

## 26 Treasures

John Simmons

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Bust of Henry VII • Sir Thomas More and his family • Armchair • Locket containing a caul • Great Bed of Ware • Young man among roses • Adam & Eve dish • Embroidery • The Shipboard boss • Wedding suit of James II • Mirror • Nautilus shell cup • Leopard flagon • Lord & Lady Clapham dolls • Document case with mammoth • Detector lock • English cabinet • Mr No-Body drinking flask • Armchair from Badminton House • Doorknob Norfolk House entrance • Side table from Ditchley Park • Candle stand • Court dress • Grandole • Bust of Humphrey • Condiment set • Gorynfaith Merched y Maerdy • Evan Roberts • Llinach ers oer Adda • Hengwrt, Chaucer • Llyfr Mawr y Plant • Awdl Heidd Wyn • Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin • Map Humphrey Llwyd • Llyfr cofia Aberfan • Llesad yn codi dros Bumlhamon • Hwyl a Sst gyla Sefyllt y Merched, a Thrip Ygol Sul Brynsiencyn • Hunan bortread, Kyffin Williams, 1958 • Yn y llywyd hwn • Llyfr Aneirin • Mary Dilwyn's photo album, 1853 • Map of the British Isles, Ptolemy, 100 A.D. Johann Reger, 1486 • Self portrait, Sani Rhys James • Illustrated pamphlet of Humpty Dumpty rhyme in seven languages • Lloyd George meeting Hitler • The North American Indian by Edward S. Curtis • Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau • Dylan Thomas' word list • Old banknotes • Aunt Gwen's map • Geoff Charles' Tryweryn • The Two Sisters of Llanfechell • Prisoner of love • Venice chair • Irish man • Toby jug • Ivory basket seller • Mammoth • Meteorite • Spar box • Stone club • Malone board • Mummy • Gold humala • Downpatrick board • Drumbest horns • Iais & Horia • Shoemaker's last • Clonmore shrine • O'Neill seat • Iron helmet • Bog butter • Salamander • Silver jug spout • Beggar's badge • Chinese puzzle ball • Basalt column • Araid airen • Lewlalan gneiss • Westiothiana lizzies • Towle hall • Cramond lioness • St Ninian's Isle treasure • Hilton of Cadboll stone • Lewis chessmen • Queen Mary harp • Bute mazer • The Maiden • Colgrich • Alexander Peden's mask and wig • Napier's bones • Darlen chest • Instrument of authority • Serf's collar • The King's prize at Leith • Prince Charles Edward Stuart's travelling canteen • Sporrans clasp with four concealed pistols • Gown of repentance • Arthur's Seat miniature coffins • Suit of Ross tartan • Daniel Laidlau's Victoria Cross • Drag chains for BAE ship • Govan ren's strike rattle • Biomic hand

### 26 Treasures

4 national museums, 104 objects, 62 words each

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**John Simmons : 26 Treasures** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised 26 Treasures:

Imagine you're in a museum. You might spot a gargantuan four-poster bed that was a 16th century pub tourist attraction or a threadbare sackcloth robe worn in church by a 17th century adulteress. Yet despite their rarity, we often fail to engage with these extraordinary objects. We simply nod and move on. But it doesn't have to be that way. Through its 26 Treasures project, writers' collective 26 is exploring how to create emotional connections between objects and individuals. In 2010, London's Victoria Albert museum chose 26 objects from its British Galleries and randomly assigned them to 26 writers. Each person wrote exactly 62 words — 26 in reflection — in response to the object. The results were beautiful, surprising, lyrical, sometimes comical. Andrew Motion wrote about a bust of

Homer, a 17th century Chinese porcelain figure reminded a writer of a pub landlord in Inverness, while the wedding suit of James II inspired 62 words about 'a suit as full of scratches as a rose-garden'. In 2011 they took the idea to the National Library of Wales, the Ulster Museum and the National Museum of Scotland, where writers were let loose on objects as disparate as a mediaeval illuminated book, a beggar's badge and a 16th century Scottish guillotine. It seems that all writers and readers treasure connections with the past through objects — personal ones and those displayed in museums. There are more than a hundred writers involved in this collection, including many of the best-known literary authors in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The result is an exquisite illustrated book, where the 104 objects and their accompanying studies appear side-by-side.

About the Author John Simmons is a writer and co-founder of the writers' organization 26. He is the author of Room 121, cowritten with Jamie Jauncey, another contributor to 26 Treasures, as well as We, Me, Them It; The Invisible Grail; Dark Angels; and 26 Ways of Looking at a BlackBerry. The Dark Angels Writing courses — run with Stuart Delves and Jamie Jauncey — have become legendary. In 2003, with six other writers, John founded 26, a not-for-profit group that champions the cause of better writing in all areas of life.