

“STOKE-IN-PRINT”

**A literary-historical look at the
Potteries from its Victorian heyday to
the post-industrial present**



A short public-access course led by
Dr Catherine Burgass at Keele University
(February-April 2017)



COURSE INFORMATION

Course overview: This course explores literary representations of the Potteries from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. We will look at fiction, poetry and some journalistic pieces to see how Stoke has been presented, attacked or defended by authors over the period. We will discuss the work of Stoke-born writers such as Arnold Bennett, John Wain and Arthur Berry, along with literary 'tourists' – from Dickens to Joanna Trollope, examining the exchanges between these two groups. Lastly, we will consider the development of Stoke's literary heritage by contemporary writers and its contribution to public perception of the city today.

The course will be of interest to local culture vultures, as well as avid readers and writers who wish to explore the region's literary traditions in greater depth. Teachers of English may also like to learn more about Stoke's literary history in order to inform and inspire their pupils.



Course leader: Catherine Burgass is a regional literature specialist with twenty years' experience as a university lecturer (Leicester, Liverpool and Staffordshire) and international publications. She has given numerous academic papers and public talks on local literary figures such as Arnold Bennett and Arthur Berry at festivals, museums and galleries. Catherine is keen to spread the word that Stoke's literary heritage includes diverse other writers and to gain fresh perspectives on that writing with a new group of readers!

Meeting time and location: Wednesdays 6-8pm, 1st Feb to 5th April 2017 at Keele University (room confirmed nearer the time).

Cost: Just £80 for all ten two-hour sessions, handouts, library access, tea/coffee, and biscuits. Parking is free at Keele after 5pm.

How to register: Return the form on the back of this leaflet. See also: <http://www.keele.ac.uk/hums/shortcoursesandcontinuingeducation/>

RESOURCES

Handouts: Tellingly, not all the course texts are in print – where this is an issue resources will be provided. An information sheet with questions and suggestions will be also be provided prior to each session.

Keele Library: Registered students will have access to Keele University Library, including borrowing rights and access to archives, including holdings in Charles Tomlinson, Arnold Bennett, and local history.



COURSE PROGRAMME

Week 1 (1 Feb)	EARLY VICTORIAN VIEWS – Charles Dickens, ‘A Plated Article’ (1852). This little-known piece of imaginative journalism pays homage to Stoke and the Spode works.
Week 2 (8 Feb)	LATER VICTORIANS – George Moore, <i>A Mummer’s Wife</i> (1885). Moore’s novel, a forerunner of English naturalism, was considered shocking in its day. Its descriptions of the heroine’s home town were influential on Arnold Bennett – but why did Moore (an Anglo-Irish writer) pick Hanley?
Week 3 (15 Feb)	ROMANCING THE POTTERIES – Arnold Bennett, <i>Anna of the Five Towns</i> (1902). Bennett fled ‘the district’ aged 21. This ‘Five Towns’ novel presents the Potteries both as sublime industrial landscape and emotional prison.
Week 4 (22 Feb)	DEFENDING THE POTTERIES – Bennett, ‘The Death of Simon Fuge’ (1907); ‘The People of the Potteries’ (1911). Bennett explains the place and its people, in a short story and non-fiction piece, both designed to correct the ignorance of outsiders.
Week 5 (1 Mar)	SOCIAL COMMENTARY – J.B. Priestley, <i>English Journey</i> (1934) and George Orwell, <i>The Road to Wigan Pier</i> (1937). Priestley and Orwell were sympathetic to the working people of the Potteries, but the commentaries of these two literary tourists have contributed to the city’s lingering reputation as a dirty industrial backwater.
Week 6 (8 Mar)	‘ANGRY YOUNG MEN’ AND THE PROVINCIAL NOVEL – John Wain, <i>The Contenders</i> (1958). Wain’s third novel is also less than complimentary about ‘the town I mustn’t name’, but is the metropolis really any better?
Week 7 (15 Mar)	THE LOST LITERATURE OF STOKE – John Toft, <i>The Bargees</i> (1969) and Paul Breeze, <i>While My Guitar Gently Weeps</i> (1979). Why is it that many Stoke-set fictions are now forgotten? We will assess the literary merits of such works and discuss the reasons they may languish out of print.
Week 8 (22 Mar)	‘FIRST IN FEELING’, POETIC RESPONSES TO STOKE – selection from Charles Tomlinson, the ‘Stoke Poems’, Arthur Berry, <i>Dandelions</i> (1993), Jeffrey Wainwright, <i>What Must Happen</i> (2016). Handout provided. We will investigate the relationship between the local industrial landscape and the poetic imagination.
Week 9 (29 Mar)	STOKE-BASED FANTASY – Philip Emery, <i>Necromantra</i> (2015). We will consider the ways in which Stoke – past and present – lends itself to the popular fantasy genre.
Week 10 (5 April)	RETURN TO GRITTY REALISM – Lisa Blower, <i>Sitting Ducks</i> (2016). This political novel about a working-class family bucks contemporary publishing trends. Just how hard is it to get a Stoke-set novel published today?

Image of postcard ‘O Beautiful My Country’ from www.thepotteries.org

REGISTRATION SHEET

How to enroll:

You can post the form below with a cheque for £80.00 payable to Keele University to:

Ms Tracy Di-Piazza
School of Humanities
Keele University
Staffordshire
ST5 5BG

Or you can make a telephone payment by debit or credit card by calling Lisa Bridge on 01782 734323. Please say that this is for the **Stoke-in-Print Adult Education Course**.

Informal enquiries are welcome: [cбургass@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cburgass@yahoo.co.uk)

Name	
Address	
Telephone Number	
Email Address	