

## 10 QUIRKY AUTHORS IN HISTORY

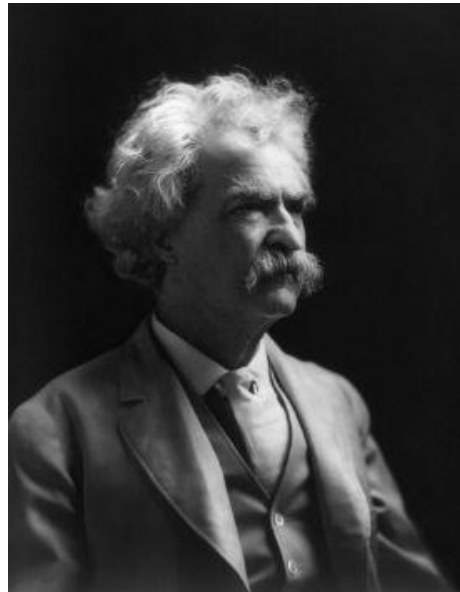
[HOMEBIZARRE STUFF](#) 10 QUIRKY AUTHORS IN HISTORY

BY [LAURA SMITH](#)

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Great authors tend to possess a wild imagination and a unique perspective of the world. As a result, they're usually kind of quirky. Whether it's a strange habit, a bizarre writing ritual, or an unconventional mannerism, there are many ways to define a writer as odd. Below are 10 famous authors and their quirky behaviors.

### 10. Mark Twain



*Mark Twain*

This typesetter turned great American novelist claimed a collection of quirky behaviors. He was an avid cat lover who owned as many as 19 at one point, saying that he preferred them to humans. In his later years he wore white suits year-round, breaking fashion conventions and making sure that he stood out in a crowd. Most famous, though, was his classic dry wit. In an 1891 letter, he was quoted as saying, "I have been an author for 20 years and an ass for 55."

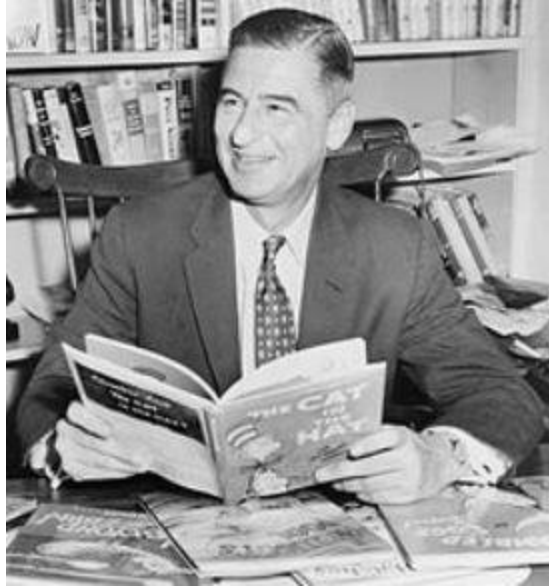
### 9. Virginia Woolf



*Virginia Woolf*

Victorian English writer Virginia Woolf's life was plagued by a rough childhood, numerous tragedies, and mental illness. Any one of these challenges is enough to make someone a little odd. From an early age, she was outspoken, telling a music teacher that the meaning of Christmas was to celebrate the Crucifixion. She kept a pet monkey named Mitz. Not to be outdone by her artist sister, who painted standing up, she created a standing desk that she used early in her career. Woolf offered specific instructions for reading and writing and is quoted as saying, "Nothing is easier and more stultifying than to make rules which exist out of touch with facts, in a vacuum."

#### **8. Theodore Seuss Geisel, a.k.a. Dr. Seuss**



*Dr. Seuss, Theodor Geisel*

The catchy rhythm and made-up words in Geisel's popular children's books alone tips off any reader of his work to assume that Dr. Seuss was a strange guy. From an early age, he had a crippling fear of crowds, most likely due to an embarrassing interaction on stage with President Theodore Roosevelt during a Boy Scout awards ceremony as a child. This made him reluctant to give interviews or make public appearances in front of an audience. While Geisel wrote children's books, he didn't have any children of his own. He confirmed his stepdaughter's description of him as his classic character, the Grinch, on a bad day and even flaunted that fact with a license plate reading "GRINCH." After all, he believed, "Why fit in when you were born to stand out?"

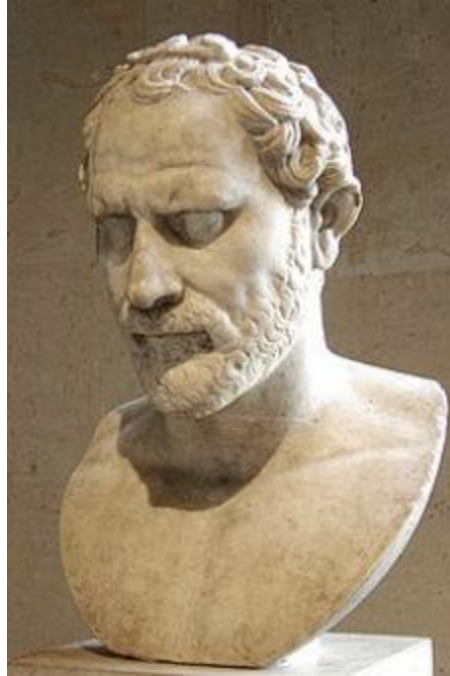
## **7. Lord Byron**



*Lord Byron*

Lord Byron was a 19th century novelist, though he was more famous for his playboy persona and eccentric behavior. When he was told that he couldn't keep a dog in his dorm room at Cambridge, he brought a bear instead and even tried to enroll him in classes. This love of animals continued into his later life where he kept a menagerie at his estate. Inside was more of a haunted house that he decorated with coffins and used human skulls as goblets and flowerpots. He was very much aware of his eccentricities, though, and used writing as a means of expression saying, "If I don't write to empty my mind, I go mad."

## **6. Demosthenes**



*Demosthenes*

The ancient Greek statesman and orator, Demosthenes, was the author of several memorable speeches in his lifetime. However, public speaking didn't come easy for him as he suffered from speech impediments as a child. His methods to correct the problem were self-imposed, including speaking with pebbles in his mouth, shouting into storms by the shore, speaking while running to improve his breathing, and living in an underground cave for several weeks, shaving half of his head while he practiced his speeches. He also perfected his posture by hanging a sword near his shoulder so that when he unconsciously rose his shoulder, he would be jabbed the sword which would cause him to lower it again. In his determination, he was true to his word when he said, "All speech is vain and empty unless it be accompanied by action."

## **5. Dylan Thomas**



*Dylan Thomas*

Poet Dylan Thomas is most known for the line “Do not go gentle into that good night...” yet he tragically succumbed to a morphine overdose in 1953 at the age of 39. The details about Thomas’ life are sketchy at best, though it’s clear that he suffered from depression and alcoholism. These vices played a factor into his offstage persona where he was known for his crude and colorful language that he used around even the most notable Hollywood stars. He was also known to relieve himself in public when his drunkenness hindered his ability to make it to the bathroom on time. Though he was unfazed by his indecent behavior, he was hard on himself as a writer as referenced in this famous quote: “Somebody’s boring me. I think it’s me.”

#### **4. James Joyce**



*James Joyce*

James Joyce was your typical Irishman turned iconic author, but his failing eyesight inspired some quirky behavior in both his professional and personal life. He suffered from eye problems for years, which caused him to wear a patch and write on large sheets of paper or cardboard with crayons. However, this didn't stop him from starting fights while out with his drinking buddy and fellow author, Ernest Hemingway. While he egged on his opponent, he would find that he couldn't see well enough to strike him and would call for Hemingway to "deal with him!"

### **3. Charles Dickens**

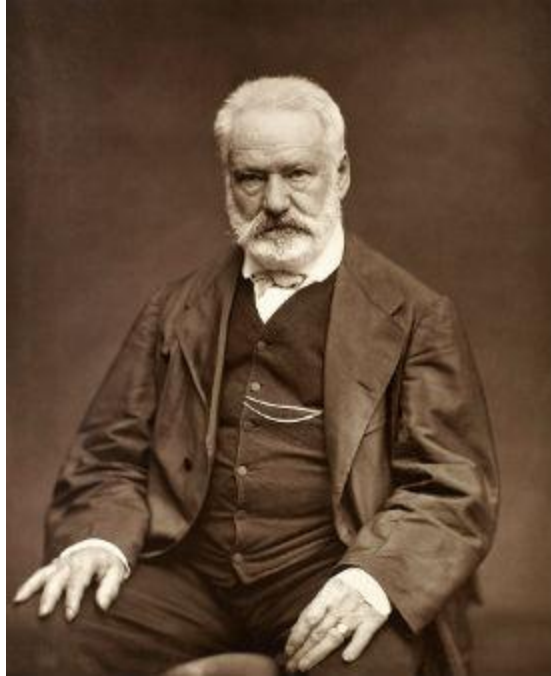


*Charles Dickens*

The great English author Charles Dickens is known for several famous works, but those great stories were written by a man with many strange tics. Dickens suffered from epilepsy, a medical condition that was shared by several of his characters over the years. He was also thought to have had obsessive-compulsive disorder. His writing space had to be just right, he combed his hair hundreds of times a day, and he was a neat freak, keeping his home spotless and the furniture in very specific locations. He also touched certain objects three times for luck. Dickens also believed in mesmerism, or hypnosis, and practiced it on his friends and family to heal their ailments. He was once quoted as saying, “No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens of another.”

## **2. Victor Hugo**





*Victor Hugo*

French author Victor Hugo had some harmless but quirky mannerisms that made him an interesting figure. He is one of many famous writers with a foot fetish, particularly female feet. Also, like many writers, he suffered from writer's block. So, his solution was to take off his clothes, have his servants lock them away, and sit in a room and write until he was finished. It has also been said that he wrote *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* in a few months wearing only a long, gray shawl. The truth of these mannerisms has been widely debated, but as Hugo himself said, "What is history? An echo of the past in the future; a reflex from the future on the past."

## **1. Truman Capote**



*Truman Capote: Credit: Jack Mitchell*

Truman Capote's odd behavior is perhaps more famous than his impressive collection of writing. He had a sentimental side, carrying his baby blanket around until his death. He was also superstitious, never beginning or ending a piece on a Friday, never staying in a hotel room that included the number 13, and never leaving more than three cigarette butts in an ash tray. When he wrote, he did it on his back with a glass of sherry beside him. While these mannerisms may seem like an act meant for show, Capote himself once commented, "I'd rather have cancer than a dishonest heart."



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