

GREAT OPENING LINES—PART II



Did you enjoy our last column with its quiz of famous first lines from some well-known works of literature? If so, you may find this follow-up just as fun.

Remember, give yourself one point each for guessing the author, and another point for the title. (Answers at the bottom—don't peek!)

Let's get warmed up with a few softballs:

1. "Call me Ishmael."
2. "Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul." Now for the main event, along with helpful clues:
3. "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." Clue: Movie and mini-series adaptations galore, but will there ever be enough? Not in my biased opinion.
4. "Far out in the uncharted backwaters of the unfashionable end of the Western Spiral arm of the Galaxy lives a small unregarded yellow sun. Orbiting this at a distance of roughly ninety-eight millions miles is an utterly insignificant little blue-green planet whose ape-descended life forms are so amazingly primitive that they still think digital watches are a pretty neat idea." Clue: Can I get a ride?
5. "You don't know about me without you have read a book by the name of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer," but that ain't no matter. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly." Clue: Tom Sawyer, Mark Twain—I think you've got this one.
6. "It was a pleasure to burn." Clue: Have you ever memorized a whole book?
7. "If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth." Clue: Red hunter's hat.
8. "The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel." Clue: Cyberpunk and console cowboy.
9. They're out there. Black boys in white suits up before me to commit sex acts in the hall and get it mopped up before I can catch them." Clue: Acutes and Chronics.
10. "When I was three and Bailey four, we had arrived in a musty little town, wearing tags on our wrists which instructed—'To Whom It May Concern'—that we were Marguerite and Bailey Johnson, Jr., from Long Beach, California, en route to Stamps, Arkansas, c/o Mrs. Annie Henderson." Clue: Streetcars and a lavender, taffeta Easter dress. And now for some really tough nuggets:
11. "The sweat wis lashing oafay Sick Boy; he wis trembling." Clue: Chemical romance. 12. "I am a sick man. . . I am a spiteful man. I am an unattractive man. I think my liver is diseased." Clue: St. Petersburg, wet snow and a redeemed prostitute.

Time to add up your points. Score yourself if you like:

0-5 Student—Stop by your library to pick up some classics.

6-10 Teacher's Aide—Time to read the ones not covered in school?
10-15 Graduate—Now is a great time to reread your favorites.
15-20 Bookworm—You would hold your own in a duel of famous first lines.
20+ Professor—You're a literary marvel.

Answers:

1. Moby Dick by Herman Melville
2. Lolita by Vladimir Nabokov
3. Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen
4. The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy by Douglas Adams
5. Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain
6. Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury
7. Catcher in the Rye by J. D. Salinger
8. Neuromancer by William Gibson
9. One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest by Ken Kesey
10. I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou
11. Trainspotting by Irvine Welsh
12. Notes From the Underground by Fyodor Dostoevsky

Did you enjoy this? Stop by the Library and let us know you took the quiz and pickup a treat!

Maybe you're ready now to write your own great opening lines. If so, I hope they'll find a home at the San Juan Island Library.

Laurie Orton, San Juan Island Library Director