

# Manchester City of Literature

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

Journée Internationale  
De La Langue Maternelle

مادري زبان کا عالمی دن

國際母語日

Día  
Internacional  
De La Lengua  
Materna

اليوم الدولي للغة الأم

আন্তর্জাতিক  
মাতৃভাষা  
দিবস

міжнародний  
день рідної мови

# International Mother Language Day 2025



#MCRIMLD25  
17th Feb – 5th Mar 2025

# Welcome to International Mother Language Day 2025!

There are around 200 languages spoken in Manchester making it the most languages in the densest population in the UK, so this is a brilliant day to celebrate with Greater Manchester communities.

The events around Greater Manchester involve libraries, cultural venues, community groups, universities, schools, museums, language centres, poets, writers, singers, dancers and translators, through a mix of interactive activity, creativity and reflection.

List of featured languages:

<b>Arabic</b>	<b>Polish</b>
<b>Bengali</b>	<b>Russian</b>
<b>Estonian</b>	<b>Shona</b>
<b>French</b>	<b>Spanish</b>
<b>Frisian</b>	<b>Swedish</b>
<b>German</b>	<b>Turkish</b>
<b>Greek</b>	<b>Ukrainian</b>
<b>Icelandic</b>	<b>Urdu</b>
<b>Mandarin</b>	

“Manchester is a city of languages, with around 200 being spoken at any one time. International Mother Language Day is such a testament to the city’s commitment to language diversity and to the UNESCO City of Literature values. Join in with the events taking place in cultural venues this month and celebrate languages!”

– Councillor Garry Bridges



**Councillor Garry Bridges,**  
Deputy Leader,  
Manchester  
City Council

# Launch of the new Manchester Multilingual City Poets

## Launch new Multilingual City Poets

Monday 17th February  
From 5:30pm – 7pm  
Manchester Poetry Library

Join the Manchester City of Literature team to mark the completion of Anjum Malik, Ali Al-Jamri, and Jova Bagioli Reyes’ tenure as the city’s first Multilingual City Poets, and celebrate the start of a new journey with two freshly appointed successors: Charlotte Shevchenko-Knight and Nóra Blascsó. Alongside readings and film screenings from all poets, Charlotte and Nora will facilitate a conversation together with Anjum, Ali and Jova, exploring themes of multilingual writing, language, translation and poetry.



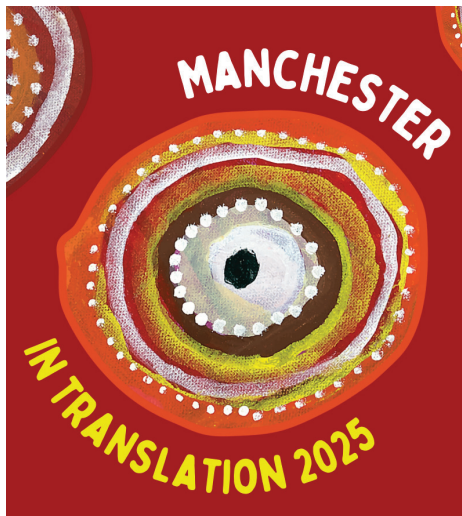


## Events

### The Power of Language

Wednesday 19th February  
From 12:30pm – 2pm  
Contact Theatre

Hear from researchers, poets and collaborators about how they came together in the aftermath of the pandemic to create a book capturing local communities' experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic. Featuring readings, poetry and discussion join us for a multilingual afternoon platforming creative approaches and the use of languages to convey emotion and feeling.



### Manchester in Translation

Wednesday 19th February  
From 5:30pm – 7:30pm  
Club Academy, University of  
Manchester Students' Union,  
Oxford Road

In partnership with the University of Manchester's Department of Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies and Centre for Translation and Intercultural Studies, Comma Press is delighted to present Manchester in Translation 2025. Aimed at anyone who is interested in or curious about literary translation, this event will comprise a series of short talks on literary translation, followed by two translation workshops to celebrate International Mother Language Day.

This year, the event will focus on Arabic. One workshop will involve participants translating an Arabic text into English or another language of their choice. This is open to Arabic speakers as well as non-Arabic speakers, and a transliteration will be provided. The other workshop will focus on translating an English poem into Arabic, best suited to those comfortable writing in Arabic. Based on their language skills and interests, participants can choose which workshop to attend.

Whether you speak Arabic or not, we invite you to join us in exploring and celebrating literary translation and the possibilities it creates.

### Community and Care Poetry night

Thursday 20th February  
From 6:30pm  
Castlefield Viaduct

Join us for Fuse's first ever open mic/poetry night, celebrating community, care and culture at the Castlefield Viaduct. Positioned around International Mother Language Day, we will be featuring two incredible headliners and six other talented performers to share original works.

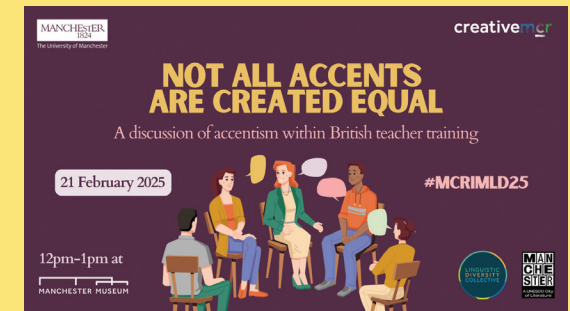
Whether you're new to poetry nights, or a regular presence across open mics in Manchester, we hope for this event to be an evening of solidarity and inspiration.

Everyone is welcome to Fuse's events, but we actively encourage Black, Asian, and Global Majority creatives to join us and be a part of Fuse's diverse community.

Fuse presents:

**Community & Care:  
a Fuse poetry night**  
—→ 20th Feb  
6pm —→ 9pm

Castlefield Viaduct, Greater Manchester, M3 4L  
@fusemanchester



### Not All Accents are Created Equal

Friday 21st February  
From 12pm – 1pm  
Manchester Museum

Join the Linguistic Diversity Collective for a talk by Dr Alex Baratta on accent bias to mark International Mother Language Day 2025.

A study involving 41 British teachers, most of whom were trainees at the time, was conducted to discover the role that accent plays in the construction of a teacher identity. The results show that it was largely Northern/Midlands accents that were disfavoured, with specific phonological advice given by mentors. For some teachers this was accepted, but for others it created a linguistic tug of war between themselves and their mentor. The results suggest that more 'general' varieties of regional accents are preferred, as a means to create a more 'professional' linguistic identity.

This talk is presented in partnership with Creative Manchester and Manchester Museum, and is part of the Manchester City of Literature International Mother Language Day celebrations.

## For Families

### Family Looking for Languages Trail

Friday 21st February  
1pm – 4pm  
Manchester Museum

The Linguistic Diversity Collective invites you to join us for some half-term fun to celebrate International Mother Language Day at Manchester Museum. Grab your activity sheet and follow the language-themed trail around the museum's enchanting collections, thinking about your own language(s) along the way.

Places are free to reserve, with several arrival time-slots to choose from. Simply book one place per family.

This free, family-friendly activity is proudly presented in partnership with Creative Manchester and Manchester Museum, and is part of the Manchester City of Literature International Mother Language Day celebrations.

### Friday at Manchester Central Library

Friday 21st February  
1pm – 4pm

Join us in Central Library for an afternoon to celebrate the language and culture of our local communities. This is the chance to try tasters, see traditional performances and have a go at traditional crafts. The event will be a celebration of the diverse range of languages in our city. Everyone welcome.

Free entry, just drop in! Please make a donation to support our Library Live cultural programme at one of our cash or contactless donation boxes or online.

### Library Lab: IMLD special

Friday 21st February  
3pm  
Z-arts

Featuring Godfrey Pambalipe, a storyteller and musician with extensive experience in African storytelling through dance, drumming, and songs.

#### Workshops:

Godfrey will lead two interactive storytelling workshops for families.

These sessions will involve:

- Creating drum circle rhythms inspired by different languages.
- Singing songs celebrating the diverse languages in our community.
- Sharing South African stories and traditional songs.

**Workshop 1: 3pm – 3:45pm**

**Workshop 2: 4pm – 4:45pm**

Between the workshops, we will screen a special Mother Language Day episode of Z-Pod on the Library TV, created by our Podcast Club.

### Funday at North City Library

Saturday 22nd February  
11am – 1pm

Welcome friends and join us for a fabulous fun packed afternoon as we dance, draw, laugh, craft, listen and sing our way through all the wonderful languages we can speak with our friends and family.

### Spanish Storytime

Saturday 22nd February  
12pm – 1pm  
Instituto Cervantes

The Instituto Cervantes Manchester celebrates International Mother Language Day with a storytelling session as part of its ongoing series promoting children's reading.

In this session, Magaly Flores will read *Samara y la gran pregunta*, written by Luma Wildish and Fran Pintadera, in Spanish. Samara is a curious girl who embarks on a journey to discover what life is truly about. Along the way, she meets a farmer, a shepherd, and a blacksmith, each of whom shares their unique perspective on life.

*Samara y la gran pregunta* is more than just a story – it's an emotional adventure that invites children and families to reflect, engage, and participate in the narrative.



### Funday at Forum Library

Saturday 22nd February  
2pm – 4pm

We will be celebrating International Mother Language Day at Forum Library, with an afternoon of workshops, crafts and performance for all ages.

### Funday at Longsight Library

Saturday 22nd February  
2pm – 4pm

Henna Fusionz and Cherish Designs present Truck Art and Kite Making. Explore traditional patterns while incorporating meaningful words and phrases from their mother languages. A vibrant exploration of art and communication and let's create something beautiful together!

Chinese Calligraphy and Crafts with Dragons Voice, and lots more with our friends Anamika Cultural Group and more.



## Events

### Mother Tongues Film Screening

Friday 21st February  
5pm – 6:30pm  
The Portico Library

A screening of Mat Lingard's Mother Tongues film about Chinese community in Manchester from 1986 with the North West Film Archive.

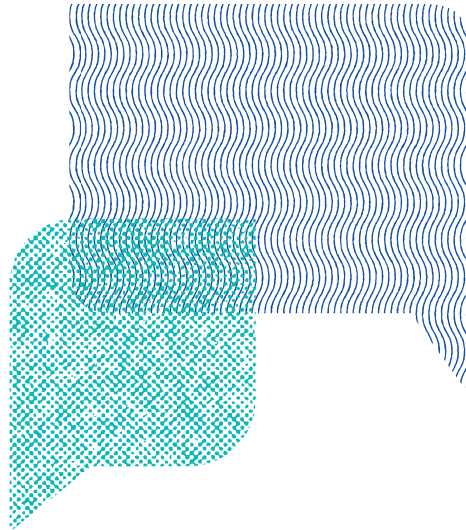
### Multilingual Open Mic

Friday 21st February  
6pm – 8pm  
Manchester Poetry Library

Manchester Poetry Library is delighted to be hosting its third multilingual open mic night to celebrate International Mother Language Day. We welcome readings in any language.

You can choose to read your own poems or a poem by a well-known poet (or not so well-known). If you're still unsure, please just turn up and you can decide whether you want to read on the night. You might want to choose something spontaneously from our collection, or just stay and listen.

This year, we will also be joined by special guests to celebrate the various multilingual projects and partnerships that the Poetry Library has been fortunate enough to be involved with. Places to read will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Refreshments will be provided.



### Undertow: The Future is Multilingual

Saturday 22nd February  
11am – 12:30pm  
Manchester Poetry Library

A multinational, multilingual poetry event, bringing together young poets from the UK and Singapore via live video hook-up, to read poems that exist in many languages. A positive look at a potential future for poetry and self-expression unbound by linguistic categories and national borders.

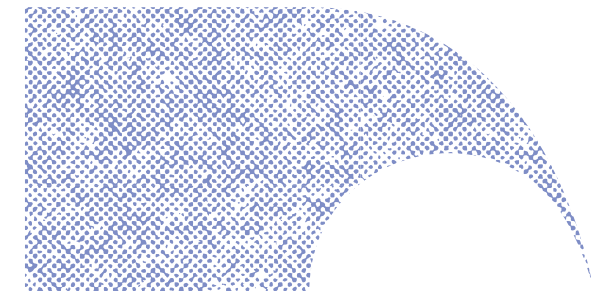
There will be poetry readings and a discussion from poets from the Poetry Translation Centre's UNDERTOW programme, who are joined by poets from a programme in Singapore run by Sing Lit Station. The UNDERTOW poets are young poets from mixed heritage and diaspora backgrounds living in the UK who take part in the programme unlock the creative potential of polylingual creativity.

As part of the programme, they are paired with young poets from Singapore where multilingualism is the norm and English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil are all spoken, alongside Singlish, an English creole that has grown out from contact between all on the languages in the island city-state.

### Meet the Changemakers

Saturday 22nd February  
12pm – 4pm  
Manchester Museum

Join us for an afternoon of activities, workshops, and family fun exploring different languages and cultures to mark International Mother Language Day. Drop in between 12pm and 4pm to discover new and different ideas and get involved in free creative workshops and activities for all ages.



## Events

### Why Bilingualism is important in any language

Tuesday 25th February  
6pm – 7:30pm  
Instituto Cervantes

The Instituto Cervantes Manchester celebrates International Mother Language Day with the lecture ‘Why Bilingualism in Any Language Is Important in Our Globalised World’ by Professor Antonella Sorace (University of Edinburgh).

This lecture is part of our Bilingualism Series, coordinated by Dr. Julio Villa-Garcia (University of Oviedo).

Many people still think that bilingualism with minority or minoritized languages makes children confused and puts them at a disadvantage at school. Research, in contrast, shows that having more than one language – any language – can potentially give

children (and then adults) not only enhanced cultural awareness but also social, linguistic and mental benefits. However, the presence of these benefits in bilingualism with minority languages crucially depends on positive, supportive and informed attitudes around children and relies on firm community foundations for inter-generational transmission. I will illustrate these facts and show how the centre Bilingualism Matters enables families, teachers, and policy makers – in Scotland and internationally – to make decisions on bilingualism informed by research.

### The Global Literary and Poetic Journey

Tuesday 25th February  
6pm – 7:30pm

Join us for an exciting event with young people from the UK and around the world on a literary and poetic journey.

*Atyab Adam, from Whalley Range High School / Newman College / Loretto College / Manchester Academy / Stretford Grammar School.*

They will encourage cross-cultural dialogue, highlighting the power of words to connect people across borders.

This event aims to create a vibrant space for cultural exchange, creativity, and sharing unique perspectives through written and spoken word.

Hosted by: Donna Johnson and Neil Johnson, Headteachers of Levenshulme High School, Manchester. Chief Guest: Jess Edwards is a Professor of Place Writing and Head of the Department of English at Manchester Metropolitan University.

### Online panel discussion ‘Language and power’

Tuesday 25th February  
7pm

Join an insightful event where individuals from various backgrounds discuss the intricate relationship between language and power.

Online

Online

- Loana Aminian, sociolinguist specialized in endangered minority languages and cultures, Austrian Academy of Sciences and University of Vienna
- Mukhtar Omar, Student, Birmingham
- Mohammad Anser Aly, Head of Unilever’s Global Learning & Leadership Development Centre, Four Acres Singapore

This panel brings together academics, and everyday people to share their experiences and perspectives on how language shapes and is shaped by power dynamics in society. The panel explores how language can be a tool of empowerment, control, and resistance.

It examines how language influences social structures, identity, and access to resources and opportunities. Through personal stories and expert analyses, the panel aims to shed light on the multifaceted nature of language and its impact on power relations.

Professor Yaron will introduce the main language communities, with a focus on the language of the city’s Muslim populations. He will discuss how information on languages is compiled, what functions languages have, and what multilingual spaces exist in the city.

Hosted by: Yaron Matras, author and former Professor of Linguistics, University of Manchester.

Chief Guest: John Cloughton, former Chief Master of King Edward’s School, Birmingham, and co-founder of WoLLoW, World of Languages, Languages of the World.

### The Rising Sun documentary film screening

Tuesday 4th March  
6pm – 7:30pm  
Manchester Central Library  
Performance Space

“We had dreams, goals, prospects, and we were working towards them... Everything was perfect! And now...” No family, no home, no language...

The Rising Sun is a documentary about a happy life that was destroyed by Russia, leaving darkness, uncertainty and fear ahead. This is the heartbreaking story of a young woman who, with her young son and a great tragedy of her own, found herself in the UK because of the war in Ukraine. The Rising Sun won Best Documentary at the Manchester Film Festival Awards in 2024. In Ukrainian with English subtitles. Running Time: 72 minutes.

### City of Languages Conference

Wednesday 5th March  
1pm – 5pm  
MMU Business School

The half-day conference brings together groups that engage with multilingualism at city level, are interested in drafting a joint vision for multilingual cities in the UK and beyond, already have a portfolio of public engagement activities around multilingualism, understand multilingualism not just as language learning in educational institutions but as safeguarding of language rights, pluralism as a civic identity badge, efforts to remove power hierarchies based on language and language background.



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of Literature



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CITY COUNCIL



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University**

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