

# Trust Trail: Literary York

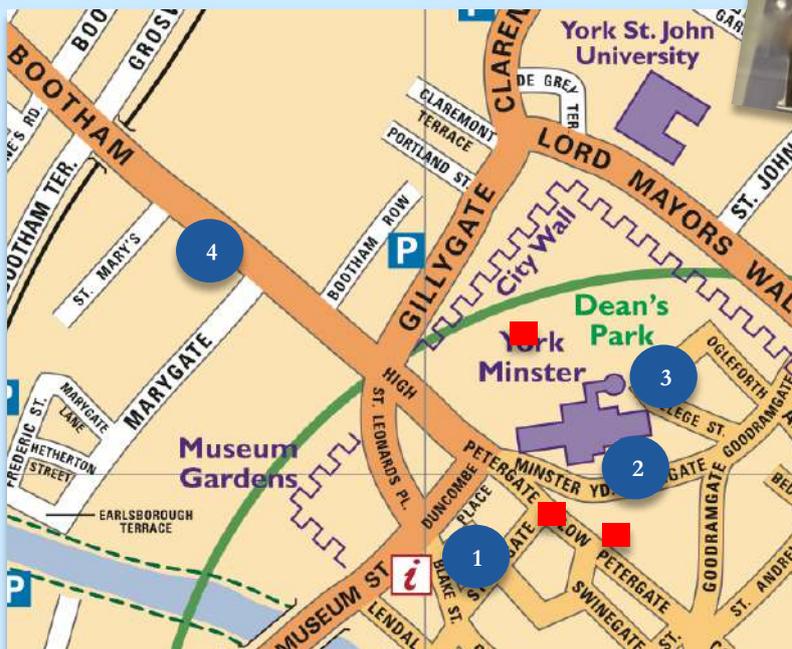
From the Brontë sisters, to Bram Stoker and Ted Hughes, Yorkshire has long been associated with celebrated authors who have drawn inspiration from the desolate beauty of its rugged moors and ruined abbeys. The city of York itself has a rich literary history, and has been known for producing books since the eight century when famous scholar Alcuin's internationally renowned collection was destroyed by Viking invaders. Daniel Defoe and Charles Dickens were regular visitors, with the latter referencing the Minster in *Nicholas Nickleby*.

And, of course, Harry Potter fans couldn't visit York without a trip to 'The Shop That Must Not Be Named' on the Shambles.

This whistle-stop tour of literary York lasts between 30-60 minutes and covers two-thirds of a mile. Starting on Stonegate, you'll pass by the Minster, through Dean's Park and finish on the grand terraced-lined streets of Bootham. On the way you'll also go by some of York's specialist bookshops, a grand library, and other literary landmarks.



## Map



## Key

Plaques



Points of interest



# Stop 1: Laurence Sterne (1713 – 1768)

## *No. 35 Stonegate*

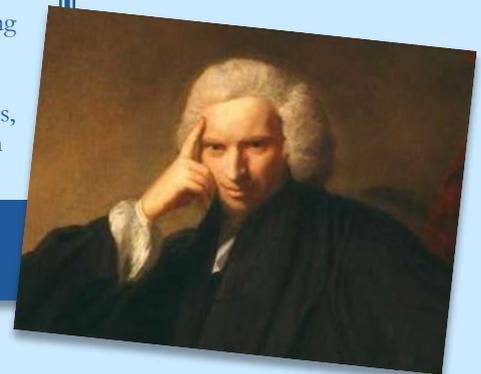
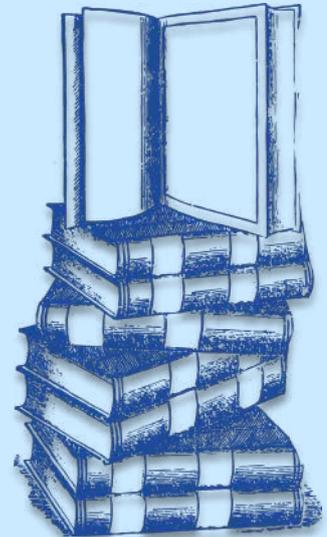
No. 35 Stonegate marks the site of John Hinxman's bookshop, the location from which Laurence Sterne's game-changing novel *Tristram Shandy* was first published in 1759. Instantly exploding onto the literary scene, this comic masterpiece redefined the novel form in English and continues to entertain and influence new generations of readers and novelists.

Although born in Ireland, Sterne's career was shaped in York. He was vicar of Sutton-on-the-Forest from 1738 to 1758. During this time, he published two sermons and an incendiary pamphlet which the Archbishop [of York?] had destroyed. These publications demonstrated Sterne's irrepressible sense of humour and eye for the absurd. It was while living at Sutton that Sterne began writing the novel that was to bring him international and lasting acclaim: *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*.

*Tristram Shandy* made Sterne a celebrity overnight and London society was charmed and fascinated by the novel. The term "Shandeism" becoming common currency on the streets and in the coffeehouses, and there was even a recipe for *Tristram Shandy* soup!

*Tristram Shandy* is by turns, irreverent, bawdy and profound - pushing the bounds of genre literary form with its unheard-of narrative devices, jumping from inane conversational cul-de-sacs to profound panoramic vistas.

'Nothing odd will do long,' wrote Samuel Johnson in 1776. Here, it appears, the famous 18th century critic was wrong: *Tristram Shandy* has never been out of print and is translated into languages all over the world.



Carry on straight ahead towards the Minster

*On your way...*

### LOOK UP

### Statue of Minerva, the Roman Goddess of Wisdom

*Corner of High Petergate and Minster Gates*

Leaning on a pile of books, accompanied by a wise owl and theatrical mask, the statue of Minerva was built in 1801 to mark the site of a former bookshop owned by John Foster from 1580 to 1607. The bookshop was also the meeting place of one of Britain's earliest book clubs.

The statue was created by Francis Wolstenholme, a bookseller in Minster Gates from 1820-1855 who erected the statue in the eaves of his shop. Wolstenholme also hosted the York Book Club, a literary society which flourished in the early nineteenth century.



*On your way...*



## LOOK RIGHT Minster Gate Bookshop *Minster Gates*

Minster Gates formed the entrance to the medieval precinct of York Minster, and is a street which has been associated with books and bookselling since 1580. The area was even formerly known as Bookland Lane, and later Bookbinder's Alley when – with the advent of the popular printing press – Minster Gates and neighbouring Stonegate were bustling centres of printing and bookselling. Today, Minster Gates Bookshop is home to an extensive collection of antiquarian and second-hand books, housed over five floors of a Georgian townhouse; the literary connection lives on!

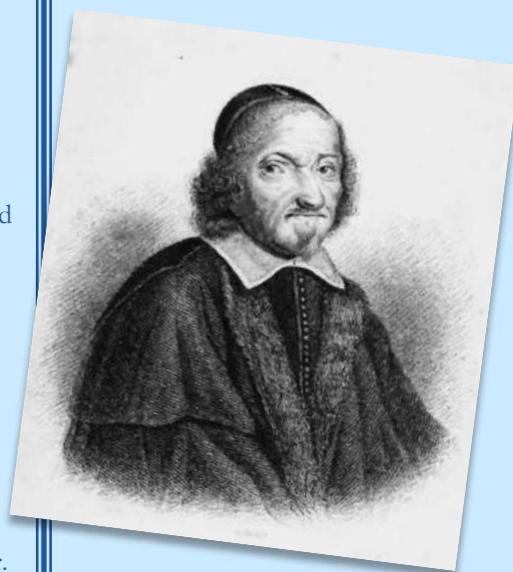
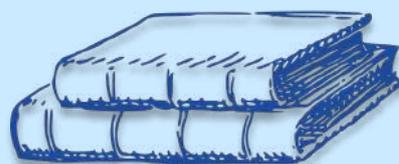
## Stop 2: Miles Coverdale (1488 – 1569) *By the entrance to the York Minster Shop*

Miles Coverdale was an important influential figure during the English Reformation as a Bible translator, writer and preacher of the Protestant cause. Coverdale lived a colourful and in many ways tragic life, rising to become Bishop of Exeter, arrested by order of Mary I, and forced into exile on the continent on three separate occasions.

As an Augustinian friar, Coverdale met Robert Barnes, who was later arrested and burned at the stake as a heretic for preaching Lutheran views. He helped Barnes with his defence and acted as his secretary during the trial. Coverdale thereafter left for Antwerp, as all reformist views at the time were regarded as heretical in England. Here, assisted in part by William Tyndale in his translation of the Bible into English, Miles worked secretly and produced the first complete English Bible in print, known as the Coverdale Bible (1535), which he dedicated to King Henry VIII.

Following his 'Break with Rome', Henry VIII proposed a Great Bible and Coverdale was sent to France to superintend its printing. Despite a Papal Edict to stop such a publication, Coverdale managed to rescue most of the work and have it printed in London in 1539.

Coverdale returned to England and in 1548 was welcomed at court, becoming royal chaplain, and a year later, Bishop of Exeter. After being put under house arrest by Catholic Queen Mary I, he fled to Copenhagen, before returning in 1559 to Protestant Elizabethan England.



Head onto Minster Yard and follow  
around the Minster

## Stop 3: Elizabeth Montagu (1718 – 1800)

### *Treasurer's House, Minster Yard*

Elizabeth Montagu lived at Treasurer's House in York in her early childhood and would go on to become a leading society hostess in London, using her privileged social position to advance the status of women.

Elizabeth was one of nine surviving children, and one of two girls who would grow up to achieve literary notoriety. Her other sister, Sarah Scott, wrote nine books, and was a social reformer, historian and translator.

While their brothers were sent away to school, Elizabeth and Sarah received no formal education. Their father did, however, encourage debate and intellectual argument in the home.

The Blue Stockings Society was a women's social and educational movement emphasising education and mutual co-operation, loosely lead by Elizabeth who was informally referred to as the "Queen of the Blues". It was a response to the frustrations of high-society women who felt that despite acting the hostess in their luxurious London homes, social events focused too much on card-playing, alcohol and gossip and that men and women were effectively segregated once 'serious' discussion started: with women excluded.

As an alternative, these women looked to the model of the French *soirée*, where philosophers rubbed shoulders with poets and scientists and the intellect of women was respected. The Society challenged barriers to women publishing in their own name, and young or inexperienced writers and artists also found rich patrons and mentors amongst the Bluestocking men and women. Elizabeth herself contributed published critiques of society, and her wealth and superior London address put her at the heart of the fashionable social and intellectual gatherings taking place at the time.

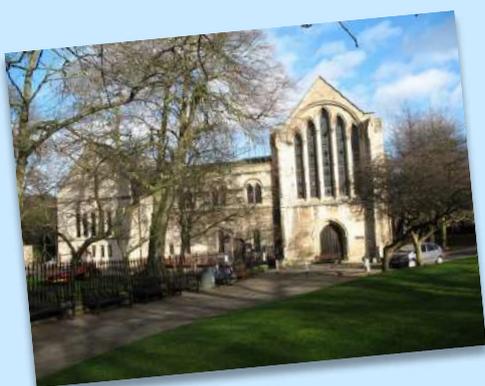
The legacy of the Bluestockings is present in the works of the most notable authors of the 19th century, such as Elizabeth Gaskell, Anne Brontë and Jane Austen.



## Head through Dean's Park

*On your way...*

**LOOK RIGHT**  
**York Minster Library**  
*Dean's Park*



York Minster Library and Archives is the largest cathedral library in the country with just over 90,000 volumes and is home to a manuscript collection spanning 1,000 years. The building is also known as The Old Palace, having previously formed part of the chapel of the Archbishop of York in the 13th century. As well as cathedral records dating back to the 12th century, notable items in the collections include the Wicked Bible – the famous reprint of the King James Bible published in 1631 that accidentally omitted the word “not” from the 10 Commandments. There are also records that Laurence Sterne borrowed multiple books from the library.

Head on Duncombe Place towards  
York Art Gallery

## Stop 4: W. H. Auden (1907 – 1973)

*54 Bootham*



Wystan Hugh Auden is one of the most popular and influential poets of the 20th century. Born in 54 Bootham, Auden did not stay in Yorkshire for very long, swapping York for New York where he spent the majority of his adult life. His most popular and well-known poems including *Musée des Beaux Arts* and *Funeral Blues*, the latter experiencing a resurgence of popularity following the tear-jerking rendition in 1994 British romantic comedy film *Four Weddings and a Funeral*.

Expected to become a mining engineer, Auden was attracted by literature from an early age and was particularly influenced by Old Norse sagas and Icelandic legends. While studying English in Oxford, his first collection of poetry, simply titled *Poems*, was published in 1930 and established him as a leading voice of his generation.

Auden's verse form is varied and noted for its stylistic and technical achievement in drawing together popular culture, vernacular speech, a range of artistic and literary forms, as well as social, political and scientific sources. In addition to poetry, Auden wrote plays, opera librettos and essays. He also worked on scripts for documentary films, with the General Post Office's *Night Mail* (1936) being one of his best known.

Auden's work continues to be widely read and still today inspires and influences poets across the world.

### *End of Trail*

We hope you enjoyed it and learned a lot.  
Click the link below to view our other  
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