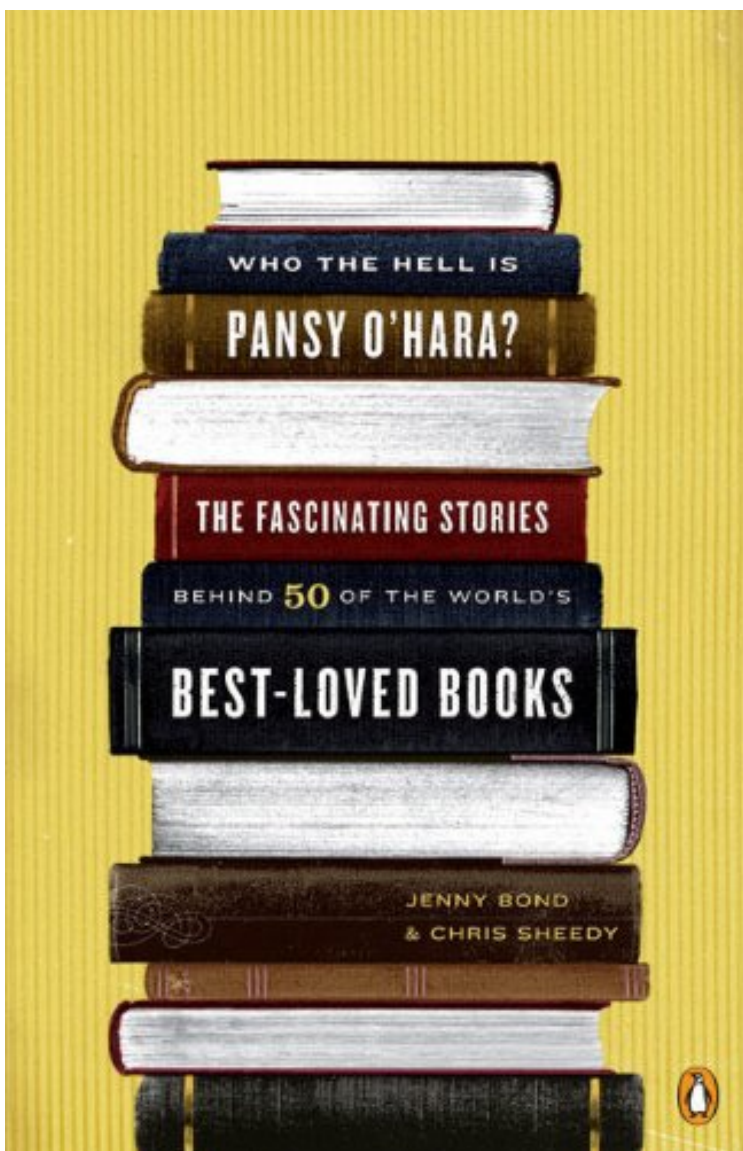


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## Who the Hell Is Pansy O'Hara?: The Fascinating Stories Behind 50 of the World's Best-Loved Books

*Jenny Bond, Chris Sheedy*

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**Jenny Bond, Chris Sheedy : Who the Hell Is Pansy O'Hara?: The Fascinating Stories Behind 50 of the World's Best-Loved Books** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Who the Hell Is Pansy O'Hara?: The Fascinating Stories Behind 50 of the World's Best-Loved Books:

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Out of all the stories there are, why choose these? By TracetOver dinner one night, apparently, the writers of *Who the Hell is Pansy O'Hara?* (Jenny Bond and Chris Sheedy) began discussing popular books and the paths taken to their publication - and this evolved into a book about books: as the subtitle says, "The Fascinating Stories Behind 50 of the Best-Loved Books". It's a great idea, which is why I ordered the book from paperbackswap - there have to be hundreds of stories out there about the trials and tribulations and mutations and evolutions of hundreds of books. Unfortunately ... three things. First, some of the writing was awful. Toward the end an essay contained two glaring typos on one two-page spread: "extracurricula activities" and a line about how someone "towed the line" (what kind of gear does it take to tow a line?). More frequently, there were sentences that ran along the lines of: "The youngest of seven children, the family moved to London that year..." That would be a case of misplaced modifier, I believe, with some comma splice thrown in? I can spot `em, but I can't name `em. It happened several times, though, and was a bit sad. I have a feeling one of the two authors wrote some entries and the other handled the rest, because some were fine, while others had iffy moments. Secondly is that even with the minimal knowledge I had of a few of the writers, I knew most of what was considered the Fascinating Story of their lives; there was very little groundbreaking information here. For writers like Austen and Dickens and Tolkien, for three, this was a rehash of well-known anecdotes. I thought it was fairly common knowledge that A.A. Milne didn't write Pooh for his son, and that Christopher Milne hated the fame that came to him because of his namesake and the silly old bear. And for Stephen King, I wonder if Bond and Sheedy looked any further than *On Writing*... The third thing is that apparently, rather than taking fifty books with fascinating stories behind them, they came up with a list of fifty of the most popular books ever, internationally, and determined that for each they would fill five pages. For some, like Jackie Collins (Jackie Collins!), what they used to fill the five rattled a bit, and I for one found it ridiculous that "Valley of the Dolls" was included in a list that highlighted *Oliver Twist* and *The Grapes of Wrath* and *War and Peace*... "Best-Loved", though, was the adjective in the title, not "Good" or "Respected", so ... Okay. (But ... really? "Valley of the Dolls" is beloved? And *The Origin of Species* is well-respected, but - one of the best-loved books in the world? And the dictionary? And may Stephen Hawking forgive me, *A Brief History of Time*? From my understanding, *BHofT* holds a record as the simultaneously most-bought and least-read book ever. I tried; I couldn't do it. And seriously? Who actually "loves" *Lord of the Flies*? I was forced to read it in high school; a great many people have to read it in high school. I can't imagine loving it. On the whole, it was a quick read, and interesting - and as a quick read it was interesting to see how often the theme "although [ ] was very bright, s/he was an indifferent student at best" was repeated - almost every author addressed fit that description. It's a nice encyclopedia, and I can't say I didn't learn from it, but I wish it had been what I expected. I mean, *The Hobbit* seems to have been included because it sold more copies than *The Lord of the Rings* - but *LotR*, to my mind, has a more fascinating back story. The student's test story is fun - but I think the tale that Strider, who is in the finished work the uncrowned king of Gondor, was originally envisioned to be a hobbit whose feet were mangled by orcs, after which he wore wooden clogs, leading to the nickname Trotter - I think that makes for a better story. And knowing that Edith was Tolkien's Luthien means a great deal to me, and adds depth to the history of the book. It had its moments, but wasn't a keeper.[...]8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. A Lovely showerBy Hande ZThere are many books about books. "Why Not Catch-21?" by Gary Dexter is one of them. Harold Bloom's "Novelists and Novels" is another. "Who the Hell is Pansy O'Hara?" is one of the most recent book about books. It is different from the others not only in style, but also in content. Some will find it fascinating to have stories like Rowling's "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" discussed in the same book that discusses Jane Austen ("Pride and Prejudice") and Emily Bronte ("Jane Eyre"). The authors include the Russian heavyweights, Leo Tolstoy ("War and Peace") and Fyodor Dostoevsky ("Crime and Punishment") - they tell us that Dostoevsky's book was accepted by the publisher only because Tolstoy grew fat on his previous success and had not written anything that year, and coincidentally, Turgenev, their contemporary rival, also had nothing to publish at the time. The unconventional mix of stories - I should now add, Jacqueline Susanne's "Valley of the Dolls", Dan Brown's "Da Vinci Code, and A A Milne's "Winnie the Pooh" - may discourage others. Austen, Tolstoy Shelley ("Frankenstein") have readers; Rowling, Brown, Susanne have fans. They might not like to catch each other reading the same book. Secondly, this book stands out because it combines a discussion of the story and the writer in the context of its history, the writer's biography, and the reviews of the work. It is a literary "making of" book of books. Every work is a chapter and the book is divided into two main parts, "fiction" and "non-fiction". That is the third intriguing aspect of this book. In the non-fiction segment the authors talk about "Encyclopaedia Britannica", and "Guinness World Records" as well as Truman Capote's "In Cold Blood". If one is looking for a scholarly work, he might prefer to pick up Bloom's book instead, where he will read Bloom's comparison of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* in such terms as: "Jane Eyre, like *Wuthering Heights*, is after all a romance, however northern, and not a novel, properly speaking. Its standards of representation have more to do with Jacobean melodrama and Gothic fiction than with George Eliot and Thackeray, and more even with Byron's "Lara" and "Manfred" than with any other works. Rochester is no Heathcliff; he lives in a social reality in which Heathcliff would be an intruder even if Heathcliff cared for social realities except as fields in which to take revenge." Bond Sheedy write, instead, "Charlotte, inspired by her time in Brussels, penned 'The Professor'. Emily, influenced by the wilds of the moors, had written 'Wuthering Heights'.

Anne had produced "'gnes Grey', a story based on her experiences as a governess." Bond Sheedy's effort, less profound in subject and analysis, is nonetheless full of useful information that are usually found embedded in a mass of other less striking information in major biographies. They tell about Erich Remarque and his "All Quiet on the Western Front", concluding with information about the consequences of his fame - the loss of his German citizenship, the welcome of America, his purchase of a house in Switzerland, his marriages (twice to the same woman), and his affairs, which include the story of Marlene Dietrich. This book will be a nice companion for a lazy afternoon by the beach; or a warm cafe in ski resort; or in the bath; or wherever. 4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Great Idea, Not Sure About the Execution By Samantha L. Sayre I love the idea of the story behind the story. I couldn't wait to get this book and even bumped it up my reading stack. However, I found it hard to get into. It takes the top 50 books written in the author's opinion and breaks them down. In the introduction, the author states what they are trying to accomplish. I found the book fell short of these goals. First, the book tells you about the author of the particular book. For instance, what is going on throughout their life and then tells you about the events in the world that are going on in that time period. Most of these sections of the chapters I enjoyed. Then it goes into why the author wrote the book. In most chapters, it's about 2 paragraphs long then the chapter will end about that particular book. I thought that the story behind the story would have more insider knowledge or more about why they wrote this particular book or even why it was so great. It doesn't. The chapters are extremely short...about 4-8 pages on average. I did like the other reading material section in the back and the book gave me information I didn't already know. I would recommend this to anyone looking for a quick read of facts about the world going on when these top books were written or a short biographical sketch about the author of these books.

The captivating stories behind fifty of the greatest authors and their most famous literary creations Before Who the Hell is Pansy O'Hara?, there had never been a single volume that explored the backstories of so many of the greatest books in the English language. A work sure to captivate all lovers of language and literature, it reveals in short, pithy chapters, the lives, loves, motivations, and quirky, fascinating details involving fifty of the best-loved books of the Western world. When stacked up, the original manuscript of *Gone With the Wind* stood taller than Margaret Mitchell, its 4' 9 1/2" author Ian Fleming, creator of James Bond, was part of the Allied team that cracked the Nazi Enigma code Leo Tolstoy's wife copied *War and Peace* by hand . . . seven times From *The Great Gatsby* to Harper Lee, from *Jaws* to J. K. Rowling, *Who the Hell Is Pansy O'Hara?* offers an entertaining and informative journey through the minds of writers and the life experiences that took these amazing works from notion to novel.

From Publishers Weekly From Stephen King's childhood fascination with gruesome comics to the famous family name behind Peter Benchley, book-lovers and first time authors Bond and Sheedy light up some intriguing angles on many popular authors. Journalists in Australia, the authors deliver their 50 profiles with reportorial vigor, moving quickly through each profile while highlighting the salient and salacious details of, for example, the role played by Mary Shelley's literary legacy (daughter of two leading British writers) and her free-love husband (poet Percy Shelley) in the genesis of *Frankenstein*. Surprising words from the authors themselves adorn many profiles; said Harper Lee of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, "I was hoping for a quick and merciful death at the hands of reviewers." Between the engaging information and the range of popular texts (*Pride and Prejudice*, *The Origin of Species*, *The War of the Worlds*, *In Cold Blood*, *Lolita*, *Roots*, *The Cat in the Hat*, *The Da Vinci Code*), this affectionate literary history should appeal to many readers. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. About the Author Jenny Bond and Chris Sheedy run the freelance journalism company The Hard Word. Their work has been published in *The Sun-Herald*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Sunday Telegraph*, *Virgin Blue Voyeur*, *Womans Day*, *TV Week*, *FHM*, and *Cleo*.