

NEW WRITING NORTH

Durham Book Festival Announce 2024 Line-Up

Pat Barker CBE, Rebecca F. Kuang, Helen Fielding, Alan Hollinghurst, Jackie Kay, Terry Deary, Jodi Picoult.

Over one long weekend [10-13 October] a host of literary luminaries descend on Durham as the city's annual book festival returns, celebrating the power of the written word.

Produced by New Writing North, the Durham County Council event features an exclusive dramatic reading of Pat Barker's new novel *The Voyage Home* in association with Live Theatre. The Booker Prize winning Durham novelist will also be in conversation with writer Adelle Stripe.

Sunderland-born Terry Deary is behind the global-hit *Horrible Histories*, selling over 38 million books in 45 languages. He'll be presenting his first book for adults, *A History of Britain in Ten Enemies*.

This home-grown talent stars alongside blockbuster American authors Jodi Picoult and Rebecca F. Kuang.

Jodi Picoult has written 30 books and sold 40 million copies. She'll discuss her latest historical novel, *By Any Other Name*.

Yellowface was an instant #1 Sunday Times bestseller and Reese Witherspoon Book Club pick. Rebecca F. Kuang discusses her page-turning phenomenon that follows the misadventures of failed novelist June Hayward.

Rebecca Wilkie, Durham Book Festival Director at New Writing North, said: "Our flagship book festival builds on a remarkable legacy. 2024 features a new commission to tell new narratives of our region, and welcomes a local literary icon, Pat Barker, with the premiere of a commission inspired by her new book. Durham is leading on a new era of creativity for the North East."

Cllr Elizabeth Scott, Durham County Council's Cabinet Member for Economy and Partnerships, said: "Durham Book Festival is one of the highlights of our exciting programme of events, and this year's line-up really underpins our commitment to writers, readers and audiences."

"As well as providing entertainment and thought-provoking discussion, the festival attracts visitors into the county and boosts our economy. It also helps to showcase the varied cultural opportunities on offer across County Durham and the north east and strengthens our reputation as the Culture County."

A platform for northern talent, headline acts include the Yorkshire-born author of the multi-million phenomenon, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, Helen Fielding. The series spawned four blockbuster movies and shaped a whole new literary genre, Chick Lit.

The author of *The Damned Utd*, Yorkshire-born David Peace, will talk about *Munichs: A Novel*. The *New York Times* praised Peace for writing "the boldest and most original

NEW WRITING NORTH

British fiction of his generation.” Here, he tells the story of the crash and aftermath of Flight 609 carrying the young Manchester United team.

The festival also showcases a new commission, North East Now, which tasked 12 northern writers to pen new narratives for the North East to mark devolution. Three of the writers - Arlen Pettitt, Louise Powell, and Richard Benson - will take part in a discussion exploring their themes that challenge northern stereotypes.

Another Booker Prize-winning author, Alan Hollinghurst, will discuss his astonishing first novel in over a decade - *Our Evenings*, a dark, luminous, and wickedly funny portrait of modern England. And Tracy Chevalier, of *Girl with a Pearl Earring* fame, brings her Venetian historical novel, *The Glassmaker*.

For the first time, Durham Book Festival will host the renowned Forward Prizes for Poetry.

An unmissable fixture on the literary calendar, twenty outstanding poets will perform their work at an awards ceremony hosted by poet and performer Joelle Taylor, featuring BBC Radio 6 Music’s Craig Charles.

Poetry lovers can also enjoy an evening with the former National Poet for Scotland, Jackie Kay, with her new poetry collection, *May Day*. The poet-turned-novelist Andrew McMillan will explore the theme ‘writing the north’ with fellow novelist Tawseef Khan.

A regular Radio 4 *Thought for Today* speaker, the Professor of Theology at Durham University, Revd Professor David Wilkinson, who has doctorates in astrophysics and theology, gives a talk on God and Cosmology. Edith Hall, a Professor in the Department of Classics and Ancient History at Durham University, will speak on her moving book, *Edith Hall: Facing Down the Furies*.

Professor Janet Stewart, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at Durham University, said: “Durham Book Festival welcomes a host of writers from all over the world, bringing an influx of talent to inspire our students and to enthuse communities across the region. With our commitment to education, Durham University is delighted to be involved, bringing people together to share ideas and develop creativity through writing and reading.”

Oliver Burkeman, behind the Guardian’s *This Column Will Change Your Life*, offers more thought-provoking ideas with his latest book, *Meditations for Mortals*.

Other acts include the stand-up neurodiverse poet Kate Fox, an exploration of literary thrillers with the bestselling authors and Durham University alumni, Lucy Foley and Mathew Blake, and Annie Garthwaite and Sean Lusk reclaim history’s hidden women.

Exploring writing from conflict, the Palestinian journalist Ibtisam Azem, Ghanian writer Peace Adzo Medie, and Ukrainian refugee Yeva Skalietska share their latest novels.

There’ll also be a screening of a documentary on the life of the working-class photographer, Tish Murtha, and a talk on capturing working-class lives with writer Tom Newlands and documentarian Jen Corcoran.

NEW WRITING NORTH

A series of workshops for aspiring writers will take place across the festival weekend.

Topics include writing adventurous non-fiction with Dan Richards, a crime writing workshop with Cathi Unsworth, and tips on overcoming obstacles and procrastination with Arvon consultant Bec Evans.

500 copies of the picture book *I am Brave*, by Caryl Hart and Zoe Waring, suitable for ages 3+, will be distributed by Durham Libraries for this year's Little Read, which encourages children to read for pleasure.

Founded in 1990, Durham Book Festival is a Durham County Council event produced by New Writing North, with support from Durham University and Arts Council England.

To book, visit www.durhambookfestival.com

ENDS

Notes to Editors

To download images of authors for media use, [click here](#).

About Durham Book Festival

Durham Book Festival is a Durham County Council festival produced by New Writing North with support from Durham University and Arts Council England. New Writing North leads the development of creative writing and reading in the North of England, identifying talent, creating career-changing opportunities, and ensuring excellent writing finds great audiences.

[Durham Book Festival - New Writing North](#)