

Before Karl Marx become *the* Karl Marx, he wrote a novel about a dog with intestinal troubles:

"Merton's [the protagonist's] dog, Boniface, who his master insists is possessed by the spirit of the patron saint of Germany, seems to be the center of the action. Boniface suffers from severe -- possibly fatal, but the ending is a cliffhanger -- constipation. The climax is Merten desperately trying to find and administer a laxative. The last words [of the novel] are: 'Oh, pious constipation!'"

Nick Hornby shares his favorite description of what it feels like to learn to read (from Fracis Spufford's memoir, *The Child That Books Built*):

"When I caught the mumps, I couldn't read; when I went back to school again, I could. The first page of *The Hobbit* was a thicket of symbols, to be decoded one at a time and joined hesitantly together...By the time I reached *The Hobbit's* last page, though, writing had softened, and lost the outlines of the printed alphabet, and become a transparent liquid, first viscous and sluggish, like a jelly of meaning, then ever thinner and more mobile, flowing faster and faster, until it reached me at the speed of thinking and I could not entirely distinguish the suggestions it was making from my own thoughts. I had undergone the acceleration into the written word that you also experience as a change in the medium. In fact, writing had ceased to be a thing -- an object in the world -- and *become* a medium, a substance you look through."

According to Harvard evolutionary geneticists, horses have stopped breaking racing records:

"...the laws of oxygen exchange will not permit it...They've now been bred to a point where they simply can't get any faster."

Advice from a father (former Michigan author Charles Baxter) to his son:

"A god named Larry is the god of parking. Don't ask me how I know this. Pray to Larry for parking spaces when you need one, and you will be rewarded."

What is the meaning of ingirumimusnoctetconsumimurigni?:

"We move in a circle and are consumed by fire;" a late-Latin palindrome sometimes used as a mysterious slogan.

Tayari Jones voicing her frustrations during Black History Month:

"There is something obscene about McDonald's restaurants in the greater Washington, D.C., area handing out copies of *A Raisin in the Sun* while they push unhealthy foods on African American children."