



(Clockwise from left) A stained glass window depicting Charles Dickens; Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese was the preferred gathering place for London's literary greats back in the day; statues and busts of famous writers at Westminster Abbey; (facing page) the Dickens House Museum



Stand across the road on a rainy day and you'll have no trouble imagining the likes of Dickens, Doyle and Thackeray escaping an icy November evening for the warmth of this charismatic watering hole. Tucked neatly away in an impossibly narrow lane just off Fleet Street, the ancient centre of London's print industry, Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese was a famous gathering place for artists and writers. The men must have been lured here by the lingering creative vibe left by author and predecessor Samuel Johnson, who moved in next door to the pub in 1748. Inside, Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese is as authentic as it was the day it was rebuilt after the Great Fire of 1666.

**TALBOT YARD**

Southwark, SE1

**Write link** The starting point of *The Canterbury Tales*

"In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay; Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage..." These first few lines of Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* describe the location where the pilgrims first meet on their journey to Canterbury in the 1380s. You will need a fair bit of imagination to invoke the images though: The Tabard Inn is now within a private building adorned with the trademark London blue plaque, a historical marker that commemorates a link between the location and a famous person or event. The inn's stable yard, known as Talbot Yard, still exists to this day.

**POET'S CORNER**

Westminster Abbey, Westminster, SW1

**Write link** The burial ground for many English literary greats

Westminster Abbey begs no formal introduction. The Abbey's Poet's Corner is where a number of poets, playwrights, and writers are buried and commemorated. The first to be interred here was Geoffrey Chaucer. Others include Charles Dickens, Alfred Tennyson, Samuel Johnson, Thomas Hardy and Rudyard Kipling, just to name a few. The feats of many other writers have also been recognised here by way of elaborate murals or memorials. In 1740, designer William Kent erected a monument in honour of the great William Shakespeare.

**THE DICKENS HOUSE MUSEUM**

48 Doughty Street, Holborn, WC1

**Write link** Former residence of Charles Dickens

This was the posh side of Victorian London. Here, politicians mingled with painters and writers were inspired by the pristine rows of terraced houses sprinkled with suits and top hats. Charles Dickens lived here between 1837 and 1839; writing some of his most renowned works such as *Oliver Twist* and *The Pickwick Papers*, the former dealing with life in stark contrast to his own privileged surroundings. The property was inaugurated as the Charles Dickens Museum in 1925, after narrowly escaping demolition two years earlier.

**YE OLD CHESHIRE CHEESE**

145 Fleet St, City, EC4A

**Write link** Gathering place for artists and writers

**IRELAND YARD**

Blackfriars, EC4V

**Write link** Former residence of William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare kept various lodgings in London throughout his time in the capital. In 1613, three years before his death, he bought this house overlooking Ireland Yard for GBP140 (approximately GBP320,000 today). The house passed to his daughter after his death. She is reputed to have sold the property in 1667. Ireland Yard is still accessible via Playhouse Yard in Blackfriars.

**22 HYDE PARK GATE**

Kensington, SW7

**Write link** Birthplace of Virginia Woolf  
Its link with Virginia Woolf does nothing to dispel stereotypes about London's famed Kensington district. And Hyde Park Gate is the picture perfect representation of the posh London of



old, a society with which the author enjoyed a long and complex love-hate relationship. Stand in front of the building on a sunny day, leaves rustling gently, and imagine the author engaging in the activities of everyday life to the backdrop of this regal setting. Only the influence of surroundings such as these could give rise to the phrase, "language is wine upon the lips."

### 18 ST LEONARDS TERRACE

Chelsea, SW3

**Write link** The residence of Bram Stoker

You might rightly wonder how a setting of Victorian haughtiness and pomposity gave rise to the most legendary of fictional vampires. However, it is here that Irish author Bram Stoker wrote *Dracula*, one of the most revered works of the horror genre, in 1897. Legend has it that the author complained of feverish nightmares after having devoured excessive amounts of dressed crabmeat. Regardless, his delusions within the comforts of his Chelsea home have set the benchmark for the modern wave of vampire fiction and film.

### 13 HANOVER TERRACE

Regent's Park

**Write link** The former residence of HG Wells

You'll have no need for HG Wells' famed time machine to walk in the footsteps of this science-fiction master. Hanover Terrace, a street of beautifully imposing 18th century terraced houses framed by the greenery of Regent's Park, allows the imagination to conjure up images of businessmen in pristine suits and the droning of their classic cars of the 1940s. Hanover Terrace was the author's last place of residence in his beloved London; he died here in 1946 from unspecified causes.

### 95 STOKE NEWINGTON

Church Street, Stoke Newington, N16

**Write link** The former residence of Daniel Defoe

Look beyond the rows of red brick Victorian buildings to visualise the site of a large property occupied by the

# Literary London

These streets and buildings in the English capital are full of stories, quite literally, each with an association of some sort with great writers of the past.

TEXT LUCIANO DI GREGORIO PHOTOS VISIT BRITAIN



enigmatic Daniel Defoe. As one of the greatest (if understated) writers of the 17th century, Defoe authored the celebrated *Robinson Crusoe* and the lesser-known but perhaps more lyrical, *Journals of the Plague Year*. Though his property here created the illusion of wealth, he suffered numerous financial hardships despite his fame as a writer and journalist.

### SHERLOCK HOLMES MUSEUM

221b Baker Street, Marylebone, SW1

**Write link** Fictional residence of Sherlock Holmes

Do not attempt to find 221b where you

would expect to find it. It is, in fact, set between numbers 237 and 241 Baker Street and bears the famous '221b' mark by permission of the local council. If you're familiar with the story, you'll recognise this as the residence of the fictional character Sherlock Holmes, who lived here in the late 1800s as a guest of the fickle Mrs Hudson. The Museum was established in 1990 by the Sherlock Holmes International Society, but bears no relevance to the life of Holmes' creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. 📍



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