

# FUTURE WRITERS CASE STUDY

## Background

The Future Writers project was developed to encourage young people to take part in something creative as a way of expressing themselves during the global pandemic. Central to the project were two writing competitions, *The Lockdown Diaries* and *Outside the Window*. The initial writing competition, *The Lockdown Diaries* took place during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic (April 2020), whilst the second competition, *Outside the Window* ran during April 2021. Both competitions were supplemented with an introductory pre-recorded launch video which outlined the benefits of reading and writing in terms of employability, as well as outlining a variety of different careers within the creative industry. Further, alongside the second writing competition *Creative Pathways* resources were circulated to all target schools and colleges in Lancashire. The interactive resources included a pre-recorded session that provided information on the different career routes in creative writing.



The Future writers project aimed to:

1. Encourage young people to take part in something creative as a way of expressing themselves and processing their experiences during the global pandemic.
2. Highlight the significance of reading and creative writing in relation to employability.
3. Encourage young people to gain an understanding of how reading and writing can increase employability prospects.
4. Provide young people with an experience of working to plan, constructing and submitting a piece of creative writing.

## Impact

A total of 37 young people submitted creative writing pieces across the two competitions. Of the seventeen *Outside the Window* submitters who were invited to take part in a feedback activity, thirteen completed the survey. Additionally, we were able to interview a submitter, a school staff member, and a judge to understand their experiences of the competitions – here are the results!

## Mental health and wellbeing



The impact of creative writing on mental health and wellbeing was a core theme. It was mentioned by each interviewee and 85% of survey respondents expressed that taking part in the competition had a positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing. Further, competition participants highlighted the value of creative writing as a passion and hobby, rather than purely its academic/employability value. All survey responders agreed that the writing competition provided a positive creative outlet.

However, only 46% of survey responders agreed that the competition helped process their experiences of the global pandemic.

## Academic merits

It was found that the requirements of the creative writing competition were similar to what is asked in the English Language GCSE exam paper. The competition, therefore, provided a great creative writing experience that supported exam preparation. As the competition linked with the curriculum there was more buy in from the wider school staff. Lastly, as the competition was open to full school years, this made the school more likely to engage with the project.



## Skill development and employability

From the survey it was found that nearly half (46%) of the submitters felt they did a great deal or a lot of drafting a plan for their written piece. 62% felt they did a great deal or a lot of following a plan, and 69% thought of the flow and structure of the written piece. However, the submitter that was interviewed outlined a process of reflection and amending a previously written piece which strengthened their critical thinking skills. During this process, the learner gained an appreciation of the importance of reviewing completed pieces of work, as it further developed the piece and improved the overall quality.

Of those surveyed 54% strongly or somewhat agreed that the competition highlighted the significance of reading in relation to employability skills, whilst 46% strongly or somewhat agreed that the competition highlighted the significance of writing in relation to employability skills. However, more than three-quarters (77%) had a moderate to little understanding of how the skills they developed were linked to employability. When the interviewees were questioned on skill development only a few skills were named, most of which being the examples provided by the interviewer that were intended as prompts. Further, the topic of the skills linking to employability did not emerge within the interviewees.

## Good reputation building

The competition provided an opportunity to build reputation for all stakeholders. One of the motivations for young people entering the competition, was for the potential opportunity of exposure by having their work published in the anthology. From the school/college perspective, having their pupil(s) published in the anthology was an opportunity for the institution to celebrate the success of their pupil(s). Lastly, it promoted the Future U brand, to pupils, school/college staff more widely, and the general public through the success of the anthology writers.



If you would like to read the anthologies for [Outside the Window](#) and [The Lockdown Diaries](#), they can be found on the resources page of our website.