

FLEET STREET QUARTERLY



7TH - 16TH MAY 2026

FESTIVAL OF WORDS SPECIAL EDITION

THE AGE OF WISDOM AND FOOLISHNESS



FLEET STREET QUARTERLY

**FESTIVAL
OF WORDS**

Sponsored by





Festival Patron Sir Ben Okri at the Festival of words Launch event, kindly hosted by Teneo.

BIGGER, BOLDER, BRIGHTER: THE FLEET STREET QUARTER FESTIVAL OF WORDS RETURNS FOR 2026

Cat Pearce
Marketing & Communications
Assistant

Fleet Street Quarter's Festival of Words returns from 12th -16th May 2026, bringing five days of enlightening and transformative conversations to this historic western side of the City of London. Featuring an array of events spotlighting authors, journalists, politicians and ideas, the festival once again places stories centre stage. Just footsteps from where London's newsrooms, pamphleteers, and publishers shaped the written words for hundreds of years, the Festival of Words celebrates Fleet Street Quarter as the place where stories have always been born.

Across an ambitious programme of talks, panels and intimate discussions, an acclaimed lineup of authors, journalists and thinkers will explore the power of language to inform, disrupt, and inspire. From debates on the state of modern media to reflective conversations on fiction and history, the Festival of Words celebrates the Quarters enduring literary legacy.

With the festival nearly upon us, we caught up with Festival directors Lucy French and Damian Collins to hear more about what audiences can expect from this year's programme. In our conversation, they share the thinking behind the curation, highlight a few must-see moments, reveal their insider picks for the best lunch spots in the Quarter, and reflect on what the Festival of Words represents: not only as a celebration of words and ideas, but as a vital part of Fleet Street Quarter's cultural life.

WHAT INSPIRED THE FESTIVAL OF WORDS?

Lucy French: The Festival idea really came from Damian, following the launch of his brilliant book on Lloyd George hosted at the old Daily Express building on Fleet Street. The event reminded us both that Fleet Street is the place where stories have always been born, and seemed a natural home for a Festival of Words!

Damian Collins: Exactly, If the English language has a home, it is on Fleet Street. It was here that commercial printing started, leading to it becoming the base for the newspaper industry in the 19th and 20th centuries. Just off Fleet Street, the English language was codified by Samuel Johnson when he wrote the first ever dictionary at his house in Gough Square, which you can still visit. Charles Dickens worked on Fleet Street and used it as a setting for scenes in many of his novels. It later inspired Evelyn Waugh's classic comedy novel 'Scoop', and was where Jilly Cooper honed her craft as a writer. Where better to host a festival of great thinking, storytelling and investigative reporting?

WHICH EVENT ARE YOU MOST EXCITED TO ATTEND?

Damian Collins: Anthony Scaramucci and Chris Steele, discussing 'What keeps Donald Trump awake at night?' is going to be fantastic, but amongst the many other great events in the programme I'd highlight our session with



Sir Ben Okri and Daniel West 'Reimagining A Tale of Two Cities.' Charles Dickens's novel provides the theme for our festival and is an epic exploration of love, war, and revolution. Booker Prize winning author Sir Ben Okri will discuss its themes and their meaning for the world today with Daniel West, writer on the BAFTA winning drama series 'Top Boy,' and now the executive producer of the BBC's new TV adaptation of 'A Tale of Two Cities.' You can also come and see me talking about

my biography of David Lloyd George, on 12th May!

Lucy French: That's a really tough one. We have over 45 fabulous events to choose from, and I want to go to everything... Last year I got real FOMO when there were two events at the same time! I'm definitely looking forward to bringing my daughters to the Beano comic drawing workshops on the family day. Of course, it's always a highlight speaking to people after the events and hearing the thought-provoking discussions these events provoke!

HOW HAS THE FESTIVAL CHANGED FOR ITS SECOND YEAR?

Lucy French: We are using an even wider array of venues across the Quarter to truly showcase the rich history of this area, we extended the festival to 5 days (plus satellite events) and... we have fewer events happening at the same time.... so hopefully no more FOMO!

Damian Collins: As well as great writing, journalism, and discussing the adaptation of words from page to screen, we will also be hosting two live audience podcast recordings – these are for The Times political podcast 'The State of It', and our closing event on 16th May will be a recording of Gyles Brandreth's 'Rosebud' podcast, with guest, the actor and star of 'Gavin and Stacey', Larry Lamb. The programme this year offers even more variety to choose from!

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVOURITE READ OF 2026 SO FAR?

Lucy French: Philippa Gregory's *Boleyn Traitor*. An absolutely dazzling historical novel about the lesser known Jane Boleyn, sister to Anne Boleyn. This thrilling historical drama is a must-read!

Damian Collins: I've recently been reading an old book, and one that doesn't feature in the festival programme this year but is highly relevant to it. That is James Boswell's 'The Life of Samuel Johnson.' This brings back to reality in incredible detail, and with great wit and insight, both the life of one of our greatest literary giants, and the world of Fleet Street in the late 1700s. I'm not surprised that 'The Rest Is History' co-host Tom Holland listed it as the one book he'd take to his desert island.

FAVOURITE SPOT FOR QUICK BITE IN BETWEEN EVENTS?

Damian Collins: Personally I love the classic breakfast options at the JD Café on Tudor Street, and recommend Bonata in New Street

Square for a grab and go lunch before an early evening drink at the historic Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese pub. If you are looking for a more leisurely option before the evening events, you can follow generations of journalists to lunch at El Vinos at 47 Fleet Street.

Lucy French: That's another tough question. There are so many brilliant places to eat and drink in the Fleet Street Quarter. There is truly something for every palate, whether you're after a proper pub lunch, Vietnamese, Italian, Indian, or of course coffee - you're in good hands with the many food and beverage businesses across the Quarter!

WHAT DOES THE AGE OF WISDOM AND FOOLISHNESS MEAN TO YOU?

Lucy French: The age of wisdom and foolishness feels alarmingly apposite as we see so much geopolitical tension and uncertainty. The festival provides an opportunity to navigate and interrogate what's happening... wow, that all sounds pretty heavy. There are also lots of opportunities to learn something new, get creative and be inspired!

Damian Collins: 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness' – Charles Dickens, 'A Tale of Two Cities.'

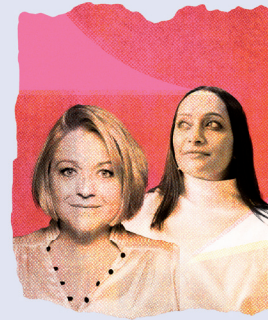
We live in an age of great technological, economic and political change that is challenging how people think about themselves, their communities and the world in which we live. As Dickens observed, when the normal rules seem no longer to apply, the loudest voice, the most reassuring argument, or fear of the unknown can hold more influence over people's actions than conventional wisdom. In the Fleet Street Quarter Festival of Words 2026 we examine what drives our own 'Age of Wisdom and Foolishness,' the ideas right or wrong that challenge what has gone before and seek to predict what will come next.



From left to right: Tom Lambregts, Marketing Manager at Landsec;
Lady Lucy French, CEO of Fleet Street Quarter; Damian Collins, Festival Director

EXPLORE THE PROGRAMME

THURSDAY 7TH MAY



LYNDSLEY SIMPSON: THE AGE REBELLION 18.00-19.00

Stationers Hall, EC4M 7AE

Join Lyndsey Simpson, Founder and CEO of 55/ Redefined, as she unveils her groundbreaking forthcoming book *The Age Rebellion: Plan Your Future and Thrive*.



CHRIS STEELE & ANTHONY SCARAMUCCI: WHAT KEEPS DONALD TRUMP AWAKE AT NIGHT? 19.30 - 20.30

Stationers Hall, EC4M 7AE

Donald Trump's second Presidential term has unleashed a new age of uncertainty. Join former White House Communications Director Anthony Scaramucci, and former MI6 intelligence officer Chris Steele - author of the Trump Russia dossier - for unique insights into how Trump thinks.

TUESDAY 12TH MAY



WRITING A MEMOIR: CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP

11:00 - 13.00

MYO New Street Square

What makes one memoir hold the reader's attention and another shut them out of the experience? Through close reading and writing prompts, you'll discover how personal narrative can be used to bring ideas and perspectives to life.



THE STATE OF IT: LIVE PODCAST RECORDING WITH THE TIMES

11.30 - 12.30

Temple Church, EC4Y 7BB

The State of It takes you inside the room where it happens. The best political journalists from *The Times* and *Sunday Times* tell you what the people running the country are saying to - and about - each other.



PURPOSE OR PERFORMANCE? BUSINESS AS A FORCE OF NATURE: SIMEON ROSE & ERIKA CLEGG

13.30 - 14.30

Temple Church, EC4Y 7BB

Companies are often keen to talk about their values, but less keen to enact them. How can businesses do better?



DAMIAN COLLINS: DAVID LLOYD GEORGE - DOES IT TAKE A DYNAMIC FORCE TO SUCCEED IN A CHALLENGING WORLD?

17.00 - 18.00

Temple Church, EC4Y 7BB

David Lloyd George was the first 'cottage bred' man to become Prime Minister and the 'man who won the [First World] war'. Today, with crises at home and around the world, do we need leaders like Lloyd George who are unafraid to find unorthodox ways to take on important challenges?

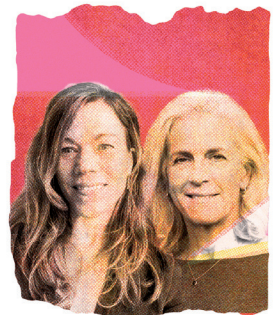


ALEXANDER HOARE: IMPACT BANKER

18.30 - 19.30

C. Hoare & Co., EC4Y 1BT

How does a family bank prepare for the 21st century? It doubles down on the power of relationships and trying to optimise for the greater good. Hear from Alexander Hoare, former Chief Executive, on the importance of simplicity and quality in banking.



LOTTIE MOGGACH: A VICTORIAN MURDER REIMAGINED - THE STORY BEHIND THE NOVEL

18.30 - 19.30

Dr Johnson's House, EC4A 3DE

Hannah Teale is a bright young woman, engaged to a budding Fleet Street reporter. When a local woman, Mary Pearcey, is arrested for a brutal double murder, Hannah is struck by a chilling realisation: she's seen that face before.



THE DAY THE QUEEN DIED: HOW A STORY UNFOLDS

18.30 - 19.30

Temple Church, EC4Y 7BB

Taking one important story - the death of HRH Queen Elizabeth II - Executive Editor of *The Times* and *Times Radio*, Jeremy Griffin, talks us through how a story breaks at *The Times* with Michelle Donelan: the government minister who oversaw the delivery of Operation London Bridge.



JAMES GRAHAM: IN CONVERSATION

19.45 - 20.45

Scotland House London

Discussing James Graham's exemplary career to date, the process of adapting page to screen, ambitions for the future and hopes for the wider industry this will be an inspiring, insightful conversation and a celebration of storytelling. In partnership with the Royal Television Society.

SCAN TO BOOK



Stationers Hall

WEDNESDAY 13TH MAY



BREAKFAST WITH THE GUARDIAN

08.30 - 09.30

MYO New Street Square, EC4A 3BF

Journalists from The Guardian review the headlines of the day.

The Guardian



HOW TO START YOUR NOVEL: ARVON CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP

11.00 - 13.00

MYO New Street Square

If you're new to writing fiction, and you're looking for inspiration and advice, join prize-winning novelist **Abi Daré** for a workshop on the key elements of compelling fiction: ideas, plot and voice.

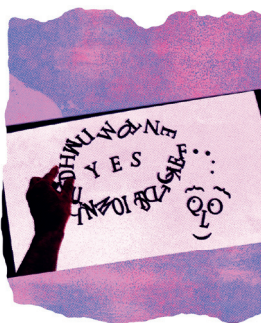


REBECCA LEE & LAURA HACKETT: ROGUES, WIDOWS, AND ORPHANS

12.00 - 13.00

Maughan Library, Kings College London WC2A 1LR

Join an expert editor and lift the curtain on the dark side of the book world: a secret history fizzing with stories of scandals, rivalries, cockups and con jobs.



DRAGON CAFE IN THE CITY: WORDS, WORDS, WORDS - ANIMATION WORKSHOP WITH REZA BEN GAJRA

13.00 - 14.00

Shoe Lane Library, EC4A 3JR

Cut out letters and words from paper, then bring them to life with stop motion animation. No tech knowhow needed. With artist **Reza Ben Gajra**.

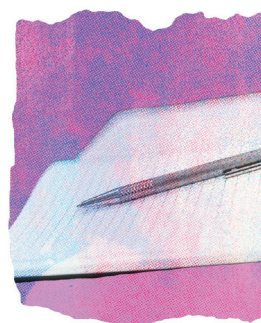


FERGAL KEANE AND ANTONY GARVEY: REPORTING FROM THE FRONT LINE

13.15 - 14.15

Cutler's Hall, EC4M 7BR

Join acclaimed war reporter **Fergal Keane** in conversation with BBC News producer **Antony Garvey** as he discusses *The Madness*, his powerful and deeply personal memoir.



DRAGON CAFE IN THE CITY: CREATIVE WRITING WITH WORDSMITHS

17.30 - 18.45

Shoe Lane Library, EC4A 3JR

Join **Naomi**, founder of Wordsmiths for this pressure-free supportive workshop. Focus on short writing tasks and imaginative free writing.



New Street Square



EMPOWERING WOMEN: POORNA BELL, SOPHIE LEE, MARYAM PASHA

18.00 - 19.00

Maughan Library, Kings College London WC2A 1LR

What happens when a woman decides she wants more than she's been given? Join our panel of brilliant authors as they discuss how women can dismantle the societal norms that can keep them confined, and live bigger, bolder lives.



GOD IS AN ENGLISHMAN: BIJAN OMRANI & THE VEN LUKE MILLER, ARCHDEACON OF LONDON

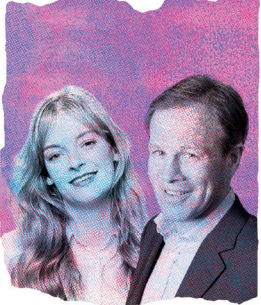
18.00 - 19.00

St Martin's Church, Ludgate Hill, EC4M 7DE

Christianity in England is in decline. As congregations dwindle, what are we losing? For historian **Bijan Omari**, this is the most momentous change to occur in English history – and something we shouldn't abandon lightly.



Dr Johnson's House, Gough Square



ITN'S TOM BRADBY ON HIS NEW ITV SPY DRAMA SERIES, 'SECRET SERVICE'

18.00 - 19.00

Cutler's Hall, EC4M 7BR

Step behind the scenes with **Tom Bradby** as he takes *Secret Service* from bestselling novel to upcoming ITV series. The award-winning journalist and anchor of *News at Ten* shares his journey adapting the thriller for screen, exploring MI6, political intrigue, and the creative challenges of bringing espionage to life. In partnership with the **Royal Television Society**.



SAJID JAVID: THE COLOUR OF HOME

19.30 - 20.30

Cutler's Hall, EC4M 7BR

Join former Home Secretary **Sajid Javid** as he discusses his memoir, *Colours of Home*. From his father's journey from Pakistan to his own path through British politics, Javid shares reflections on identity, ambition and belonging.

THURSDAY 14TH MAY



BREAKFAST WITH THE TIMES

8.30 - 9.30

MYO New Street Square

Journalists from The Times review the headlines of the day. **Jeremy Griffin**, Executive Editor, The Times and Times Radio (chair), **Andy Silvester**, London Editor, The Times and The Sunday Times and **Rebecca Myers**, Foreign Editor.

THE  TIMES



FICTION - WORK IN PROGRESS: ARVON CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP

11.00 - 13.00

MYO New Street Square

Are you working on a novel and seeking a boost? Join novelist and short story writer **Sophie Mackintosh**, Booker-longlisted author of *The Water Cure*, for a workshop on building a compelling, fully realised fictional world from the germ of an original idea.



TINA HODGKINSON: AGATHA CHRISTIE'S LONDON

12.00 - 13.00

Stationers Hall, EC4M 7AE

Writer, researcher and guide **Tina Hodgkinson** explores Agatha Christie's enduring relationship with London. From former homes to glamorous hotels, restaurants and favourite buildings, she retraces Christie's footsteps across the capital.



Maughan library



IAIN DALE & STEVE RICHARDS: THATCHER & BLAIR

13.15 - 14.15

Stationers Hall, EC4M 7AE

How did Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair make the seemingly impossible job possible, becoming the only Prime Ministers in modern times to serve more than a decade in power. **Iain Dale** and **Steve Richards** join us to discuss their recent biographies of these two era defining leaders.



WALKING TOUR WITH TOM LEVITT: THE BUSINESS OF HISTORY

14.30 - 16.30

180 Studios, WC2R 1EA

What does it take to build a business that stands the test of time? Join writer and journalist **Tom Levitt** as he discusses his book charting the evolution of British commercial icons from Wedgwood to WHSmith.



SHAKESPEARE IN LONDON: LUCY MUNRO & DR HANNAH CRAWFORTH

18.00 - 19.00

Dr Johnson's House, EC4A 3DE

Join King's College London Shakespeare specialists **Professor Lucy Munro** and **Dr Hannah Crawforth** as they share their discoveries about Shakespeare's connections to this part of the city, and the ways in which London shaped his plays.



St Brides Church



POLITICAL JOURNALISM IN AN UNSTABLE WORLD

18.00 - 19.00

St Brides Church, EC4Y 8AU

Political editors from leading news media titles reflect on the role of political journalism in an increasingly unpredictable climate. In partnership with News Media Association.



ARE WE HARDWIRED TO DISAGREE?

18.00 - 19.00

Stationers Hall, EC4M 7AE

Our ideologies give us frameworks through which we view the world, but how much do we really know about what shapes our beliefs? Join our expert panel for a discussion about why we think the things we do, and what we lose by not engaging with people who have vastly different beliefs to ours.



CALMING CHAOS: GETTING THE BIG DECISIONS RIGHT IN A FAST CHANGING WORLD

19.30 - 20.30

Stationers Hall, EC4M 7AE

The global security order and political settlement of the post-Cold War world faces continued attack. What is the future for institutions like the United Nations, the special relationship between the USA and UK, and for democracy itself?

FRIDAY 15TH MAY



VOICES OF FLEET STREET

13.30 - 14.30

Stationers Hall, EC4M 7AE

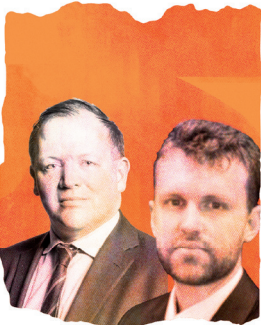
Join our panel of journalists as they take a joyous trip down memory lane to the heyday of Fleet Street. BBC foreign correspondent **Humphrey Hawksley** has reported on crises all over the world. **Emma Lee-Potter** is a journalist and novelist who wrote for the Evening Standard and Sunday Express in the 1980s and 1990s. The panelists will share their stories from the golden age of British newspapers with journalist and bestselling novelist **Wendy Holden**.

SAM MCBRIDE & MARK HENNESSY - FOR OR AGAINST A UNITED IRELAND: THE ARGUMENTS

13.30 - 14.30

Maughan Library, Kings College London WC2A 1LR

Join **Sam McBride**, journalist and author of *For and Against a United Ireland* (co-written with **Fintan O'Toole**) and **Mark Hennessy**, Ireland and Britain Editor of *The Irish Times* and leader of the newspaper's Common Ground project, for a fresh discussion of the arguments for and against unity.



BREAKFAST WITH THE NEW STATESMAN

8.30 - 9.30

MYO New Street Square, EC4A 3BF

Join **Tom McTague**, Editor of *The New Statesman*, as he discusses the headlines of the day and the week with **Damian Collins**. He'll be looking at the headlines of the paper, but also of the *New Statesman Magazine*, which hits the newstands on the day of the event. Complimentary breakfast is included in this ticket.

THE NEW STATESMAN

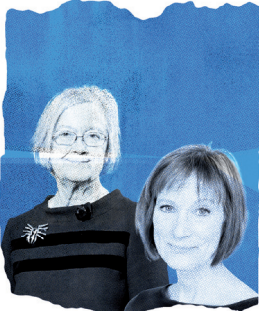


HOW TO FINISH YOUR BOOK: ARVON CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP

11.00 - 13.00

MYO New Street Square, EC4A 3BF

How do you grab an agent's attention? How do advances and royalties work? Should authors engage with social media? Whether you're working in fiction or non-fiction, this session will offer guidance and clarity on the publication process, from traditional publishing to the pros and cons of self-publishing.



BARONESS BRENDA HALE HALE OF RICHMOND AND WENDY JOSEPH KC BEYOND THE BENCH: LIFE AS A KC

12.00 - 13.00

Temple Church, EC4Y 7BB

Join Lady **Brenda Hale KC** and **Wendy Joseph KC** in conversation as they reflect on their remarkable legal careers and lives in the law. From landmark judgments to the realities of the courtroom, this event offers insight into justice, leadership, and the experiences that shaped two of Britain's most influential legal minds.



JACQUELINE RIDING: HARD STREETS - WORKING-CLASS LIVES IN CHARLIE CHAPLIN'S LONDON

12.00 - 13.00

Maughan Library, Kings College London WC2A 1LR

Charlie Chaplin rose from the hard streets of Edwardian London to worldwide fame. Breathing life into forgotten stories of mothers and sons, labourers and actors, vagrants and sex workers, of suffering, survival and success against the odds, **Jacqueline Riding's** social history paints a striking portrait of Charlie Chaplin's London - a vanished city.



SCOTT WALKER: BOARDROOM LESSONS FROM A HOSTAGE NEGOTIATOR

18.00 - 19.00

Maughan Library, Kings College London WC2A 1LR

Join Sunday Times bestselling author **Scott Walker** as he reveals the psychological and communication techniques used in life-or-death negotiations, and how you can successfully apply them to both business and life. Using gripping, real-life examples, he'll reveal how to build trust quickly and navigate difficult conversations with calm confidence. This is a masterclass in negotiation you don't want to miss.



FROM DICKENS TO BEN OKRI AND DANIEL WEST: REIMAGINING A TALE OF TWO CITIES

18.00 - 19.00

Stationers Hall, EC4M 7AE

Join Booker Prize winning novelist **Sir Ben Okri** and producer **Daniel West** for a discussion of the enduring appeal of *A Tale of Two Cities*. Dickens' epic exploration of love, war, and revolution has given us the theme for this year's Festival of Words - The Age of Wisdom and Foolishness - and is the subject of a new BBC adaptation later this year, which West is executive producing.



St Bride Foundation

SCAN TO BOOK



SATURDAY 16TH MAY



St Bride Foundation



**DRAW WITH ROB:
WOLVES AND FOXES**
12.30 - 13.30
St Bride Foundation,
EC4Y 8EQ

Join Rob Biddulph – bestselling, multi award-winning author and illustrator, and the creative force behind the viral #DrawWithRob phenomenon – for a fun-packed event for the whole family. This lively show will feature a live episode of Draw With Rob, you will hear all about Rob's journey as a children's book creator, and you'll get to enjoy his much-loved musical rendition of I Follow the Fox. Plus attendees will get an exclusive first look at Rob's brand-new book, The Last Wolf – the thrilling first instalment in The Moonhaven Chronicles.



**PIERS BLOFELD &
ANTONIA SENIOR:
THE CAMBRIDGE 5 SPIES**
13.30 - 14.30
Stationers Hall, EC4M 7AE

Do you think you know the story of the Cambridge Five? Think again. Join two authors who have written revelatory new books about Britain's most notorious spy ring. In Master of Lies, Piers Blofeld uses extensive research and newly-released documents to position Anthony Blunt as not just "the fourth man" of the group, but the greatest spy-master of them all. Antonia Senior's Stalin's Apostles is a radical new look at the way The Five's obsession with Communist ideology led them to betray their country and become tools in Stalin's imperial scheme. Chaired by author, journalist, and broadcaster Terry Stiastry.



GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS
14.00 - 15.00
St Bride Foundation,
EC4Y 8EQ

Join the number one authority on record breaking as they bring the Guinness World Records book to life. Expect an action-packed, immersive hour of jaw-dropping records plus a demonstration from Paul Hunn – a career burper who once held the record for the loudest burp at 109.9 decibels. There will also be an opportunity to take part and maybe set your own Guinness World Records title!

This event is suitable for children aged 6+. Adults accompanying children go free – please select Accompanying Adult ticket at checkout.



**REVIEW OF THE SATURDAY
PAPERS CHAIRED BY PADDY
O'CONNELL**
10.30 - 11.30
Stationers Hall, EC4M 7AE

Join our stellar line-up for a canter through the Saturday paper's headlines. Chaired by Radio 4's Paddy O'Connell. Featuring columnist Sarah Vine, Ayesha hazarika MBE, and journalist/author Hugh Pym.



**CREATE A COMIC WITH
BEANO ILLUSTRATOR
HUGH RAINE: MORNING SLOT**
11.00 - 12.00
St Bride Foundation,
EC4Y 8EQ

In this crazy comic creating workshop, Beano's Betty & The Yeti writer and illustrator, Hugh Raine, will teach you how to draw characters using simple shapes, and also share some of his secrets of comic making before creating a big live comic with your help!



**HANIF KUREISHI:
SHATTERED**
12.00 - 13.00
Stationers Hall, EC4M 7AE

On Boxing Day in 2022, renowned novelist, screenwriter and playwright Hanif Kureishi fell while in Rome and lost the use of his limbs. He discusses his account of a life shattered and then reassembled with author and Guardian theatre critic Arifa Akba.



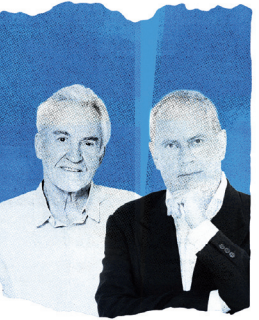
**GYLES BRANDRETH:
AA MILNE, WINNIE THE
POOH, AND FLEET STREET**
15.00 - 16.00
Stationers Hall, EC4M 7AE

Author and broadcaster Gyles Brandreth discusses the remarkable story of A.A. Milne, and of the "bear of very little brain" who became a global phenomenon. Drawing on his friendship with Milne's son, the real Christopher Robin, Brandreth will talk about his revealing and intimate portrait of the author and his family's conflicted relationship with the iconic bear.



**CREATE A COMIC WITH
BEANO ILLUSTRATOR
HUGH RAINE:
AFTERNOON SLOT**
15.30 - 16.30
St Bride Foundation,
EC4Y 8EQ

In this crazy comic creating workshop, Beano's Betty & The Yeti writer and illustrator, Hugh Raine, will teach you how to draw characters using simple shapes, and also share some of his secrets of comic making before creating a big live comic with your help!



**LARRY LAMB JOINS GYLES
BRANDRETH:
LIVE RECORDING OF THE
ROSEBUD PODCAST**
17.00 - 18.30
Stationers Hall, EC4M 7AE

Join author and broadcaster Gyles Brandreth for a live recording of his hit podcast, Rosebud. Gavin and Stacey star and author Larry Lamb will be talking to Gyles about his earliest memories and experiences of his turbulent childhood in Edmonton.

WEDNESDAY 3RD JUNE



**TIM WU: THE AGE OF
EXTRACTION**
18.30 - 19.30

A handful of tech platforms rule our world. They extract wealth, destabilise societies, and create vast inequality. Join Tim Wu, a former White House official and one of the world's foremost antitrust experts, as he explains how and why we can take back control from tech giants to create a future where technological advances serve the greatest possible good – for everyone. Chaired by Damian Collins.

In partnership with
[Geradin Partners](#)



**SCAN TO
BOOK**





DESIGNED FOR HOW

WE MEET
now

MY
O

Inspiring meetings and
unforgettable event spaces

Space for 4 - 200 guests across 7
Central London locations.

Perfect for networking drinks,
conferences, workshops and more.

Bankside | King's Cross | Liverpool Street | New Street Square | Piccadilly | St Paul's | Victoria Street

WORDS, PLACE AND PERMANENCE

Tom Lambregts,
Marketing Manager
Landsec

In a political and cultural climate shaped by division, speed and constant opinion, literature offers something increasingly vital: pause, perspective and connection. Words allow space for nuance at a time when public debate is often compressed into headlines and soundbites. They invite us to listen as much as to speak.

That belief sits at the heart of the Fleet Street Quarter Festival of Words 2026. Rooted in one of London's most historically resonant neighbourhoods, the festival draws on Fleet Street's legacy of journalism, publishing and storytelling, while firmly engaging with contemporary voices and concerns.

MYO New Street Square provides an ideal setting for these events. As a workplace and event venue designed around openness, flexibility and collaboration, it mirrors the spirit

of the festival itself: accessible, inclusive and serenely disconnected from the relentless rhythm of the city.

This approach reflects Landsec's wider commitment to creating places that stand the test of time. Building welcoming urban environments is not just about physical longevity, but about cultural relevance and social value. By embedding arts and culture into the fabric of its destinations, Landsec recognises that successful places are those

that evolve with the people who use them, fostering connection, creativity and a sense of belonging.

At a moment when public space can feel increasingly contested, the Festival of Words offers something quietly powerful: the chance to come together, to listen, and to reflect. It is a reminder that literature is not a luxury, but a vital part of civic life—and that the right places can help ensure those words continue to be heard.



FESTIVAL PERKS WORTH SAVOURING AT APEX TEMPLE COURT

To celebrate the Festival of Words, Apex Temple Court have created special deals for ticket holders!

Head to the beautiful Lazy Ballerinas Wine Bar to enjoy two small plates and a glass of house wine for only £20, or receive a free glass of house wine with your meal at Chambers Restaurant.

Just show your ticket to any of the Festival of Words events to access this fantastic deal.

Available from the 12-16th of May at Apex Temple Court only!



Fergiani's
Columbia Road Books
Queen's Park Books
West End Lane Books

MEET THE FLEET STREET QUARTER FESTIVAL OF WORDS BOOK SELLERS



For over two decades Queens Park Books has served the local community and beyond, bringing books into the hands of eager readers. Founded in 2003, Queens Park Books is the second bookshop opened by the Fergiani family, the first being West End Lane Books in 1994 and the most recent being Columbia Road Books in 2025.

From supporting local schools by offering a school payback scheme towards their libraries to hosting local and international authors for launch parties and signings, Queens Park Books is a pillar of the community. Last year Queens Park Books was proud to be awarded the "Best Independent Bookshop in London" award from the British Book Awards.



SUMMER CELEBRATIONS AT HYATT REGENCY LONDON BLACKFRIARS

Host your summer celebration at Leaf & Cane or Nylon from June through August and enjoy:

- No room hire fees
- Private or semi-private spaces
- A minimum spend of just £500

Book by 31 August 2026



CELEBRATE FLEET STREET QUARTER'S FESTIVAL OF WORDS WITH CORD

From May 7-16, enjoy a 10% discount on coffee and breakfast at CORD Café, 85 Fleet Street. Use code: FLEETSTREET85.

In the evenings, savour a 20% discount on our tasting and à la carte menus at CORD Restaurant. When booking, please reference Fleet Street 85.

Terms: Not valid in conjunction with other promotions. All bookings are subject to availability.

Join us in celebrating literature and community!

CROSSWORD

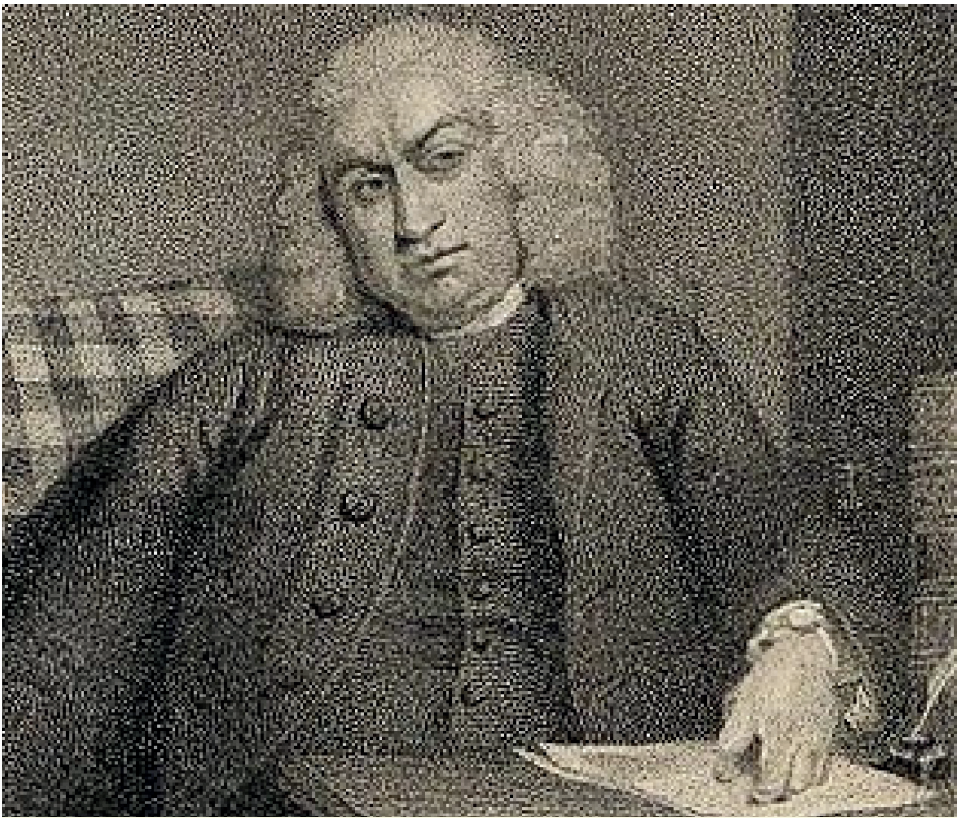
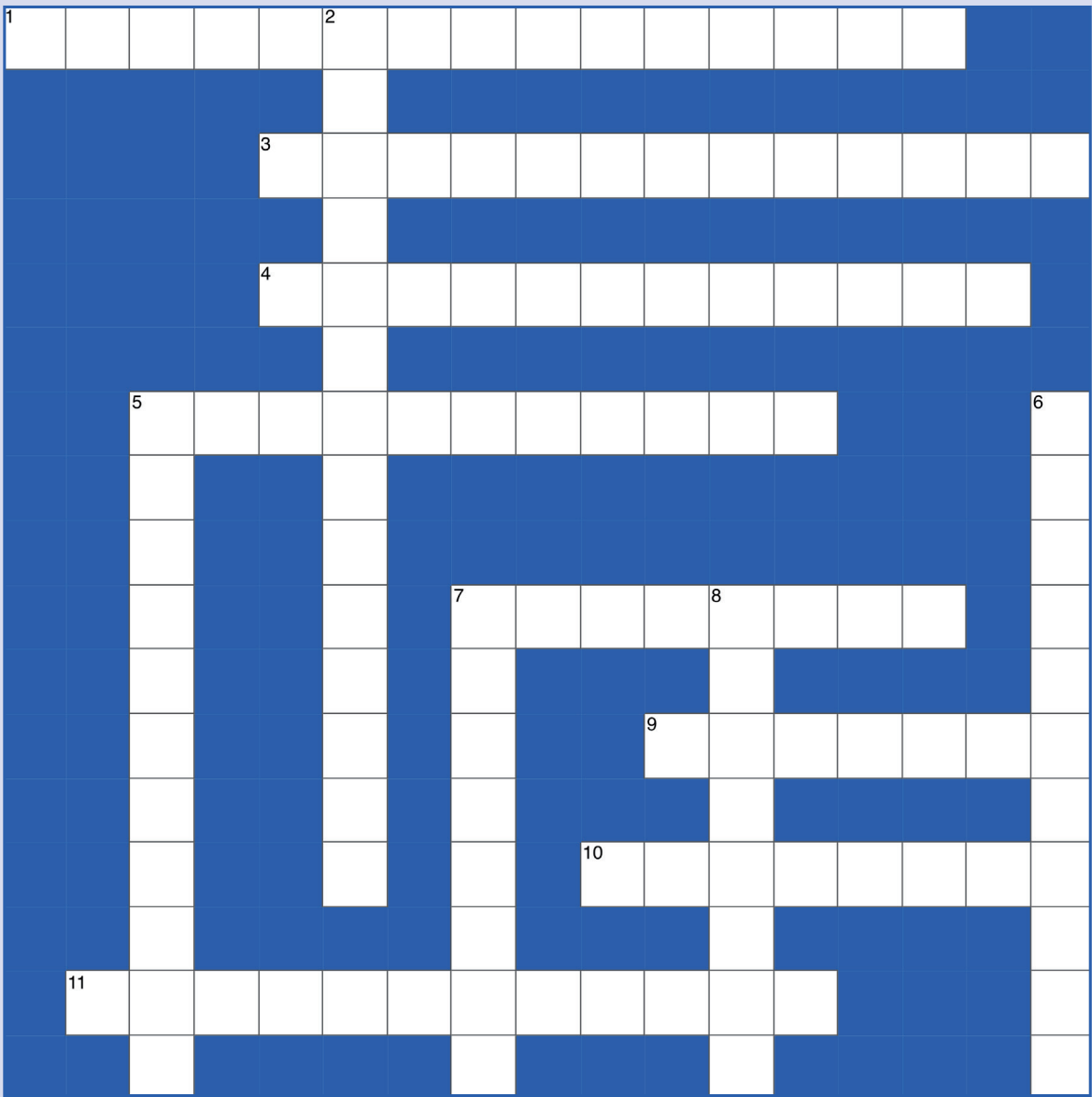
Try your hand at our crossword.
Clues are scattered throughout this Literary Festival themed programme, with answers available on the back cover.

ACROSS

- 1 Fleet Street Quarter's reading haven (4, 4,7)
- 3 Author of The Buddha of Suburbia (5, 8)
- 4 This grade II listed building is home to the Lady of Justice (3, 3, 6)
- 5 The former site of a medieval monastery, now a TFL hub (11)
- 7 Iconic "in-the-round" theatre on the bank of the Thames (3, 5)
- 9 The mother church of the diocese of London, visible from Fleet Street (2, 5)
- 10 The cultural, historical, and social legacies passed down through generations (8)
- 11 Festival of Words venue which brings together the legal world and the church (6, 6)

DOWN

- 2 Renowned "whodunnit" author (6, 8)
- 5 Home to London's most famous literary detective (5,6)
- 6 The Bard of Avon (11)
- 7 The nickname for former White House communications director discussing Trump at the Festival of Words (3,5)
- 8 The ability to read, write, and speak - a cause FSQ is very passionate about! (8)



‘WHEN A MAN IS TIRED OF LONDON, HE IS TIRED OF LIFE!’

Discover Georgian England's most famous Man of Letters: Dr Samuel Johnson



Dr Johnson's House
17 Gough Square EC4A 3DE
Visit Tuesday - Sunday



GRAB 20% OFF AT HYDE'S LEYDI FOR THE LENGTH OF THE FESTIVAL!

Quote "FESTIVAL26" to access this exclusive deal and enjoy the vibrant flavour of Istanbul right in the heart of the City of London! Access this incredible saving for the length of the Festival,

12-16th May, during Restaurant opening times: 7am-10pm Monday to Saturday, 7am-3pm on Sundays.

Head to leydilondon.com to book now!

FLEET STREET'S LITERARY FUTURE

Cat Pearce
Marketing & Communications
Assistant

Here at the Fleet Street Quarter BID, we are deeply passionate about literature, and we are committed to championing literacy and celebrating the power of the written word in all its forms. Through meaningful partnerships with literacy charities, continued support for our local libraries, and of course delivering the Festival of Words, we actively work to promote reading, writing, and access to literature. Our aim is simple but vital: to inspire a love of reading and storytelling among people of all ages and backgrounds, no matter the genre or topic!

Fleet Street's unparalleled literary legacy provides a powerful foundation for this work. For centuries, the area has been



synonymous with publishing, journalism, storytelling, and ideas that have shaped culture and society far beyond its streets. Not only do we celebrate this heritage, but

it actively informs how we look to the future. Read on to find out more about how we're supporting the literary future of the Fleet Street Quarter.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL LITERACY TRUST

National
Literacy
Trust

Change your story

The National Literacy Trust is an independent charity that empowers children, young people, and adults with the literacy skills they need to succeed. Reading, writing, speaking and listening skills give you the tools to get the most out of life, and the power to shape your future. For over 30 years the National Literacy Trust has continued to support schools, families and communities on a local and national level to help people change their stories. literacytrust.co.uk

Fleet Street Quarter were delighted to partner with the National Literacy Trust for our Festive FSQ 2025 programming, and welcomed their ambassador Alexander Armstrong to switch on our Christmas Lights at Ludgate Circus! We look forward to supporting the National Literacy Trust and their important cause in the future.



THE TIMES: GET BRITAIN READING

Ben Hoyles & Helen Davies,
Co-Directors

Reading for fun transforms lives. It builds children's confidence, stretches their imagination and is a proven driver of future success. More importantly, as the bestselling author Katherine Rundell puts it, "if there is a silver bullet for ordinary, everyday childhood happiness, it is reading for pleasure."

Yet the proportion of children who don't read for enjoyment is rising across every age bracket, according to the National Literacy Trust. One in five aged 11 to 13 never pick up a book voluntarily. One in ten aged 5 to 18 do not have a single book of their own.

That is why The Sunday Times started the Get Britain Reading Campaign last October. We challenged our readers to:

- Take Our Pledge to read, just for fun, for at least 10 minutes a day for six weeks
- Donate money to the brilliant charity Bookbanks and put books into the hands of those who need them most
- Volunteer to read with children in schools, via the organisation Coram Beanstalk

With the backing of everyone from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie to Graham Norton the campaign has already enjoyed enormous success. We've seen our first wave of pledge-takers complete their six week challenge, raised tens of thousands of pounds and recruited hundreds of volunteer readers. When the Chancellor unveiled a new library book fund for every secondary school in England she cited us.

But there is so much scope to do more. As the government begins a National Year of

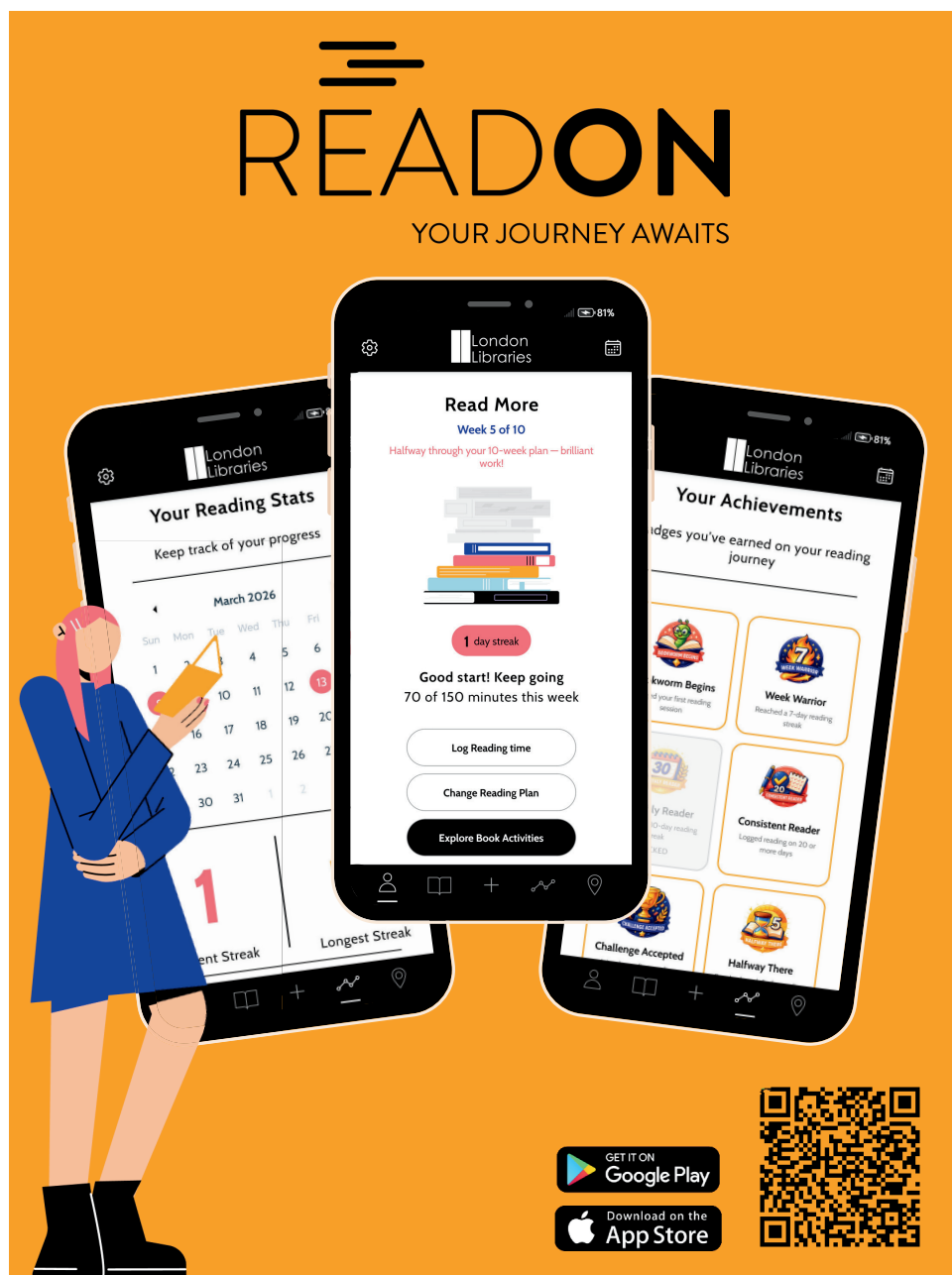
Reading we urge you to sign up to The Sunday Times campaign and make your mark on the fightback against the reading crisis. Share the link thetimes.com/uk/get-britain-reading on social media, take the pledge, and tell us what you are reading now.



FLEET STREET QUARTER IS VERY PROUD TO BE SUPPORTING THE SUNDAY TIMES GET BRITAIN READING CAMPAIGN DURING THIS ALL IMPORTANT NATIONAL YEAR OF READING.

THE CITY IS A BUSY PLACE, WE LEAD BUSY LIVES AND WE ARE INEXTRICABLY CONNECTED TO OUR MOBILES AND LAPTOPS. THIS CAMPAIGN GIVES US A REASON TO BREAK FREE AND REDISCOVER THE JOY OF READING! THIS YEAR, I FOR ONE AM DITCHING DIGITAL TO READ A BOOK, AT LEAST ONCE A DAY - EVEN JUST 10 MINUTES COUNTS!

**LADY LUCY FRENCH,
FLEET STREET QUARTER, CEO**



CITY OF LONDON LIBRARIES LITERATURE ON YOUR DOORSTEP

The City of London's lending libraries, open to all.

Ever spent an afternoon exploring a public library? If not, you may be missing out on one of London's most accessible, affordable pleasures. Barbican and Community Libraries, the City's lending libraries, are spread around

the Square Mile, a short walk for the millions of locals, visitors, and workers that the City attracts every year.

Artizan Street Library, a hidden gem close to Liverpool Street Station, celebrates the vibrant history of Petticoat Lane Market with murals and an innovative Makerspace

hub with 3D printing and sewing machines. Shoe Lane Library, which neighbours Fleet Street and the home of literary icon Dr. Johnson, holds a series of popular wellbeing workshops, and welcomes guest speakers to deliver an expansive talks programme. Barbican Library offers a vast assortment of specialist books within their Arts Library, and an award-winning Music Library equipped with public pianos - well suited to being set within Europe's largest arts centre.

All three locations offer books, CDs, films, children's spaces, study areas, and free events

year-round. They offer escape, possibility, and the promise of transformative literature, from Rilke to Rooney, Shelley to Szalay, and Angelou to Ahlberg.

With the National Year of Reading hitting headlines with major ambassadors like Queen Camilla and Richard Osman, there's never been a better time to explore your local library. Membership is completely free, and open to anyone who regularly visits the City, so why not make the most of this vast public resource?



CHAPTER ONE: IT ALL STARTS WITH LITERACY

Anna Ansted,
Head of Corporate Partnerships,
Chapter One

2026 is the National Year of Reading - a once-in-a-generation moment to shift our national reading culture. Chapter One is a UK literacy charity working to close the reading gap for children facing disadvantage, and we're inviting businesses to be part of it.

Our award-winning Online Reading Volunteers Programme connects 5- to 8-year-olds with teams of corporate volunteers from businesses across the country. The commitment is straightforward: 30 minutes a week, online from your workplace, for an academic year. There are no specialist skills required, just a willingness to support a young reader. Supported by their employers, the volunteers act as crucial 'reading influencers' in children's lives, providing weekly one-to-one support that builds confidence and skills and sparks joy in reading. For many of the

children we work with, our volunteers are the only adults they regularly read with outside the classroom.

Volunteers tell us that those 30 minutes become one of the highlights of their week - a moment of genuine human connection in the middle of a busy working day. Their skills grow too: communication, patience and the ability to build rapport with someone very different from themselves.

As Alison Walker, Social Impact Skills Lead at Deloitte, a Chapter One Platinum partner, put it: "From whatever aspect you're looking at it as a company - whether it's to positively impact children and young people, develop your own staff's skills, or to share a great story - Chapter One just works."

Your employees might just agree. To find out how your business can support Chapter One, visit chapterone.org.uk

EXPECT THE UNEX-PORCUPINE

Olaf Falafel's

PAGE OF WISDOM

and FOOLISHNESS

IN LIFE AND IN THE DICTIONARY,



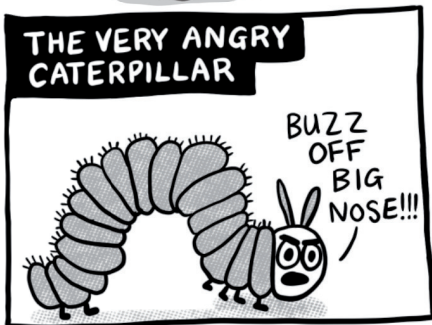
EVERYTHING STARTS WITH SOME AARDVARK



WHAT RHYMES WITH POTATO?

NO IT DOESN'T!

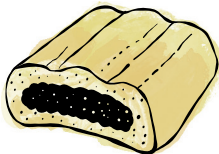
WHAT YOUR CHOICE OF BISCUIT SAYS ABOUT YOU



THE VERY ANGRY CATERPILLAR



A PERSON OF EXQUISITE TASTE.



COMPLEX AND ENIGMATIC.



FUN-LOVING AND FLAMBOYANT.



LOYAL AND TRUSTWORTHY.



SOLID, RELIABLE, A TAD BORING.

IT TAKES A LOT OF THOUGHT BEING THIS STUPID!

ROYAL FRACTIONS



HENRY THE EIGHTH



HENRY THE SIXTEENTH



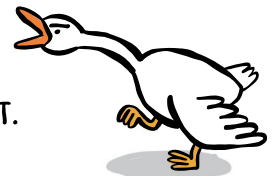
HENRY THE THIRTY SECONDT

WORDSEARCH
FIND THE WORD 'WORD'.

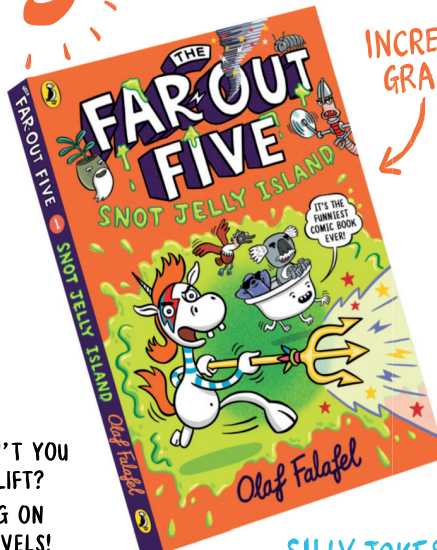
W	O	R	W	O
O	O	R	D	D
R	W	O	R	W
M	R	O	D	O
D	W	R	O	W

FIVE GOLDEN RULES

- 1 NEVER TRUST SOMEONE WHO SAYS "TRUST ME."
- 2 IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING, DO IT CONFIDENTLY.
- 3 ALWAYS KEEP AN EMERGENCY BISCUIT HANDY.
- 4 DO NOT FIGHT A GOOSE.
- 5 IF YOU MUST FIGHT A GOOSE, WRITE A WILL FIRST.



3 BOOKS GUARANTEED TO MAKE YOU MORE INTELLIGENT*



INCREDIBLY FUNNY GRAPHIC NOVEL



SILLY JOKES AND POEMS



ART AND BUM-FACED SNAILS

*NOT STRICTLY TRUE

ALWAYS MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A GOOD PAIR OF SHOES AND A GOOD BED...

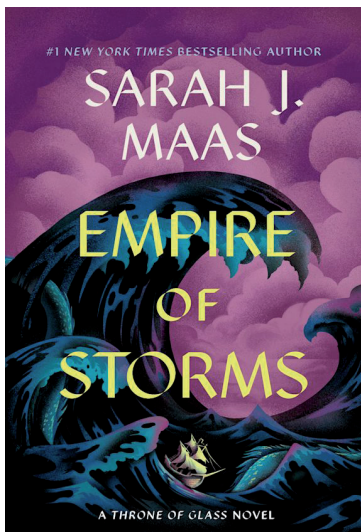
BECAUSE IF YOU'RE NOT IN ONE, YOU'RE BOUND TO BE IN THE OTHER.

Q. WHY SHOULDN'T YOU FART IN A LIFT?
A. IT'S WRONG ON SO MANY LEVELS!

WOBBLE!

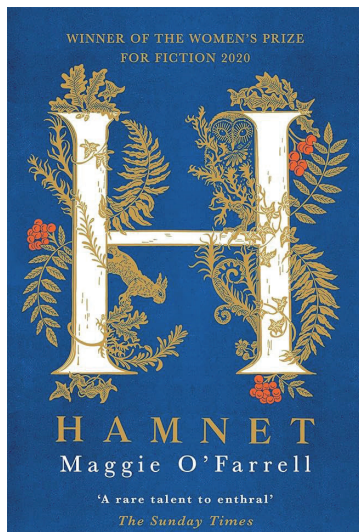
THOUGHT OF THE DAY

WHAT ARE THE FLEET STREET QUARTER TEAM READING?



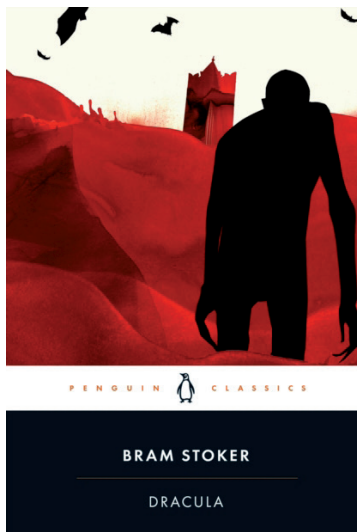
Beth Nash
Safe & Secure Manager

I'm currently tandem reading **Empire of Storms** and **Tower of Dawn** by Sarah J Maas. Both sit in a 7-book fantasy series that has had me rapidly tapping to the next page on my kindle since December last year. The character development and world building is unmatched, and I am a sucker for a powerful, no-nonsense heroine. Highly recommend to get stuck in and lost in the world of Erilea.



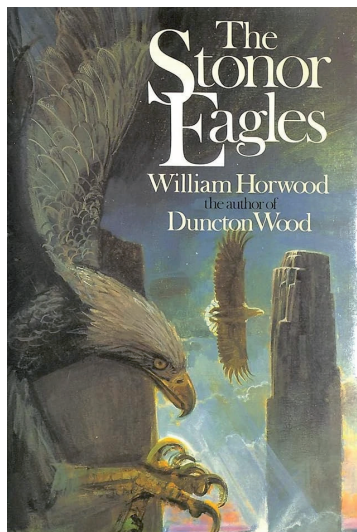
Lucy French
CEO

At the moment I'm reading **Maggie O'Farrell's Hamnet**, a really incredible novel reimagining Shakespeare's life and centering around the loss of his son. I've been reading this one in preparation for our event at the Festival of Words: Shakespeare in London, where KCL Shakespeare specialist Lucy Munro will discuss her groundbreaking discovery: Shakespeare was a Fleet Street Quarter resident! I greatly look forward to diving into her article in the New York Times Literary Supplement where she explains how this discovery came about!



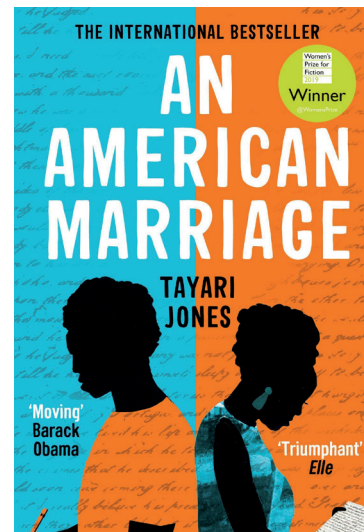
Ciara Wilczur-Wieja
Head of Operations

I'm really enjoying getting back into classics and revisiting English literature from school - funny because I hated it at the time! I'm reading **Dracula** now and love how creepy it feels, **Bram Stoker** is brilliant at building atmosphere and tension. Next on my classics list is **The Count of Monte Cristo**.



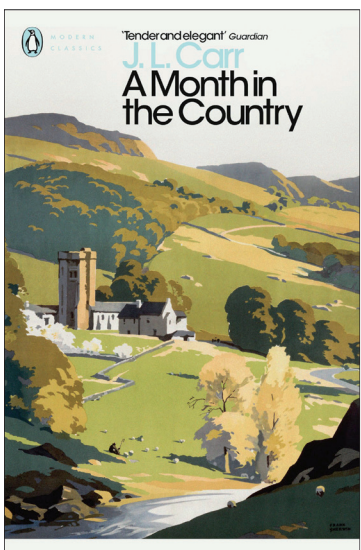
Mike Fairmaner
Head of Placemaking

I'm currently re-reading the **Stonor Eagles** by **William Horwood**. It intertwines two story lines (which I don't usually like but works perfectly) of sea eagles and Jim Stonor, a budding artist who becomes obsessed by the eagles. Both stories are gripping, and the descriptions of the birds -magnificent sea eagles, golden eagles and the Raven of Storr - along with the Scottish Islands and Norway make you want to visit and experience them for yourself.



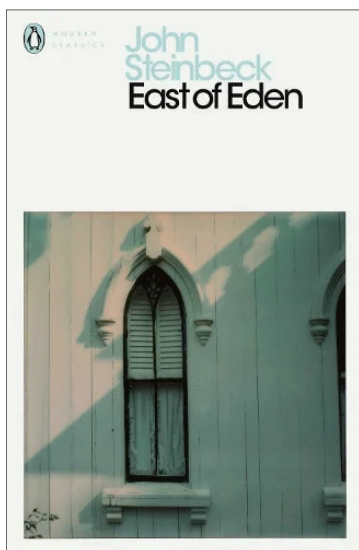
Hamish Rogers
BID Administrative Assistant

I've just finished reading **An American Marriage**, a gripping novel by **Tayari Jones**. Accused of a crime he didn't commit, newlywed Roy is ripped from his wife Celestial and thrust into the depths of the deeply flawed American legal system. When he is released years later, he and Celestial must navigate the seismic effects this incarceration has had on all areas of their lives. I thoroughly recommend this read to everyone!



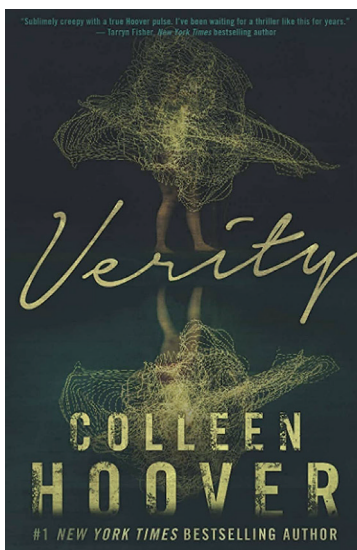
Flora Cooper Maddocks:
Marketing & Sponsorship Manager

Fifteen years ago my Dad gave me **JL Carr's A Month In The Country**. On my first read, I struggled to sink into the poignant, pastoral novella about a 1920s sun-drenched summer in Yorkshire, where a WWI veteran restores a medieval church mural. On second read, all these years later, it's excelled memory with expert stillness, honeyed landscapes and a story about survival across 100 or so pages. I'm looking forward to seeing what the third read will bring...



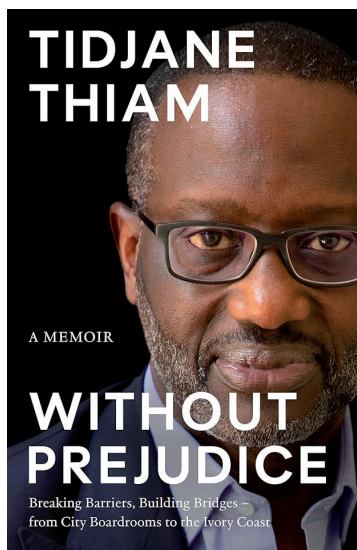
Cat Pearce
Marketing & Communications Assistant

I'm about halfway through **East of Eden** by **John Steinbeck** at the moment and loving it. Set in the rich farmland of Salinas Valley, Steinbeck's epic follows the intertwined lives of the Trask and Hamilton families. Steinbeck's descriptive writing really brings the Salinas Valley in the early 20th century to life, and the characters are incredibly well written. I'm excited to see how their story ends...



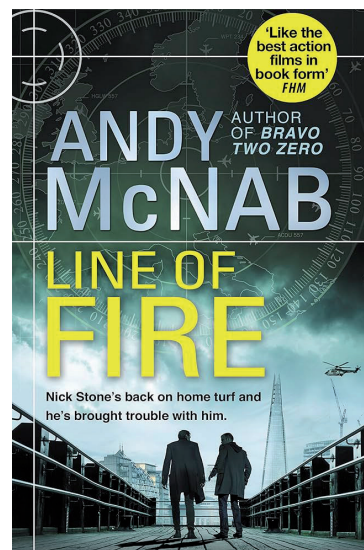
Tinyan Osunbor
Stakeholder Engagement Coordinator

I've been reading **Colleen Hoover's Verity**: a suspenseful psychological thriller that keeps you questioning what's real until the very end! The story feels dark and mysterious making it exciting to read. It's just a genuinely great book that's both thrilling and impossible to put down. I can't wait to see what happens!



Al Fadiga
Fleet Street Quarter Ambassador

I recently read a book called **Without Prejudice** by **Tidjane Thiam**. This memoir covers everything from childhood to his professional life. After his success at Prudential in the City of London he became CEO of Credit Suisse. In the end, things went wrong as he became a victim of discrimination. Following his experience in the insurance industry, he decided to run for presidential election in Ivory Coast and became a threat for the incumbent president. They then used his dual citizenship, French Ivorian, as an excuse to exclude him. even though he had given up the French one to be in line with the law of the land.



Saud Ahmad
Fleet Street Quarter Ambassador

Line of Fire by **Andy McNab** is my most recent read: a beautifully written novel that captures both emotion and atmosphere with quiet confidence. The characters feel authentic, their struggles relatable without becoming predictable. The pacing allows reflection without dragging, and the themes linger after the final page. Overall, it offers a thoughtful and rewarding reading experience that resonates long after finishing.

Beano Laughter boxes

Explore the Quarter with the whole family by finding Beano's laughter boxes! Hit the big red button for non-stop laughs and guess the right answer to hilarious jokes!

FESTIVAL MAP



Beano book bench

Designed by Beano Studios,
Painted by Adam Pekr.

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ST BRIDE'S
CHURCH

ST MARTIN
WITHIN
LUDGATE



CUTLERS' HALL



CROSSWORD ANSWERS

Across:
1. Shoe Lane Library, 3. Hanif Kureish 4. The Old Bailey
8. Blackfriars, 7. The Globe 9. St Pauls 10. Heritage
11. Temple Church
Down:
2. Agatha Christie 5. Baker Street, 6. Shakespeare,
7. The Mooch 8. Literacy

