



Paper Nations Interim Impact Report 2018-2020

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Paper Nations is a creative writing incubator, championing inclusive approaches to the art of writing. Growing out of extensive research and consultation with practitioners, Paper Nations develops programmes that aim to enhance existing creative writing provision in England in a sustainable way.

We are a team of writers and researchers working with other cultural leaders to deliver programmes that connect and expand support for writers. Based in the upper South West of England, we twin with other regions and cities across the world that share our vision and mission. Our approach is creative, collaborative and always responsive to the needs of the wider writing community.

Paper Nations is supported by Arts Council England, Bath Spa University, and Investors in Writing. The initiative is led by Professor Bambo Soyinka at the Research Centre for Transcultural Creativity and Education (TRACE) at Bath Spa University. We work in partnership with Bath Spa University's Creative Writing Faculty and School of Education, Bath Festivals, the National Association of Writers in Education (NAWE), StoryHive, and a thriving community of local schools and arts organisations.

We design and run a new programme of work every three years. Our stated goals for the 2019-2021 season were to break down the barriers to writing and creative media industries, creating a 'Writing for All' programme that enables writers from anywhere and from any background to connect with other writers, learn or further develop their craft and, should they choose, pursue a career in writing. Though the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has shifted aspects of our programme, it has not changed our overall goal and we have been able to carry out a successful virtual programme of events and support over the last year, details of which can be found in the report below.

Underlying Research

A data-driven approach

All of our decisions are informed by evidence emerging from our research into writing habits, communities and networks. We regularly map the writing landscape, identify gaps in provision, create resources and share insights into the lives of writers.

A key finding from our 2016-18 programme was that confidence in writing flourishes when approaches to learning are:

1. **Exploratory:** Creative writing emerges from free expression and exploration of ideas. To develop as writers, individuals need space and time to explore writing without pressure to publish or have their work 'assessed' by examiners.

2. **Grounded in supportive writing communities:** Material cultures and supportive communities play a key role in helping to sustain writing practice. Writing helps people to connect to others and to the world around them. Although individual exploration is important, writers who feel connected to a community are more likely to sustain their practice.

Drawing from our research and findings we have created two pivotal pedagogical resources: *The Writer's Cycle*, an adaptable guide for writing educators that explores how writers learn and develop their craft; and *Dare to Write?* a set of educational resources and materials to support writers to keep going with their writing and stay connected to each other.

The Writer's Cycle is a reference map to the themes of a writing life - **discovering** writing, **connecting to** the world around you, **crafting** new work, and **transforming** yourself, your writing or the world around you.

Importantly, in this model of writing development, ways of practising these habits are not presented as a linear process, or as stages of attainment. Every writer's experience is different, depending on their own circumstances, inclinations and interests. To show this, we represent the writer's process of development as a cycle of learning in constant motion. The writer can revisit the same action over time with increasing complexity and depth, or they can add new orbits to represent different approaches to writing and exploration.

Each orbit introduces a new theme -- a new way to engage with writing and exploration. Anyone can create or customise their own solar system by using their own words to describe the themes and habits - just start with the writer at the centre, and build habits around them to describe current and developing practice.

The intention is for *The Writer's Cycle* to contribute to the growth of a nationwide ecology of creative writing and the development of a common language to describe it. The pedagogy of *The Writer's Cycle* is rooted in evidence gathered from grounded research across the country. Through this resource we aim to make a contribution to the vital national effort to ensure that creative writing has its place at the heart of learning in all schools and communities.

Grounded research undertaken between 2016-18 led to the development of a range of creative writing resources that support writer development and which now underpin the work of the Writing for All project.

How we embed our research into our programme

In addition to using *The Writer's Cycle* to support the work of our partners and readers, the themes of *The Writer's Cycle* inform our ongoing programme of work and form the foundation for our new 2018-21 programme, supported through ACE's Ambition for Excellence scheme.

The programme of activities described in this document is part of a series of creative initiatives and action research projects conducted between 2018 and 2020, led by Professor Bambo Soyinka, the Principal Investigator. At the start of each project practitioners (teachers, curators and community leaders) were given access to our research on pedagogies for writer development (*Writer's Cycle* and/or *Dare to Write?*). Participants were also given the opportunity

to attend workshops and developmental sessions. At the end of each intervention Bambo Soyinka or members of the research team then worked with the practitioners to review how they had embedded the themes of *The Writer's Cycle* (Discovery, Connection, Craft and Transformation) into their activities, and to consider how they could sustain the activity in their school or community beyond the workshop.

Our current *Writing for All* programme builds on Paper Nations' previous partnership programme (Creative Writing in Schools) and on our research. Our programme is divided into four strands, each relating to an aspect of *The Writer's Cycle*.

Discovery - opening up access to writing development

This theme champions support for writing at the community level, with an emphasis on writing for all. It provides an entry point into the programme for writers, teachers and curators interested in writing, providing access to a range of courses, resources, and support designed to assist the writing journey, regardless of age, background, experience, or starting point. The theme involves developing partnerships with individuals and grassroots organisations from underserved or marginalised communities.

Artistry - enabling talented writers to produce great literary art, regardless of their background

This area of our programme relates to the theme of '**craft**' in *The Writer's Cycle*. It supports writers in their early to mid-career to develop work for publication or production. The theme involves developing partnerships with agencies, publishers, educational outlets and individuals who are working to support underserved artists.

Audiences - building connected communities of writers, and raising the local and international profile of the South West as a writing destination

This strand of our programme relates to the theme of '**connection**' in *The Writer's Cycle*. For this area of our work we are focusing on building and educating audiences for diversity through live workshops and events. In addition, our aim is to promote work from the region and bring new work from other places, supporting the South West to grow as a writing destination.

Innovation - invigorating the publishing, writing and media industries with new talent, voices and forms

This strand relates to the theme of '**transformation**'. Our goal is to build diversity and capacity for writing in the South West through supporting innovation across genre, form, content, and delivery platform. Our plan prior to Covid-19 was to support the development of more inclusive physical spaces, but during the pandemic we pivoted to the development of online spaces.

Creative Leadership - expanding and sustaining support for diverse writers and forms of writing

At the centre of our work is our active community of leaders and facilitators who work with us to develop initiatives and to embed knowledge from our research into their own programmes.

How we gather Data and Measure Impact

We use a range of mixed media methodologies, co-designed action research (McKenzie et al., 2014); cultural mapping using ethnographic principles and approaches (Duxbury et al., 2015; Kharel, 2015; Ellis et al., 2011; Van Maanen, 2011; Atkinson, 1990); co-production (Bond, 2018; Campbell and Vanderhoven, 2016); and surveying (Adams, 2014; Ellis, 2011; Dicks et al., 2006; Charmaz, 2000).

This mixed approach has enabled us to capture nuances within the data (Hay, 2020; Paris, 2019; Hay et al., 2014; Tondeur, 2013). Throughout this process, we consider the people that we worked with – and on behalf of – as knowledge holders (Bond, 2018; Wang et al., 2017). Our collaborative action research approach is central to the project's wider objective to effectively share knowledge (Jindal-Snape et al., 2013; Horner, 2010; NACCCE, 1999).

To ensure all participants understand the scope of the research and their ability to abstain or withdraw from taking part, they were given an information sheet to ensure they provided “meaningful consent” (Williams 2006) or “informed consent” (Murphy and Dinwall, 2007; Chih Hoong Sin, 2005; Thorne, 1980). Participants had the option to anonymise their contributions or, in keeping with the project’s objective to give voice to underrepresented writers, participants could choose to be credited. Special care was taken when working with vulnerable groups and young people and specific safeguarding measures were taken on occasions where children participated in workshops.

Surveys

To further ensure the accuracy of our data collection methodologies we work closely with an independent evaluator: The Centre for Education and Youth (CfEY). CfEY has provided us with CPD training in data collection methodologies, and has also designed our surveys in order to ensure that they are robust. In addition, CfEY reviews a sample of our surveys in order to produce interim and final reports. We use these reports to gain a better understanding of the impact of our research, and to support the future design of provision.

Theory of Change

Our approach to developing impact is informed by the following theory of change, initially developed by ACE and later refined in consultation with our partners and the Centre for Youth and Education. Our surveys are designed to enable us to quantitatively track and measure the outcomes of our theory of change. In addition to this quantitative approach we conduct in-depth qualitative interviews and surveys and gather testimonies from participants to support the evaluation of specific areas of our programme. Using qualitative research tools, these ‘intensive’ studies have enabled us to produce a series of case studies highlighting some of our flagship projects and notable impacts. Our qualitative research enables us to gain deeper insights into the stories underpinning our qualitative data.

This interim report discusses some of the preliminary findings about the outcomes and impacts of our current programme of work.

Overall outcome/theme	Measurable outcomes, results and impacts	How is this research, measured or shared?
1. Best practice in creative writing	Best practice in creative writing education in schools is researched, captured, articulated and made more explicit.	Core research activities – i.e., action research and analysis. S1-9. Esp. S3 & S8 .
	Best practice is transferred to adult education settings.	
	Multimodal approaches are researched and developed to ensure that resources are more widely applied and used.	
2. Valuing creative writing	Values and approaches are shared by all involved.	Lit review, mapping and impact evaluations . S1, S4 & S9 .
	People value creative writing more.	
3. Participation (engagement, inclusivity and diversity)	Participation in creative writing increases.	Impact evaluations. S5 , with some evidence drawn from S8 and S9.
	Facilitators, curators and participants enjoy creative writing more.	
	A diverse range of participants engage in creative writing.	
	Use of inclusive creative writing pedagogy among facilitators and writers increases.	
4. Communities of Support	Existing networks are expanded and new networks are created.	Impact evaluations. S1-9. Esp S5, S3, S6, S8, S9 .
	Barriers to partnerships between organisations and partners are reduced.	
5. Viability	Participants want to continue writing post-project.	Mapping exercises, impact evaluation, case studies and distribution strategies. S5, S5 and S8
	Facilitators' and curators' motivations for involvement change.	
	Facilitators, organisations and writers have the capacity and ability to continue.	
	It is economically viable to continue delivery.	
	Knowledge is communicable, adaptable and mobilised.	

Wider Impact Data

An independent report from The Centre for Youth Education identified the following changes across our sites of impact from our 2016-17 programme: Paper Nations' research boosted teachers' and writers' confidence and practice in teaching creative writing, encouraging classroom teachers to adopt a wider range of strategies as part of their regular lessons. Writers involved in Paper Nations highlighted the benefits of having space and structure to generate ideas, reflect on one another's writing, and engage in the process (rather than focusing purely on outputs).

"Young people report writing more frequently following their involvement in Paper Nations. Those who initially wrote less frequently participated more often by the end of the Programme."

"Paper Nations' research has been pivotal in changing my perception of my work both as a writer and a producer. It has transformed my understanding of writing habits and the craft of writing and the Paper Nation's model of the eco-system around writing has directly impacted on my work as a practitioner. Engagement with this body of research has enabled me and other producers to create opportunities for writers from underrepresented backgrounds, opening up access and networks of support."

Jasmine Richards, Founder of StoryMix

"We are delighted that Paper Nations and First Story will be sharing replicable delivery and business models as the legacy of the Creative Writing in Schools programme, to inform, inspire, and support more children and young people to write creatively and for pleasure, in and outside school." **Sarah Crown, National Director for Literature, Arts Council England**

Further extracts from our most recent interim report from the Centre for Education and Youth:

1. Participants' backgrounds

Over a third of all participants in Paper Nations' activities say they are from a group or background that is underrepresented in literature and the media. Nine people (60%) participating in Dare to Write? consider themselves underrepresented. Participants in the Stay at Home! Festival live across the UK. Participants in Paper Nations' other activities tend to live in the South West, but not exclusively, with a small number living in other parts of the UK or internationally.

2. Participants' engagement in writing

A majority of participants involved in Paper Nations' writing activities said they would write more often as a result. Similarly, participants said their involvement in the activities would increase their participation in future writing events.

Qualitative feedback from participants emphasised the events' accessibility and diversity, with two attendees at the Stay at Home! Festival saying:

“Extremely diverse, welcoming, inspiring, well organised, wonderful!”

3. To what extent have the events supported participants as writers?

The highest proportion of participants saying they ‘strongly agreed’ the events had helped them as writers said this in relation to their appreciation of the cultural and emotional value of writing, and their confidence.

Over 80% of presenters (n=20) agreed that running sessions developed their confidence and skills as facilitators and presenters.

Some participants provided qualitative feedback about the events. These responses highlighted the positive impact the events had on the respondents’ mental wellbeing, confidence, connection with other people, and enjoyment of writing.

4. Barriers experienced by participants

Asked about whether they had experienced any barriers during their participation in events, nearly half of participants highlighted that a lack of time had been an issue for them. Respondents providing qualitative feedback suggested that they had occasionally experienced technical issues, such as poor internet connection. Some participants joining sessions from outside the UK said the time difference had been challenging.

5. Barriers that events helped overcome

Participants said that Paper Nations’ events helped them overcome barriers to their writing, in particular with geography, confidence, and cost. Respondents were less likely to agree that the events helped them overcome a lack of equipment or space, or support from friends and family.

6. The Writer’s Cycle

Of the 36 participants asked, 21 said they had used *The Writer’s Cycle*. Two thirds of respondents strongly agreed *The Writer’s Cycle* had enhanced their understanding of how rhythms and habits inform practice, and 20 of 21 respondents agreed that the Cycle recognised and validated their experiences as writers.

Online Engagement:

Total online engagement for Ambitions Project: 3,161,031 views (as of 1st February 2021).

The Overarching Programme: Writing For All

In July 2018, we formally launched our Writing for All programme with a call for participants.

Throughout the programme, Paper Nations has gained positive feedback, reinforcing our vision and purpose. Responses from delegates at the launch of Writing for All were hugely encouraging:



Following an initial call for partners and advisors in 2018, in July 2019 we ran a summit which welcomed 100 cultural workers and educators at Corsham Town Hall. During the event we ran a mini survey to canvas the initial impact and response to our work. Here's a snapshot of some of the responses:

'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 Summit 2019

'Vulnerable adults need a safe space and ongoing support.'

Liv Torc, at the Writing For All Summit 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 Summit 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 Summit 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 Summit 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 Summit 2019

‘We need to empower people to just write, not as a means to an end.’

Dionne McCulloch, at the Writing For All Summit 2019

‘How can digital writing be measured? You need to broaden the scope of what writing is.’

Anonymous, at the Writing For All Summit 2019

Further [written feedback](#) and [video feedback](#) is available on our website.

Further responses can be found on our [website](#).

Discovery:

Writing Resources (*The Writer's Cycle*)

In July 2020, Paper Nations released the latest version of [The Writer's Cycle](#), an important resource to help writing educators design effective writing provision. *The Writer's Cycle* is rooted in the experiences of over 700 writers and writer-facilitators, and has been developed with input from published, established authors as well as emerging writers. The model which has emerged from this research is designed to have overarching appeal to writers and writer-facilitators of all ages, from any background, and at any phase in their writing lifecycle.

We also responded to requests from individuals and organisations for specific support surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic. In the set of *Writer's Cycle* resources, we've included an executive summary and full-length paper which explores the effect of the pandemic on writers and their creative processes, entitled *Beyond Covid-19: The Writer's Cycle as a Model for Resilience, Transformation and Inclusion*. The Cycle is now being used by writing educators in courses, workshops, and schools across the country.

The National Association of Writers in Education (NAWE) set up a new sub-committee dedicated to community writing as a result of Paper Nations' research:

"The Paper Nations' research was a real turning point for NAWE. We were given the opportunity to test out ideas emerging from the research collaboratively and directly with grassroots projects. The research enabled us to form new relationships and initiatives. The Writer's Cycle was a very important output and was shared at the NAWE Conference and through our publications and networks. As a result, we've now developed a series of Regional Network meetings open to members and non-members alike and have run these in Cornwall, Leeds, Norwich, London and Bath. These have been really well received and we plan to run similar interventions across the UK."

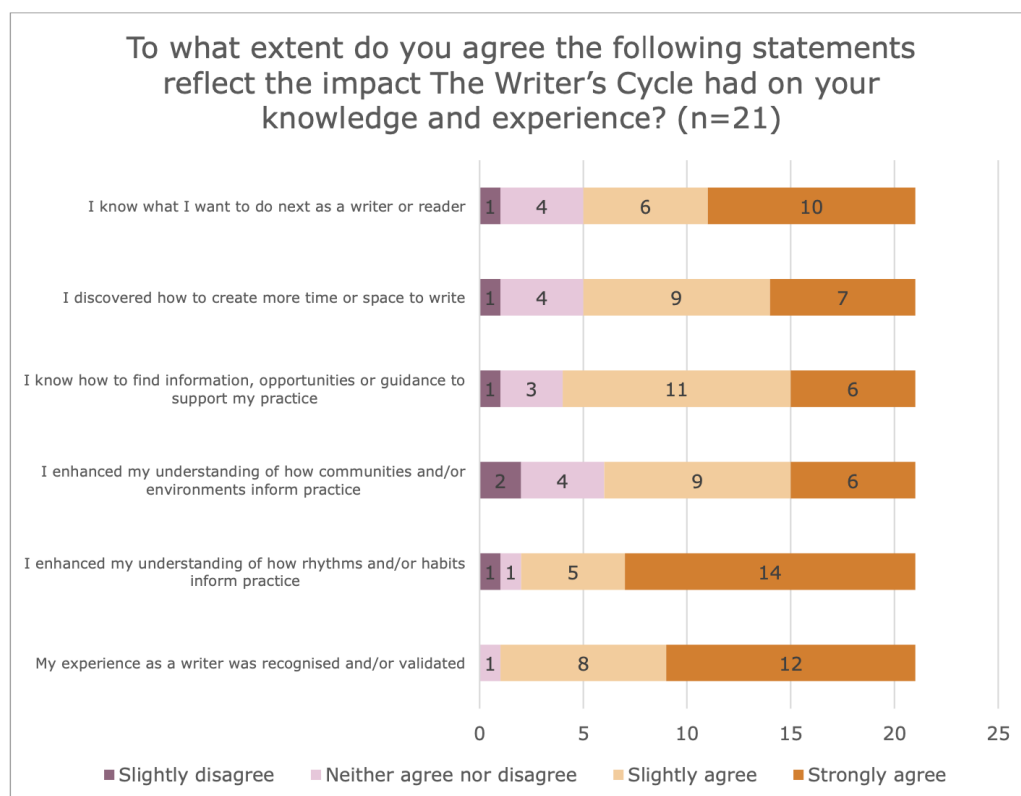
Seraphima Kennedy, Director of National Association of Writers in Education

The Writer's Cycle has been shared widely via the NAWE website. It is difficult to evaluate the wider impact on our readers. However, we conducted a survey following one of our events which gave an indication of how this work is making an impact on those who read. The extract below is from our interim report from CfEY:



6 Writer's Cycle

Of the 36 participants asked, 21 said they had used the Writer's Cycle. Two thirds of respondents strongly agreed the Writer's Cycle had enhanced their understanding of how rhythms and habits inform practice, and 20 of 21 respondents agreed that the Cycle recognised and validated their experiences as writers.



In addition, several facilitators have contacted us following workshops and/or after reading our documentation to let us know how this pedagogical tool has influenced/changed their understanding, perception or practice:

“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. It was the model (*The Writer’s Cycle*) I’m doing all of the elements, I hadn’t consciously thought about it before.”

Bridget, *The Writer’s Cycle* Workshop Attendee

“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 also value the overall guidance and appreciate the clear design and accessible layout used too.”

Gill Pawley, Founder of Inkpots

“I see The Writers' 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. [...] 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, Bristol City Poet

"I've recently been teaching *The Writer's Cycle* with marginalised writers. The ideas behind *The Writer's Cycle* are based on research into the habits of successful writers and it's been developed by the literary development support agency, Paper Nations, to provide best practice for creative writing teachers. In my teaching I also use a variety of divergent thinking techniques to help writers free themselves from negative blocks. But the best help I can give you is to provide you with daily support and inspiration in a friendly group to get your words down on a page. The emphasis in this class is less about critiquing but more about celebrating story and helping you recognise what parts of your story are working well."

Grace Palmer, Founder of Novel Nights

"It was really helpful to place myself in *The Writer's Cycle*. Where am I? How am I going to move forward?"

Angela, *The Writer's Cycle* Workshop Attendee

"*The Writer's Cycle* really helped me not only to understand myself as a writer (and, actually consider myself a writer) and also what, as a facilitator, I actually do!"

Rebecca Adams, Writer Facilitator and Producer

The Dare to Write? Academy

In July 2020 Paper Nations hosted a month of writing courses, workshops, and CPD courses with award-winning author, Aminatta Forna. This programme has recently returned for Spring 2021 and is currently part-way through being revealed.

Feedback from attendees described the series as "outstanding" (Akulah Agbami) and "Inspiring; online platform made it feel more accessible than other hall-based events" (Fiona Williams).

Dare to Write? On Tour

Building on our successful series of child-facing workshops and applying the methodology of *The Writer's Cycle*, Paper Nations partnered with Bristol Libraries to host a series of online workshops for all ages known as Dare to Write? On Tour. They also hosted a special edition of Dare to Write? in honour of Black History Month with special guests, Ronnie McGrath and Zena Edwards, reflecting on the meanings, histories, and influences on blackness.

Feedback

"It was very enjoyable and accessible - I particularly liked that audience members were welcomed up on-screen if they wished, but that there was no pressure to if they weren't able/didn't want to."

Lois Foster

“More enjoyable and felt like a more intimate conversation with the group rather than being talked at.”

Roxanne Barbon

“This event was incredible. I was amazed at how the event felt freeing and structured at the same time. People were invited to participate and also invited to listen. The presenters struck a perfect balance and I left feeling incredibly inspired. Creatively, I had been feeling low but the encouragement and dialogue in the event gave me extra fuel to write after a few months of stagnation.

I had never confronted the issue of race in my writing and a section specifically inviting this subject helped me open myself up in a new way. What could have been an emotionally difficult experience was carried out so supportively as Naomi held the space so well. I was thoroughly buoyed and have been singing her praises ever since!

Accessibility-wise, I liked Crowdcast as the chat function was inviting. The chat function allowed everyone to participate in real-time while letting the speakers go uninterrupted. Unlike Zoom, the chat function felt more like Facebook Live in how people could type more informally with emojis and the like. This made the chat function feel less pressured and more personal and worked really well.

The whole event was educational but entertaining with performances and discussions - Naomi even went into a freestyle which was really cool! Having a host be so open to experiment with the unknown was so effective as Naomi led by example and made others - including me - feel comfortable doing the same in different ways.

In short: more useful than other events I have been to lately, more enjoyable and very accessible.”

Christopher Beale (Co-founder of Bristol Tonic)

Artistry:

Time to Write

Time to Write is a support-giving initiative for underrepresented writers. The bulk of support was facilitated through a series of online community group workshops in Summer 2020, with additional opportunities offered to the cohort of 50 underrepresented writers, such as publication on The Great Margin showcasing blog, and bursaries to attend other Paper Nations initiatives.

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!”

Participants in Time to Write have expressed how vital the time, space, and resources offered by the programme are, as well as how important writing is to them. Several participants told us about the challenge of finding time to write when you have conflicting responsibilities, such as caring for others and having to earn a living across several jobs:

‘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.’
Time to Write Participant

‘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.’
Time to Write Participant

Anonymised Feedback from the Time to Write Online Community Groups:

“Useful, well organised and structured writing groups - very accessible for all levels.”

“It was useful to workshop with those who write outside of YA fiction for a range of input. Being online made it very accessible!”

“It was different due to being online, but I enjoyed it very much. It was easier to attend than if it was a live event.”

“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.”

“Much more down to earth and accessible than other events I've been to. Less pretentious.”

“All of the events were useful and enjoyable, including well thought-through content that was really practical.”

“More enjoyable and more in depth, being a 5 week programme with the same people was really beneficial.”

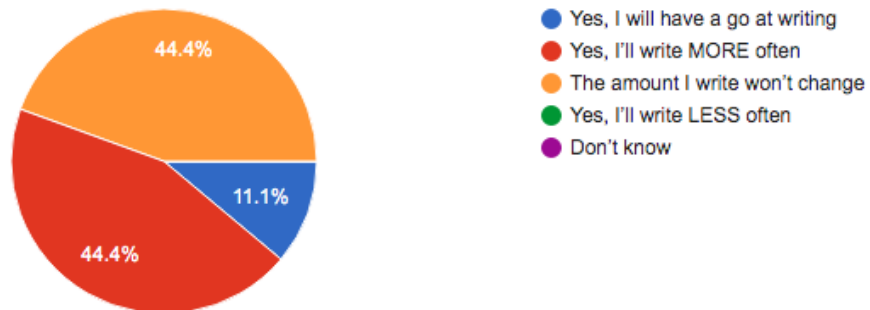
“The workshops were great, really useful, engaging and inspiring.”

Statistical Data:

44.4% of the Time To Write participants who responded said they would write more often as a result of the programme.

Do you think this event will change how often you write? (Select ONE):

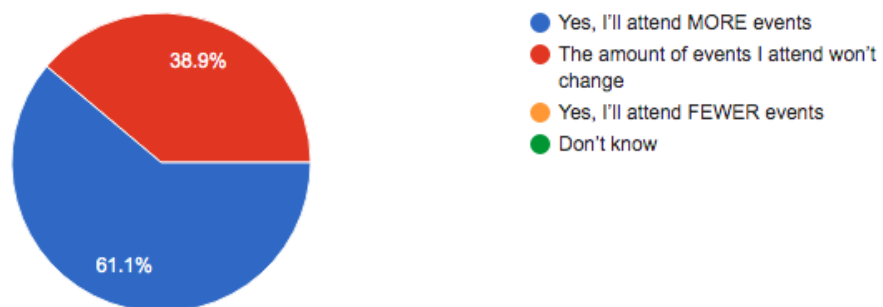
18 responses



61.1% of the Time To Write participants who responded said they would attend more writing events as a result of the programme.

Do you think this event will increase your participation in writing events (e.g. writing groups, literary festivals, workshops) (Select ONE):

18 responses



Audience:

StoryTown

Led by Corsham Town Council in collaboration with Paper Nations, StoryTown is a year-round programme of writing events culminating in a weekend-long festival. The festival has run since 2018 and utilises the pedagogy of *The Writer's Cycle*. StoryTown returned in October 2020 for its third year, co-produced by Paper Nations, who provided significant support to transpose the festival to Zoom and Crowdcast. The festival events reached over 10,000 people.

- 400 children to receive Arts Awards through StoryTown project with Marnie Forbes (a project developed with reference to *Dare to Write?* and *The Writer's Cycle* as a methodology)

- 10,000 attendees at StoryTown 2020 (a town-wide festival that embeds *The Writer's Cycle/Dare to Write?* as a creative pedagogy/methodology)
- 973 people engaged with via Marnie at StoryTown 2020
- 1005 people engaged with via Marnie at StoryTown 2019

"Corsham Town Council's Strategic Plan has long included a requirement for a literary event, but we were determined to make it more than a gathering of authors reading their latest works. StoryTown could not be a one-off, or even a once-a-year event. It had to become a brand for the town that would inspire the entire community and attract visitors. The creative, organizational support of Bath Spa, Paper Nations and Dare To Write? research has made that possible, and the input of the Pound Arts Centre, Springfield Library, Corsham Institute, all the schools, the Town Hall, local retailers, Red Forge Studios and interest groups has imbued it with true community spirit."

Neville Farmer, Corsham Town Councilor

"Excellent - love to see what creativity there is locally."

Kate Skelton

"[My child] had the most wonderful time taking part in this Story Town event with wider members of the community. It has been wonderful to see her confidence grow in front of an audience and working with adults outside of the school community."

Anonymous Parent

"Paper Nations making writing accessible for all with their events map and their involvement in supporting StoryTown is fantastic."

Carly Corlett, Founder of Peahen Publishing

The Writing Producers' Scheme

In 2020, Paper Nations launched the Writing Producers' Scheme, which sought to support writing producers to create, expand and sustain writing initiatives. The Writing Producers' Scheme is designed to support this talented pool of producers to create, expand, and sustain writing initiatives which will have a lasting effect on the writing ecology of the upper South West region. Paper Nations has selected eleven talented writing producers and is now concluding a programme of support for them, which has included tailored support in a nurturing and professional environment and regular coaching sessions with Professor Bambo Soyinka.

"I'm feeling optimistic and energised about 2021 and much of that is down to the boost our mentoring sessions gave me." Michael Loveday, Writer Facilitator and WPS Mentee. Michael developed a new model for mentorship classes on the advice of Professor Soyinka, which brought in 25% more funds than in his courses' previous application window.

The Writing Producers' Scheme is the latest iteration of our Writing Ambassadors scheme and employs the pedagogy of *The Writer's Cycle*. Professor Bambo Soyinka introduced 20

participants to *The Writer's Cycle* and subsequently supported the producers to develop their writing ideas and to create a sustainable writing enterprise.

WPS Mentee JLM Morton's new writing development organisation, Dialect, received a £15,000 ACE grant as a result of the support provided by the Writing Producers' Scheme.

Another producer was Jasmine Richards. Jasmine has worked in children's publishing for 15 years at both Puffin and OUP. As an author, she has written and published over a dozen books for children. For five years she ran Book Bound – a writer's retreat that has supported and launched many debut children's authors. She has delivered author training for Booktrust Represents and still teaches on the Oxford MA for creative writing. As an expert on the industry, she has written an article for the *Writers and Artists Yearbook 2020* on the publishing market.

The project which Jasmine brought to the Writing Producers' Scheme was Storymix. Founded in 2019, Storymix is a book incubator with a social purpose. The project supports the creation of children's fiction series with diverse casts of characters. Jasmine works with emerging writers from diverse backgrounds and offers a pathway to publication. Through Jasmine's nurture and support she is tackling the chronic underrepresentation of black writers and creatives in children's books.

The support of the Writing Producers' Scheme has been invaluable in the development and continuation of Storymix. Jasmine describes Bambo's input as 'pivotal in changing my perception of my work both as a writer and a producer'. She adds that engagement with Paper Nations :

"... has enabled me and other writing producers and educators to create opportunities for writers from underrepresented backgrounds. These impacts have been achieved both through the sharing of research (i.e. *The Writer's Cycle* and other documents) and through innovative research-informed initiatives that have opened up access and networks of support."

Jasmine has recently secured another book deal and has been nominated for a prestigious award. Bambo will continue working with Jasmine as an independent evaluation partner.

The Great Margin

The Great Margin Platform and Poetry Film Series

December 2020 saw the launch of the dedicated Great Margin platform (www.thegreatmargin.org). The platform features two series of poetry films "Bulletins From the Edge" and "I Even Dream in Haiku"; exploratory field notes; as well as conversations on writing practice, guest curated by Amanda White, founder of The Daily Haiku. The poetry film series represents the culmination of our wider research into creative writing ecologies. Both

film collections were directed by Bambo Soyinka in collaboration with writers who shared their work with us.

Each film in “Bulletins From the Edge” explores community writing and sense-making through the pandemic, encapsulating different facets of isolation from the fringes of the writing world. The “I Even Dream in Haiku” series is a set of dynamic, collaborative films that are crowd-sourced from The Daily Haiku’s 5000-strong community of writers. The collection imaginatively depicts a day in the life of a writer and returns to touchstones of creativity.

Founded on an ethos of collaboration and integrity, The Great Margin was launched in March 2020. The project was facilitated through a series of flash initiatives and partnerships, which moved rapidly to support isolated and marginalised writers. Through poetic language, the individual perspectives of these writers on the recent past, present, and future were interpreted and explored. By sharing these writings, this created a sense of a shared community and broadened understanding of how to support writers within online environments.

The Great Margin encompassed the following flash initiatives:

- The Stay-at-Home! Literature Festival (more below)
- The Great Margin Showcasing Blog, culminating in a Showcasing Event at StoryTown Corsham
- ‘Lockdown’ A Writing Competition by Bath and North East Somerset Libraries
- The Great Margin dedicated digital platform, including
 - [Poetry Film Series “Bulletins from the Edge”](#)
 - [Haiku Film Series “I Even Dream in Haiku”](#)
 - [The Field Notes Series](#)
 - [The Conversation Series](#)
- A scholarship scheme for under-represented writers (facilitated through Time to Write, above).

Partners include:

- The Stay-at-Home! Literature Festival led by Carolyn Jess Cooke
- BBC Upload
- The British Library
- Bath Record Archives
- Bath and North East Somerset Library Service
- StoryTown Corsham Family Writing Festival
- Tracy Harris Video Production
- The Daily Haiku

"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

Further Feedback:

"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

"In awe [...] totally connecting us in our homes of isolation"

Tish Camp, Writer, at The Great Margin Showcase

"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

Launch of The Great Margin Dedicated Platform

December 2020 saw the launch of the [dedicated Great Margin platform](#). The platform features two series of poetry films, contextualising essays, as well as conversations on writing practice, guest curated by Amanda White, founder of The Daily Haiku.

The Film Series

"Bulletins From the Edge" and "I Even Dream in Haiku" are two new collections of poetry films that represent the culmination of a year of The Great Margin project and our wider research into creative writing ecologies. Both film collections were directed by Bambo Soyinka in collaboration with writers who shared their work with The Great Margin.

Each film in "Bulletins From the Edge" encapsulates a different facet of isolation from the fringes of the writing world. The films are acts of translation that represent an interpretation of the original pieces of work, which were submitted to The Great Margin in Spring/Summer 2020. With empathy at its heart, the project was an exploration of community writing and sense-making through the pandemic.

"I Even Dream in Haiku" are dynamic, collaborative films that are entirely crowd-sourced from The Daily Haiku's 4200-strong community of writers from across the world, presenting many voices at once to create a diverse call from the depths of pandemic isolation. The collection

imaginatively depicts a day in the life of a writer. Each film represents a stage in their day, and returns to touchstones of creativity.

Video Reach:

Youtube Views "Bulletins From The Edge" & "I Even Dream in Haiku": 1110
(As of 1st February 2021 midday)

Feedback from "Bulletins From the Edge"

"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."

Winston Plowes

"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. Thank you!"

Josephine Corcoran

Feedback from "I Even Dream in Haiku"

'The field notes and the conversations are a great inspiration as well as the films. Thank you!'

Fiona Jane Stuart:

'The haiku are beautiful and the films are lovely. Congratulations to all the collaborators.'

Wendy Blomseth

"What delightful (and much needed) little slices of stillness these films are."

Oz Hardwick, Poet, The Daily Haiku

'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

'Wonderful! Honoured to be part of this great project.'

Marion Clarke

'Beautiful, touching films! I'm so pleased and proud to be a contributor. Many thanks for giving TDH members this opportunity.'

Kelly Davis

"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. I am an avid follower."

Fiona Jane Stuart

'Really enjoyed the way they were put together. The short length of each is so accessible.'

Judith Railton

'Absolutely beautiful!'

Jim Lamey

The Stay-at-Home! Literature Festival

The Stay-at-Home! Festival is an online festival that ran from the 27th March to 11th April 2020. It was developed by bestselling author and poet CJ Cooke, with Paper Nations as a partner. The festival celebrated the power of writing and reading in preventing loneliness and championed connectivity and community amidst social distancing.

It is hoped that work produced and inspired by the festival will be submitted to The Great Margin Showcase. Paper Nations also supported the development of several Writers in Residence, who will each contribute a piece of writing to The Great Margin Showcase.

The Stay-at-Home! Festival had over 20,000 participants, and 220 writers took part. Paper Nations hosted a plenary via Zoom on 23rd April to consult with both the participants and the writers to determine the best way to continue the festival.

In October, The Bookseller highly commended the Stay-at-Home! Festival for its FutureBook Award: Best Event of Lockdown.



Reception:

- 54.7% of people who attended Stay at Home! Festival said they would write more as a result of this session
- 75.9% said they would attend more events as a result of Stay at Home! Festival
- 74% said they developed their writing skills
- 72% said they developed their confidence
- 76% said it increased their appreciation of the cultural and emotional value of writing

Feedback (all anonymous):

"It helped me feel I can break down the barriers of my disability"

"I felt connected to a writer community and less isolated during lockdown"

"Absolutely brilliant to be able to access online workshops and as the first online literary festival I've ever attended it was incredibly helpful. It helped me to feel included, gave me confidence to try new things and start writing again, and helped me feel less isolated."

"It's made me realise I can use Zoom with the writers I know to have virtual writing sessions. Huge breakthrough in my daily practice."

"It widened access to creative writing resources: the festival itself, the books recommended in the sessions etc."

Innovation:

Beyond the Book

Beyond the Book is a new scheme that aims to develop innovative models for writing and publication, promoting dialogue between writers, technologists and new publishers. We want to help writers work with technologists to go 'beyond the book' – developing writing for media such as phones, games, and immersive technology. We want to subvert the mainstream, with a wider range of voices and new ways of writing.

The three selected projects:

- Lucy Telling – "The Wallet Chapters", an interactive narrative inspired by e-tickets
- Melanie Frances – "Seer", a reader-led interdimensional journalistic investigation
- Lucy Christopher and Rajiv Edward – "The Fog", a mission to save Bath from a time-freezing fog

The projects are currently underway and will conclude later in 2021.

AI Story Lab & Placement

This May, 10 writers from across the region took part in our two-day [AI Story Lab](#). Run in partnership with Bath Spa's [Centre for Cultural and Creative Industries](#), [Bristol+Bath Creative R+D](#), and [To Play For](#), this fully-funded workshop gave underrepresented writers the opportunity to explore interactive, immersive storytelling powered by AI through developing stories for [Charisma](#). Charisma is a breakthrough interactive comic app placing you inside a story, where you talk to the characters and influence the stories themselves as a result.

Four writers were selected for paid placements with To Play For to develop their stories for Charisma. They were: short story writer, Alex Carter, who has an interest in linguistic analysis and has built algorithmic trading programmes; Constance Fleuriot, a writer, artist and gamemaker who has worked in creative technology research since the early 1990s; Jasmine Richards, who is passionate about creating stories that are inclusive and exploring opportunities to connect with readers in new and innovative ways through StoryMix, her inclusive fiction studio; and finally, Matthew Thorpe-Coles, a poet and digital editor, interested in environment, interactive storytelling and social justice.

Matthew Thorpe-Coles, who is a poet and MA Creative Writing student at Bath Spa University, spoke to us about his experience.

'I was thrilled to have been given the opportunity to work more closely with Charisma following our Paper Nations workshop. Writing with Charisma was a unique and refreshing challenge and I'm very pleased that I got to be one of the first people to work with it. Both Paper Nations and the team at To Play For have afforded me so much experience, and I'm so grateful to have been able to tell a story unlike anything I could ever have dreamed of writing on pen and paper.'

Concluding thoughts from Professor Bambo Soyinka at the close of 2020

As 2020 drew to a close and I reflected on it occurred to us how many times we use the word 'we' when talking about our work. It got us thinking about what exactly we mean when we say this tiny word which encompasses so much and so many.

The 'we' of Paper Nations includes a team of writers, researchers, editors, and administrators. We also work closely with several leading authors including Nathan Filer, Kit De Waal, and Aminatta Forna who support and inform our programme of work. Outside the immediate team, we work closely with a group of community educators, creative producers, and creative advisory groups. Widening the circle still further, we also work with writers, writing facilitators, social enterprises and writing organisations nationally and online.

This 'we' is a collective composed of individuals from different backgrounds, with different motivations, experiences, and perspectives, whose singular voices contribute to one single shared purpose. It is this 'we' -- this diverse fusion of people, ideas and experience -- that gives strength to our work.

Our programme of work in 2020 was delivered against the backdrop of a world in crisis. It was an enormously difficult year for many people, and it reminded us how important it is for us to stay connected.

2020 brought us together, and has revealed more starkly the ways in which we remain divided. Analysis shows that mental health has worsened by 8.1%, and that women and young adults have been hardest hit. Black, Asian and people from a minority ethnic background have been shown to be nearly twice as likely to die of the virus than white people. Older people living in care homes have suffered greatly, both from Covid-19 and from the effects of restrictions.

At the same time, we were amazed by the speed at which the writing community has responded to the pandemic, adapting work and developing new opportunities. Communities have come together online through creative initiatives such as The Great Margin. Individuals who might normally be excluded from creative events -- perhaps due to disability or caring commitments -- have been offered opportunities for online inclusion.

As we try to make sense of our experiences, many of us are increasingly turning to creativity. Research from University College London shows that 24% of people across all demographics embraced creative activities during lockdown, and that creative activities were credited as being the most effective way to create wellbeing. Whilst creativity and creative writing cannot solve all of our problems, they can help us to process our situation and imagine futures. Creativity can help us to communicate with other people, listen, and share divergent views.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank all of the writing educators and writers who contributed to the success of this programme,

Whilst this project has always been a collaborative one at heart, it has never spoken with just one voice. Our work is a celebration of diversity and divergence and inclusivity.

We wish you well, and join you in hoping for a more positive note for 2021. If there ever was any question about the ability of the arts to survive in difficult times, the sheer resilience, determination, and creativity the writing sector has shown this year, proves there is enduring strength and potential in creating stories and sharing them together.

Professor Bambo Soyinka, December 2020

List of Reports, associated projects and documents that this project draws on:

- R1** Soyinka B (2018), The Dare to Write? Library and the Dare to Write? Atlas (2019)
- R2** .The Writer's Cycle on the [NAWE Creative Writing in Schools Page \(2020\)](#)
- R3** Soyinka, B. (2020) [The Great Margin](#) (Research Portfolio published with support from Arts Council England)
- R4** Summary of [contextualising evidence](#) (2016-20)(supporting document in this portfolio).
- R5** Dare to Write? [Images/Visual Documentation](#) (folder in this portfolio)
- R6** [LKMCo Evaluation of Creative Writing in Schools](#) (commissioned by Arts Council, 2019)
- R7** [Paper Nations Impact Reports:](#)
- **R7a** Evaluation by The Centre for Education & Youth (2016-2018)
 - **R7b** Paper Nations Impact Report (2018-2020)
- R8** Case studies and testimonials (In contextual materials folder in this portfolio)
- R9** PN [participants, organisations and practitioners](#) (in contextual materials folder in this portfolio)
- R10**:Participant Case Studies and Testimonials (document in this portfolio).

List of data sets that this document draws on

- S1: Paper Nations Online Thematic Mapping Data
- S2: Scoping Surveys
- S3: Paper Nations Call for Evidence
- S4: Paper Nations Semi Structured Interviews or focus groups
- S5: Paper Nations Qualitative Survey Results
- S6: Creative outputs from the project team, participants or collaborations
- S7: Paper Nations Field Notes, Documentation and Observational Data
- S8: Paper Nations Case Studies
- S9: Paper Nations participant quotes and feedback