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# Pomp & Circumstantial Evidence

The official newsletter of  
Magna cum Murder

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Ball State University  
E.B. & Bertha C. Ball Center  
Muncie, IN 47306

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## Magna Wrap-Up

by Shelly Gage

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It's hard to believe Magna cum Murder 2019 is over! As always, time at the festival passed much more quickly than the days leading up to it. It was a wonderful three days at the beautiful Columbia Club in downtown Indianapolis.

It was my pleasure to kick things off with a presentation on paranormal investigations. That was followed by a fascinating talk on arsenic from Magna's "Poison Lady," Luci Zahray. Jonathan Eller presented on Ray Bradbury's detective fiction to round out the presentations for Friday. Jan Kornilow gave an exciting talk on strangulation during the reception, and finally the evening was finished off with a rousing and hilarious edition of Magna Squares. Since Ruth Dudley Edwards was unable to attend last year, the Magna Squares tech team "Ruthified" all of the panelists, including host John Gilstrap!

Sadly, illness kept some attendees away but others stepped up to take on moderator duties for panels and everything went off without a hitch.

Saturday offered panels covering topics ranging from avoiding legal woes in fiction to writing duos, from the dilemma of choosing between series



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and standalones to the challenges of playwriting, as well as a discussion of this year's One Festival, One Book title *Thus Was Adonis Murdered*. The lunch-time interview of Guest of Honor, Joe Lansdale, by Reavis Z. Wortham was entertaining and informative and Saturday was wrapped up with a delightful keynote from International Guest of Honor, Ruth Dudley Edwards.

In between panels, attendees had a chance to work on their flash fiction submissions for the annual Speed City Sisters in Crime writing contest.

Sunday continued the excellent panels, with talk about the perils and perks of engaging fans on social media, a panel of debut authors, discussion of following mystery legends and greats, and talk about writing realistic relationships.

At lunchtime I was thrilled to learn that my husband, Andy Gage, won the

Speed City Sisters in Crime flash fiction contest with his humorous story of a live-action game of clue gone wrong. (Read Andy's story on the next page.) Alas, then it was time for everyone to leave. I didn't say good-bye to anyone, instead opting for "see you next year."

I am looking forward to hearing Guest of Honor, C.J. Box, and International Guest of Honor David Trimble, but I'm even more eager to be back with all my Magna people for another fun weekend!



*Shelly Gage is the Payroll/HR and Accounts Payable Specialist for Muncie Public Libraries in Muncie, Indiana. Andy and Shelly have been steadfast, devoted, weariless Magna cum Murderers for decades. Their worth is beyond measure!*

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## Readers Exchange

What books are on your Christmas list?  
What are you reading? What would you recommend?

*Let us know on social media!*



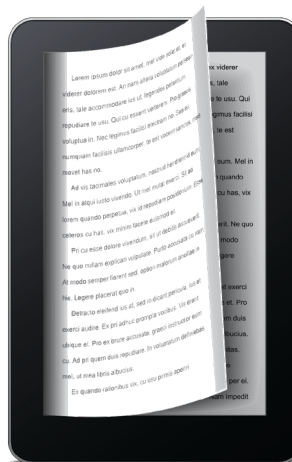
magnacummurder@gmail.com



@MagnacumMurder



@MagnacumMurd



## A Simple Game *by Andy Gage*

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The red stain had stopped spreading across the white cowboy hat as the participants gathered around. The red slowly blended into the purple ribbon tied around the brim.

Diane Watters shifted uncomfortably in her dress and apron. Turning to Kathryn Kennison, she asked, “Who had the silver candlestick?”

The horrified expression on Kathryn’s face contrasted with her cheerful red dress. For the moment she found herself speechless.

Diane turned her attention to the others in the gathering, looking for answers. In the background, the Columbia Club waitstaff exchanged glances. Was this part of the program, or something else? One stepped away to call the police.

Kent removed his yellow pith helmet and rubbed his hand over his head. “I thought it was John.”

John set down his martini glass, his green suit coat clashing with the red flush in his face. “I didn’t do it!”

From the back of the group, an English accent piped in. “I did it. In the lounge, with the candlestick.”

The others turned in shock and stared at the petite lady in her blue dress.

“I didn’t like his hat,” she said.

As the police arrived and hauled her away, Kathryn looked to John. “Next year we go back to Magna Squares.”



*Andrew is the training specialist for American Woodmark in Gas City, Indiana. He is the winner of the annual Speed City Sisters in Crime short story contest.*

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# Pomp & Circumstantial Evidence

The official Magna cum Murder newsletter

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# Interview with Kent Krueger *by Cameron Pence*

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**PCE:** *Ordinary Grace* took many readers by surprise as it was a departure from your Cork O'Connor series. When and how did you know you wanted to write a companion novel?

**WKK:** This was a long time ago, and memory doesn't serve me well. But it seems to me as I neared the end in composing the manuscript for *Ordinary Grace*, I was aware that I'd had an extraordinary experience in the writing, one very different from the experience of writing a Cork O'Connor novel, and I knew I had to have that kind of experience again. What followed, my first attempt at a companion novel, turned out to be an entirely different kind of experience, and not in a pleasant way.

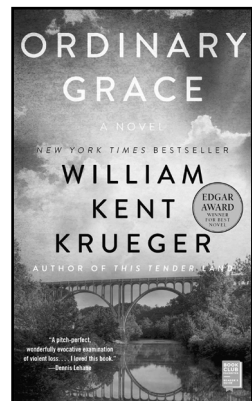
**PCE:** You said your original manuscript for *This Tender Land* was not what you were hoping for which, ultimately, led to the rewrite and what we have now. In what ways did the first manuscript not meet your expectations?

**WKK:** The structure of that first attempt was challenging. In retrospect, I can see that I was trying to be too artsy-fartsy with the narrative voice, which was first person female and was disastrous in so many ways. The story itself

wasn't so bad. It was set in the late fifties. I was trying to get deeper into the experience of men like my father, who'd come back from fighting in World War II wounded in body and in spirit. There were a lot of good things about the story, but in the end, it simply didn't gel. It felt forced. I knew that if I was disappointed in it, readers would be, too. I told my publisher I simply couldn't give them the manuscript, although I was contractually obligated to deliver it. They were very understanding.

Again in retrospect, what I see now is that the expectations for that companion were huge, and I felt crushed the whole time I was trying to write the story. But once the weight of all that expectation got lifted off my shoulders and I felt free again, I saw very clearly the story that spoke to me from my heart. And I launched immediately into the writing of the manuscript for *This Tender Land*.

**PCE:** While both *Ordinary Grace* and *This Tender*



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*Land* carry many similar aspects of faith, relationships, and coming-of-age themes, the story of each novel is very different. What were some of the most distinct challenges in writing a grand adventure novel versus a family drama/murder mystery?

**WKK:** For a long time, I'd been wanting to write an updated version of *Huckleberry Finn*, one of my favorite novels from adolescence. In my thinking, it was going to be a novel for young adults. I'd taken a couple swings at it over the years, to no great avail. Part of the problem was that I just couldn't see the mechanism that would drive the story. What was it that would compel the kids I imagined on this long journey down a big river? When I came out of the confusion and the despair of the first attempt at a companion piece for *Ordinary Grace*, things fell into place in my thinking. The most important was the structure for the story. I decided I would build it around a series of encounters on this river journey that would mirror the experiences Odysseus had as he made his long voyage home from Troy to Ithaca. From this came an understanding, a vision of the sweep of the novel, a much larger tale than the intimate family story of *Ordinary Grace*. Nothing after that felt

like a particular challenge. It all felt so much more like a glorious adventure.

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*That's the kid I  
always wanted to be  
but never quite was.*

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**PCE:** The strong concepts of faith and doubt are so prevalent in *This Tender Land* with Odie and his companions finding so many instances of hope and disappointment throughout their journey. How strongly do these stories mirror the role of faith on your own life and as a story teller?

**WKK:** Anyone familiar with my Cork O'Connor series has probably recognized that often in the stories there's an undercurrent that deals with the spiritual journey. It's something that comes out of who Cork is, a man of mixed heritage: Irish-American and Ojibwe. He has a foot in two different spiritual traditions—his white Catholicism and his Native spirituality. In the stories, he's often trying to understand where his spiritual journey lies, which has been an issue for me my whole life. With *Ordinary Grace*, I was able to explore more deeply the nature of the spiritual journey that I believe all of us are on, whether we acknowledge it or not. That exploration of the divine was a natural thread that wove itself into *This Tender Land*.

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**PCE:** Both of these novels were written from the perspective of children. What challenges and advantages did this present for you when tackling such powerful themes as opposed to writing from the point of view of adult protagonists?

**WKK:** I never really grew up. So, it's been easy to find the adolescent inside me. In writing the narrators for these novels—Frank Drum in *Ordinary Grace* and Odie O'Banion in *This Tender Land*—I pretty much tapped my inner kid. Frank Drum was an amalgam of traits that I saw in myself and my older brother. Odie O'Banion is pure me. Or rather, he's the kid I always wanted to be. Odie is fearless, iconoclastic, wily. He's a rebel, always challenging authority. That's the kid I wanted to be but never quite was. I think that inside ourselves, we all still have that child we once were. If

**you write from the perspective of a child, it connects with readers' memories and emotions from their own childhood, so maybe it's easier to capture their hearts.**

**PCE:** What's next for you?

**WKK:** I'm at work on the next in my Cork O'Connor series, a novel that will be called *Lightning Strike*. It's a prequel to the series. It takes place in the summer one year before Cork's father, who is sheriff of Tamarack County, is killed in the line of duty. It's allowing me to explore all the relationships that were important in shaping Cork into the man he is in the series, and I'm having a blast.



*Cameron Pence is a committed Magna cum Murderer.*

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## Thank You from MWA and Skillen Elementary



MWA collected 44 books that were donated during Magna cum Murder. On behalf of Mystery Writers of America, Midwest Chapter, we really appreciate the generous participation of the attendees. The social worker at Skillen was overwhelmed by the kindness and generosity of everyone who was a part of making this happen.

-Tony Perona

# Magna cum Murder XXVI Guests of Honor

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**C.J. Box** is the #1 *New York Times* best-selling author of 27 novels including the Joe Pickett series. He won the Edgar Allan Poe Award for Best Novel (*Blue Heaven*, 2009) as well as the Anthony Award, Prix Calibre 38 (France), the Macavity Award, the Gumshoe Award, two Barry Awards, and the 2010 Mountains & Plains Independent Booksellers Association Award for fiction. Over seven million copies of his books have been sold in the U.S. and abroad and translated into 27 languages. Two television series based on his novels are currently in development.

Box is a Wyoming native and has worked as a ranch hand, surveyor, fishing guide, a small-town newspaper reporter and editor, and he owned an international tourism marketing firm with his wife Laurie. In 2008, Box was awarded the “BIG WYO” Award from the state tourism industry. An avid outdoorsman, Box has hunted, fished, hiked, ridden, and skied throughout Wyoming and the Mountain West. He served on the Board of Directors for the Cheyenne Frontier Days Rodeo and currently serves on the Wyoming Office of Tourism Board.

He and Laurie live on their small ranch in Wyoming. They have three daughters and one (so far) grandchild.

**David Trimble**, the leader of Northern Ireland’s Protestant party, the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), was known for a long time for his implacable stance towards the Catholics. But only a few weeks after taking over as party leader in 1995, he launched discussions with his opponents in search of compromise. Trimble sat down at the negotiating table with the Prime Minister of Ireland, the old arch-enemy Sinn Fein, and the British. In April, 1998, he was one of the signatories to a peace agreement which he persuaded a UUP majority to support. The Good Friday agreement entailed extended self-government for Northern Ireland under which a reasonable degree of influence was secured for both population groups. Lord Trimble and John Hume were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1998 for their efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Northern Ireland. Trimble took over as First Minister in Northern Ireland’s coalition government in November 1999. In 2006, he was made a life peer in The House of Lords, taking the title of Baron Trimble, of Lisnagarvy in the County of Antrim.

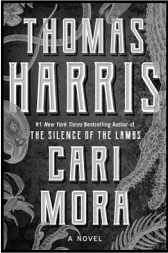


He and his wife Daphne have two sons and two daughters.

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## ***Cari Mora***

by Thomas Harris



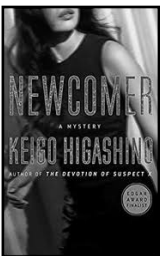
A young woman tries to piece her life back together after being a child soldier, but house-sitting a mansion that happens to be sitting on a safe full of gold puts her in the crosshairs of some bad people in Thomas Harris' *Cari Mora*.

Harris is best known for his Hannibal Lecter novels, and often goes a long while between new releases. This one is a bit of a surprise, more of a straightforward, sardonic action piece than some of his more creepy-crawly and cerebral works.

But Harris still provides some nightmare fuel, largely in the form of an antagonist who has a side gig providing female slaves to disturbed clients.

## ***Newcomer***

by Keigo Higashino



A divorced woman newly moved to a new neighborhood is found dead, and it is up to a recently-arrived police detective to find out what happened, in Keigo Higashino's *Newcomer*.

This is an exceedingly clever police procedural, set in Tokyo, where the mild

but very intuitive policeman begins to uncover all of her neighbor's secrets as the investigation unfolds, including embezzlement, a false medical certificate, a hidden love child, and more.

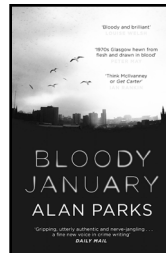
The lead detective, Kaga, is really woven into the background of all of these stories and never in the forefront, an interesting device.

Even more interestingly, the plot hinges on the minutiae of things, including a child's wooden top, a pair of new kitchen scissors, and a box of sweets.

I have read several crime novels by Higashino and find that he is incredibly versatile writer, with all of his novels varied in plot, characters, and themes. I always enjoy finding him in translation when I can.

## ***Bloody January***

by Alan Parks



In early '70s Glasgow, an only slightly crooked cop is assigned a seemingly open-and-shut murder-suicide; but when an influential family's secrets seem to be tied up with the case, the stakes run dangerously higher in Alan Parks' debut crime novel *Bloody January*.

Our tarnished protagonist, McCoy, ends up on the outs with his superiors, and has to rely on his oldest friend--who happens to be a crime boss and possible



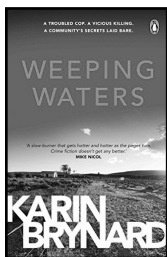
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sociopath. McCoy's adventures on both sides of the law ratchet up the tension throughout the story.

Glasgow's underbelly is on full display, as well as a large helping of retro vibes in setting and character. Overall an engaging start to a new detective series, and I look forward to the next one.

## **Weeping Waters**

by Karin Brynard



A burned-out Johannesburg cop is re-assigned to a remote police station at the edge of a desert, and arrives just in time for a spate of bizarre farm murders, in Karin Brynard's debut thriller *Weeping Waters*.

The story follows both the detective, with his two rookie assistants, and a young woman whose estranged artist sister meets a grisly end.

Brynard is a former investigative reporter in South Africa turned crime writer, and her background lends itself to a writing style full of interesting details and characterizations.

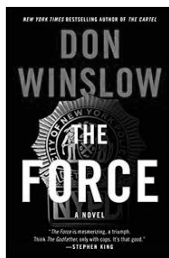
The unraveling of the crime itself was almost of secondary interest to me (and she spends the last chapter basically outlining how it all transpired, in a sort of anticlimax). I found myself more caught up in the cultural and political aspects of contemporary South Africa.

The cover listed this as the first of the series, and the first translated into English, so I am looking forward to the

next entry. I would recommend for police procedural fans interested in a different perspective.

## **The Force**

by Don Winslow



The Manhattan North Task Force rules the streets, applying the laws--or breaking them--as they see fit; but when they decide to take down a major drug lord, and make off with his profits, the dominoes begin to fall in Don Winslow's *The Force*.

This cynical, shaded-in-gray crime novel will remind contemporary readers of television shows like *The Wire* and *The Shield* but probably owes the most to Joseph Wambaugh and police novels like *The Choirboys* and *The Glitter Dome*.

This is an action-packed tale with few heroes and plenty of villains on a sliding scale of honor, leading to a fairly nihilistic ending.

This is my first book of Winslow's, although I believe he is well-regarded in this genre and has other books both standalone and in various series. I will look for others by him.



*John Dalton is the Director of Communications and Marketing for Indiana University East in Richmond, Indiana, by day and a freelance writer by night.*

# How well do you know the legends? Wilkie Collins

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William Wilkie Collins, English novelist, playwright, and writer, was classified in his time as a writer of “sensational novels,” a genre similar to our modern detective and suspense fiction. He is best known for *The Moonstone*, which some have called the first modern English detective novel. T.S. Eliot described this work as “the first, the longest, and the best of modern English detective novels... in a genre invented by Collins and not by Poe.”



1. Wilkie Collins was born on \_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_.
  - a. Jan 8, 1824: Paris
  - b. June 8, 1824: London
  - c. July 12, 1829: York
  - d. Jan 8, 1824: London
2. While Collins attended private boarding school, he discovered his passion for story telling when \_\_\_\_.
  - a. A Latin instructor required students to tell a new story every day of class.
3. After meeting in March of 1851, Wilkie Collins and \_\_\_ became lifelong friends and collaborators.
  - a. Thurgood Marshall
  - b. Fredrick Douglass
  - c. Mark Twain
  - d. Charles Dickens
4. In May of 1851, Collins acted in the play *Not So Bad As We Seem*, for an audience that included \_\_\_\_.
  - a. Queen Victoria & Prince Albert
  - b. Abraham Lincoln & Aaron Burr
  - c. Rosalind Franklin & James Watson
  - d. Queen Victoria & Napoleon Bonaparte
5. In April of 1852, Collins’ story \_\_\_\_ was published in *Household Words*, as Wilkie’s first contribution to the magazine.
  - b. A bully would prevent Collins from sleeping at night until he told him a story.
  - c. Other students of the school began to pay Collins to tell them stories.
  - d. Collins became infatuated with a young girl who loved stories.

- 
- a. "A Terribly Strange Bed"
  - b. "Lighthouse"
  - c. "After Dark"
  - d. "A House to Let"

- b. Ralph Waldo Emerson
- c. Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr.
- d. Robert Frost

6. While writing his novel *Hide and Seek* in 1853, Collins suffered his first attack of \_\_\_\_, an affliction that would trouble him for the remainder of his life.

- a. Pneumonia
- b. Gout
- c. Measles
- d. Tuberculosis

7. In his 1870 novel *Man and Wife*, Collins criticizes the institutions of \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_.

- a. Marriage/justice system
- b. Marriage/organized religion
- c. Marriage/competitive athletics
- d. Organized religion/ justice system

8. Collins was elected \_\_\_\_\_ of the Society of Authors in 1884.

- a. President
- b. Vice President
- c. Secretary
- d. Honorary Member

9. Collins toured the United States, giving readings of his work from 1873 to 1874, and met writers such as Mark Twain and \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. Emily Dickinson

10. Collins' 1867 play \_\_\_\_ was drafted and written in conjunction with Charles Dickens, and enjoyed 200 consecutive nights of shows at the Adelphi Theater.

- a. *No Thoroughfare*
- b. *The Moonstone*
- c. *The Woman in White*
- d. *No Name*

11. Collins employed \_\_\_\_\_ as an amanuensis for several years toward the end of his writing career.

- a. Charles Dickens, his friend
- b. Harriet, his stepdaughter
- c. Caroline Graves, his lover
- d. Martha Rudd, his wife

12. Wilkie Collins' last novel \_\_\_\_ was finished posthumously by Collin's friend, Walter Besant.

- a. *Blind Love*
- b. *Poor Miss Finch*
- c. *Armadale*
- d. *A Tale of Two Cities*



***Answers on page 14***

# Magna cum Murder Registration Form

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To pay by credit card, register online at [magnacummurder.com](http://magnacummurder.com)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have attended Magna before, which years? \_\_\_\_\_

Select one or more that describes you:  Reader  Vendor

Publisher/Agent/Editor  Other  Author (At least one full-length crime fiction or true crime novel or collection of short stories published in 2018 through 2020. Provide titles, publication dates, and publishers. E-mail information to [magnacummurder@gmail.com](mailto:magnacummurder@gmail.com).)  
Authors registered for entire weekend will be considered for panels, but program assignments are not guaranteed.

## REGISTRATION OPTIONS (Per Person)

Full Weekend Registration - \$295 (Includes everything)

Saturday Limited Registration - \$175 (Banquet extra)

Sunday Limited Registration - \$75 (Includes lunch)

Limited Vendor Registration - \$155 (Vendor space extra)

Spouse Meals - \$200 (Includes meals only, must accompany a full weekend registration.)

## EXTRAS

Saturday Luncheon - \$65 per person

Saturday Banquet Dinner - \$95 per person

Vendor booth space with one table - \$150

Vendor booth space with two tables - \$200

Vendor booth space with three tables - \$250

Amount enclosed, payable to Ball State University: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**No refunds after October 16, 2020.**

Mail to: Magna cum Murder  
E.B. & Bertha C. Ball Center  
Ball State University  
Muncie, IN 47306

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CAROLINE TODD  
WANTS  
YOU

at  
*Magna cum Murder XXVI*

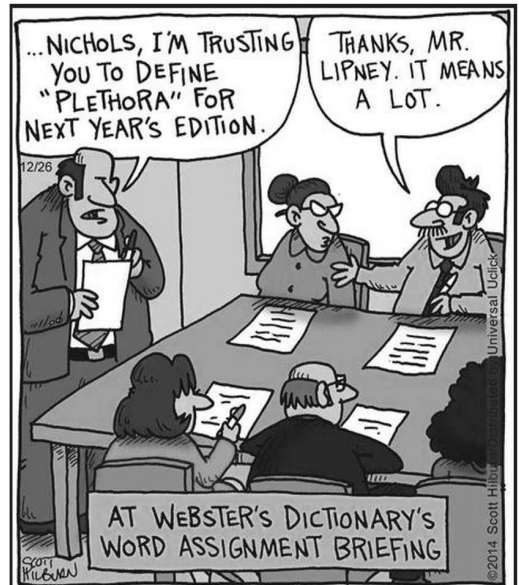


\*Photo credit: Taken by Charles Todd at the National WWII Museum, New Orleans, LA

# Answers to Collins Quiz

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1. William “Wilkie” Collins was born on the 8th of January, 1824 to the family of a painter in London.
2. From 1838 to 1840, he attended the Reverend Cole’s private boarding school in Highbury, where he was bullied by a boy who would force Collins to tell him a story before allowing him to go to sleep.
3. An instrumental event in his career was the introduction to Charles Dickens by a mutual friend in March 1851. They became lifelong friends and collaborators.
4. In May 1851, Collins acted with Dickens in Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s play *Not So Bad As We Seem*. Among the audience were Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.
5. Collins’ story “A Terribly Strange Bed,” his first contribution to *Household Words*, appeared in April, 1852.
6. Collins suffered what was probably his first attack of gout from April to early July, which would plague him for the rest of his life.
7. *Man and Wife* was Wilkie Collins’ ninth published novel. It is the second of his novels in which social questions provide the main impetus of the plot, in this case, marriage and competitive athletics.
8. In 1884, Collins was elected Vice-President of the Society of Authors, which had been founded by his friend and fellow novelist Walter Besant.
9. In 1873–74, Collins toured the United States and Canada and met writer Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr.
10. His play *No Thoroughfare*, co-written with Dickens, was published as the 1867 Christmas number of *All the Year Round*.
11. His step-daughter Harriet served as an amanuensis for several years.
12. His last novel, *Blind Love*, was finished posthumously by Walter Besant.



# Quoth the Writer

*Writers' Observations on Writing*

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“A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies. The man who never reads lives only one.”

-George R.R. Martin



“I am talking about the general psychological health of the species, man. He needs the existence of mysteries.”

-John Fowles



“It’s a damn good story. If you have any comments, write them on the back of a check.”

-Erle Stanley Gardner



“What the detective story is about is not murder, but the restoration of order.”

-P.D. James



“A really good detective never gets married.”

-Raymond Chandler



“The crime novel is the great moral literature of our time.”

-Jean-Patrick Manchette



“I’ve been as bad an influence on American literature as anyone I can think of.”

-Dashiell Hammett



“Tis the good reader that makes the good book; in every book he finds passages which seem confidences or asides hidden from all else and unmistakably meant for his ear; the profit of books is according to the sensibility of the reader; the profoundest thought or passion sleeps as in a mine, until it is discovered by an equal mind and heart.”

-Ralph Waldo Emerson



“The title of a book fills the place of the face in a human being.”

-Gustav Boehm



“Reading in bed jumpstarts dreams.”

-Terri Guillemets



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**Ball State University**  
**E.B. & Bertha C. Ball Center**  
**Muncie, IN 47306**

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