

## Where the Magic Was Born: Birthplaces of Our Favorite Fictional Characters

Ernest Hemingway once said, “When writing a novel a writer should create living people; people, not characters. A character is a caricature.” What is it that inspired history’s greatest authors, like Hemingway, to develop characters so unforgettable that their names have taken a permanent place in literature?

It is no secret that the act of thinking creatively can either be enhanced or weakened by a simple change in environment. Whether a grand home or backyard retreat; near the water or deep in the woods; a common trait among history’s most famous writers seems to be the preference for one particular setting when creating memorable characters and stories.

### Peter Pan

Composed in tribute to his younger brother who died in childhood, the character of Peter Pan from the classical novel of the same name, details the magical character’s adventures with the children of the Darling family: Wendy, John, and Michael. Fans of ‘The Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up’ may be excited to learn that now on the market is the historical home where Barrie resided while developing his most loved character. Barrie was one of the Bloomsbury Set, a group of intellectual writers and artists, who resided at **81 Guilford Street** during the early 1900s.



Located in heart of Bloomsbury, this period building has been transformed into Grade-II townhouses featuring three one-bedroom apartments and a three-bedroom marionette. Close in proximity to prime central London, this historical address is only a short distance from Gordon Square, another famous place for Bloomsbury Group gatherings, and is just around the just corner from the Charles Dickens Museum.

### Oliver Twist

“My house in town,” as Charles Dickens referred to **48 Doughty Street**, was an important place in the writer’s life. His two eldest daughters were born here and his sister-in-law, Mary, for whom he held great affection, died in his arms at age 17. Her death is fictionalized in his story *Little Nell*. Some of his best-loved novels were written here, including *Oliver Twist*.

Although he resided at the Doughty Street address for only two years, it was in this house that he achieved universal recognition as one of the world's greatest storytellers. His extraordinary gift for developing cartoonish characters who were delightfully real made him a household name



around the world. With his success came wealth and he moved on to live in much grander homes, but this house, now The Dickens House Museum, is the only one still standing.

Visitors to the Dicken's Museum have access to over four floors of exhibits featuring the world's most important collection of paintings, rare editions, manuscripts, original furniture, and other items relating to his life and work.

## Clarissa Dalloway

Just a short distance from the Dickens home and Guilford Street is the former London residence of one of the most significant literary figures of her time, Virginia Woolf. The **Gordon Square** home purchased by Adrian and Vanessa Bell, Woolf's sister, was the hub of creativity and social activity for the Bloomsbury Group. Woolf lived in the Gordon Square home with her sister and other family members for many years.

In 1919, Virginia and her husband purchased the rural Sussex 17<sup>th</sup> century weather-boarded cottage named **Monk's House**, where she had a small writing room in the garden constructed out of a wooden toolshed. The "writing lodge," as she called it, is where she wrote parts of all of her major novels, including one of the most famous, *Mrs. Dalloway*. Clarissa Dalloway, the heroine of the novel, was a vital part of the Modernist literature movement.

Open to visitors, this charming cottage currently contains displays of some Leonard and Virginia Woolf's favorite household items. The natural beauty of the land and gardens, which was what attracted the couple to the home, still holds a mix of flowers, vegetables, orchards, lawns, and ponds.



## Eliza Doolittle

Like Woolf, many writers prefer the peace and solitude of nature as the backdrop for their literary inspiration. George Bernard Shaw, Nobel-Prize-winning Irish playwright, preferred to work in natural light, so he designed and built a rotating hut deep in his garden. Shaw could rotate the hideaway to face any direction. He called his spinning shed “London” so that if people called for him, they could be told he was in “London” and it would be true.



It was in this hut that Shaw most likely created many of the works for which he is so famous. *Pygmalion*, his most popular play, is the story of a British linguist who turns Cockney flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, into a lady. The quick-witted and independent Miss Doolittle is one of Shaw’s most recognized and memorable characters.

Located in the small village of Ayot St Lawrence, in Hertfordshire, England, **Shaw’s Corner** is open to the public with the 64 sq ft writing hut in the garden and the interior rooms of the home remaining much as Shaw would have left them.

## Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn

Samuel Langhorne Clemens, better known by his pen name Mark Twain, was a famous American author and humorist. Throughout his life, Twain lived in many places throughout the world and received international attention for his prose. He was a friend to presidents, artists, industrialists, and even European royalty.

One of the most recognized names in classic literature, Twain started from humble beginnings in the town of **Hannibal, Missouri**. Located along the edge of the Mississippi River, Hannibal was home to the Clemens family during young Sam’s childhood years. Many of the popular characters featured in Twain’s works were based upon people he had known while growing up in Hannibal. Today, visitors can still tour Mark Twain’s boyhood home, the Becky Thatcher house, and the famous Mark Twain Cave.



His most beloved home was the one he and his wife constructed in **Hartford, Connecticut**. It measured 11,500 square feet, and had 25 rooms distributed through three floors. It displayed the latest in modern innovations when it was built in 1874. It was lit by gaslight; it had seven bathrooms with hot and cold running water and flush toilets – and at least one bathroom had a shower. Rudimentary ductwork carried warm air from the furnaces in the basement, and in 1878; Clemens had an early model of the

telephone installed in the kitchen. There were also two features that ran on batteries: a burglar alarm system and an "enunciator" bell for calling the servants.

He and his family enjoyed what the author wrote were the happiest and most productive years of his life in their Hartford home. "To us, our house...had a heart and soul and eyes to see us with." It was while living here that Twain published some of his earlier literary successes such as *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Old Times on the Mississippi*.

## Harry Potter

Undoubtedly, the most famous fictitious characters of modern times are those of the Harry Potter series created by author J.K. Rowling. The inspiration for the Boy Wizard series came to her in 1990 during a delayed train ride from Manchester to London, says Rowling, describing it as an "idea that just fell into my head."

It was not until 1995 while living in Edinburgh, Scotland that Rowling actually put her ideas to paper. Finding the easiest way to get her daughter to sleep was by taking a walk, she did much of her writing in cafés. The Elephant House, a gourmet tea and coffee house, is one of the places she would sit for hours and bang away on her manual typewriter. Today, visitors of the Elephant House can enjoy a gourmet cup of coffee and the stunning view of Edinburgh Castle, just as Rowling did then.

