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Literary London

London has inspired authors for centuries. It’s a true literary city, with nooks and crannies connected to famous books and authors. Discover the homes, commemorative statues and real-life locations that have played a part in some of the greatest works of literature. This is your guide to the literary sights in London.

The Old Curiosity Shop

This 16th-century Tudor antique shop built of old ship timber is the inspiration for Charles Dickens’ 1841 novel The Old Curiosity Shop. In the novel, this is where Little Nell Trent and her grandfather live, struggling to pay debts to the lecherous money-lender Daniel Quilp. Today, it’s one of London’s oldest shops, having survived both the Great Fire of London and the Blitz.Tucked away down Portsmouth Street in Holborn, The Old Curiosity Shop has a sloping roof and wonky walls. The shop changed its name shortly after Dickens published his novel, in a shrewd marketing move. It still trades today as a luxury shoemaker, so snap a photo outside and take a peek inside.

Paddington Bear Statue

Among the many travellers passing through London’s Paddington Station is Michael Bond’s beloved bear from Peru, who’s had quite a few adventures: sharing marmalade sandwiches with the Queen and starring in some hit films.The Paddington statue on platform one under the station clock captures dear Paddington resting on his suitcase with his icon label asking passersby to “Please look after this bear. Thank you.”The life-size bronze statue by Marcus Cornish arrived at the station in 2000 and quickly became a popular site for travellers and a literary stop for Paddington fans. So if you’re passing through, stop and say hello.

Sherlock Holmes Museum

221b Baker Street is the address of probably the most famous fictional detective in the world. It’s also where you’ll find the Sherlock Museum, with plenty of souvenirs to take home with you. Step into Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s world of London crime fighting, explore Victorian curiosities, sit at Holmes’ desk lit by gas lamp and investigate famous cases. And on the top floor, there are creepy waxworks of Sherlock Holmes’ villains. Book your Sherlock Holmes Museum tickets

Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese

The Cheshire Cheese pub, London’s 17th-century chophouse with sawdust on the floor and unpretentious food, was rebuilt after the Great Fire of London in 1666. And it has a stellar literary legacy. PG Wodehouse, Mark Twain, Dr Samuel Johnson, W.B. Yeats and Alfred Tennyson all frequented this chophouse. Agatha Christie staged a Poirot scene here, and Charles Dickens alluded to the pub in A Tale of Two Cities. It might have been easier to list the literary titans who weren’t regulars!Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese inn is on Fleet Street. While you’re here, look out for stuffed Polly the Parrot behind the bar. She was famous in the late 19th century for her foul mouth, and when she died, there were 200 newspaper obituaries mourning her passing.Enjoy a slice of historic luxury while you explore London’s literary greats and stay at The Clermont, Victoria or The Clermont, Charing Cross where the walls have their own stories to tell.

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