

Discovering the art and literature of England: Jane Austen, Shakespeare, and more

Reading List

The House of Fiction: From Pemberley to Brideshead, Great British Houses in Literature and Life

by Phyllis Richardson

Houses in literature have captured readers' imaginations for centuries, from Gothic castles to Georgian stately homes, Bloomsbury townhouses and high-rise penthouses. Step on to a tour of real and imagined houses that great English writers have used to reflect the themes of their novels... houses that became like characters themselves, embodiments of the social and historical currents of their time.

Phyllis Richardson takes us on a journey through history to discover how authors' personal experiences in their homes helped to shape the imaginative dwellings that have become icons of English literature:

Virginia Woolf's love of Talland House in Cornwall is palpable in *To the Lighthouse*, just as London's Bloomsbury is ever-present in *Mrs Dalloway*. E.M. Forster's childhood home at Rook's Nest mirrors the idyllic charm of *Howards End*. Evelyn Waugh plotted Charles Ryder's return to Brideshead while a guest at Madresfield. Jane Austen was no stranger to a manor house or a good ballroom. And Horace Walpole's 'little Gothic castle' in Twickenham inspired him to write the first English Gothic novel, *The Castle of Otranto*.

But the English country house, from the idyllic to the unloved, is also viewed through a modern lens – Kazuo Ishiguro's *Darlington Hall*, Ian McEwan's *Tallis House*, Alan Hollinghurst's *Two Acres*.

Using historic sources, authors' biographies, letters, news accounts, and the novels themselves, *The House of Fiction* presents some of the most influential houses in Britain through the stories they inspired, while offering candid glimpses of the writers who brought them to life.

This Is Shakespeare

by Emma Smith

A *THE TIMES* BOOK OF THE YEAR 2019

'The best introduction to the plays I've read, perhaps the best book on Shakespeare, full stop'
Alex Preston, Observer

'It makes you impatient to see or re-read the plays at once' Hilary Mantel

A genius and prophet whose timeless works encapsulate the human condition like no others. A writer who surpassed his contemporaries in vision, originality and literary mastery. Who wrote like an angel, putting it all so much better than anyone else.

Is this Shakespeare? Well, sort of.

But it doesn't really tell us the whole truth. So much of what we say about Shakespeare is either not true, or just not relevant, deflecting us from investigating the challenges of his inconsistencies and flaws. This electrifying new book thrives on revealing, not resolving, the ambiguities of Shakespeare's plays and their changing topicality. It introduces an intellectually, theatrically and ethically exciting writer who engages with intersectionality as much as with Ovid, with economics as much as poetry: who writes in strikingly modern ways about individual agency, privacy, politics, celebrity and sex. It takes us into a world of politicking and copy-catting, as we watch him emulating the blockbusters of Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Kyd, the Spielberg and Tarantino of their day; flirting with and skirting round the cut-throat issues of succession politics, religious upheaval and technological change. The Shakespeare in this book poses awkward questions rather than offering bland answers, always implicating us in working out what it might mean.

This is Shakespeare. And he needs your attention.

Shakespeare: A Book of Quotations

by William Shakespeare

Shakespeare is without doubt the most quoted writer in English. His plays and poems comprise an inexhaustible source of memorable and often profound thoughts beautifully and concisely expressed. This remarkably affordable volume presents over 400 quotations conveniently arranged by topic: love, marriage, conduct and morality, truth, beauty, time, death, music, and more.

Included are such timeless observations as: "All that glitters is not gold," "Brevity is the soul of wit," "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is/ To have a thankless child"; "While you live, tell truth and shame the devil!"; "The very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream," and many more. Romantic thoughts receive a particularly rich treatment; extensive selections on the subject of love include quotes from the plays ("The course of true love never did run smooth"; "Speak low if you speak love") and sonnets ("For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings,/ That then I scorn to change my state with kings"). Each quote bears a complete citation.

Ideal for writers, speakers, students of literature, and any lover of Shakespeare's works, this inexpensive treasury lends itself admirably to a virtually endless number of uses, from casual browsing to designing personal greeting cards.

Shakespeare in a Divided America

by James Shapiro

From the author of 1599, a fresh perspective on the history of the United States - and a timely reminder of Shakespeare's indelible influence. Shakespeare's position as England's national poet is established and unquestionable.

But as James Shapiro illuminates in this revelatory new history, Shakespeare has long held an essential place in American culture. Why, though, would a proudly independent republic embrace England's greatest writer? Especially when his works enact so many of America's darkest nightmares: interracial marriage, cross-dressing, same-sex love, tyranny, and assassination?

Investigating a selection of defining moments in American history - drilling into issues of race, miscegenation, gender, patriotism and immigration; encountering Presidents, activists, writers and actors - Shapiro leads us to fascinating answers and uncovers rich and startling stories.

But perhaps most pressingly, we learn how, in Trump's America, the staging of his work has provoked threats of violence and has become a battleground for freedom of speech.

In Search Of Shakespeare

by Michael Wood

Almost 400 years after his death, William Shakespeare is still acclaimed as the world's greatest writer, and yet the man himself remains shrouded in mystery. In this absorbing historical detective story, the acclaimed broadcaster and historian Michael Wood takes a fresh approach to Shakespeare's life, brilliantly recreating the turbulent times through which the poet lived: the age of the Reformation, the Spanish Armada, the Gunpowder Plot and the colonization of the Americas.

Drawing on an extensive range of sources, Michael Wood takes us back into Elizabethan England to reveal a man who is the product of his time - a period of tremendous upheaval that straddled the medieval and modern worlds. Using a wealth of unexplored archive evidence the author vividly conjures up the neighbourhoods of the Elizabethan London where Shakespeare lived and worked during his glittering career. Full of fresh insights and fascinating new discoveries, this book presents us with a Shakespeare for the twenty-first century: a man of the theatre, a thinking artist, playful and cunning who held up a mirror to his age, but who was also, as his friend Ben Jonson said, 'not of an age, but for all time'.
