

Wakefield
LitFest

2021

Inside

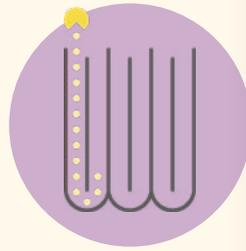
CELEBRATING WORDS
RECOMMENDATIONS
THE NORTHERN
WRITING SCENE
MUTUAL AID
& COMMUNITY
LIBRARIES
POETRY



Check
out our
writing
prompts!



CELEBRATING WORDS. DEFYING CONVENTION. CREATING COMMUNITY.



Those six words sit at the centre of our ethos at Wakefield LitFest.

Before we planned any of the logistics of our first festival in 2020, we sat down on Zoom and discussed our core goals- what we really wanted to achieve with a youth literature festival in Wakefield. And these six words are what we kept coming back to. This ethos is what drove and inspired us throughout the process to create a great LitFest, and it's what has continued to drive us this year too.

Following the success of last year's festival, we wanted to ensure that our message stayed the same throughout this year too. While we had plenty more opportunities to continue our legacy (hooray for in-person events!) we also

had plenty more challenges to overcome in order to create something that truly spoke to the vision we've had and continue to have.

Words, in every form, lie at the heart of what we do with LitFest. From poetry recommendations on our social media channels to world-building over Zoom and being inspired by history at Pontefract Castle, every event that we run and thing we do aims to celebrate words, in every form. It's important to us that literature isn't just something that lies dormant, studied in high school classrooms and university auditoriums. We want to display, to young people especially, that literature is living, breathing, all around is, and above all, can be really exciting. Words feature in every part of our lives, from books to video games, to television and film, and we think it's important to celebrate that.

It's the wide variety of places where we find words that also, in part, drives the second part of our ethos, that of defying convention. When people think of 'literature,' we're immediately drawn to thinking of Shakespeare, Dickens, and the like. These writers are, of course, important to literature, and certainly are worthy of time and attention. But we want to challenge the assumptions people have about literature, to show people that comedians and screenwriters are just as important and significant to literature as poets and playwrights. Part of what we also want to challenge is the established 'canon' of literature, a body of works largely dominated by wealthy, dead, white, heterosexual, cisgender men. While these writings certainly have their place in the world, we want to question; is this writing any more important and significant than the writings of people of colour, of women, of the working classes, of LGBTQ+ people. At Wakefield LitFest, we truly believe that all writing is important, and thus we want to champion the writing of people who are often overlooked.

Finally, we want to create community. Wakefield, and the North in general, is often overlooked when it comes to arts and culture. But there is a thriving community of writers and artists across the Wakefield district and indeed the North who are passionate about words in every

form. It remains our aim to help foster this community and allow it to grow. As a literature festival made for and by young people, we understand how important a sense of belonging and community is. We hope you're able to find that in what we do with Wakefield LitFest.

This zine serves as a reflection of our ethos. It is a celebration of words, a defiance against convention, and a testament to the community created. We hope this gives you a flavour of the amazing work of writers in the North and the focus of this year's festival, and whets your appetite for next year's, which is sure to be just as brilliant.





ODE TO MIDDLETON

by Aoifke McGuire-France

we built empires;
from the ground-up
dotted through whitened windows
tooth-pasted mirrors for good luck.
blazed through nights. feasted on formals. learnt to be royalty. even if it was

make-believe
to become accustomed to wine chalices and Latin for grace
running through castles even though we're from the estate.

nobility became us, playing dress up-
laughing in black tie-
the boys on white lines-
the girls with an Asti fever.
I never knew how to pronounce caviar before this
nor what duck parfait was
now I'm full of pearls with faint Michaelmas memories
words take new shapes in my mouth
by the girls in their fur for ascot.

this new life- new being- new voice
such gloss covering those early September fears.
balls gowned, matriculated
champagne soaked through my dress.

I'll leave here, one day
and return to the wrong side of the tracks
with the knowledge of how to live like a king
whilst getting poorer.
adorned in riches
with debt piling on my name.
but,
my god,
wasn't it fun to play pretend?

PROMPT #1

Write a story about two characters with different perspectives of the same event

PROMPT #2

Listen to a song and write about whatever it inspires



SUNDAY WITH SIMBA

by Jay Mitra

Freshly baked in a patch of sunlight
a limbless loaf with a crust-coloured back

and eyes the colour of yolks seasoned with pepper,
melts like margarine on the hot black leather.

He makes his bed (the living room settee),
and his honey-coloured body lounges drowsily.

Wisps of white hair sugar the air when I comb him,
the tufts of soft strands stick to my shirt.

When he purrs beside me, I'm healed of past hurt.
His tender paws pad the blanket I pull him onto, gently

kneading an invisible creation into rolls of cotton.
Cheek against furry cheek, I lie beside him as he sleeps.

Like the tiny heart beneath his downy chest,
the present pulses with hope and rest—

all because of my sweet ginger guest.



NIGHTINGALES

by Olli Watkins

i heard two songbirds through the window last night.
 notes ringing out through the panes of glass,
 breaching the vacuum between us.
 a wistful cacophony flowing over my body,
 drenching my pores and seeping into my bones.
 memories of primordial existence rushing back,
 of a time before we stained the ground with blood
 and let sooty smears sink into the landscape.

i heard two songbirds through the window last night,
 like a call to prayer, pan's flutes, a siren,
 intoxicating me,
 drawing me to a time where once again
 songbirds sing and
 bee/aches bourgeon
 and out of the ashes of a world laid bare,
 desolate,
 decimated,
 rises humanity like a great tsunami.

and as we crash down upon this ground we call home,
 we bring not death and destruction,
 but rebirth,
 regeneration,
 a resistance against the throngs that came before,
 bearing chainsaws and
 factories and
 plastic bags.
 we will come bearing
 their mistakes and
 their regret.
 we will bury them,
 nurture them,
 watch them flourish.

PROMPT #3

Write a series of letters between a superhero and a super villain



PROMPT #4

What 5 things would a mermaid buy in a Supermarket

let the rains fall,
 wash into the soil,
 saturate the earth between our toes,
 rivulets snaking down our backs
 until our skin is slick to touch
 but the seeds are nourished.
 they've started germinating and they will not be halted.

from the rubble of a world destroyed by corporate greed,
 we rebuild a world centred on its own merits.
 we may bear the burden of our ancestors,
 but we bear too their gifts.

i heard two songbirds through the window last night,
 singing their lamentations,
 their funeral dirges,
 and i grieved for the ruthlessness of man,
 and the songbirds, of course,
 but i grieved too, joyously,
 because i was grieving the end of an era,
 and marking the dawn of a new one.





THE BLANK BOOK

by Qasim

On my 14th birthday I was given a blank book.
Because the shrink told me so
I did not think it would help

I was young you see, old in mind and cracked in heart but still, young.
I dismissed the idea
Gave it no more thought
And the book stayed buried



PROMPT #5
Start
your story
with someone
discovering a
photograph that
has something
written on the
back



PROMPT #6
Write a
story in
exactly 10
words

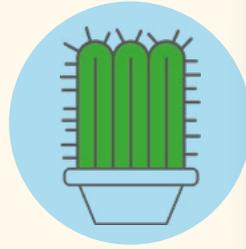
But then my limbs grew long
And I grew tired
Tired of drifting, of staring, of hearing the screams and punching my walls.
Yet still I did not write
I stayed in that paradoxical state.
That in between of life and death
The abstract dance of starless nights and dreams gone past.

On my 15th birthday I bought a pen
And wrote on my arms
But the inky inscribing's washed off and I cried
Wishing for permanence
This was when I picked up the book

I wrote slowly at first, ironically, and did not stop slashing at my arms
But then my hand grew quick and started to shake, pen pressed against the
page as if it wanted to break through
I filled that book with my life
But I didn't stop staring at the bottle of pills beside my bed
I filled the book with my life
And when it was too soaked through with ink and tears I drowned it in my
dark red pain until the words could not be seen
I took that as a sign
A metaphor of sorts
And when my mother saw the rope marks around my neck she threw the
book away
And put me on the meds

On my 16th birthday I wrote down my story
This time of my own accord
I wrote of my hope, my dread and my strife and slowly my shattered wings
started to heal.
I decided then and there I would tell my story
A story not of me but of you
The person made of paper
Who taught me to take my eyes off the bridge
And choose not to drift but to stand.

MUTUAL AID AND COMMUNITY LIBRARIES



Making Big Scale Changes in Small Ways

by Toni Stephenson and Amy Winder

How would we describe mutual aid? It's community action where people contribute what they can spare in a way that is beneficial to all parties. There are lots of things which fall under this category. It can be small-scale and informal, like a family who grows an excess of potatoes trading a few for their neighbours' eggs. Or it can be a larger scale project, like Wakefield Street Kitchen who help to provide food for people who need it in the local area.

The origins of the term mutual aid come from philosopher Peter Kropotkin, who wrote an essay titled "Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution". The essay is essentially a rejection of Darwin's Theory of the Survival of the Fittest, arguing that community effort is essential to the survival of an individual. The term was taken on by community organisers and activists to describe how grassroots movements can collaborate based on their resources. Basically, teamwork makes the dreamwork!

While similar to charity work, mutual aid has a different flavour to it, avoiding associations of the privileged helping those in need. For us, this feels like an empowering way to organise. It strengthens community bonds, can more effectively share resources and enables groups to individualise the work they are doing rather than being shoehorned into a one-size-fits all approach. Mutual aid also often carries an overt political aspect, with participants treating the symptoms of structural problems while working towards societal changes.

As with everything, it's not always perfect. Informal organisations can be susceptible to structural issues and poor communication. This can lead to inefficiencies and burnout. But, from our experiences of mutual aid, it provides something that charity work can be lacking.

An example of how mutual aid can work is small community libraries. These are

waterproof boxes in public places which are used as sites for book exchanges or informal lendings.

One organiser of these, The Little Free Library, call themselves, "the world's largest book-sharing movement," with aims of, "Building Community, Inspiring Readers and Expanding Book Access for All". Motivated by the need for more libraries, it was established in Wisconsin USA and has expanded globally. There are over 100,000 free libraries registered with the scheme, and there are many unaffiliated free community libraries which are inspired by it. In West Yorkshire, there is a registered one on Banks Avenue in Pontefract. There's also independent ones within Wakefield in Thornes, St John's, Wrenthorpe and two in Outwood.

According to Cipfa, there were 773 UK libraries closed between 2010 and 2019, leaving only 3,583 branches still open. With this recent reduction in the number of public libraries, there is a need for alternative venues providing access to books. The presence of community libraries can minimise obstacles such as physical barriers to reaching libraries, social barriers to reading and time constraints. Especially during the COVID-19 lockdowns, when public library access was further restricted, community libraries provided relief to those who otherwise would have lost access to free books. Reading is essential to the way our society

is built with access to enjoyable books being a good way to support children's acquisition of written language. It has also been proven by neuropsychologist Dr David Lewis that reading as little as six minutes a day can reduce stress by 60% as it alters heart rates, relaxes muscles in the body and aids mindfulness.

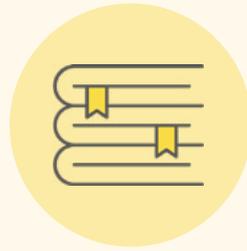
It's important to note, however, that small community libraries aren't capable of fulfilling the same role as public libraries. They provide internet access, the support of librarians and a free inside space.

Public library collections are also cultivated to provide a broad and inclusive collection of books. While this is harder on a smaller scale, it is something that the Little Free Library have been working towards through initiatives such as their Read in Color programme, making books available to their community libraries which "promote understanding, empathy, and inclusion."

Mutual aid is a way to make small contributions which can have a huge impact locally. If you want to see a community library in your area, Little Free Library has lots of information about how to get started. And keep an eye out for other ways you can help out, whether it be donating items to an LGBTQ+ clothes swap, listening to a neighbour or classmate about an issue they face, or joining a union at your job, communities thrive on small actions.

Wakefield LitFest

POETRY RECOMMENDATIONS



Poet: **ROQUE DALTON**
Title: **LIKE YOU**

1

Recommended by:
SAM WINDER

I like it that it speaks to our humanity and the necessity of thinking and ideology. Our ideas are as important as anything else.

Poet: **PIPA DEAN**
Title: **(UNTITLED)**

2

Recommended by:
DAISY FANTHORPE

I love it because it's so real, kinda like the harsh reality of the world put into a poem.

Poet: **DAVID HERD**
Title: **SEPTEMBER 11TH 2001**

3

Recommended by:
CHLOE WATSON

I chose the poem because I think it's beautiful because it summarizes how the world stopped for this moment of global tragedy.

Poet: **AOIFKE MADELEINE**
Title: **AT THE UNIVERSITY**

4

Recommended by:
KATHERINE CARR

Come across this one on twitter and I absolutely fell in love because it's nice to have your own experiences echoed back sometimes with same mad passion you feel to know you aren't alone.

Poet: **PATIENCE AGBABI**
Title: **EAT ME**

5

Recommended by:
ESTELLE HOLMES

I love this poem as it is an abstract interpretation which exposes the unhealthy attitudes which are associated with the female body and the power we as females can gain from dismissing these stereotypes and feeling comfortable in our own skin.

Poet: **ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING**
Title: **SONNET 43**

6

Recommended by:
LAYLA ALLEN

I like this poem because the poem shows love from a different era.

Poet: **JOHN KEATS**
Title: **TO AUTUMN**

7

Recommended by:
CAITLYN FRAMPTON

I really like 'To Autumn' by John Keats because of the way there is still hope in the darkness of changing seasons.

Poet: **WILLIAM BLAKE**
Title: **A POISON TREE**

8

Recommended by:
ALISE GERMOVA

It's a classic, very dark but it's so beautiful, it was the first poem I ever fell in love with that wasn't spoken word.

Poet: **ROBERT BURNS**
Title: **A MAN'S A MAN FOR A' THAT**

9

Recommended by:
ARGYLE BIRD

I like this because it expresses the importance of justice and freedom beautifully.





Poet: **RUDY FRANCISCO**
Title: **THE BODY**

10

Recommended by:
DAVINA JANDU

I love Rudy's work as a spoken word artist, and I feel like his voice is so prevalent in this poem. I'm a massive fan of how Francisco is able to create a warm feeling and is so open about his struggles and it can often be relatable.

Poet: **WILLIAM BLAKE**
Title: **THE SICK ROSE**

11

Recommended by:
ORLA NEVILLE

It can be interpreted in many different ways - its meaning is interesting to me as it was completely ahead of its time!

Poet: **LUKE WRIGHT**
Title: **THE BALLAD OF CHRIS AND ANN'S FISH SHOP**

12

Recommended by:
JOHN BROADHEAD

Luke Wright - The Ballad of Chris and Ann's Fish Shop - tells an emotionally engaging story subverting cliché using familiar imagery.

Poet: **CAROL ANN DUFFY**
Title: **LITTLE RED CAP**

13

Recommended by:
EBONY KYUNG

The main thing I like about it is how many layers it has; it can be a fairytale, a love story of Carol, a metaphor for relationships and loss of innocence, or a feminist statement about how Carol Ann Duffy discovered herself while fighting sexism.

Poet: **JOHNNY CASH**
Title: **DON'T MAKE A MOVIE ABOUT ME**

14

Recommended by:
ELLIE PETERS

I love this poem purely for the fact that it reflects Cash's disdain of Hollywood retelling his story, but also drops lots of hints of how he would like his story to be told through film. The multiple contradictions of his own opinions make a poem not written for comedic effect, almost seem comical to me, it's just an absolute joy to read!



Poet: **WILFRED OWENS**
Title: **EXPOSURE**

15

Recommended by:
LEWIS GIEMZA

I like the poem Exposure by Wilfred Owens because we have been learning about it in school and I have grown to like the poem as it shows how people coped during the war mentally and physically - Lewis Giemza

Poet: **MARY OLIVER**
Title: **RED BIRD**

16

Recommended by:
IRIS RUSHTON

The Mary Oliver collection of poems 'Red Bird' is a wonderful collection of poems as when you read them a second time, you see that there are much deeper meanings behind them. My personal favourite poem is Luke as it matches the beauty and simplicity that nature can have with the complexity of time, moving on, moving closer to death reminiscing over the special memories you have.

Poet: **YUSEF KOMUNYAKAA**
Title: **FACING IT**

17

Recommended by:
GABBY BALMOND

I came across this poem during my degree, where I studied a lot of African American literature. I think this poem is so important in discussing the awareness and visibility of Black history. Although this poem comments particularly on the history and trauma of Black people within the Vietnam War, I think that it also delivers a more general message about the importance of equality and acknowledging all cultures and races within society. Particularly within Black History Month this poem speaks volumes, with its striking imagery, in creating more awareness and visibility of Black history and culture and not letting it be erased or concealed. It can be accessed via the poetry foundation website poetryfoundation.org/poems/47867/facing-it.



TAKING A GANDER INTO THE NORTHERN WRITING SCENE



As someone interested in the writing industry, you'll hear that if you want to be in writing, you've got to go down South. That isn't the case. The North has a bustling scene waiting for new writers to take under its wing so let's take a look of the opportunities right on your doorstep.

PROMPT #7

If you cast a net into the sea what would you hope to catch

1 HIVE POETRY COLLECTIVE

A South Yorkshire based organisation offering workshops, writer's day, and a fun writing group to get involved if you're a young writer wanting to take that first step into the wider writing world. They, also, host numerous competitions with some great prizes and of course, the chance to see your words in print.

2 THE WRITING SQUAD

Since 2001, The Writing Squad has been recruiting writers, developing their craft via mentorships and workshops, and cultivating a great community of writers alongside. Once applications are open, all you have to do is share a sample of your writing and a cover letter explaining you, your work, and why you want to join the squad. And if you're accepted, their help is with you forever.

3 NEW WRITING NORTH

The original regional writing development organisation, New Writing North are still working tirelessly to help Northern writers reach their potential. Through funding, mentoring, professional development, commissions, and networking opportunities, this is one place you need to know as a Northern writer wanting to get their work out into the world.

4 SOCIETY OF YOUNG PUBLISHERS NORTH

This one is for all you wanting to enter the industry but not as a writer. SYP North Host free panel events with the big five and the fantastic indie publishers, have a forum connecting you to the best of the industry outside events, and cultivate a great community of aspiring publishers through their book clubs. If you're interested in a publishing career, there's no better place to start but here.

5 BOOKCAREERS .COM

Another one for those wanting a publishing career. With great resources and job club, Bookcareers are dedicated in launching your career in publishing. This is for those who know they want to go into publishing and now its about trying to get you into the industry.

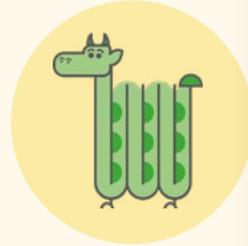
6 LITERATURE FESTIVALS

Still, Literature Festivals are one of the best ways to get involved with the writing community and network with professionals. One of the best things, you can be as involved as you wish! If you just want to attend casually, that's perfectly fine. Or if you want to you can get involved as a volunteer or perhaps as a member of the programme board (as you can with WakeyLit Fest). But ultimately, they're just a fun way of getting involved in the writing world however big or small.

As you can see, there's a lot of variety out there waiting for writers both old and new and the Northern scene is one that is just going to evolve, grow, and reach new heights! So, there's no time like the present to get involved!

Profile of

OUR PROGRAMME BOARD



The title "The Programme Board" might seem a bit mysterious. So simply put, what we do - as a team of young people - is make the decisions about how to use the funding and resources we have available. We send (a lot of) emails, get in touch with other organisations and discuss what it is that we want to include in our festival.

We do lots of different things in our day to day life, from studying in schools and universities, to working full-time. And we have different passions: from poetry to storytelling, journalism to mathematics. What we have in common is that we want to create a festival which gives young people the chance to celebrate literature, in all its forms.

We've joined for different reasons, from meeting new people with a shared interest in literature to gaining some experience in the arts and culture sector. But what unites us all is a drive

to contribute to the local literary scene in Wakefield and help make a space for young people to be creative and share their work with the local community.

We've learned lots as we've gone on: from corresponding with professionals and commissioning them to hold workshops, to management skills such as leading projects within LitFest, from podcasts to events. We delegate tasks to ensure we share our responsibilities. Communication has also been key as well as self-awareness and time management. We have learned to take on only as much as we can and ask each other to help out when needed. We've also learned to work within a budget and alongside funding to create events that we think young people will love.

Some of us have stuck around for both years so far. For lots of reasons: to carry on our original vision, to keep finding new ideas, or because we enjoy the way our team works.

Despite that, one of the things that's really important to us is that the programme board continues to grow and change with the festival. We want to keep exploring new ideas, challenging concepts and being challenged by new perspectives. Thinking about the sort of person we hope will join us next, it would be good to find people who will help represent the youngest end of our age range, so that we can keep making sure our events are welcoming to all young people in Wakefield.

We've achieved a lot, and cannot thank everyone enough for their support. But for now, we guess that's a wrap on Wakefield LitFest 2021.



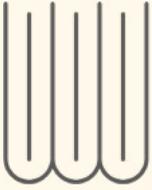
Connect with us:

-  [@wakefieldlitfest](https://www.instagram.com/wakefieldlitfest)
-  [@wakeylitfest](https://twitter.com/wakeylitfest)
-  [facebook.com/wakeylitfest](https://www.facebook.com/wakeylitfest)

The illustrations throughout are by **Alisha Little** and inspired by *Ode to Middleton* and *Nightingales*.

Follow Alisha:

-  [@Alinaydra](https://www.instagram.com/alinaydra)
-  [@Alinaydra](https://twitter.com/alinaydra)
-  [@Alinaydra](https://www.youtube.com/alinaydra)
-  [alishafayelittle.wixsite.com/artportfolio](https://www.wixsite.com/artportfolio)



**Wakefield
LitFest**

PROMPT #8

**Look at an old
painting and
write from the
perspective of one
of the objects
depicted**

**With thanks
to our supporters:**

**WORD
FEST**
MAKE WORDS COUNT

wakefieldcouncil

