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MANCHESTER is a CITY OF LITERATURE

Manchester is bursting with literature, it's leaping off the page and onto our streets. You'll find here poems on pavements, up walls and sprawling out to reach literary houses, writing schools, heritage libraries and language centres. Grab a book from our bookshops and head to new-found reading spots, discover local publishers, comic artists and the lively radical history of Manchester's literature.

The city centre is home to 4 historic libraries, 23 public libraries plus many more independents. There are 2 universities both with thriving writing schools. There are more than 40 arts and culture festivals, including Manchester Literature Festival which has recently celebrated its 20th anniversary.

We are a city of publishing, with more than 10 independent publishers such as Carcanet and Comma Press, plus Hachette and Harper North. There are more than 20 bookshops in Greater Manchester selling a mixture of books, comics and poetry.

Manchester is the proud home of writers and radicals such as Anthony Burgess, Emmeline Pankhurst, Lemn Sissay, Carol Ann Duffy, John Cooper Clarke, Elizabeth Gaskell and Jeanette Winterson.

Manchester was designated as a City of Literature by UNESCO in 2017. It's a permanent designation acknowledging the incredible work that goes on in historical and contemporary contexts to further the artform of literature in the city.



1 Alliance Française de Manchester

125 Portland St, Manchester M1 4QD

Since 1997, the Alliance Française de Manchester has been serving an ever-growing community of Mancunian French-language enthusiasts. More than just a language school, they are a locally-registered and locally-run charity. The aim is to promote the French language and French-speaking cultures and there is a publicly accessible French library of films, graphic novels, children's books and more.

2 'Circling the Drain' by Faz Barber

Albert Square, Manchester M60 2LA

On your way past the Town Hall be sure to look down and read this uplifting poem by Faz Barber beneath your feet, and remember "The hope in our city is yours to regain".

3 International Anthony Burgess Foundation

3 Cambridge St, Manchester M1 5BY

The International Anthony Burgess Foundation encourages and supports public and scholarly interest in all aspects of the life and work of Manchester-born writer Anthony Burgess. They have an extensive library, archive and study centre containing his books, music and papers. The Foundation also has a performance venue to present new work by writers, artists and musicians. Established in 2003 by Liana Burgess (1929-2007), the Anthony Burgess Foundation is an independent educational charity and visits to the building are free but for archive access please book in advance. For more Burgess in Manchester there is a mural on Tib Street in the Northern Quarter by artist Tank Petrol and a plaque at the University of Manchester to say he was a student there.

4 'Manchester's Sprawling' by Argh Kid (David Scott)

11 Baring St, Manchester M1 2PY

An extract from 'Manchester's Sprawling' a poem by performance poet Argh Kid (David Scott) features at the entrance to Mayfield Depot. Step into Manchester's newest park Mayfield for a lovely reading spot while you're there.

5 Blackwell's Bookshop

University Green, 146 Oxford Rd, Manchester M13 9GP

Blackwell's University Bookshop is Manchester's leading academic bookshop and is only a short walk from University of Manchester with its thriving Writing School. The bookshop is located on Oxford Road at the heart of Manchester's university district. As well as stocking a wide selection of textbooks, they have all the new bestsellers plus a great range of fiction and popular non-fiction. They also host a thriving events programme and champion indie publishing – head here for books by Manchester thriving independent publishers such as Carcanet, Comma and Fly on the Wall Press.

6 Instituto Cervantes

326-330 Deansgate, Manchester M3 4FN

This Grade-II listed historic building houses the Official Cultural Centre of Spain in Manchester. Instituto Cervantes supports Manchester schools and individuals with Spanish language learning, and they even have a library of 25,000 books including films and children's resources. Instituto Cervantes is a public institution founded in 1991 to promote Spanish language teaching and knowledge of the cultures of Spanish-speaking countries throughout the world, and this branch works closely with local arts and culture to promote Spanish culture in Manchester, offering a rich and varied cultural programme.

7 Chetham's Library

Long Millgate, Manchester M3 1SB

Chetham's Library was founded in 1653 and is the oldest public library in the English-speaking world. The Library began acquiring books in August 1655, and has been adding to the collections ever since. As well as early printed books, the collection includes ephemera, manuscript diaries, letters and deeds, prints, paintings and glass lantern slides.

Chetham's Library is also known for being the place where Marx and Engels met to discuss their revolutionary ideas that changed the world. It's also where Dr. John Dee supposedly summoned the Devil! You'll find lots of fascinating stories about the people who have been here on one of our tours, please note that visits must be booked in advance.

8 Corn Exchange Book Vending Machine

Exchange Sq, Greater, Manchester M4 3TR

Come along with an old book and get a token in the Corn Exchange for Manchester's book vending machine to get a new read for free. From there why not head to Cathedral Gardens for a peaceful reading spot.

9 Elizabeth Gaskell's House

84 Plymouth Grove, Manchester M13 9LW

Described by the press after her death as 'one of the greatest female novelists of all time' Elizabeth Gaskell was born in 1810 and lived here with her family from 1850 until her death in 1865. She was a writer, social reformer and radical, best known for writing 'Cranford', 'North and South' and the biography of her friend Charlotte Brontë. Her home is now Manchester's very own Literary house and museum. It's a truly hands-on experience that will introduce you to the world of the writer and her family through restored rooms, a Victorian style garden, expert guides and changing exhibitions.

10 'DLEIFHTIMS' by Antony Szmieriek

Manchester Craft and Design Centre, 17 Oak St, Manchester M4 5JD

A poetry mural collaboration between graphic designer Amy Mac and local teacher turned poet-musician Antony Szmieriek. This mural in the stairway of the building is inspired by the shapes and lines of old nearby architecture and the poem by a hidden dialect used by market stall owners using words and phrases backwards.

11 House of Books and Friends

81 King St, Manchester M2 4AH

This is a one-of-a-kind purpose-led independent bookshop, cafe and events space with an important mission – to combat loneliness through bringing people together and to build and rebuild communities. There's a packed events programme and lots of community activity to get involved in.

12 The John Rylands Research Institute and Library at The University of Manchester

150 Deansgate, Manchester M3 3EH

The John Rylands Library is one of the finest examples of neo-Gothic architecture in Europe. Opened in 1900, the purpose built library became part of The University of Manchester in 1972. It contains collections spanning 5000 years of history, in hundreds of languages and covering a wide range of subjects. Enriqueta Rylands (1843-1908) founded the library in memory of her husband. John Rylands was a cotton merchant and on his death, his widow became one of England's wealthiest women. Today it is a dynamic community of world-leading researchers, curators, conservators and imaging specialists. Drop in to explore exhibitions and you can visit the Research Room by appointment to start your research journey.

13 'Flags' by Lemn Sissay

Tib St, Manchester

First installed in 1997, Lemn Sissay's poem 'Flags' in partnership with artist Tim Rushton is cast in iron onto the pavement for almost a mile down Tib Street in the Northern Quarter, running from Market Street up toward Swan Street. You will find so much of Lemn's poetry in Manchester, his poem 'Rain' is iconically on the side of Gemini Cafe and 'Catching Numbers' is printed inside Shudehill Bus Station.

14 Manchester Central Library

St Peter's Sq, Manchester M2 5PD

Take a walk down the stunning Library Walk and into the main entrance of Manchester Central Library. It's the busiest UK public library and an iconic city building that first opened in 1934. A heritage asset boasting the must-see Wolfson Reading Room but also a community hub of information and education, Manchester Central Library is home to so many literature organisations including the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah RACE Centre, Archives+, Manchester Histories and is the flagship venue for Manchester Literature Festival. Be sure to see Read Manchester's Book Bench and head downstairs to the children's library to see the reading themed Metrolink Map for young people for some extra reading stops.

15 Paramount Books

25-27 Shudehill, Manchester M4 2AF

A family-run bookshop since 1965 stocking magazines, comics and rare books, they also have a great selection of out of print books. You will likely hear this one before you see it as they play music out into the street.

16 Manchester Poetry Library at Manchester Metropolitan University

Cavendish St (off Oxford Rd), Manchester M15 6BG

The North West's first public Poetry Library and it's free and open to the public. The library nurtures and develops all those inspired by poetry, from schoolchildren to professional poets. Manchester Poetry Library builds on Manchester Met's reputation for creative writing through the Manchester Writing School and is the only poetry library in the UK to be supported by a university. The library features poetry in many of Manchester's community languages, curated by multilingual poets. While you're visiting be sure to take a look at Made In Manchester, a 'living poem' on display opposite the entrance that features 65 Manchester community languages and growing...



17 The Portico Library

57 Mosley St, Manchester M2 3HY

The Portico is a historic library that is free to the public for collections and archive inspired events, exhibitions and workshops. Open 6-days a week, the Portico is also home to the city's oldest café and a curated bookshop, which sit below a stunning 19th-century domed ceiling.

18 Queer Lit and Social Refuge

27 Great Ancoats St, Ancoats, Manchester M4 5AJ

This is Europe's largest LGBTQ+ bookshop and inclusion drives everything they do. As well as stocking 4500 titles in store, with a thriving café, bar, co-working space and events programme the bookshop donate books each month to local schools and even send books to MPs relevant to LGBTQ+ rights discussions happening in parliament.

19 Royal Exchange Theatre

St Ann's Sq, Manchester M2 7DH

Now one of Manchester most-loved theatres, the Royal Exchange was originally a meeting place for cotton trade merchants as well as the site for the very first play to be performed in Manchester. The Royal Exchange and its busy newsroom became the meeting hub for the rising working-class movement, peaking after the Peterloo Massacre and ultimately starting what is now The Guardian Newspaper. Now home to a thriving independent theatre and Europe's biggest playwriting competition, the Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting.

20 Travelling Man Comic Book Store

4 Dale St, Manchester M1 1JW

Named after the prototypical adventurer from the games it continues to sell today, "Travelling Man" has become both a mission statement as well as the company name – to be always moving forward and to keep exploring the rich genres and worlds that games, comics and independent press have to offer. Whilst you're here, visit Forbidden Planet just around the corner for more comic book love.

21 Waterstones Deansgate

91 Deansgate, Manchester M3 2BW

Open since 1987, Waterstones Manchester Deansgate is our biggest bookstore with over 80,000 titles spread over three floors. The store is opposite the Grade II listed Art-Deco building of Kendals, and sits in a Victorian built store open since 1873. It's the biggest bookshop in the North of England. They have a regular events programme, lots of family events and a lovely café upstairs. In case you can't find what you're looking for in there... There's also Waterstones stores in Manchester Arndale and the Trafford Centre to visit too.

22 Z-arts

335 Stretford Rd, Hulme, Manchester M15 5ZA

The UK's only arts centre dedicated to offering best-practice in creative provision for children and families. Z-arts have a dedicated Children's Library where children and families can read, imagine, connect, create and have fun. The library is home to lots of books that celebrate diversity, with dedicated sections for preschool, primary and secondary school children. Plus, Z-café is just downstairs, the perfect place to grab a cuppa or bite to eat.



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