

OVER A DECADE OF LITERATURE

The Emirates Airline Festival of Literature is hosting its eleventh annual event in Dubai this month under the theme 'United by Words'. Flashes takes a look at some of this year's key highlights.



EMIRATES AIRLINE FESTIVAL OF LITERATURE

The UAE's love of books and the written word is second to none. As this year's Nobel Museum exhibition celebrating the works of Nobel laureates in literature was drawing to a close, the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature was preparing to throw open its doors.

Held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, and organised in partnership with Emirates Airline and Dubai Culture & Art Authority, this year's festival takes place from 1 – 9 March, at the InterContinental Hotel, in Dubai Festival City.

The lit fest sets out to appeal to bookworms of all ages and nationalities, and this year's event is brimming with sessions hosted by authors, thought-leaders and opinion formers on topics as varied as fiction, history, current affairs, food, health, travel, biography, business and more. There are opportunities to appreciate poetry, take part in creative writing workshops and generally indulge in intelligent and articulate discussions.



THE FESTIVAL IN NUMBERS



41,000+
visitors



180+
authors



From **50**
countries

*Statistics from the 2018 Emirates Festival of Literature

LOCAL AND REGIONAL STORYTELLERS

Jabbour Douaihy



Abudullah Al Maglooth



As always, the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature will champion local and regional storytellers. This year, writers from the region include Lebanese author Jabbour Douaihy, who was nominated for the Arabic Booker Prize for his novel *June Rain*. Douaihy will take part in a panel discussion with fellow Arab writers Shahad Al Rawi and Shereen Abouelnaga, to discuss how political discourse helps to shape our identity, and how the writers approach the topic of identity in their own novels.

For those interested in the impact of social media platforms across the region, Saudi Arabian YouTube star and author

Abudullah Al Maglooth will discuss his works, including *Twittering In Happiness, Optimism and Hope* and *Tomorrow is More Beautiful*. Al Maglooth will be holding several talks throughout the festival, including one focused on the positive impact of social media.

Also on the agenda this festival is the award-winning Palestinian author Ahlam Bsharat, who will be holding a masterclass on how to kick-start writing your memoirs. In the session, she will focus on the dichotomy between memory and forgetfulness along with techniques that have helped her write.



Ahmad AlShugairi



Dr Rafia Ghubash



Jennifer Palmieri



Jeff Kinney

GCC YOUTH DAY

Brand new for 2019 is the festival's GCC Youth Day. According to Festival Director Ahlam Bolooki, the one-day event is designed to "engage, inform and inspire" the younger Arab generation in the region. Aimed at those aged 16 - 21, the event will see a range of special thought-provoking sessions take place on March 7. With the Instagram-generation in mind, one of the key speakers at the event will be Saudi Arabian media star and social media influencer Ahmad AlShugairi, who currently boasts more than 10 million followers on Instagram and is known for his TV programme *Khawatir*. During his talk, he will discuss his ideas on fulfilment and success.

Elsewhere on GCC Youth Day, there will be talks by Dr Rafia Ghubash (the first Emirati psychiatrist and the first female president of the Arabian Gulf University) and former White House Director of Communications Jennifer Palmieri, who will give young people advice on setting goals.

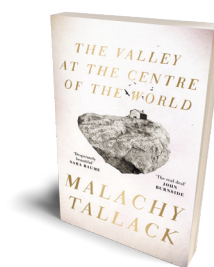
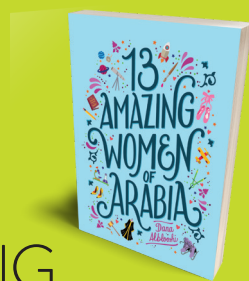
There will be many children's authors attending the event. Standout highlights for younger readers include a talk with the author of the *Wimpy Kid* series, Jeff Kinney, and author of the *Demon Headmaster* series, Gillian Cross.

AMAZING YOUNG TALENT

The youngest author at this year's Emirates Airline Festival of Literature is 12-year-old Dana Alblooshi. At just nine, this determined youngster became the youngest Emirati to undergo training courses with NASA. Now she has just published her first book *13 Amazing Women of Arabia*, in which she pays tribute to a hand-picked selection of women from the Arab world who the young author finds inspiring.

Among Alblooshi's picks from the fields of science, government, fashion, business, sports and more are UAE Minister of Culture Her Excellency Noora Al Kaaby, human rights lawyer Amal Clooney and fighter jet pilot Mariam Al Mansoori.

Published by Motivate Publishing/Motivate Media Group in partnership with GEMS Education, the children's book also features beautiful illustrations of each woman created by Middle Eastern artists.



Malachy Tallack



Hessa Al Muhairi



Aziz Mohammed

NEW AUTHORS

"The festival has always championed new writing, and 2019 is no exception," says Festival Director Ahlam Bolooki. "We are proud to offer a platform to new writers, and to offer our visitors the chance to hear from some of the most interesting new writers of our time."

Among the latest generation of talented authors who will be entertaining and educating us for years to come is Malachy Tallack, a writer, editor and singer-songwriter from Scotland. His first novel, *The Valley at the Centre of the World*, has been met with widespread praise and awards for its portrayal of nature, community and island life.

Award nominations are rare for new authors but another two who have found success with their first books are Hessa Al Muhairi, an Emirati author who won the Sheikh Zayed Book Award 2018 for her children's book *The Dinoraffe*, and Aziz Mohammed, a Saudi Arabian writer who has written poetry, short stories, film reviews and online blogs. *The Critical Case of 'K'* was his debut novel and it was shortlisted for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction in 2018.

TECH, AI AND THE FUTURE



Gerd Leonhard

From Sophia the robot to drone technology, it seems the future of AI has arrived. Taking the lead at this year's literature festival is futurist Gerd Leonhard, who will be heading up a discussion on the relationship between mankind and technology

From Sophia the robot to drone technology, it seems the future of AI has arrived. Taking the lead at this year's literature festival is futurist Gerd Leonhard, who will be heading up a discussion on the relationship between mankind and technology. The theorist will be examining questions such as "How do we embrace technology without becoming it?", and in the age of technology, "What moral values are you prepared to stand up for?"

Elsewhere at the festival, Rowan Hooper, the Managing Editor of *New Scientist* and BBC presenter, and Cambridge geneticist Giles Yeo tackle the future of our genes. Hooper will look at how genes can affect everything from lifespan to more abstract ideas, such as happiness and achievement. Meanwhile, Yeo, the author of *Gene Eating*, will look at the effect genes play on our eating habits and weight gain.

Rounding up the futuristic talks will be Sam Schwartz and Richard Baldwin, both experts in the cityscapes and the development of the human landscape. Schwartz will be asking if our time at the wheel is almost done? He asks if driving will become illegal, as human drivers will be demonstrably more dangerous than cars that pilot themselves. Is this an impossible future or a revolution just around the corner? Schwartz is an award-winning American transportation engineer. He is the author of the acclaimed books *Street Smart: The Rise of Cities and The Fall of Cars* and *No One at the Wheel: Driverless Cars and the Road of the Future*. Find out what life will be like with a robot at the wheel.



Sam Schwartz



Richard Baldwin



Rowan Hooper

WOMEN LEADING EXTRAORDINARY LIVES

This year's festival will see some of the best female thought-leaders in the world take to the stage in Dubai, from the former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, who will be discussing her iconic work *Climate Justice: Hope, Resilience and the Fight for a Sustainable Future*, to Zelda La Grange, the former private secretary to Nelson Mandela.

Jane Hawking, former wife to the late, great scientist Stephen Hawking, and whose memoir of her marriage to the Nobel Prize Winner was turned into the film *The Theory of Everything*, is also an invited guest.

Also on the agenda is Jennifer Palmieri, the former Director of Communications for Hilary Clinton's Presidential campaign, who will be offering insight to one of the most famous electoral battles in recent history.

Closer to home, Saadia Zahidi will be on site during the festival discussing the 50 million women entering the workforce in the Muslim world in the 21st century. The World Economic Forum executive will offer inside accounts to one of the most prolific moments in the Arab world.



Mary Robinson



Jane Hawking



Jennifer Palmieri



Saadia Zahidi

TOP CHEFS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

As a growing food hub in the Middle East region, one of the most exciting additions to this year's festival is the plethora of chefs and foodies from around the world who have been added to the line-up. To kick off the festival, British-Indian chef Mira Manek will be serving up a vegetarian brunch on 1 March, alongside Dubai-based yogi Melanie Swan, who will be leading a yoga class during the first morning of the festival. The next day, Mira will be on hand to offer tips and tricks to her fans in her talk *Saffron Soul*, named after her eponymous best-selling cookbook.

If you ever found yourself licking your lips as a child while reading about the food eaten by Winnie the Pooh or the Famous Five, you might want to check out this year's talk by Kate Young. The cookbook author will be on hand to discuss her book *The Little Library Cookbook*, which includes the recipes enjoyed by some of the best-loved childhood fictional characters in the world.

If the science of food is more your thing, be sure to check out the talks held by Trine Hahneman and His Excellency Sheikh Dr Majid Al Qassimi this year. Hahneman, a Danish food writer and chef, will be discussing ways in which everyday cooks make organic and sustainable choices, while still saving money and enjoying delish food. Meanwhile, HE Al Qassimi, the Director of Animal Health and Development in the UAE's Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, will be discussing ways in which we can make sustainable changes to our diets.



Mira Manek



Melanie Swan

Emirates Airline Festival of Literature runs from 1 – 9 March 2019, at the InterContinental Hotel, Dubai Festival City. For more information on this year's programme and to buy tickets visit emirateslitfest.com.