it was mating for life, which everyone made a big deal out of even though the swan was not even old enough to rent a car. The swan wasn't old enough to silently hyperventilate in bed. The swan didn't have a bed. The swan was too stupid to have a bed and if it did it would fill the bed with swan shit. That's all for today about swans.



Answers

1. Virgo (until Sept 22) and Libra (from Sept 23)
2. True – 7
3. Barley
4. Sapphire
5. The Blackpool illuminations
6. Groucho Marx
7. Fingerprints
8. Neville Chamberlain
9. The Gurning World Championships
10. Battle of Flodden Field



Prison Reading Groups

www.giveabook.org.uk

www.prisonreadinggroups.org.uk

