

# Paper Nations Pedagogy and Practice: Participant Quotes

## The Writer's Cycle

*As a creative writing facilitator, the Paper Nations Writers' Cycle is an extremely helpful resource. I work with young writers aged 10 - 16 years and one of my challenges is helping them to understand the creative process and appreciate the ebb and flow of creativity. The Writers' Cycle helps them to understand how their work may develop and to not feel frustrated if their stories aren't 'right' straight away. We are also starting to use the term 'emerging writers' to describe the young people in our groups - it is a phrase which they enjoy using and appreciate too.*

*As a writing mentor, I also use the Writers' Cycle to support my own continuous development. I value the overall guidance and appreciate the clear design and accessible layout used too.* **Gill Pawley - Founder of Inkpots - Friday 13th November 2020.**

*Too often, we think in a linear way, when life too is wonky, errant, and surprising. And so it is, the organic orrery of the writing life: we set off on one course, rocket to other planets, realise they're not inhabitable (sometimes even toxic), before plotting a new course to see where that takes us. [...]*

*I see The Writer's Cycle as a little orrery reflecting experiences. I recognised some lifeforms and felt kinship with all three of the Emerging, Continuing and Writer-Facilitator beings. Sometimes, I'm one orbiting another - a little space station or satellite, observing. There were customs and habits I recognised in all of them. There are days I'm all three: changing shiny costume / pointy ear prosthesis as I go. [... Through various projects, including Beyond Words (Cheltenham Festivals), I've also realised the value of empowering writers that their obsessions and geeky hobbies aren't in the way of writing, they are your writing. [...]*

*I invite you to think of your own writing life as just such an organic orrery. Build it with beachballs, raisins, lightbulbs - whatever you have to hand. Keep rearranging them. And look out for that little spaceship between them all, because its wobbly and varied course will be uniquely your own.* **Caleb Parkin, Writing Facilitator**

*The writing cycle is really helpful. It takes the pressure off. It helps you to take the space for yourself, to say: I am a writer. Sometimes, you feel like an imposter.* **Grace Palmer, Novel Nights, at a workshop on The Writer's Cycle and funding at StoryTown 2019**

*The thing I found most interesting was thinking about the role of facilitators (Re: The Writing Cycle). I hadn't valued their role. This is what I'm doing, it's made me think about it, acknowledge and value my role.* **Bridget, at a workshop on The Writer's Cycle and funding at StoryTown 2019**

*It was the model (the Writers' Cycle) I'm doing all of the elements, I hadn't consciously thought about it before.* **Bridget, at a workshop on The Writer's Cycle and funding at StoryTown 2019**

*It was really helpful to place myself in the Writer's Cycle. Where am I? How am I going to move forward?* **Angela, at a workshop on The Writer's Cycle and funding at StoryTown 2019**

*Super helpful template, good to go through.* **Jasmine, at a workshop on The Writer's Cycle and funding at StoryTown 2019**

We should be arguing to put [The Writer's Cycle approach to writing] more centrally within the curriculum.  
**Anonymous, at the NAWE 2018 Conference Paper Nations Plenary Session**

## Writing For All Quotes

"Once you call yourself a writer, there is a community of support, what Paper Nations is talking about is going a layer below, even though our audience is not as diverse as it should be. For this to truly have an impact, you have to take storytelling to those who don't currently have a voice." Feedback on the concept of Writing for All from **Grace Palmer**, Novel Nights.

It's about getting people and young people who've never thought about writing involved. **Kit De Waal, at the Writing For All Launch 2019**

Vulnerable adults need a safe space and ongoing support. **Liv Torc, at the Writing For All Launch 2019**

Adolescents, children, old people, they all need a way to express who they are – creative writing is very powerful. **Camila Fuentes Diaz, at the Writing For All Launch 2019**

Writing is important for mental and physical health. **Jo Simmonds, at the Writing For All Launch 2019**

Go to where people are and ask how we can get them to engage to make a diversity project work. **Roy Hanney, at the Writing For All Launch 2019**

We want to break down barriers to writing, to create a new infrastructure to enable anyone to participate, to diversify writing through people, place and form. **Lucy Sweetman, at the Writing For All Launch 2019**

What Paper Nations is launching is about everyone having a voice, no matter what your gender, race, background; it is a democratic ideal. What Paper Nations is doing is incredibly important; Writing for All is a democratic right. **Jenna Ng: Head of Interactive Media, University of York, at the Writing For All Launch 2019**

We need to empower people to just write, not as a means to an end. **Dionne McCulloch, at the Writing For All Launch 2019**

How can digital writing be measured? You need to broaden the scope of what writing is. **Anonymous, at the Writing For All Launch 2019**

## Reviewing the Writer's Cycle Autumn 2018

I really like the idea that the Benchmark is NOT a tool for assessment and evaluation, but simply a pathway or route map that one can use if needed. **Richard Parfitt, Songwriter**

I think it [The Writer's Cycle] is impressive in its scope and the categories of emerging, developing and writer-facilitator do seem helpful and clear. The emphasis you have given on fun and playfulness and writing for pleasure and enjoyment is welcome – and a good way to begin to redress the balance between these

values and the current narrow focus often solely on spelling, punctuation and grammar and the mechanics of writing that can turn children and young people off writing. **Becky Swain, Arvon**

## Dare to Write? Responses

*It showed me that if I don't know what to write or I have ran out of ideas, it's okay to write something totally random and it will be even more fun!* **Young Person (anonymised)**

*You can forget about perfect handwriting or fronted adverbials for just a second.* **Lily Green**

*This is better than school. I found it better than school.* **Young Person at a Dare to Write? Library Workshop (anonymised)**

*Running the Dare to Write? Library has a tangible impact on the young people who come along, both inside the session and afterwards.* **Lucy Condon, Dare to Write? Library Book Pilot**

*A lot of the young people we meet normally associate writing with rigorous tests of their technical ability, handwriting, spelling and grammar. These skills are fundamental but in our workshops we focus on ideas and the freedom to write.* **Lucy Condon, Dare to Write? Library Book Pilot**

*If you can make [writing] exciting, and build in that habit early on in life, it affects pretty much everything that they're going to do. And maybe kids haven't seen how fun or accessible creative writing is before so these Dare to Write? Library sessions are really great for that.* **Parent at a Dare to Write? Library Workshop (anonymised)**

*I like spending time without using technology, and actually having fun, which never happens!"* **Young Person at a Dare to Write? Library Workshop (anonymised)**

## The Great Margin

### Writers and/or Contributors to The Great Margin

*They're all so beautiful and a very calming way to start the day. I've not been managing to contribute much lately but I'm very honoured to be a part of this and will be sharing proudly. Thank you.* **Daniela Cross, I Even Dream in Haiku Contributor**

*This is super! Such great work to come out of these times and the strength to stir people and to bind them at the same time. Well done to you and to all the collaborators. Whilst I have not been contributing widely I am an avid follower.* **Fiona Jane Stuart, I Even Dream in Haiku Contributor**

*Wonderful! Honoured to be part of this great project.* **Marion Clarke, I Even Dream in Haiku Contributor**

*Beautiful, touching films! I'm so pleased and proud to be a contributor. Many thanks for giving TDH members this opportunity.* **Kelly Davis, I Even Dream in Haiku Contributor**

*Really enjoyed the way they were put together. The short length of each is so accessible.* **Judith Railton, I Even Dream in Haiku Contributor**

*Thank you so much. Just enjoyed the great work. Feeling proud to be a part.* **Rajeshwari Srinivasan, I Even Dream in Haiku Contributor**

*It's wonderful! I feel very proud to be a part of it.* **Daniela Cross, I Even Dream in Haiku Contributor**

*Thank you. The films are really beautiful. I love the way you've mostly not matched an exact image to the words. Really takes you back to the empty spaces of the lockdown. All the images are wonderful.* **Pam Z-H, I Even Dream in Haiku Contributor**

*It was nice to go back to some of these musings at the beginning of lockdown and see how they could be more moulded into something. To put it into The Great Margin context and have other people interpret and represent something personal was a really revealing process too. The creative exchange and the ability to communicate something on different levels, for different people through different mediums is really special.* **Jess Bunyan, Writer and Great Margin contributor**

*I like the way the poetry film made from my poem honours my text but interprets my writing in a different way to how I imagined. It was wonderful to be a participant in this collaborative, creative project and it gave me a greater understanding of how meaning is a fluid process open to interpretation.* **Josephine Corcoran, Writer and Great Margin contributor**

*Thanks so much for your help and encouragement! I'm very pleased with this lovely project. I love the general feel of this piece, the sound of the voice, the images used and the music. I especially love the "O" – it's beautiful and heartfelt!* **Josephine Corcoran, Writer and Great Margin contributor**

*Through the multilayered, interpretive process of reading and then recording someone else's poem, I inhabit it. I instinctively think of the 'why' behind each line and therefore I put on another world like a coat. It's still me wearing that world but in bringing my own experiences and empathy, my voice stretches the sleeves so that it fits. Recording my own poems is absolutely different to recording someone else's work. There is a distance between myself and another poet's material and with this distance comes a clarity and a freshness, because it's not muddled with my own craft and editing process.* **Sophie Dumont, Writer, Spoken Word Artist and Great Margin contributor**

*One of the things I love about poetry is the way both writing and reading it startles your focus. The ordinary becomes extraordinary, ideas and emotions revealed in each twist of a line. I am intrigued by what we choose to include and what we leave out, by the unsaid finding its way through anyway. Perhaps this is why the film poem felt like a gift – it represents someone else hearing my words and dappling them with their own truth. And this for me is the centre of poetry – that it connects. It connects ideas, experiences and people who need never meet but who share a moment of understanding, a yes.* **Katharine Goda, Writer and Great Margin contributor**

*I just had to send an email straightaway to say HOW beautiful is the film of Through Glass, Darkly? Thank you. So much. I can't wait to see what happens next.* **Katharine Goda, Writer and Great Margin contributor**

*When people ask me what it's like to be a poet I sometimes quote Michael Symmons Roberts who described the poet as 'a messenger bringing back bulletins from the edge of experience.' As a writer working in a hospice it's my privilege to visit one such 'edge of experience' and meet the patients and doctors such as Rachel who inspired this piece. It's a reminder that listening is just as important as talking, that being some sort of journalist of emotions is a valuable role in life and maybe as our worlds become smaller our hearts need to get bigger. I have enjoyed the editorial process involved in giving my words a voice via this short film and hope that it helps connect us further and helps us through these off-kilter times.* **Winston Plowes, Writer and Great Margin contributor**

*I have been impressed with how Paper Nations is engaging with the artists making their films and joining us up. As one of those artists (poets) I would like to thank you for breathing life into my words. I was offered a chance at recording my own voice and I'm glad I declined. The reading here by Naomi Knox is wonderful, just the right emphasis, and intonation at the right times. I couldn't have done nearly as good. And the images are so pertinent and powerful. The music and sound effects and background effects enhance the whole film too. Thank you again. Eventually I will send this when it's released to the amazing woman who works at a hospice I also work at as a writer running workshops.*

*Absolutely beautiful work, thank you.* **Winston Plowes, Writer and Great Margin contributor**

*My professional and voluntary work aims to shine a light on inequalities particularly based on gender and ethnicity. Nurtured by my Buddhist faith, I believe each small action makes a difference. Writing is one way I take care of myself amid the hurly-burly of activism, as well as being a tool I use to encourage scrutiny and change.* **Subitha Baghirathan, Writer and Great Margin contributor**

*This piece isn't entirely autobiographical, it grew out of one facet of my personality. The idea of speaking French is meant to be emblematic of an aspirational lifestyle; I certainly do not live a life in which I am required to speak French. I felt that considering a life/lifestyle in such specific detail would indicate the absence of those things in my reality. I hoped to create a sense of longing in the negative space around the words.* **Zoe Raven, Writer and Great Margin contributor**

*It's a beautiful, beautiful film.* **Tish Camp, Writer and Great Margin contributor**

*It was a complete pleasure to have the extra dialogue with you and share the background to my writing.* **Jasbinder Bilan, Writer and Great Margin contributor**

*Thank you for the opportunity that you have offered. This is a first for personal recognition and I am truly grateful. I can't quite believe it is my work.* **Shobi Warwick, Writer and Great Margin contributor**

*The work you are doing is not only supporting writers and teachers like me but supporting other healthcare and education professionals and providing some much needed insight and positivity in these strange and uncertain times.* **Winston Plowes, Writer and Great Margin Contributor**

## **Creative Producers and Facilitators:**

*When I am making a film based on my own writing I have a clear relationship to the words and can see the images straight away. I know my own vision and where the original inspiration came from. With other people's writing I have to approach it in a slightly different way. I have to interpret the emotions and feelings behind the words and take time to sensitively create something that explores this visually.* **Tracy Harris, Writer, Creative Producer and Great Margin contributor**

*I love the democratisation of poetry and I see poetry as another discourse. It's another way that knowledge can filter through to the community. In an age where we are having to redefine notions of the community and in an age where this notion of being human is slowly eroding, poetry is the catalyst for us to have these conversations.* **Ronnie McGrath, Author and Great Margin workshop group leader**

*It's not so much that we teach writing but that we discover and interpret it together. A teacher can introduce a writer to craft and help them develop technically, but what really happens in a writing group, a workshop, a classroom, a Zoom room, is determined by those who are present – the facilitator, or teacher, is only part of the mechanics of the process. It is within the relationship between writers in which writing is shared, interpreted and discussed, that discovery happens. It is where writers create community with each other, where they learn to understand each other and where a deep listening is possible. It is through this process of sharing, listening and reflection that writers mature and we all move forward creatively together.* **Lucy Sweetman, Reader in Teaching & Learning and Lead Convenor of The Great Margin writing groups**

*I just wanted to say thank you for organising such a fantastic event this weekend. It was really inspiring and motivating. The events I attended were fantastic and The Great Margin just blew me away. It's been really nice to get messages from the folks I shared the event with, saying how much they enjoyed the sessions they attended. A friend of mine who's an educational writer based in Spain tuned into The Great Margin and was really impressed with the whole thing. She was bowled over by the quality of the pieces that were read out.*

*I thought I would let you know how much we loved it as I know you have all put such a lot of hard work into organising it. The work you have done with The Great Margin has been incredible. What an achievement, and, under such difficult circumstances. What an amazing team! I'm covered in goose pimples...* **Rebecca Adams, Writer Facilitator and Producer at The Great Margin Showcase**

*'If you think of poetry as this technology, nothing but words, a pen and paper and our thoughts, it's competing in this highly digital world and yet, it's still here, it's this technology that's still here.*

*There are so many things we take for granted. This notion of caring, caring for someone else. When we are amputated from a community or from the immediacy of help, it's phenomenal to those people who go through that and somehow inspire themselves to write.*

*This phenomenon, this disruptive virus, that's claimed us as its host, that is with us and continues to be with us. As it tries to pull us apart, I also see a coming together of these very intimate stories about the human condition and how we navigate our way through the moment, through the everyday.*

*With this virus, the permanency or the illusion of the permanent has been so fractured and so disrupted that we can see possibilities. We can now see the importance of art. We are still fighting that battle for the visibility of art to take the central role and we are seeing that. This fracture, this disruption, has somehow given us agency.'* **Ronnie McGrath, Author and Great Margin workshop group leader**

### **Further Feedback from the Great Margin Event and Website:**

*'Stunning writing - such a wonderful experience to hear them all. Each one spoke to me in some way... and will stay with me for some time to come. Thank you, amazing writers and readers.'* **Hillary Smith at The Great Margin Showcase Event**

*"Much more down to earth and accessible than other events I've been to. Less pretentious."*  
**Event Participant**

*In awe [...] totally connecting us in our homes of isolation,* **Tish Camp, Writer, at The Great Margin Showcase**

*A rain shower of beautiful words and feeling,* **Jasbinder Bilan, Costa Prize-winning Children's Writer, at The Great Margin Showcase**

*The poetry tonight is tremendous. Feel my heart expanding.* **Grace Palmer, Founder of Novel Nights, at The Great Margin Showcase**

*Feeling moved by so much connectivity! A huge sense of shared human experience.* **Judy Darley, Writer, at The Great Margin Showcase**

*It's beautiful. I cried the first time I read it, and I'm crying again now. It's not sadness. It's welcome release.*  
**Hospice Doctor, sent to us via email**

### **Time to Write**

Time to Write is a support-giving initiative for under-represented writers. The bulk of support was facilitated through a series of online community group workshops in Spring 2020, with additional opportunities offered to the cohort of 50 under-represented writers, such as publication on The Great Margin showcasing blog and translation of their work into films.

Kit De Waal, commenting on our Time to Write campaign said: *"For writers of colour, working class writers, writers with rural coastal deprivation, writers with experience of homelessness, refugee writers, writers in LGBTQ+ communities, writers who've survived abuse, disabled writers, writers with chronic health conditions. That's inclusion!"* **Kit De Waal**

**Time to Write participants:**

*'By taking part in Time to Write, I'd hope to have some set time off work where I could check out from everything and have time to focus on writing without anything else distracting me or rather than only being able to write in short bursts, I'd be able to give myself whole days to dedicate to writing.'*

*'I am a 60-year-old bricklayer who needs to work to survive. I try to write in the evenings, but am generally too tired. This scheme has encouraged time off to write in the day and complete my working class memoir, of which I already have 30,000 words.'*

*"There were few restrictions imposed on me - in fact, there was no obligation to write anything at all - and I found this incredibly freeing. I had begun to experiment and try new ways of writing (working with word and image) at the start of the lockdown and it was wonderful to be able to develop some of my ideas for this commission. I very much welcomed this generosity of spirit and felt I benefited from it. I later developed and extended the work I submitted for this project.*