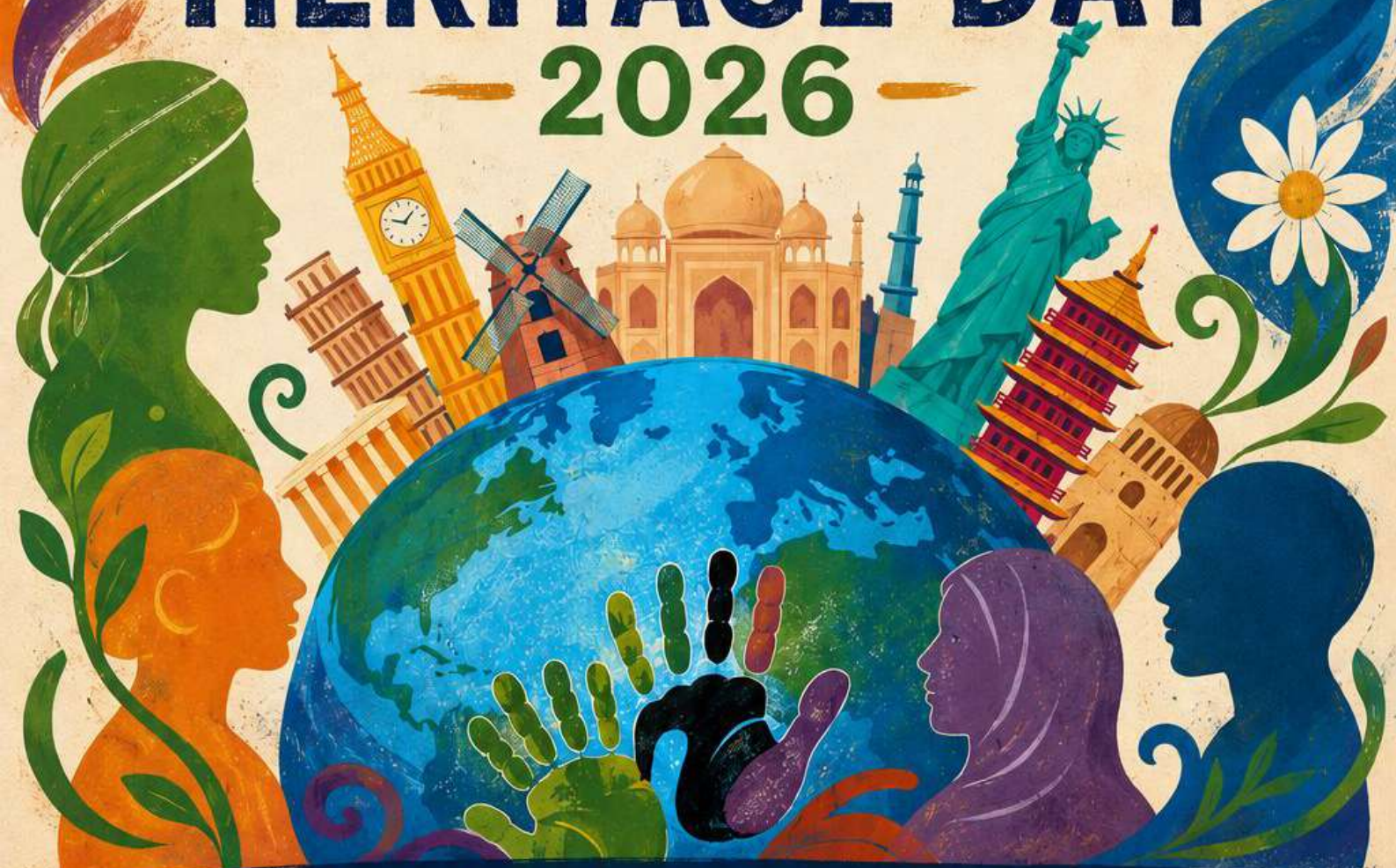




HIGHLANDS SCHOOL
CULTURAL
and
HERITAGE DAY
2026



*Celebrate Our Cultures. Embrace Our Heritage.
Inspire Our Future.*



Cultural and Heritage Day at Highlands School

Highlands School is proud to celebrate the rich diversity, traditions and stories that make our community unique. On 11th June, the school came alive with colour, music, language and culture as students and staff were invited to wear traditional attire or clothing that reflects their heritage and identity.

Cultural and Heritage Day is more than a celebration of food and fashion. It is an opportunity to recognise how culture shapes the way we live, communicate, believe and connect with one another. At Highlands, we value learning about different cultures as a way to develop respect, understanding and compassion, while encouraging thoughtful and sensitive appreciation of cultural traditions.

This special newsletter highlights how diversity continues to shape and strengthen our world, from medicine and technology to literature and the arts. Britain's cultural landscape has been enriched by writers such as Avni Doshi, Zadie Smith and Nazneen Ahmed Pathak, whose work explores identity, history, and multicultural experiences.

Cultural and Heritage Day at Highlands reflects the vibrant society we live in today. It is a chance to celebrate our differences, recognise shared experiences and appreciate the cultures that enrich our school community. We hope this edition inspires curiosity, pride and unity as we celebrate who we are.

Cultural and Heritage Day at Highlands is more than a celebration. It is a reflection of the vibrant, evolving society we live in and a reminder of the strength we find in our shared experiences.





Icons of identity

Celebrating British heritage and diversity

These individuals are highlighted for Cultural and Heritage Day because they embody the richness of British multiculturalism and the profound impact of global migration. Their stories celebrate:

- **Pioneering achievement:** From Dame Elizabeth Anionwu's healthcare breakthroughs to Dr Nira Chamberlain's mathematical excellence, they represent leaders who have broken barriers in fields where minority voices have historically been underrepresented.
- **Identity and advocacy:** Figures like Jade Thirlwall use their platforms to champion diversity and STEM inclusion, fostering a sense of pride and belonging for future generations.
- **Cultural fusion:** Through the spiritual music of Sami Yusuf and the legendary artistry of Lucian Freud, they demonstrate how diverse backgrounds, ranging from Azerbaijani heritage to Jewish-German migration - shape and redefine British arts and culture.

Together, they remind us that our collective heritage is a vibrant tapestry of shared history and individual resilience.

Lucian Freud

(1922 - 2011)



Born in Germany to a Jewish family before emigrating to Britain, Lucian Freud became one of the most influential portrait artists of the 20th century. His story reflects themes of migration, identity and cultural contribution through the arts.

He became one of Britain's most important figurative painters, creating intense, psychologically rich portraits of people, often friends and family. Using thick brushwork and a highly realistic style, Freud focused on capturing the physical and emotional presence of his subjects. His work is widely regarded as a major contribution to modern portraiture and continues to be exhibited and studied internationally.



Icons of identity

Celebrating British heritage and diversity

Sami Yusuf

(1980)



A British artist of Azerbaijani heritage, Sami Yusuf is known for blending global musical traditions with themes of spirituality, unity and cultural understanding. His work celebrates multiculturalism and connects audiences across different backgrounds.

He performs in multiple languages and is known for exploring themes of spirituality, unity, compassion and cultural connection. Through his distinctive fusion of Eastern and Western musical traditions, his work aims to promote understanding and shared human experience across cultures.

Jade Thirlwall

(1992)



Jade Thirlwall, who has Egyptian and Yemeni heritage, is recognised for embracing and speaking openly about her mixed-race identity. Throughout her career, she has used her platform to celebrate her cultural background and encourage conversations about diversity, representation and belonging.

Through her music, public advocacy and support for inclusive initiatives, she promotes cultural pride and inspires others to embrace their own identities while championing equality and inclusion.



Icons of identity

Celebrating British heritage and diversity

Dr Nira Chamberlain

(1969)



Dr Nira Chamberlain is a British mathematician of Jamaican descent, widely recognised for his contributions to applied mathematics and for promoting diversity and inclusion in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Throughout his career, he has used mathematical modelling to solve complex real-world problems across industries such as aerospace, energy and transport. A passionate advocate for representation in STEM, he regularly encourages young people from all backgrounds to pursue careers in these fields. In recognition of his achievements, he became the first Black mathematician to be featured in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.



Dame Elizabeth Anionwu

(1947)



Dame Elizabeth Anionwu is a British nurse of Nigerian and Irish heritage who is widely recognised for her pioneering work in sickle cell and thalassaemia care in the UK.

Throughout her career, she has played a leading role in improving awareness, treatment, and support for people living with these conditions, which disproportionately affect Black communities.

A passionate advocate for equality and inclusion, she has also worked to promote diversity within healthcare and education, inspiring future generations of nurses and healthcare professionals through her leadership and public engagement.





Celebrating Cultural and Heritage Day

Highlands School marked Cultural and Heritage Day with a fantastic celebration of the many cultures and backgrounds that make up our diverse community. Students and staff proudly took part by wearing traditional clothing or dressing in the colours of their national flags, creating a vibrant and colourful atmosphere across the school.

A particular highlight of the day was the cultural bake sale, where students shared a wonderful selection of homemade dishes and treats inspired by their heritage. The event gave everyone the opportunity to experience flavours from around the world while also raising money for the school's house system.

The day was a wonderful reminder of the importance of celebrating our differences and learning from one another. It was inspiring to see our school community come together to share stories, traditions and cultures, reinforcing the values of inclusion, respect and belonging that are at the heart of Highlands School.





Celebrating Cultural and Heritage Day





Celebrating Cultural and Heritage Day





Celebrating Cultural and Heritage Day

Cultural and Heritage Day at Highlands School is a celebration of the strength, beauty and unity found in diversity. By recognising and valuing the many backgrounds that make up our community, we not only honour our differences but also learn from them in meaningful ways. From global achievements in medicine and technology to the diverse voices shaping contemporary British literature, our shared experiences continue to deepen our understanding of the world around us.

As we come together in cultural dress, and share stories, food, music and traditions, we do so with respect, care and appreciation for one another's heritage. In celebrating what makes each of us unique, we help to build a more inclusive, connected and compassionate future for all.

A huge thank you to all our staff and students for making Cultural and Heritage Day such a vibrant success!

Whether you wore your traditional dress, shared a delicious family recipe, purchased treats at the bake sale or helped transform our space with beautiful decorations, your participation brought our community's rich history to life. It was a wonderful celebration of who we are and the diverse backgrounds that make us stronger together. You can watch highlights of the day on our [Instagram page](#).



Cultural book corner in our library

As always, our library played an important role in celebrating key events across the school calendar by creating a special Cultural and Heritage Day book display. Featuring a carefully selected collection of inspiring books that celebrate diversity, culture and identity, the display encouraged students to explore and appreciate the many stories and experiences that shape our world. Cultural and Heritage Day is an opportunity to recognise and value the different backgrounds, traditions and histories that make up our community.

At Highlands, we are proud to say that while we come from many different cultures, we are one community, united by respect, understanding and a shared commitment to celebrating what makes each of us unique.





Celebrating Cultural and Heritage Day

Staff wellbeing break

Staff enjoyed a special Cultural and Heritage Day wellbeing break, featuring a wonderful selection of delicious homemade treats from a variety of cultures. From freshly made patties and traditional lemon drizzle cake to an array of other homemade favourites, the staffroom became a celebration of flavour, community and the rich diversity within our school.

A heartfelt thank you goes to all the staff who baked, prepared and brought in treats for the occasion, helping to make it such a memorable and enjoyable event for everyone.





Celebrating Cultural and Heritage Day

House bake sale

As part of Cultural and Heritage Day, each house hosted a vibrant bake sale to raise money for their chosen charity, with every pound raised also contributing towards the house competition. From delicious homemade patties and spanakopitas to beautifully decorated Jamaican-themed cupcakes and a wonderful array of international treats, the event showcased the rich diversity of cultures within our school community.

It was a real delight to see so many different cuisines and traditional bakes on offer, and the sale was thoroughly enjoyed by students and staff alike. A huge thank you to everyone who baked, donated and supported the event.





Why we should celebrate and recognise cultural diversity?

"We can recognise everyone's diversity and to find out more about where they come from."
- Demmi Colthrust

"To encourage community cohesion."
- Ardil Kalayci

"Without all backgrounds being represented, students will feel like they aren't fully understood."
- Naomi-Rose Folorunso

"When you look around at Highlands - seeing all the different students and how everyone gets on is really beautiful."
- Abel Kalaj

"It doesn't matter who you are, where you come from, what you choose to celebrate or practice, or what you believe in, everyone is welcome at Highlands. Through celebrating and recognising cultural diversity and identity, we can be the ones who make people feel welcomed when we leave and go into the wider world, and that's something that's really important."
- Isaac Mooney

"Growing up in London, I was always surrounded by my culture. Through clothes, dances, music and cuisine. People tend to think that because my siblings and I are first generation British, the children of Congolese immigrants, that I wouldn't know a lot about where I came from, growing up in Britain but that's a misconception. My parents made sure my siblings and I would know who we are. They made sure we were loud, proud and not unashamed."

- Kayla-Faith Muhelele

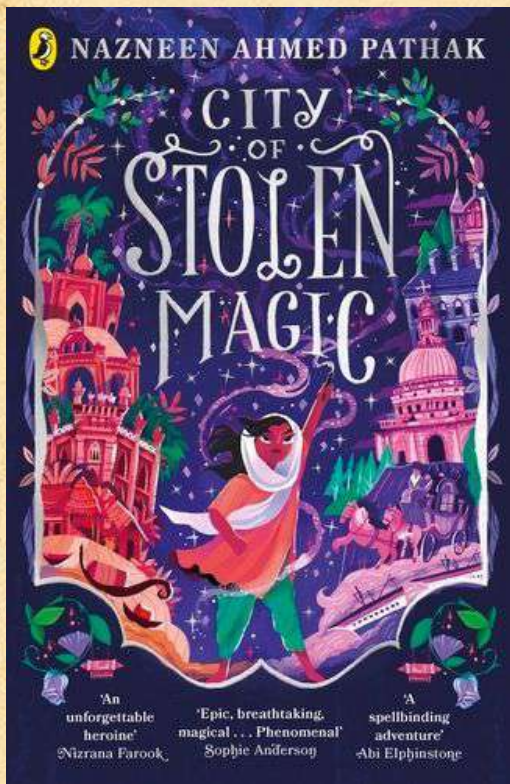
"I celebrate my culture by attending the Lord Mayor's Show in London every November. Although it is a historic procession, to me it feels like a parade and marks the beginning of the Christmas season. The event brings together businesses, charities, and community groups, celebrating the people and cultures that make London unique. Last year was particularly special as it was the first time the city welcomed a Lady Mayor. For me, the procession represents unity and the diversity that shapes my identity. Cultural diversity is important because it helps us understand and appreciate one another, creating a community where everyone feels represented, valued, and included."

- Emily Newton





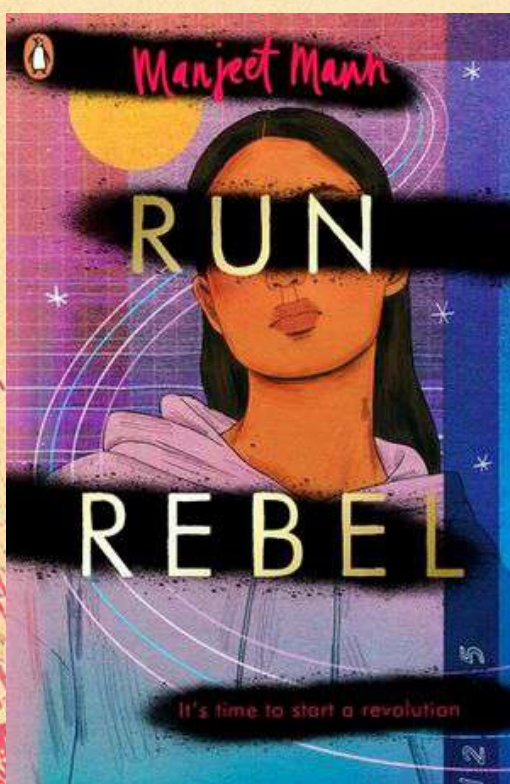
Recommended reads



City of Stolen Magic by Nazneen Ahmed Pathak

City of Stolen Magic is a gripping historical fantasy set in 1855 during British rule in India, where magic is feared and being systematically destroyed. The story follows Chompa, a young girl born with rare and dangerous magical powers, whose life changes when her home is attacked and her mother is kidnapped by agents linked to the sinister East India Company.

Determined to rescue her mother, Chompa journeys to the busy streets of Victorian London, where she uncovers dark secrets, betrayal, and the true cost of magic. Blending adventure, history and fantasy, the novel explores themes of identity, colonialism, courage and belonging, while bringing to life a richly multicultural Victorian London.



Run, Rebel by Manjeet Mann

Run, Rebel is a powerful and emotional verse novel about courage, identity and breaking free from expectations. The story follows Amber, a teenage girl who feels trapped by her strict father's rules and the pressures placed upon her at home.

As Amber discovers a passion for running, she begins to find strength, confidence and a sense of freedom. Determined to stand up for herself, her mother and her sister, Amber learns that choosing independence and following her own path comes with challenges and sacrifices. The novel explores themes of family, control, resilience and empowerment in a deeply moving and inspiring way.

Recommended reads

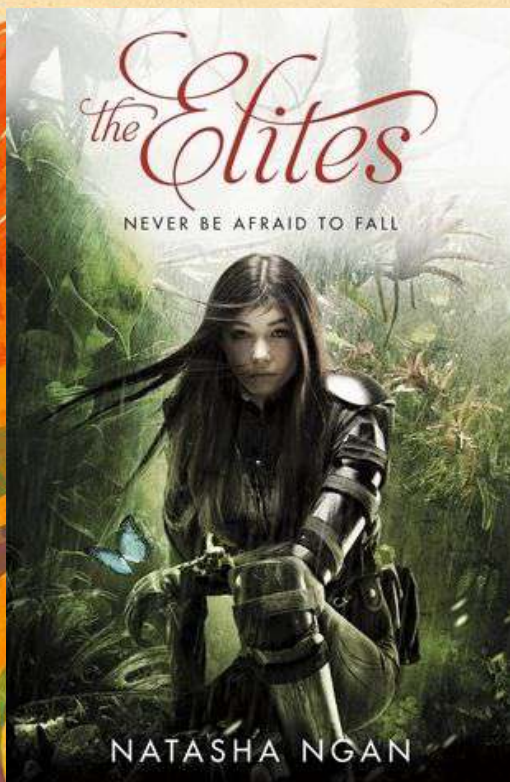


The Deep Blue Between by Ayesha Harruna Attah

The Deep Blue Between is a moving historical novel that follows twin sisters, Hassana and Husseina, after a raid on their village in 1890s West Africa tears their family apart.

Separated across continents, Hassana travels through the Gold Coast (modern-day Ghana), while Husseina is taken to Brazil. Despite the distance between them, both sisters cling to the hope of one day being reunited.

Rich in history and culture, the novel explores themes of family, identity, resilience and the lasting impact of colonialism, while celebrating the enduring power of sisterhood and human connection.



The Elites by Natasha Ngan (ages 13-16)

The Elites is a thrilling dystopian novel set in the future, where wars and climate disasters have left Neo-Babel as the last surviving city on Earth. The story follows fifteen-year-old Silver, a genetically enhanced Elite chosen to help protect the city.

After she fails to stop the assassination of the president, Silver is forced to flee alongside her best friend, Butterfly.

As they uncover hidden secrets and face danger at every turn, the novel explores themes of identity, friendship, inequality and what it truly means to belong in a divided world.



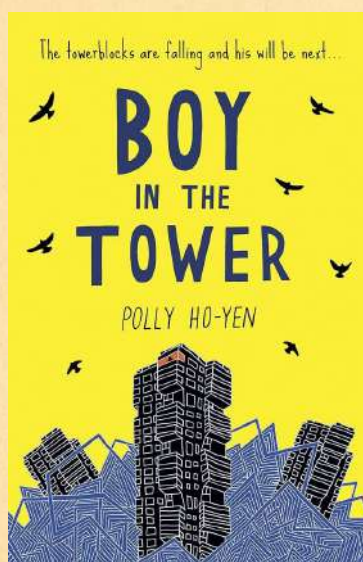
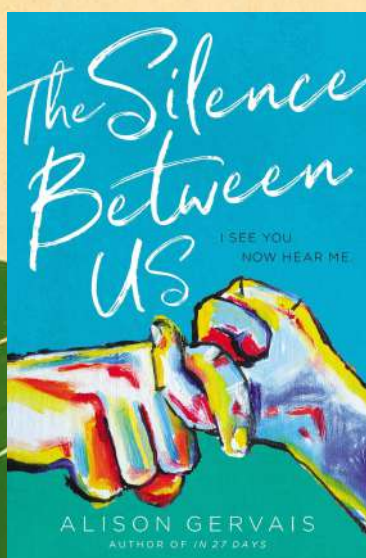
For further reading

Our reading recommendations

At Highlands School, we believe that reading is a powerful way to broaden perspectives, celebrate different cultures and develop a deeper understanding of the world around us. We encourage our students to explore books that reflect a wide range of voices, experiences and identities.

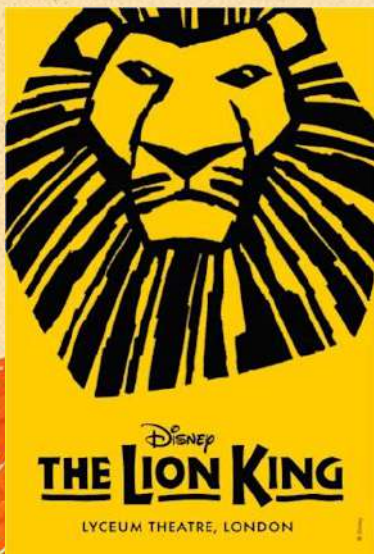
For those looking to diversify their reading, we recommend exploring the **Peters Diverse and Inclusive Books for Secondary Schools** collection. This carefully curated selection features books by authors and illustrators from a variety of backgrounds, alongside stories that include characters of colour, neurodiverse characters and characters with disabilities. These engaging and thought-provoking texts help promote empathy inclusion, and meaningful conversations about identity and belonging.

Explore the collection here: [Peters Diverse and Inclusive Books for Secondary Schools](#).



Theatre recommendations

These theatre productions have been highlighted to celebrate Cultural and Heritage Day by showcasing stories, traditions and perspectives from different cultures around the world. From the African-inspired journey of *The Lion King* and the inspiring true story set in Malawi in *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, to the Japanese storytelling and artistry of *My Neighbour Totoro*, each production encourages appreciation of diversity, identity, resilience and community. Shows such as *Hamilton* and *Paddington The Musical* also explore themes of belonging, migration, family and inclusion, helping to raise awareness and inspire meaningful conversations about culture, heritage and representation through the performing arts.



[The Lion King](#)

Lyceum Theatre

Disney's award-winning musical brings the beloved 1994 film to life on stage through stunning puppetry, vibrant costumes and unforgettable music by Sir Elton John and Sir Tim Rice. Set against the backdrop of the African savannah, the story follows Simba's journey from playful cub to rightful king as he discovers courage, responsibility, and the true meaning of the "circle of life."



[The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind](#)

Soho Place, West End

Based on the international bestselling book, this inspiring musical tells the true story of William Kamkwamba, a determined 13-year-old boy from Malawi who builds a windmill to save his drought-stricken village. Through courage, creativity and perseverance, William brings hope to his community against all odds.



Theatre recommendations

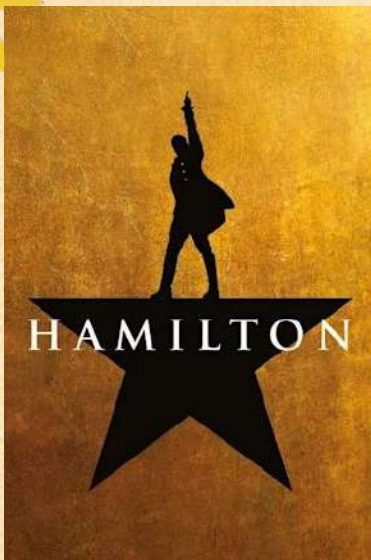


[My Neighbour Totoro](#)

Gillian Lynne Theatre

Based on the beloved *My Neighbour Totoro*, this enchanting stage adaptation follows sisters Satsuki and Mei as they move to the countryside and discover a magical world of woodland spirits, including the iconic Totoro.

Praised for its imaginative puppetry, stunning visuals and award-winning creative team, the production became a major hit in London, winning six Olivier Awards.

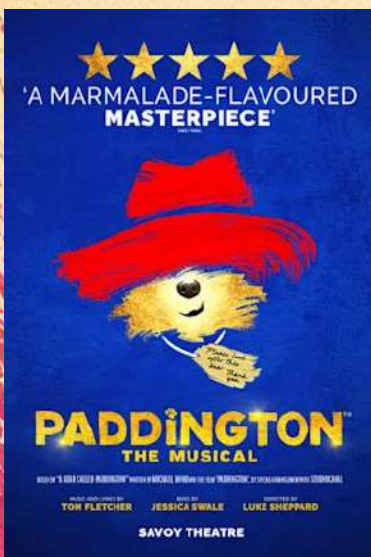


[Hamilton](#)

Victoria Palace Theatre

Hamilton is the award-winning musical by Lin-Manuel Miranda that tells the story of American founding father Alexander Hamilton through an energetic mix of hip-hop, R&B and soul music. The production follows Hamilton's journey from orphaned immigrant to George Washington's trusted advisor and the first U.S. Secretary of the Treasury.

Known for its powerful storytelling and diverse cast, *Hamilton* has become a global theatre phenomenon.



[Paddington the Musical](#)

Savoy Theatre

Based on the beloved books by Michael Bond and the popular films, *Paddington The Musical* brings the charming story of Paddington Bear to the stage.

After arriving in London from Peru, Paddington is welcomed by the Brown family and begins a heartwarming adventure filled with humour, kindness and courage.