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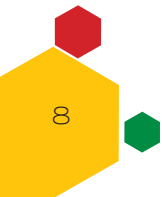
Grahamstown

National English Literary Museum

The National English Literary Museum (NELM) is one of South Africa's literary treasures. Tucked away in the university town of Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape, NELM collects all creative writing by southern African authors who write in English, and in the following genres: novels, short stories, plays, essays, poetry, theatre, television and film scripts, autobiography, travel, letters, memoirs and diaries. Critical writing on the authors and their works is also collected, as well as writings on related subjects such as literary history, censorship and literary awards. These materials are collected in all formats: books, study guides, theses, literary manuscripts, press clippings and audio-visual material.

The beginnings of the Museum go back to 1972, when Professor Guy Butler, a noted author and the major force behind the drive to teach South African literature at university level, persuaded Rhodes University's Institute for the Study of English in Africa to sponsor the foundation of the Thomas Pringle Collection for English in Africa, with the express purpose of collecting books and manuscripts illustrating the role of English as a language of South Africa. Many literary friends of Butler contributed their manuscripts, typescripts, scrapbooks, press-clippings and other memorabilia to this project. In July 1974 the National English Documentation Centre was established as an independent body. This then became the National English Literary Museum and Documentation Centre and in 1980, the National English Literary Museum (NELM) became a Declared Cultural Institution.

Although many continue to believe that NELM's focus is on the writings of 1820 Settlers and their descendents, the truth is very different. Literary materials are collected without regard to the race, age, gender, social standing, academic qualifications, political or religious views of the authors. If a literary work has a South African connection and is published in English, NELM staff will try to obtain a copy. Translations into English from other South African languages are also kept.





NELM's holdings also include a small collection – 405 titles – of foreign translations of South African literary works. These have been donated to NELM by the authors themselves and include texts published in languages such as Turkish, Catalan, Polish, French and German.

