

The Cheltenham Literature Festival



Cheltenham is world famous for three things: the Gold Cup Horse Race, the Ladies' College and the Literature Festival, the longest-running festival of its kind in the world.

It's not like Frankfurt or Leipzig where publishers are trying to sell new works – *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* Cheltenham Literature Festival is more of an opportunity to relax and enjoy the latest works of established and up-and-coming writers. For one glorious week from 7th to 16th October you can immerse yourself in writings, readings and interviews with world famous authors of poetry, fiction, history, lifestyle, comedy, psychology – the list goes on and on.

The *Cheltenham Literature Festival* is just one of many cultural festivals held in the beautiful regency spa town. Nestled on the edge of the Cotswolds in Gloucestershire, in the west of England, Cheltenham became famous as a health and holiday resort after the discovery of its mineral spring in 1716. It has been described as 'the most complete regency town in Britain'. The current festival was founded in 1949 by the Spa Manager George Wilkinson and Tewksbury-based author John Moore. Sir Ralph Richardson, who was born in Cheltenham, launched the festival and Cecil Day-Lewis (later to become Poet Laureate) read a selection of contemporary verse.

The festival prides itself on being able to attract the biggest names from contemporary culture and to create a buzz of controversial debate. This year there will be over 600 writers, actors and politicians and a stellar list of authors giving talks and interviews. Booker prize-winning author Ian McEwan presents his latest novel, *Nutshell*: a murder mystery told from a surprising perspective. Politicians will be speaking: Nick Clegg, the former Deputy Prime Minister, will be talking about life at the centre of the coalition government from 2010 to 2015 and Alan Johnson, former member of the Labour government, will be discussing the third instalment of his memoir.

Father and son historians Peter and Dan Snow present their new book about the fifty most important documents which influenced British history. Children's authors will be there including Jacqueline Wilson and poet Michael Rosen.

As it is 2016 there are two Shakespeare lecture to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the bard's death and a US election review to consider the American general election in November this year.

There will be discussions on such wide-ranging topics as post-natal depression, ancient Rome, dogs as domesticated animals, women and sport, crosswords

and English cathedrals. There will be comedians, politicians, cooks and of course straight-forward authors. There is surely something for everyone in this long-running festival in one of the prettiest of Britain's towns.

If you would like to find out more about the *The Times and The Sunday Times Cheltenham Literature Festival*, then click [here](#).

And if you would like to use the *Cheltenham Literature Festival* as a topic in your lesson, then we have provided you with an activity at A2 level. You'll find it in the following **Teacher's notes** and on the **Worksheet**.

Teacher's notes

Who wrote ...? (level A2 and above, 10+ mins)

- Make a copy of the **Worksheet**, one for each student.
- On the board write *Cheltenham Literature Festival*. Ask students where and what they think this is. Explain that it is a ten-day event in Cheltenham, England where writers talk to the public about their books (see above for more details).
- Ask if students would like to visit a literature festival or if they could tell the class about a literature festival they've already visited (Where?, When?, Main topics / authors / ...? etc.).
- On the board write: *Who wrote Pippi Longstocking?* Give students time to think about the answer. (Astrid Lindgren)
- Tell students that they are going to do a quiz about books and authors.
- Hand out the **Worksheet**, one to each student.
- Give students five minutes to complete the quiz. Go around the class and, if necessary, help with translations. (*Harry Potter und der Stein der Weisen, 1984, Der Herr der Ringe, Stolz und Vorurteil, Anna Karenina, Oliver Twist, Der alte Mann und das Meer, Der Räuber Hotzenplotz, Der Zauberberg, Tod auf dem Nil*)
- Tell students to check answers with a partner.
- Then check answers together in class.
Key: 1-a), 2-c), 3-a), 4-b), 5-c), 6-b), 7-a), 8-b), 9-a), 10-b)
- Ask students to tell their partner about any of the books in the quiz they have read.

You could use the *Cheltenham Literature Festival* as an introduction to reading books in English. [Here](#) you find a wide-range of titles to choose from.

You could also encourage students to bring in (English) books they have enjoyed reading. Each student could present his / her book and tell the class why he / she found it a good read.

Worksheet

Who wrote these books? Choose the right answer.



1 **Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone**

- a) J K Rowling b) Stephen King c) James Patterson

2 **1984**

- a) Thomas Mann b) Aldous Huxley c) George Orwell

3 **Lord of the Rings**

- a) J R R Tolkien b) Isaac Asimov c) John Grisham

4 **Pride and Prejudice**

- a) Mark Twain b) Jane Austen c) Jodi Picoult

5 **Anna Karenina**

- a) John Steinbeck b) Isaac Asimov c) Leo Tolstoy

6 **Oliver Twist**

- a) Mark Twain b) Charles Dickens c) Malcolm Gladwell

7 **The Old Man and the Sea**

- a) Ernest Hemingway b) Graham Greene c) John Steinbeck

8 **The Robber Hotzenplotz**

- a) Thomas Mann b) Otfried Preußler c) Günter Grass

9 **The Magic Mountain**

- a) Thomas Mann b) Hermann Hesse c) Günter Grass

10 **Death on the Nile**

- a) Stephenie Meyer b) Agatha Christie c) Rosamunde Pilcher

Have you read any of these books? Tell your partner about it.