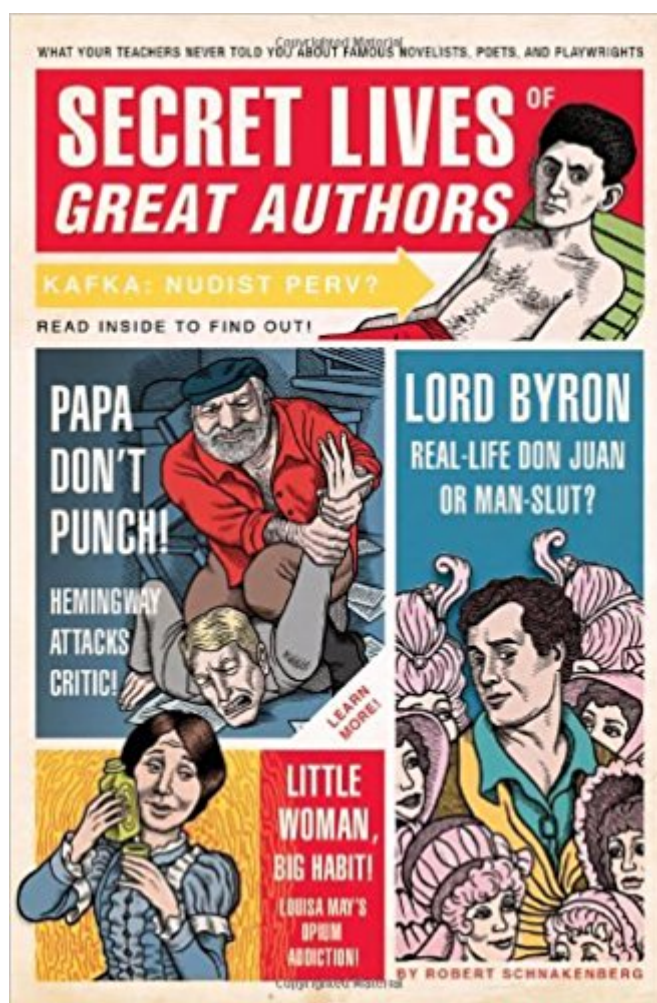


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Secret Lives Of Great Authors: What Your Teachers Never Told You About Famous Novelists, Poets, And Playwrights



Synopsis

Strange-but-true tales of murderers, adulterers, drug addicts, and other literary legends. With outrageous and uncensored profiles of everyone from William Shakespeare to Thomas Pynchon, *Secret Lives of Great Authors* tackles all the tough questions your high school teachers were afraid to ask: What's the deal with Lewis Carroll and little girls? Is it true that J. D. Salinger drank his own urine? How many women and men did Lord Byron actually sleep with? And why was Ayn Rand such a big fan of Charlie's Angels? Classic literature was never this much fun in school!

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Adult/High School Schnakenberg packages the lives and loves of 41 famous writers into a supermarket-tabloid parody. All rumors, idiosyncrasies, feuds, etc., are fodder for laughs or sarcastic jeers; no event is so tragic as to be exempt. Each biography starts with birth/death dates, nationality, astrological sign, major works, contemporaries and rivals, literary style, and words of wisdom. Because Emily Dickinson wrote her poems in iambic tetrameter, they can be sung to the tune of "The Yellow Rose of Texas." She may have been a closet lesbian, but was definitely a Sagittarius. J. R. R. Tolkien (Capricorn) was one of the original translators of the Old Testament Books of Jonah and Job of the Jerusalem Bible and also snored so loudly that he was relegated to the bathroom to sleep while his wife remained in the bedroom. Agatha Christie, a Virgo, had a

disability called dysgraphia and had to dictate all of her writing. Also, both of her husbands cheated on her. Schnakenberg compares F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald to P. Diddy and Lindsay Lohan as King and Queen of the celebrity party circuit, "astounding guests with their outrageous, drunken behavior." He cites Hemingway and Fitzgerald as the Oscar and Felix of America's Lost Generation. Thanks to modern headlines and reality TV, nothing here is particularly shocking, but the author does show that celebrity is celebrity no matter when it occurs. All readers will find at least a few "you have to hear this" tidbits.

—â •Dana Cobern-Kullman, Luther Burbank Middle School, Burbank, CA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Robert Schnakenberg is the author of several nonfiction books including *Distory: A Treasury of Historical Insults*. He lives in Brooklyn, New York.

Pros: Informative and extensively researched (given that you believe everything written in it despite a daunting lack of sources). The colors are uniform and bright, and the way information is organized is visually stunning and consistent. Gives great biographical and historical context on writers and their major works.

Cons (there are a lot of them): The grammar is horrendous. The sections are brimming with comma splices, missing periods, missing spaces, and, in at least one sentence, missing words entirely. In the section on Franz Kafka, the "Words of Wisdom" quote reads "Beyond a certain point there is no return. This point has to reached." when it should be "This point has to be reached." The writing style also gets too casual and opinionated for my taste, but I understand the author's tone is intended to be a little conversational rather than serious. The cover of the book is also misleading and cheapens the content; although the cover is intended to be fun and engaging, I found myself embarrassed to carry it around and people asked me if I was reading gossip and propaganda on writers. A lot of the content should have sources as well--I was questioning consistently the content and trivia because there were no mentions of where information came from. Sources are crucial for a book like this where controversial tidbits and facts of authors and written are exploited, otherwise it can be construed as libel. Another huge disappointment is probably not the author's fault, but my copy came in good condition. After one day of reading it, just one, the binding came apart completely; the glue used was not very adhesive and now I have pages barely clinging on to each other that I have to put together with my own stronger glue.

This book has some very interesting facts about famous authors that were referenced in *The Allure of Nymphets*. For example, thirty-four-year-old Leo Tolstoy had his eighteen-year-old

newlywed read his diary on their wedding night - apparently, as a preview of what to expect from him sexually, because the diary detailed "his sexual escapades with other women, including female serfs." And Balzac often wrote for fifteen hours per day, drank fifty cups of Turkish coffee per day, and practiced, as Deida recommends in *The Way of the Superior Man*, non-ejaculatory sex. Katie

I love this. It's so funny, so full of trivia about writers. J.R.R. Tolkien slept in the bathtub. Agatha Christie was addicted to something or other (opium?). On and on. Writing this review reminds me to get the book out for a few laughs. I could use them.

This book was great fun! I got it as a gift for an avid reader but everyone at the party had fun hearing the "other" stories of these well known authors. Each chapter included little cartoon like "blurbs" with additional stories or gossip...Lots of laughs....

The book is very entertaining & informative. However, as others have pointed out, he makes a few notable errors in the book. Which then leaves me to wonder about the accuracy of the rest of the book. A bibliography of his sources would be helpful, especially if one wanted to use this in a classroom.

I got this as a Christmas gift for a friend who writes books. He's sold close to ten million copies of his different books in over 20 languages. So I like it when I can get him a book he hasn't heard of or read. Bingo. He loved this.

Great quality

This was a really amusing read. Who knew authors led such wierd and interesting lives. Ha ha. William Burroughs! Holy moly.

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