



# Quizz

## Hemingway's Chihuahua

True or false ?

Test your understanding of the book

### 1. Einstein's chauffeur

Did Albert Einstein really persuade his chauffeur to deliver a speech on Relativity?

True  False

*I think.* I heard about this story from my family, so I looked it up on on-line. It is widely reported, but it's also similar to an old Jewish folk tale about a Rabbi, so the Einstein version may be an urban legend. For extra research I read up on Einstein and watched a video of him giving a talk on YouTube. He comes across as a 'wicked uncle', paradoxical and brilliant with a childlike sense of humour and wonder at the world. I had great fun writing this and honing the dialogue.

### 2. Notes from The Maestro

Did Mozart ever write a short piece of music for a beggar?

True  False

Music is a mystery to me. I've grown up with Mozart in every house I've lived in, and feel that no one has ever managed to 'blend' different instruments with the same elegance and precision. Looking back at this story, I realize it was influenced by Peter Shaeffer's wonderful *Amadeus*.

### 3. Strangers in a Bar

Did Raymond Chandler unwittingly insult Patricia Highsmith in a Hollywood bar?

True  False

This was the first story written for this volume. I adapted it from an essay I wrote on a Creative Writing Masters in Bath in 2006. *The Big Sleep* blew me away when I first read it, and I wanted to express my admiration by riffing on Chandler's razorblade style.

### 4. Josephine's Beast

Did Josephine Baker's cheetah truly attack orchestra in Paris in the 1920s?

True  False

Josephine Baker was a sensuous woman who lived in a fascinating place and time, and excited both men and women. I wanted her to be in the volume, dancing on stage in Paris. Plus I love big cats.

### 5. Buckingham Palace Poker

Does the Queen ever play poker with the Buckingham Palace servants?

True  False

My stepbrother introduced me to poker a couple of years ago, and I've been paying for it ever since... I love the psychology, the tension and the banter in a good game of Texas Hold'Em. I can't remember why I set this story in Buckingham Palace, but I enjoyed looking up old video footage of the Queen rushing around excited at the racetrack.



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### 6. A Letter to Stalin

Did Stalin himself telephone Bulgakov as a result of a letter he wrote?

True  False

It kills me that I couldn't mention Bulgakov's *The Master & Margarita* in this story, as it's my favourite book. Life must have been incredibly nervewracking under Stalin; to get myself in the mood for this piece I tried to imagine how it would feel to get a phone call from The Grim Reaper.

### 7. Hemingway's Chihuahua

Did Ernest Hemingway have a lethal Chihuahua in Cuba?

True  False

Ernest Hemingway *did* have dogs, but I'm certain Chihuahuas weren't macho enough for him. I had this story in my mind before I put Hemingway at its centre; like the narrator I'm more interested in his life than his writing.

### 8. Death in Hollywood

Did Errol Flynn accidentally cause the death of a woman in 1942?

True  False

Coconuts have always worried me. This story was floating around in my brain long before I decided on its protagonist. I wrote it while I was re-reading *The Big Sleep* and staying in Santa Monica with my cousin. Errol Flynn was an obvious candidate for the 'stud' at the heart of the tale, and I enjoyed imagining how people's behaviour changed when he was around. Santa Monica isn't in Hollywood, so the story is doubly false.

### 9. Winston vs Welles

Did Orson Wells hire Winston Churchill as an extra in 1949?

True  False

but only just! I've grown up on Churchill's quotes, so I thought there must be some fun stories about him. I found chat show footage of Orson Welles telling a story about his attempts to persuade an East-European financier to back his production of *Othello*, and Winston Churchill happened to be in the restaurant and happened to help Welles secure the deal by giving him a little bow. That in itself was a great anecdote, but I felt a better story lay in what might have happened afterwards. How did Orson Welles repay the ex-prime minister?

### 10. Follow the song

Did Paul Robeson sing to the men constructing the Sidney Opera House in 1960?

True  False

If Mozart was the music of my childhood, Paul Robeson was the voice. Years ago I'd enjoyed Bruce Chatwin's *The Songlines*, so it was really exciting combining ancient navigation with the visit of a great man to Australia. I wrote the first draft very quickly; it was my favourite kind of writing, instinctive and passionate, without thinking.