

## Wokingham Literary Society

### Programme for 2024/2025 Season

**19th September 2024**

***Writers on The Grand Tour*** – Talk by: **Douglas Irvine**

In the Eighteenth century it became fashionable for wealthy young Englishmen to travel to the Continent to acquire culture and good manners. Their journeys became known as The Grand Tour. This talk will briefly describe the places and people they visited and will discuss several writers who recorded their views of the Tour and their fellow travellers.

**17th October 2024**

***Local links to Jane Austen*** – Talk by: **Joy Pibworth**

(Guest Speaker)

Joy Pibworth has been a Janeite since reading the first paragraph of *Pride and Prejudice* in Third Year at school and a member of the Jane Austen Society almost as long. The talk will reveal the many and varied links which connected Jane Austen and her family to people and places in the Thames Valley; links between Jane's life in her beloved Hampshire and what Mrs Austen referred to as "the broad river, the rich valleys and the noble hills (of the Thames Valley)...at her native home near Henley on Thames".

**21st November 2024**

***A miscellany of favourites – "Becky Sharp", Barbara Pym, Joanne Harris***

Talk by: **Christopher Carter, Eileen Davis and Pat Vokes**

**Becky Sharp** (in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*) is a heroine or mischief maker who defies the previous feminine archetype in literature and engages our sympathy despite her disreputable behaviour.

**Barbara Pym** was a post-war novelist who had an unexpected renaissance in 1977. She was a shrewd observer of the middle class, described by the historian A L Rowse as "the Jane Austen de nos jours".

**Joanne Harris** is a prolific and popular author whose books have been described by The Guardian as "astringent, highly organised and often subtly fantastic mainstream novels".

**5th December 2024 – Christmas Special: Christmas readings and a quiz**

Presented by: **Rosemary Hughes & Chris Davies.**

**2025**

**16th January 2025 – *Not Just Angry Young Men: novels of the late 50s/early 60s***

Presented by: **Chris Davies, Christine Harrington, Doug Irvine.**

After the austerity of war and the prolonged recovery following it, the late 1950s and early 1960s was a period of changing social attitudes which were reflected in popular plays and novels. Members recall some representative novels of that time.

Chris Davies will show how literature reflected the national mood and introduce *Lucky Jim* by Kingsley Amis, the quintessential campus novel.

Christine Harrington will recall *Room at the Top* by John Braine and consider the attitudes of that era and whether the novel's Joe Lampton really was an 'angry young man'.

Doug Irvine will discuss whether *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* by Alan Sillitoe and *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* by Angus Wilson (with their different portrayals of working class life) reflect the life and times of the UK in the 1950s, and if not, why not.

**20th February 2025 – *Make it New: TS Eliot, Ezra Pound and Modernism.***

Talk by: **Martin Hughes**

Ezra Pound and Tom Eliot were Americans who decided to pursue their careers in Europe. Both were dedicated to finding ways of making new the ideas, sentiments and passions that poetry and art had conveyed to earlier generations. What went wrong – or right?

**13th March 2025 – *Why the caged bird sings: Maya Angelou's memoirs and poetry.***

Presented by: **Pat Vokes & Angela Wade.**

Maya Angelou, a renowned American poet, memoirist, and civil rights activist, produced a significant body of work that explores themes of identity, trauma, resilience, and liberation. Her work includes both autobiographical novels as well as poetry, which have made a profound impact on literature, particularly in the context of African American experiences.

**3rd April 2025 – *The Poetry of the Sea: taming the untameable.***

Talk by: **Chris Carter**

The sea is a dominant force in world literature, and the rhythms of verse ideally mirror its unpredictable and varied moods. Christopher Carter reviews themes and examples from Homer to the present day.

**15th May 2025 – *Polar writings: the enjoyment and endurance of exploration.***

Talk by: **John Andrew.**

*(This will follow the Annual General Meeting)*

The human race has always been excited by exploration and extremes. Our planetary poles have been an attraction for over 100 years. John will use the writings of a few Polar explorers and adventurers to spell out the thrills and dangers they enjoyed and endured on their journeys to these desolate places.