

FIRST STORY

Summer Residential Programme 2021

"I've never felt so emotionally attached to a group. I am going to miss coming online to this residential."

– ROXANNE, PARTICIPANT

FUNDER'S REPORT FOR



team Archie
INSPIRE & MOTIVATE YOUNG PEOPLE



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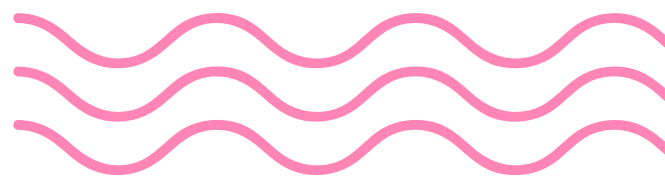
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First Story is England's leading creative writing charity for young people, empowering students experiencing disadvantage with the skills and confidence to tell their own stories. Find out more at [firststory.org.uk](https://www.firststory.org.uk) and follow our story at @FirstStory.

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FOREWORD

First Story's annual summer residential programme is a much-coveted opportunity available to the most promising and talented young people who take part in our flagship Young Writers Programme during the academic year. Attending the course, which takes place in the school summer holidays, can be a life-changing experience. Participants spend a whole week writing every day, alongside like-minded peers from different places and backgrounds, learning from and supported by inspiring professional authors. The residential is a unique opportunity for young people from less advantaged backgrounds to receive intensive support to hone their own writing craft, whilst expanding their horizons and building self-confidence. Cherished new friendships are frequently formed too.

The residential week historically has been hosted at the Arvon Foundation's idyllic venue in rural West Yorkshire, Lumb Bank. However, at the time of planning our 2021 programme, Covid-19 restrictions were still in force in England and the pandemic was an ongoing challenge. So, albeit with some regret, we made the sensible decision to deliver the course virtually for a second year.

Widespread disappointment at being kept physically apart by the Coronavirus for another year, was nonetheless tempered by excitement about the potential of the digital platform. Building on the brilliance of 2020's virtual residential, we realised we could try to bring together a larger group of students this time. We were also confident, based on experience, that the digital format would provide just as much fun and engagement.

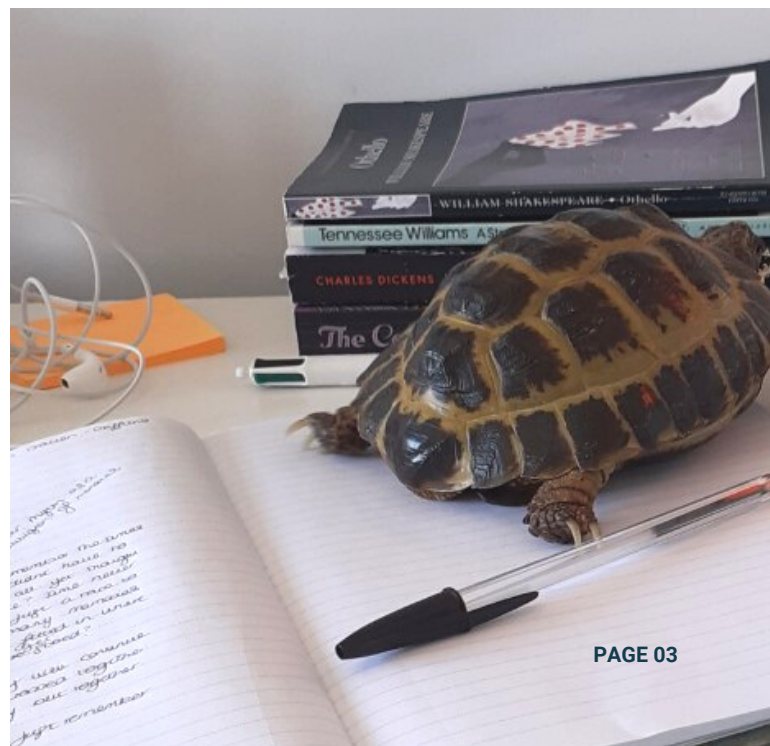
Like last year, we welcomed a remarkably committed and diligent cohort – eagerly logging on each morning and remaining attentively online all day. They had each made their creative intentions clear from the outset: they were attending this course because they wanted to write and to grow and to share. This was their rallying point. As the five days flew by, each of the young writers' unique styles and personalities burst through the digital ether in poetry and prose.

Participants were masterfully guided by our fabulous writing tutors for the week, John Berkavitch, Vicky Foster, and Nik Perring. Three very different but equally inspiring leaders, who each day delivered engaging, challenging and fun writing exercises.

There were many highlights of the week to pick from. Masterclass sessions featured activities both joyous and poignant; the one-to-one mentoring sessions were crammed with insights; and the small group sessions were focused and intimate. Then there was the final day's virtual showcase, attended by various encouraging family members, writers, teachers, First Story's team, and teamArchie's own Claire and James. Each in our little boxes on the screen, we listened attentively as each young writer stepped bravely into the virtual spotlight to share with us their new work.

What was so impressive to see was how, even after these young people endured a year of school closures and intermittent online learning, they each threw themselves enthusiastically into every aspect of the virtual residential experience. All came back, morning after morning, pens in hand, raring to go. We couldn't imagine a more appreciative group and we can't wait to reward their commitment with their own printed anthology, which we expect to publish in the autumn.

First Story is incredibly grateful to project funders teamArchie, for its third consecutive year of support for the summer residential.



OUR WRITERS-IN-RESIDENCE

JOHN BERKAVITCH

John Berkavitch is one of the most respected voices in the UK spoken-word poetry scene. He's a former UK Slam Poetry Champion, an internationally acclaimed storyteller, plus an accomplished breakdancer, digital artist and animator.

Berkavitch has toured poetry and spoken-word across Europe and Asia, as well as having pieces commissioned by theatres and companies in the UK, including Apples and Snakes, the Southbank, Saddler's Wells, and Curve Theatre Leicester. His work has been featured on Radio 1, 1Xtra and Radio 4.

He has worked as an artist in education for over a decade. His unique approach to learning and collaboration, with a focus on transferable skills, has inspired thousands of hard-to-reach and disenfranchised young people across the UK.



VICKY FOSTER

Vicky Foster is a writer, performer and poet. Her work has been broadcast on BBC radio stations 3, 4, 5 and 6. Her poem for the Commonwealth Games 2018 was part of the BBC's national coverage and she has twice been selected for Radio 4's *Pick of the Week*. She was one of the BBC's selected poets for *Contains Strong Language* in 2017 and 2018, writing a new commission for them in 2019 which also featured in Hull's Freedom Festival.

She wrote and recorded a poem for *NHS 70* that was broadcast on television. Her play *Bathwater* was produced by Susan Roberts and debuted as a live performance in 2018. It was aired on Radio 4 in 2019 and published by Wrecking Ball Press. A tour of *Bathwater* is planned in 2022.

Vicky has delivered workshops for all kinds of organisations. She is currently working on various commissions, based in Hull, whilst also writing a novel.



NIK PERRING

Nik Perring is a widely-published short story writer and the author of five books. Most recently his re-telling of Little Red Riding Hood, *Carmine's Fruit*, won the Artificum Short Story Prize. It has been read on the radio, performed on stage, and even included (alongside Dave Eggers' work) in a United States' high school distance learning programme.

Nik is also an editor and an experienced teacher of creative writing. He has worked extensively with children and adults, teaching in a range of environments, from community projects, libraries, schools and colleges, to festivals and the BBC. He is based in Yorkshire.



OUR PARTICIPANTS

During 2020/21 First Story's Young Writers Programme ran in some 25 non-selective secondary schools across London, East Midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside. Representing communities in each of these regions, this year's diverse cohort ranged from ages 12 to 17. Participants were selected based on their ability and potential, and also after considering application personal statements – extracts from which are shared below.

ALICE

NOTTINGHAM ACADEMY, GREENWOOD ROAD

"The First Story residential seems like a really cool opportunity that I won't be able to get anywhere else. It would benefit my creative writing skills by helping me improve and I'd get the chance to share ideas with new people and also hear theirs! Writing makes me very happy. It's also a sort of escape, I can transport myself as well as others to somewhere else."

ANISA

CO-OP ACADEMY GRANGE, BRADFORD

"I, like many people love writing. Writing is a way for me to express how I feel through hundreds and thousands of words. Writing is always going to be something that I do for fun, it always brings out a spark inside of me and I never get bored. Writing a piece of work and seeing it out there is amazing. I've felt that before and it's unlike anything else."

KAMILÉ

GEORGE GREEN'S SCHOOL, LONDON

"I would like to attend the First Story residential because I really enjoyed the First Story programme, it helped me improve and enhance my writing, allowed me to explore my creative world with real and very useful advice. The residential would help me learn more about what it is to be a professional writer, learning to work more collaboratively with my peers. I have gained a lot of confidence with my writing and would like to further better my writing, so it is not only enjoyable for me but also for others to read."

CHLOE

APPLETON ACADEMY, BRADFORD

"Taking part in the First Story Residential would be fantastic, I have taken part in First Story and it is great to see the amount of work that is put into the showcase of brilliant writers, young and old. Writing for me is a way of expressing myself and creating narratives to the emotions we feel on a day-to-day basis. It allows me to describe things that seem so irrelevant in such a relevant way that makes them seem important."

CHOBE

LANDAU FORTE COLLEGE, DERBY

"I would love to participate in the First Story summer residential because it will give me the opportunity to find my passion for writing again. It will help me to develop my writing skills and I know I will enjoy being in the same space as like-minded people as there will be no judgment. The people from First Story have inspired me to start writing outside of school again and have made me realise that there is no need to be embarrassed of anything I write."

EMILY

THE DUKERIES ACADEMY, NOTTINGHAM

"I am eager to attend the residential because it would give me the opportunity to cultivate my writing skills in a situation other than me being alone in my bedroom with a pen and paper. Being around other people who are enthusiastic about writing inspires me to push my skill further, and I have found that it makes me feel less alone in the creative process."



EVA

TITUS SALT SCHOOL, WEST YORKSHIRE

"I love writing. I have always loved writing, it's a way to express emotion for me. A few simple words on paper can change my mood, words have powerful meanings and can change someone's life, I think that's amazing. First Story has helped me to enjoy writing again. They brought back that passion for me."

FREYA

WITHAM PRIORY SCHOOL, LINCOLN

"The residential would benefit me because I am a young author constantly working to improve and gain writing skills. The residential will improve my future and give me more confidence as a writer. First Story has meant the world to me so far, it's the highlight of my week and I would love to continue my experience. I want to continue writing because it's my passion and I channel emotions and thoughts straight into my work."

HENRY

ST GABRIEL'S COLLEGE, LONDON

"I would like to participate in the summer residential programme because I would learn how to improve the quality of my writing to make it more compelling."

HOPE

CO-OP ACADEMY GRANGE, BRADFORD

"To me, writing means that I can let go of all my worries and lets me create in a deep and sincere manner. I find creative writing to be comforting and gives me a chance to spread awareness of the issues I am interested in. First Story has been an amazing experience and has helped me gain so many new skills, giving me a chance to display my recently acquired writing techniques, such as communication, determination, confidence and responsibility. This knowledge will pay dividends in my everyday lessons."

LAUREN

THE DUKERIES ACADEMY, NOTTINGHAM

"Writing is truly powerful and each book that is placed on a library bookshelf is another life changed, a future created for the better as well as hope for another day. First Story brings explorers, introverts, and thrill seekers together, and that is something special: how another person on the other end of the screen can be so different but withhold the same power of words meeting page."

MARIA

CRANFORD COMMUNITY COLLEGE, LONDON

"I personally think the First Story residential would benefit me with my creative writing. Being part of First Story really made me feel good about myself, First Story taught me what I enjoyed doing even when I wasn't completely sure of it. I would like to keep writing because, to keep it simple, I enjoy writing."

NOAH

ST GABRIEL'S COLLEGE, LONDON

"First Story helped me to make improvements to my writing by teaching me about using different styles of writing and introducing me to new ways of thinking about and planning my work. I would like to take part in the summer workshops to develop my writing skills further, have the opportunity to create and share my pieces with new people and hear the work that they are doing. It would be a chance to gain new perspectives from people outside of my usual group and meet new writers to learn from."

SAMUEL

LANDAU FORTE COLLEGE, DERBY

"I think this residential will help me a lot with my overall script writing skills and overall knowledge on script writing for in the future and help me understand scripts a lot more."

BETHAN

WITHAM, PRIORY ACADEMY, LINCOLN

"I would like to attend the First Story summer residential since it would really benefit my writing skills and help me be more creative when writing and expand my crafting techniques. In addition to expanding my skills, it is also a once in a lifetime opportunity to get advice on my work from published authors. I also enjoy First Story since there is no right or wrong answer and you are able to express yourself through writing."

ROXANNE

CHELSEA ACADEMY, LONDON

"Being a part of the First Story group at Chelsea Academy has boosted my confidence with writing and sharing stories with people who share the same passion as me. I believe that the First Story summer residential program will be a huge opportunity towards my writing path: I love writing and letting my imagination run loose, and I feel that with this programme I can meet other children who share the same passion and drive as me, creating memorable stories and friendships along the way. I truly believe that this course will be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for me to flourish as an author and develop my skills."

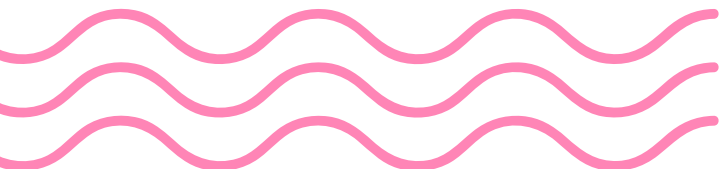
SAM

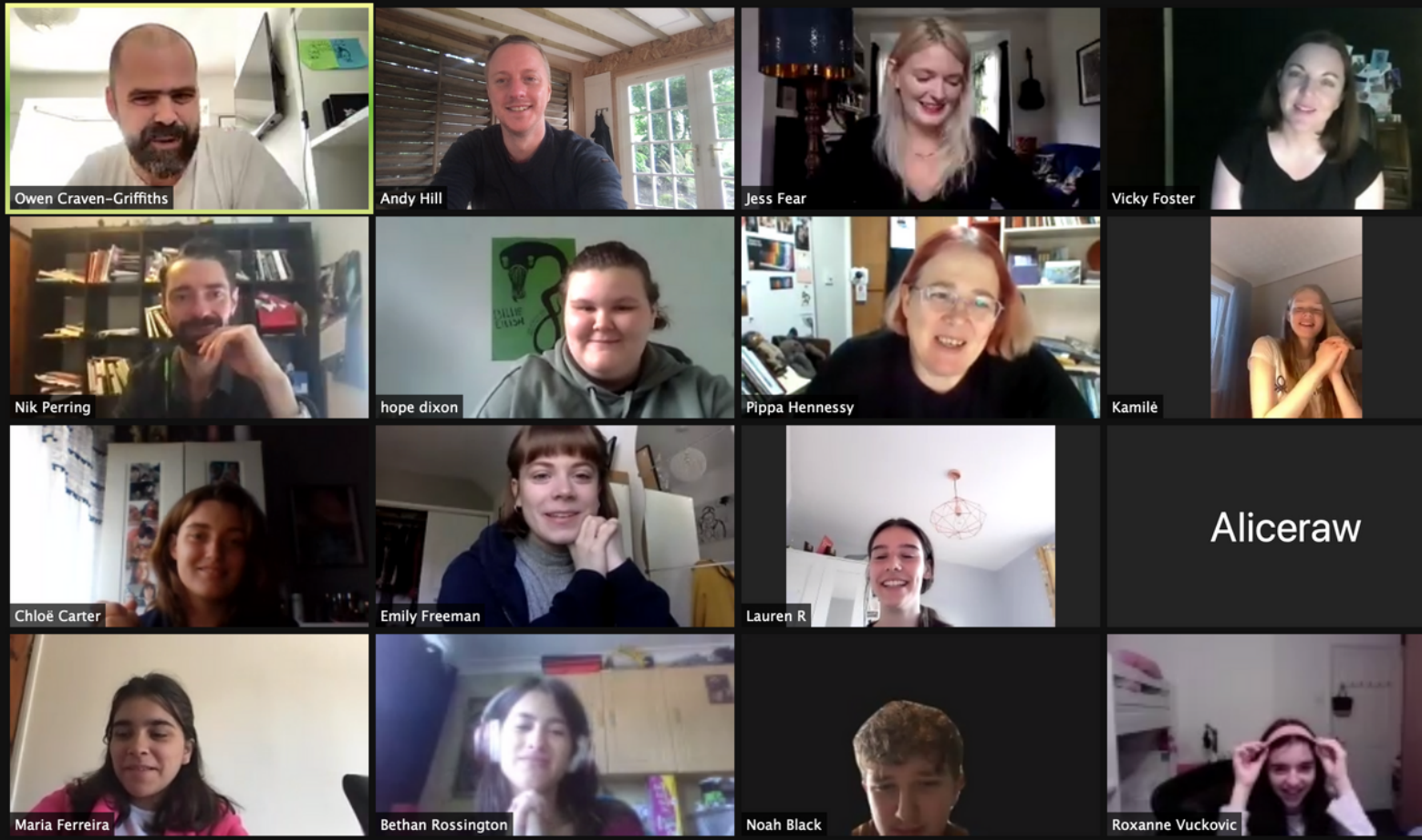
THE DUKERIES ACADEMY, NOTTINGHAM

"The First Story residential will continue to allow me to grow astronomically as a writer and therefore express what my world looks like. Having the opportunity to work with incredible creators and other young writers appears to be a life-changing experience of which I would enjoy enormously. The First Story experience has already added hugely to my ability to write and allowed me to explore my passion through a multitude of ways."

"I wasn't
scared of
unmuting
or using my
camera.
Compared
to school
this was
definitely a
much more
inclusive
situation."

– CHLOE, PARTICIPANT





RESIDENTIAL DIARY

MONDAY

Our 17 earnest, somewhat anxious (and a few slightly sleepy!) participants logged-in for the first time to be greeted by ever-enthusiastic East Midlands slam poet, John Berkavitch. Undeterred by the early start, John dived straight into talking about rules. Not the boring kind, but rules about poetic forms: how we can conform to them, break them, and even reinvent them. The session started with a Haiku, progressed to a vowel-elimination poem, marched on through a Fibonacci sequence poem, battled with a Golden Shovel poem, and ended on an ABCD poem. Amazingly, given it was their first day meeting each other and working with John, all of the young writers easily kept pace with this rigorous literary workout!

TUESDAY

On day two, again bright and early, all the participants returned, this time for a masterclass led by Hull-based writer, Vicky Foster. Vicky's session encouraged everyone to think about where they are from, what memories they might have of nearby places, and what dialects are spoken in their parts of the world. The group then swapped phrases and words, guessed the meanings of any they didn't already know, and traded tales of people they imagined speaking the words and what they might say. During the session, everyone shared bits of information about where they live, outlining what it looks like, and adding details of other significant places – forming imaginary maps of their lives. It was a fantastic bonding activity which served to really connect our young writers to each other across the digital divide.

WEDNESDAY

Mid-week, we kicked-off with a masterclass from accomplished short story writer, Nik Perring. He led the group into the wonderful world of the surreal and extraordinary, urging our young writers to ignore any concerns about plausibility in their writing. Too often, he warned, it can stop us from ever getting going. The group started writing with a simple premise: 'What if...?' Nik told the group to generate as many endings to that question as possible, not disregarding anything as too silly or outlandish. In fact, the more ridiculous the better. According to Nik, the more our brains can be pushed to imagine the impossible, the more our writing becomes daring and original.

THURSDAY

Another masterclass session started the day, this time focused on how a writer might go about performing their own writing to an audience, in preparation for the showcase event the following day. Who better to lead this session than John Berkavitch? He coached participants in how to avoid common pitfalls in public reading, from rushing, mumbling and monotony, to poor eye contact and failing to convey the right emotion.

FRIDAY

The final day of our 2021 virtual residential came all too quickly. As it was the showcase event in the afternoon, everyone was feeling somewhere between nervous and excited. In the morning, everyone came together to write a group poem, a short activity led by Nik. Participants then split into smaller groups, to select and practice reading their best pieces from the week, in preparation for the showcase. Our young writers got the chance to listen to each other's work and to offer praise and helpful feedback. Everyone left the session feeling much more confident about the running order of the afternoon event.

During the afternoon's showcase, we heard a wealth of exciting new writing, crossing a range of forms and genres. Each young person had a distinct voice and offered the audience something different to the writer who read before. The showcase was compered by our three pro writers, who gave lovely introductions to welcome our young writers to the virtual stage. It was the perfect conclusion to an inspiring week!

FROM THE INSTANT MESSAGING CHAT BOX

Kamilé on **Anisa's** work:
'My jaw dropped at the end.'

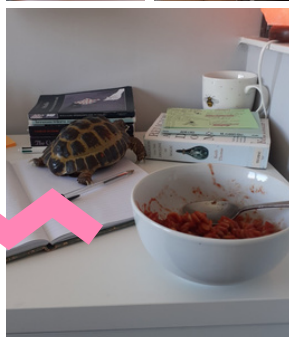
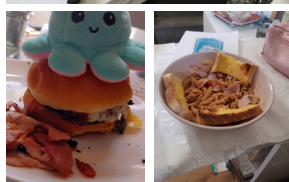
Chloe on **Alice's** work:
'Please publish a book, Alice!!!!'

Freya on **Kamilé's** work:
'It's really powerful it feels like you're leading me through the streets and I can see all this around me.'

Chloe on **Lauren's** work:
'You're so good at expressing, Lauren.'

Roxanne on **Freya's** work:
'I really liked it had a rhyme and, though it doesn't need to, having a consistent rhyme made it all the much more enjoyable to listen to.'

Freya on **Lauren's** work:
'That was incredible!'





Samantha king

@Samantha1k11



@FirstStory Thank you for such a unique experience this week ❤️



Emily Freeman

@fremilyeeman



Massive thank you to all those part of First Story's online residential this week. It was truly inspiring and such a wonderful thing to be a part of. 📖 ✍️ ✨

@FirstStory @fear_jessica @nikperring @berkavitch @vickyfoster_ @ChloeCa12957835 #writing #FirstStory #youngwriters



nikperring

@nikperring



I'm just coming down after the best week. The @FirstStory residential went online again this year and it was every kind of wonderful. Honoured to have been involved and still vibrating with story/poetry mouth-gaped awe.



Chloë Carter

@ChloeCa12957835



So that's a wrap on the First Story Summer Residential 2021.

I absolutely loved this week, and I learnt so much! Can't wait to see all our hard work in black and white. 🙌

PARTICIPANTS' FEEDBACK

**AVERAGE CONFIDENCE IN SHARING WRITING
ON DAY 1:**

3.3/10

**AVERAGE CONFIDENCE IN SHARING WRITING
ON DAY 5:**

7.5/10

I think the variety of writing that I got to hear/see/think about. It's been amazing to hear so many view points and opinions and to jump inside all of these incredible imaginations.

– JOHN BERKAVITCH,
WRITER-IN-RESIDENCE

"The variety — of ideas and workshops and voices and ways of approaching things."

– VICKY FOSTER,
WRITER-IN-RESIDENCE

"I loved seeing you all tackle challenges and allow yourselves to get out of your comfort zones - it's really brave!"

– JESSICA FEAR,
FIRST STORY LEAD

WHAT DID YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT THE WEEK?

"Being able to try different styles of writing and meeting new people."

- BETHAN

"I enjoyed meeting other people who are as enthusiastic about writing as I am, and I have enjoyed the one-to-one sessions and the types of topics we write on."

- ROXANNE

"Being in a space where everyone is as interested in writing felt so reassuring and was so nice."

- EVA

"Being able to hear about the different writers' journeys to where they are now, and being able to interact with them."

- EMILY

"I enjoyed being able to work with such incredible writers. Along with a diverse amount of young writers I feel like I've gotten to know."

- SAMANTHA



WHAT'S THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU LEARNED? WHAT WILL YOU REMEMBER, WHEN WRITING IN THE FUTURE?

"I've learnt that my writing is good and my own style. I really liked that we were supposed to write with the words we'd use in our everyday life."

- SAMANTHA

"Write as if you're talking to you're friends, it helps convey your storyline further and not hidden behind formal language."

- ROXANNE

"How to just go for it. Don't be hooked on what others might think just express your thoughts without creating barriers."

- CHLOE

"That you can only look silly when you don't put your full into things and that all writing is art and is just as valuable."

- LAUREN

"Do what you can, don't worry if it's bad, someone is gonna like it somewhere and don't be scared to share your work."

- HOPE

"I'll see all your amazing books in the future!"

- PARENT DURING LIVE SHOWCASE



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?



The young people who apply for and win places on our summer residential programme tend to be among the most committed and talented of each year's Young Writers Programme cohorts. It's not surprising, therefore, that students from the residential often go on to access our other main progression opportunity available exclusively to First Story alumni.

The **Rathbones Folio Mentorship Scheme**, founded in 2017, is an incredibly valuable progression route currently available to six First Story students annually. Selected mentees are supported over an academic year to pursue their writing ambitions, develop their craft, and strengthen their voice, with one-to-one mentoring by an established professional writer from the Folio Academy.

From the summer 2019 residential group, one participant, **Naomi** (bottom right), from Hampstead School, went on to win a place on the scheme. She worked closely during 2019/20 with the novelist **Alice Jolly**. From last year's residential group (summer 2020), two students subsequently won coveted places on the scheme. **Katie**, from Longcroft School in Beverley, was mentored by multi-award-winning poet and non-fiction writer, **Paul Farley**; whilst **Alice** (top right, who also goes by Frankie), from Hull College, was mentored by the award-winning poet, **Rachel Long**. Both students took part in the final (virtual) showcase event on 8th July 2021, reading new creative work they had written as part of their mentoring experience.



Rathbones
Folio Prize
MENTORSHIPS

Two young people from this year's residential also applied for places on the Folio scheme for 2021/22. We are delighted to be able to share that both **Emily** and **Lauren** have been selected. Lauren will be mentored in the year ahead by **Stephanie Cross**, who has ghostwritten two Sunday Times Top 10-bestselling memoirs, and Emily is being paired with the award-winning poet, **Fiona Benson**.

Emily is by all accounts a talented young poet, with a bright future ahead. Although it's a little too early to say what most of this year's residential group might achieve, we already know the next stage of Emily's story: she has tweeted that she secured a place to read English at **Christ's College, Cambridge**.

In 2021/22, First Story launches its **new strategy to 2026, Reach & Impact**. Our ambitious plans for the coming years include seeking to deepen impact for our beneficiaries, by expanding our offer for First Story alumni (students who complete our year-long Young Writers Programme).

The summer residential is such a valued and valuable progression opportunity for a small number of each year's aspiring young writers. The Folio mentorships scheme is an exceptional opportunity too, though it benefits even fewer students.

This year, we will be launching a new 'year-two' programme, designed to develop the skills and experience of a group of First Story alumni in every partner school. The **First Story Young Ambassadors** is a year-long modular course that will develop in participants vital transferable life skills including leadership, team work, communication and project planning.

FIRST STORY **YOUNG AMBASSADORS** PROGRAMME

The Young Ambassadors is a year-long modular course for students who complete our flagship Young Writers Programme. This ambitious new 'year-two' offer has been piloted in eight schools during 2020/21. We plan a national roll-out during 2021/22.

The programme will:

- Empower First Story alumni as young leaders, engaging their communities to participate in creative practice.
- Provide young people from under-represented communities access to opportunities and progression pathways that will contribute to a more diverse and inclusive cultural sector.
- Develop in young people valuable, transferable life skills.
- Create rich cultural learning experiences that can enhance UCAS applications.

FIRST STORY

England's leading creative writing charity for young people, empowering students experiencing disadvantage with the skills and confidence to tell their own stories.

Find out more at firststory.org.uk
and follow our story at [@FirstStory](https://www.instagram.com/FirstStory)



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