

Literature is Great Part 2

The works of George Orwell, C.S. Lewis and Tolkien have arguably more influence today than when their works were first published. *1984*, *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Lord of the Rings* have also been turned into movies as has that other icon of British fiction: Harry Potter.

This is Leadenhall Market, an old fashioned Victorian market that's still popular today and I've been told that if I walk over here, something rather magical will happen... because this is also the location of Diagon Alley from the Harry Potter films where wizards come shopping.

Evanesco!

The Harry Potter films were adapted from the children's novels of J.K. Rowling. She is a world-class leader in modern literature and one of the most successful authors of her generation. Over 450 million copies of the Harry Potter books have sold throughout the world. They've been translated into 72 different languages.

Amanda Craig is a novelist and the Times critic for children's literature.

Richard: Amanda, what impact has J.K. Rowling had on literature?

Amanda: I think above all, I think she's reminded the world that the British are great storytellers. She's made people in every country laugh, cry and sit on the edge of their seats.

Richard: What about other British authors then?

Amanda: Well, there are fantastic children's authors, like Philip Pullman, whose *Dark*

Materials trilogy I'm sure will be familiar, and Anthony Horowitz, who reinvented the James Bond spy novel for teenagers, and for younger children, there's Cressida Cowell's *How to Train your Dragon*. All of these are fantastic stories.

Richard: Why is Britain such a breeding ground for writing talent?

Amanda: Well, we've had over 200 years of practice at the novel and 600 years at the play. We've got people like Charles Dickens and William Shakespeare to draw upon, we've got the wonderful English language and I think we are full of curiosity about other people. We want to entertain them, we want to make them laugh, we want to make them feel shivers up their spine. We just love literature.

Well I'm excited about the classics and the future of modern British literature. They say there's a book in everyone and I feel so inspired, I'm going to start writing straight away. I just need a pen...