

# **Inspire Poetry Festival 2025**

**25 September – 2 October**

**A week of wonderful words**

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## Introduction

### Welcome to Inspire Poetry Festival 2025

#### Join us for a week of wonderful words!

This year we are excited to welcome the acclaimed poet Imtiaz Dharker who will be sharing her 'desert island poems' in conversation with the Library Director of Bromley House Library Clare Brown, before reading from her own work. The brilliant Romalyn Ante returns to the festival for a workshop and performance, while Bad Betty Press joins us for an afternoon of poetry featuring Jake Wild Hall, Chris Lanyon and Leanne Moden. Library-based poetry collective Paper Crane invites us to their showcase, while Five Leaves New Poetry celebrates two years of publishing regional poets with the launch of two new pamphlets. Plus, the Social Model Writers make their festival debut with a sharing session, and don't miss the chance to have a poem scribed for you at our Poems While You Wait event.

We also have workshops from Andrew Graves, James Trevelyan and Writing East Midlands' groundbreaking Beyond the Spectrum project. Children from invited schools in Mansfield are set to enjoy an extremely funny poetry performance from Paul Cookson, and there's also a film about Keats, a children's short film and poetry activity, and an exhibition featuring photography, poetry and prose.

And do look out for poetry activities at other libraries – check at your local library and on their Facebook pages for details about what's happening near you. We look forward to seeing you for a wonderful week of words.

## Booking information

Tickets for events can be booked [online](#), by phone via Ask Inspire on 01623 677 200, or in person at any of the festival libraries.

Tickets are non-refundable except where an event is cancelled. Changes to the programme will be advertised online.

Eventbrite is our ticket provider. [Read their accessibility statement on their website.](#)

## Access information

All our festival venues are accessible to wheelchair users. Find out more about access and facilities at your local library [online](#).

Please notify us on booking if you require a wheelchair space or have any specific access needs.

Email [ask.inspire@inspireculture.org.uk](mailto:ask.inspire@inspireculture.org.uk)

Phone 01623 677 200

## Events Programme

### Exhibition

#### Nuclear Bunker: A Creative Archive

Arnold Library

Wednesday 3 September – Saturday 11 October

Free

On a patch of suburban wasteland in Nottingham, a Cold War relic lies abandoned. This is Regional Seat of Government 3, a nuclear bunker from which a commissioner and a staff of 400 people would have governed whatever remained of the North Midlands after nuclear war.

This exhibition sees the bunker through the eyes of writers and experts who ventured through the bunker's steel doors to explore it in the summer of 2024.

Featuring poetry, fiction, artwork and photography, it wanders the windowless corridors, offices, dormitories and washrooms of a place from a terrible alternate reality.

The exhibition features poetry and prose by acclaimed writers: Zayneb Allak, Hannah Cooper-Smithson, Daniel Cordle, Anthony Cropper, Ailbhe Darcy, Jay Gao, Delphine Grass, Jonathan Hogg, Helena Hunter, Sarah Jackson, Phil Leonard, Jon McGregor, Andrew Taylor, and Maria Gil Ulldemolins. With photography by Martine Hamilton Knight and artwork by Ganna Bielcheva.

The book to accompany the exhibition *Bunker: Stories and Poems from a Nuclear Age* is edited by Daniel Cordle and Sarah Jackson, and is published by [Five Leaves Publications](#).

Special event

### **Poems while you wait!**

Eastwood Library

Thursday 25 September, 12:30pm - 3.30pm

Free. Just drop by.

Join poet Leanne Moden and friends at Eastwood Library for poems while you wait – written and personalised just for you! Whether you need a poem for a pal, or a ditty for your dad; a rhyme for your rabbit, or some doggerel for your dog, our poets have got you covered! Don't miss the chance to grab your free personalised poem. Written in 30 minutes – or your money back!

Eastwood Library's popular **Places of Welcome** session also takes place in the library on Thursday afternoon 2pm - 3.30pm.

Places of Welcome are free weekly sessions hosted by volunteers, providing a social meeting place for those who may live alone or feel isolated, are new to the area or have little opportunity to meet other people in their neighbourhood. It's somewhere everyone is welcome.

Part of the national Places of Welcome initiative, which helps to provide a network of community venues where anyone can go to find a friendly face for a cup of tea and a chat.

Headline event

**Desert Island Poems: Imtiaz Dharker in conversation with Clare Brown**

West Bridgford Library

Thursday 25 September, 6.30pm

£10

Booking advised. For adults (Under 18s to be accompanied by an adult)

Join us at West Bridgford Library for an evening of wonderful poetry, as acclaimed poet Imtiaz Dharker shares her desert island poems in conversation with the Library Director of Bromley House Library Clare Brown, before reading from her own award-winning work.

**About Imtiaz Dharker**

Imtiaz Dharker is a poet, artist and video film maker, awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry in 2014. She has been Poet in Residence at Cambridge University Library and worked on several projects across art forms in Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle and Hull as well as the Archives of St Paul's Cathedral. Her seven collections include *Over the Moon* and the latest *Shadow Reader*, with poems featured on radio, television, the London Underground and Mumbai buses. She has had eleven solo exhibitions of drawings and scripts and directs video films, many of them for non-

government organisations working in the area of shelter, education and health for women and children in India.

[imtiazharker.com](http://imtiazharker.com)

## **About Clare Brown**

Clare Brown's professional background is in arts management, initially working in theatre before becoming Director of the Poetry Book Society (PBS) in 1996. Running the PBS enabled her to develop her passion for reading poetry, particularly when organising the annual TS Eliot Prize readings and award ceremony. She has two novels published with Bloomsbury in the UK and one with Hachette in France, and freelanced for several years as a writer, consultant and workshop leader until joining Inspire Libraries' Culture team in 2016. She has been Library Director of Bromley House Library since September 2022.

[bromleyhouse.org](http://bromleyhouse.org)

Community event

## **Poetry Bingo! Hexameter**

Southwell

Thursday 25 September, 7.30pm

£4

Booking advised

For adults (Under 18s to be accompanied by an adult)

Hexameter - a group of poets from Sheffield, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire who meet at Southwell Library - invite you for a fun evening of Poetry Bingo live at the library! Poems will be drawn 'live' on the night from a selection that includes work by local poets and well-known old favourites. Should a local poet be present, and their poem drawn, they'll be invited to perform it live, and audience members will be given chances to read well-loved favourites.

Audience members booking before 7 September will be given the opportunity to suggest poems for the 'lottery' when booking their ticket.

Event for schools

**PAUL COOKSON**

Friday 26 September

Mansfield Central Library

This event is fully booked



Pupils from local Mansfield schools will join Paul Cookson for a memorable, lively and extremely funny poetry performance at Mansfield Central Library. Filled with poems from Paul's many poetry titles with plenty of interaction guaranteed. Warning: the show may contain ukuleles.

### **About Paul Cookson**

With over sixty titles to his name, Paul has sold well over a million books and his poems appear in over two hundred other books. He has visited thousands of schools and performed to hundreds of thousands of pupils and staff. He is the official Poet In Residence for the National Football Museum and the Poet Laureate for Slade. His poem 'Let no-one steal your dreams' has been adopted by numerous schools as their mission statement or school motto and become a Year Six leavers' poem.

Paul lives in Retford with his wife and too many ukuleles.

[paulcooksonpoet.co.uk](http://paulcooksonpoet.co.uk)

Performance

## **The Paper Crane Poets Showcase**

Beeston Library

Friday 26 September, 7.30pm

Tickets are free. Paper Crane Poets will hold a Pay What You Like collection after the event.

Booking advised

For adults 16+ (Under 18s to be accompanied by an adult)

Join Beeston Library's resident poetry collective for a fantastic evening of original spoken word at Beeston Library. This performance features a range of exciting local poets with something to say!

### **About Paper Crane Poets**

Paper Crane Poets is a local poetry collective, based at Beeston Library in Nottingham. It's a space for writers of all ages and abilities to create and connect, and stretch their poetry skills at events and festivals.

[leannemoden.com/Paper-Crane-Poets](http://leannemoden.com/Paper-Crane-Poets)

Family Small World Cinema

## **The Red Balloon (PG)**

Southwell Library

Saturday 27 September

Showings at 10am, 11.30am and 1pm

Free

Booking advised

For ages 5+ and their families - Children to be accompanied by an adult

Can a film be poetic? Be inspired by the adventures of Pascal, a young Parisian boy who discovers a red balloon one morning, and soon finds that it has a will of its own. Children and families can join us throughout the day to create their own poetry book inspired by their favourite film.

Special event

## **Virtual Reality Library**

Beeston Library

Saturday 27 September, 10am - 3pm

Free. Just drop by.

Suitable for ages 10+

The innovative Digital Spaces programme, in collaboration with Arts Council England, BFI, with National Lottery Funding, and The Space, will bring more exciting VR experiences to libraries this autumn - including immersive reality film *Monoliths* which features poetic monologues. Experience radiant

renderings of three northern UK environments – a moor, a city and a coast – with sweeping soundscapes and poetic monologues by Hannah Davies, Carmen Marcus and Asma Elbadawi. Sit back and enjoy, or choose from a selection of other family-friendly experiences.

For dates at Mansfield Central and Worksop Libraries visit

[inspireculture.org.uk/ VirtualRealityLibrary](https://inspireculture.org.uk/VirtualRealityLibrary)

## Workshop

### **Beyond The Spectrum: Poetry Workshop For Neurodivergent People**

Beeston Library

Saturday 27 September, 11am – 1pm

£3

Booking essential

For adults (16+)

Beyond the Spectrum is a writing project which celebrates autistic creativity and creates spaces for neurodivergent people to write together. In this one-off poetry workshop, with autistic professional writer Pippa Hennessy, you will write alongside like-minded people to respond to prompts and craft a poem reflecting your own experiences and creative process. Best of all, it'll be fun! You're welcome if you already write, or if you've never written anything creative before!

## About Beyond the Spectrum

Who says neurodivergent people can't be creative? Writing East Midlands' Beyond the Spectrum has been disproving misconceptions since 2021, through online workshops and live performances, building a community of supportive and highly creative writers in the process. This session will give you a taster of how the wider project works, and tell you how to join if you're interested in doing more writing.

*"I've enjoyed the chance to meet and chat with other autistic people who are interested in writing. I've loved being able to develop my skills with people who understand when I'm not able to present myself as neurotypical."* Beyond the Spectrum workshop participant

[beyondthespectrum.uk](https://beyondthespectrum.uk)

Workshops

## **Black British Ballet Poetry Workshops**

Workshop Library

Saturday 27 September, 11am – 12.30pm and 2 – 3.30pm

Free

Booking essential

For adults

Do you like to play with words or tell unheard stories? Whoever you are, take your skills back in time to explore the lives of Black dancers in British ballet. Taking parts of the Into the Light exhibition as our inspiration, which will be on show at Workshop Library, we'll go through some activities together before you get to explore your poetic and balletic ideas! Take part in either the morning or afternoon workshop. Led by writer and Director of Oxygen Arts Marsha Lowe, and poet and cultural historian Dr Panya Banjoko.

### **About Marsha Lowe**

Marsha Lowe is a writer of Guyanese/ Grenadian heritage, who is passionate about using creativity to address the challenges facing global majority communities, in the UK and abroad. She has written extensively about the issues facing Black creatives, in particular those working in mainstream institutions. As a Founding Director of Oxygen Arts, Marsha leads the Black British Ballet project, which documents and celebrates the history of Black dancers in British ballet. She also wrote a children's book for the project called *Onisere and the Ballet Queen*.

[oxygenarts.com](http://oxygenarts.com)

## About Dr Panya Banjoko

A UK based poet and cultural historian, Panya Banjoko's work features in numerous anthologies, exhibitions and museum collections. Her poetry collections, *Some Things* (2018) and *(Re)Framing the Archive* (2022) are published by Burning Eye Books. Her practice as poet and cultural historian often centres on her personal engagement with museums and galleries for almost three decades, and as the founder of Nottingham Black Archive.

[panyabanjoko.com](http://panyabanjoko.com)

About the exhibition

## **Black British Ballet: Into the Light**

Worksop Library

Saturday 30 August – Monday 29 September

Free

The Black British Ballet project celebrates the achievements of Black dancers in British ballet in this insightful new exhibition appearing at Worksop Library. The exhibition brings together archive photography, film, newspaper articles and posters alongside new video and audio interviews to trace the history of Black British ballet from the 1940s to the present. To find out more, and for details of other events from the Black British Ballet project, visit: [inspireculture.org.uk/BlackBritishBallet](http://inspireculture.org.uk/BlackBritishBallet)

The Black British Ballet project is brought to us by Libraries Connected and Oxygen Arts' Black British Ballet project. Funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Poetry Showcase

**Bad Ideas Club**

Mansfield Central Library

Saturday 27 September, 1.30pm

Free

Booking advised

For adults

Join us for an afternoon of poetry live at Mansfield Central Library with independent publishers Bad Betty Press, featuring Leanne Moden and Chris Lanyon and hosted by Jake Wild Hall.

Join us to celebrate the work created at Bad Ideas Club - a workshop series conducted over nine weeks in three Nottinghamshire libraries. For a chance to share your own your own poems on the open mic, please email [reading@inspireculture.org.uk](mailto:reading@inspireculture.org.uk) in advance. Priority will be given to workshop participants.

[badbettypress.com](http://badbettypress.com)

**About the poets**

**Leanne Moden** is a poet, theatre maker and educator, based in Nottingham. She's performed across the UK and Europe, and her second pamphlet of poetry *Get Over Yourself* was published with Burning Eye Books in 2020.



**Chris Lanyon** is a poet and mathematician. He has nearly a decade of experience running poetry workshops for people at all stages of their writing practice.

**Jake Wild Hall** is an award-winning poet and one half of Bad Betty Press. He has performed on BBC Radio and at festivals and literary events across the UK. He is a multiple slam champion and his work has been published in magazines, anthologies and online journals. He is the Author of two pamphlets, *Solomon's World* which was longlisted for the Saboteur Awards Best Pamphlet, and *Blank*. He has worked with partners including Penguin, Apple's and Snakes, Writing East Midlands, Derby Poetry Festival and Pearsons. He has also been a guest tutor for Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham University, King's College London, Lincoln University and others. His debut collection *Alanis Morissette* is due out in 2026 with Broken Sleep Books.

To find out more and to book visit [inspireculture.org.uk/BadIdeasClub](https://inspireculture.org.uk/BadIdeasClub)

## Workshops

### **Bad Ideas Club Workshops**

Free

Booking essential

For adults

Bad Ideas Club workshops will be taking place at three Nottinghamshire libraries in the run-up to the festival. All workshops take place 11am – 1pm:

Chris Lanyon - Mansfield Central Library, Saturday 9 August

Leanne Moden - Mansfield Central Library, Saturday 16 August

Casey Bailey - Mansfield Central Library, Saturday 23 August

Georgina Wilding - Newark Library, Wednesday 3 September

Chris Lanyon - Newark Library, Wednesday 10 September

Leanne Moden - Newark Library, Wednesday 17 September

Casey Bailey - Hucknall Library, Saturday 6 September

Leanne Moden - Hucknall Library, Saturday 13 September

Chris Lanyon - Hucknall Library, Saturday 20 September

To find out more and to book visit [inspireculture.org.uk/BadIdeasClub](https://inspireculture.org.uk/BadIdeasClub)

Workshop

## **Whiching and Pitching: Planning Your First Poetry Pamphlet**

West Bridgford Library

Sunday 28 September, 1 – 3pm

£8

Booking essential

For adults

Thinking about collecting your poems into a first pamphlet? Bring your idea and join this demystifying workshop run by Birmingham publisher The Emma Press. In considering what editors are looking for in a pamphlet, we will see what we can learn from some of the best recent publications, and get thinking about how to select and order your own poems.

The session will explore the range of poetry publishers and consider how to pitch, how to talk about your work, and how to know your audiences.

With plenty of time for questions and discussion on good practice and common pitfalls, you'll leave with key footholds for your next steps on your publication journey.

This workshop will be run by Emma Press editor James Trevelyan.

## About James Trevelyan

James Trevelyan is a writer and editor who grew up in the Midlands and now lives in Birmingham. His poems have been widely published and his debut pamphlet of poetry *DISSOLVE to: L.A.* was published in 2016.

Since 2023, he has been the Director of small Birmingham publisher the Emma Press, a Birmingham-based independent publisher specialising in poetry, short fiction, essays and children's books.

Their poetry books and pamphlets have won and been shortlisted for several awards, and in 2024 and 2025, the Emma Press was a Finalist for the British Book Awards Small Press of the Year (Midlands).

[james-trevelyan.com](http://james-trevelyan.com) [theemmapress.com](http://theemmapress.com)

Performance

### **The Social Model Writers**

Beeston Library or online

Monday 29 September, 12pm – 2pm

Booking essential

Join the Social Model Writers, a collective of disabled writers who perform together. They will be hosting a special lunchtime sharing hybrid session: featuring poems, stories and a Q&A.

All welcome to join, either in person or online. If you identify as a Social Model Writer and would like the chance to share a short poem of three minutes or less, please email [reading@inspireculture.org.uk](mailto:reading@inspireculture.org.uk)

Performance

**Five Leaves New Poetry Launch: Tony Challis and Tara Singh**

Beeston Library

Monday 29 September, 7.30pm

£4

Booking advised

For adults 16+ (Under 18s to be accompanied by an adult)

Five Leaves New Poetry celebrates two years of publishing regional poets by launching Tony Challis's and Tara Singh's new pamphlets. Tony and Tara will be joined by other poets published earlier in the Five Leaves New Poetry series.

**About the poets**

**Tony Challis** has been writing poetry since the 1980s. For some years he facilitated an LGBT+ writers' group at Nottingham Writers' Studio, and in 2018 he was Nottingham Writers' Studio Poet of the Year. He has been published in a range of regional anthologies, and his prose has appeared in *Late Outbursts* (2014) and *Desire, Love, Identity* (2019).

He is Chair of Nottingham Poetry Society, and enjoys performing his work at spoken word events.

**Tara Singh** (they/them) was born in Nairobi and moved to Nottingham as a child. Tara is a queer neurodivergent poet and occasional facilitator. Their work explores the Indian diasporic experience, queerness, gender identity, intergenerational trauma, debilitating mental illness and disability.

<http://www.fiveleaves.co.uk>

[fiveleavesbookshop.co.uk](http://fiveleavesbookshop.co.uk)

Workshop

### **Folklore and Poetry**

Mansfield Central Library

Tuesday 30 September, 11am – 1pm

£5

Booking essential

For adults

Nottinghamshire is rich in legends and folklore. Stories flow below the surface through endless sandstone catacombs and the coal dust choked holes of the defunct mining industry. Fingers pull on the bowstrings of time, arrows pointing toward stocking frame destructors and luddite rebels, and

the feigned insanity of Gotham fools. They trace the expensive finery of interwoven lace – a pretty pattern legacy of worker sweat and toil.

Join writer Andrew Graves as he explores these hidden histories and strange tales in an interactive and informative poetry workshop, aimed at giving you the opportunity to create your own work based on these myths and folkloric traditions.

Adults of all ages, abilities and levels welcome.

### **About Andrew Graves**

Andrew Graves has appeared on TV and radio, including BBC Radio 6 Music's Cerys Mathews Show, BBC Inside Out and the documentary Evidently John Cooper Clarke. His third collection *Not Dancing with Ingrid Pitt* was published by Burning Eye Books in 2021. He has performed with the likes of Sleaford Mods, John Hegley and Henry Normal and has been commissioned by the National Portrait Gallery, BBC Radio 4, Edinburgh International Literature Festival and National Poetry Day.

**Film screening**

**BRIGHT STAR (PG)**

**Southwell Library**

**Thursday 2 October, 2pm**

**£3**

**Booking advised**

Join us on National Poetry Day for a special screening of *Bright Star* at Southwell Library. Written and directed by Oscar winner Jane Campion (*The Piano*), *Bright Star* tells the story of the romance between 19th century romantic poet John Keats and Fanny Brawne, who together rode a wave of romantic obsession that deepened as their troubles mounted.

*“Campion treats Keats’s talent as a given ... She weaves his poetry into the drama, calling for it to be spoken naturally and not at all awkwardly by her characters. It’s not easy to follow verse this way, but it certainly inspires the viewer to head straight from the cinema to the bookshop.”* **Time Out**



Workshop

**Chasing Sunlight: Poems of Play, Memory, and Growing Up With  
Romalyn Ante**

West Bridgford Library

Thursday 2 October, 2 – 3.30pm

£8

Booking essential

For adults

The theme for this year's National Poetry Day is 'play'. Celebrate by joining award-winning poet Romalyn Ante for this generative workshop, where you'll journey through the playful echoes of childhood— those moments filled with laughter, curiosity, and boundless imagination. Together, we'll uncover how time transforms these memories, revealing new meanings beneath the surface.

Through creative prompts, readings, and shared reflection, you'll craft poems that capture the joy, challenges, and bittersweetness of growing up and looking back with fresh eyes.

Headline Event

## **Romalyn Ante**

Thursday 2 October, 6.30pm

West Bridgford Library

£8

Booking advised

For adults (Under 18s to be accompanied by an adult)

Join Romalyn Ante, nurse and award-winning poet, as she reads from her sparkling new collection *AGIMAT*, which moves between the Philippines and Wolverhampton, myth and the grind of the present-day NHS. These are poems of strength and solace; they question what it means to fight, and what it takes to heal.

### **About Romalyn Ante**

Romalyn Ante FRSL is an award-winning Filipino-British poet, author, and editor. Romalyn was born and bred in Lipa, Philippines and migrated to the UK when she was sixteen. Her debut collection, *Antiemetic for Homesickness* (Chatto, 2020), was shortlisted for the Jhalak Prize and longlisted for the Dylan Thomas Prize. Her second collection, *AGIMAT* (Chatto, 2024), was awarded the Arthur Welton Award, and was a Poetry Book Society Recommendation and The Observer Poetry Book of the Month. She was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 2023. The Fellowship is a lifetime honour that includes 'the best writers in or from the UK today'. She currently sits on the editorial board for Poetry London.

[romalynante.com](http://romalynante.com)

## Poetry book recommendations

### Festival Fifteen

Discover this year's Festival Fifteen – our carefully curated selection of poetry titles that are available for you to borrow for free from Inspire Libraries. You're sure to find something to whet your appetite in our collection of new, contemporary and prize-winning poets, alongside some old favourites. Explore our Festival Fifteen:

[inspireculture.org.uk/FestivalFifteen](https://inspireculture.org.uk/FestivalFifteen)

### eLibrary Poetry Special

Celebrate from home with our curated collection of poetry eBooks and eAudio. Visit BorrowBox to browse, reserve and borrow:

[inspireculture.org.uk/PoetryLibrary](https://inspireculture.org.uk/PoetryLibrary)

### Your Next Good Read For Children

As a special edition for this year's festival, we're excited to share a selection of poetry titles for children, featured as part of our *Your Next Good Read* series. Visit: [inspireculture.org.uk/YourNextGoodRead](https://inspireculture.org.uk/YourNextGoodRead)