

Editor's notes:

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Somebody said it takes about six weeks to get back to normal after you've had a baby. (Somebody doesn't know that once you're a mother, "normal" is history.)

Somebody said a mother can find all the answers to her child-rearing question in the books. (Somebody never had a child stuff beans up his nose or in his ears.)

Somebody said the hardest part of being a mother is labour and delivery. (Somebody never watched her "baby" get on the bus for the first day of kindergarten or on a plane headed for military boot camp.)

Somebody said you don't need an education to be a mother. (Somebody never helped a fourth grader with her math.)

Somebody said a mother's job is done when her last child leaves home. (Somebody never had grandchildren.)

There are two schools of thought about how May, once the third month in the Roman calendar, got its name. Some historians believe it derives from "Maia," the Roman goddess who was the daughter of Atlas and mother of Mercury. Others say the name came from "Maiesta," the Roman goddess of honour and reverence who was also the wife of Vulcan.

Here is what is happening during the month of May.

May Day, May 1 -- Spring festivals have marked this holiday since ancient times. Folks may no longer dance around a Maypole, but, according to English folklore, if you wash your face in the dew on the first of this month, you'll enjoy everlasting beauty.

Canadian Tulip Festival, May 4 - 22 -- Ottawa hosts the world's largest tulip festival, showcasing more than three million tulips in bloom. Events include a parade of decorated boats, floral sculptures, outdoor concerts and fireworks.

World Red Cross Day, May 8 -- This day is held on the birthday of Henry Dunant, a Swiss citizen who founded the organization in 1863 to alleviate the suffering of war victims. The flag, a red cross on a white background, is the reverse of the Swiss flag and was chosen to signify neutrality.

Mother's Day, May 14 -- The British "Mothering Sunday," a precursor to our own Mother's Day, was introduced by King Henry III of England in the 13th century. He called for people to return to their home, or "mother," church to worship during Lent. These visits often included family reunions. In Victorian times, it was common to give children who had gone to work as domestic servants the day off to visit their mothers and families. Eventually, it became a day to honour all mothers.

Victoria Day, May 22 -- Canada celebrates this day on the Monday before May 25th every year in honour of Queen Victoria's birthday, May 24, 1819. It was celebrated as a holiday starting in 1845, eight years into her reign. After her death in 1901, the Canadian Parliament made the day a national holiday.

Chelsea Flower Show, May 23-27 -- This botanical extravaganza is billed as one of the greatest flower shows in the world. The showgrounds in London cover 11 acres. Some 600 exhibitors from around the world participate. More than 157,000 attend, including Britain's royal family who visit on Preview Day, the day before the show opens to the general public.

Graduating with Pomp and Circumstance



Many high school and college graduates are likely to hear "Pomp and Circumstance," by the British composer Edward Elgar, at their commencement exercises. It was first played at an American graduation in 1905, when Elgar received an honorary doctorate of music at Yale. It made such a strong impression on the audience that other universities began to use it. Today, it can be heard at just about any graduation that has music.

According to the Elgar Society, "the tune manages to sound triumphant, but with an underlying quality of nostalgia, making it perfectly suited to a commencement that marks the beginning of one stage of life, but the end of another."

“Elementary, My Dear . . .”

Sometimes quotes just stay with you forever. Nowhere is this more apparent than the famous words uttered by Doyle’s fictional Sherlock Holmes.

Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, May 22, 1859. He was one of seven children in a poor family. Wealthy relatives sent him to private school in England, and it was there that he found his knack for story-telling in regaling classmates with tales.

At the University of Edinburgh Medical School, he served as assistant to a professor whose angular features, piercing gaze, and powers of observation and detection, many believe, were the model for Holmes. Conan Doyle worked as a ship’s surgeon, travelling to the Arctic and Africa. He eventually practiced as an eye specialist near Portsmouth, England, but lamented that the area had more doctors than ailments. In his spare time, he started writing. *A Study in Scarlet*, published in 1887, was his first novel featuring Holmes, and soon newspapers and magazines were clamoured for his stories, which they published in series.

His stories about the shrewd detective were so popular that Conan Doyle retired from medical practice in 1891. Two years later, he killed off Holmes in the *Final Problem*, believing that the mini-mysteries were not of high enough literary quality. Readers were so disappointed that they cancelled subscriptions and wore black arm bands in mourning. In 1903, Conan Doyle resurrected Holmes, explaining he had survived the plunge down the waterfalls at the end of his “final” novel.

Doyle was knighted in 1902. In his later years, he ran unsuccessfully for Parliament and spent a great deal of time and money studying the occult. He shocked his fans with claims that fairies exist and that he had witnessed levitation. His last novel, *The Edge of the Unknown*, recounted his psychic experiences. He died at 71 in 1930.

The History of Humpty Dumpty

*Humpty dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king’s horses, and all the king’s men
Couldn’t put Humpty together again!*

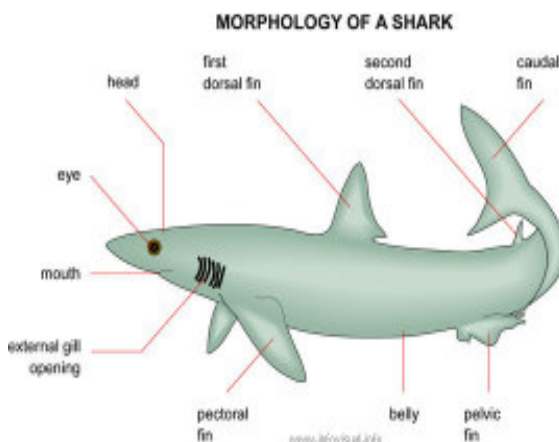
Although most children’s books depict Humpty Dumpty as a large egg, many historians believe that Humpty Dumpty was a cannon deployed in the English Civil War between the Royalists (supporting King Charles I) and those on the side of Parliament.

According to the East Anglia Tourist Board, the cannon was mounted on top of a church wall in Colchester, England, where the Royalists, who had captured the city, were defending it against a siege in the summer of 1648. A shot from a Parliamentarian cannon damaged the wall underneath Humpty Dumpty, causing it to fall to the ground. The Royalists -- or “all the king’s men” attempted to raise the cannon to another part of the wall. Even with the help of the cavalry, “all the king’s horses,” they could not reposition the cannon. Colchester fell to the Parliamentarians after an 11-week siege.

Beware of Truth Stretchers

The old adage to “get it in writing” may be truer than ever in these days of doing so much business on the telephone. A recent study by Cornell University found that people lie in 37 percent of their phone interactions, 27 percent of their face-to-face contacts, but only 14 percent of their e-mail exchanges. Psychologists say it’s not surprising that phone and in-person chats lend themselves to stretching the truth more readily than e-mail. “When you are talking to someone face-to-face or on the phone, the pressure is on,” says Bella DePaulo, a psychologist at the University of California. “If you get caught in a difficult place, there is no time to stop and think. People will tell a quick and convenient lie.”

Shark Facts



Scientists estimate that sharks have been around for 400 million years, making them older than the dinosaurs. There are more than 300 different species. Bull sharks can tolerate fresh water and have been found in rivers and lakes in Africa; the shortfin mako is considered the fastest fish in the ocean and has been clocked at speeds of 60 miles an hour. Unlike most fish that have smooth, flat scales, sharks have sharp tooth-like scales called “denticles.” In the past, dried shark skin was used as sandpaper and a non-slip surface for sword grips. Until the 1950s’ breakthrough of synthetic vitamins, sharks were killed to harvest the Vitamin A from their livers. The shark’s average life span is 25 years, but some live to be 100. Other than other sharks and orca killer whales, man is the shark’s only predator. Of about 100 shark attacks worldwide on humans each year, fewer than 30 are fatal.