

# The FREEDOM of PAPER and INK

An anthology of poems by young writers  
from the 2007 Write Lines project



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OF PAPER  
and INK

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from the 2007 Write Lines project

*edited by*  
SUNDRA LAWRENCE



CAMBRIDGE

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'Ink runs from the corners of my mouth.  
There is no happiness like mine.  
I have been eating poetry.'

MARK STRAND, 'Eating Poetry,' *Reasons for Moving*, 1968



## Foreword

WHEN A STUDENT was asked to comment on what he had learnt from the Write Lines project his response was 'THE FREEDOM OF PAPER AND INK' we have taken his bold statement as the title of this anthology.

A 200-strong audience at the Elliott Hall Theatre, Harrow Arts Centre, last year, witnessed this freedom. Young writers from five schools in Harrow performed poems that they had spent two months developing under the guidance and inspiration of professional poets. The language, confidence, and issues from the performances were truly moving. Students who were shy or spoke English as a second or third language were up on stage performing their poems proudly along with students who had never thought of expressing themselves in school, let alone doing so through poetry. Write Lines showed them that through poetry they could communicate with the world and write about what is important to them.

We followed our first ever Write Lines project in 2006 with a bigger and braver project in 2007.

We worked with more schools, extended the poetry residencies, hosted the performance showcase in a bigger venue. We also arranged for journalism workshops, run by our media partner the Harrow Observer, which gave students a wider understanding of working in the creative industries. We teamed up with radio stations London Link and Desi Radio who, in turn, have produced a CD. Moreover, leading poetry publisher, Salt Publishing have produced this anthology!

But we are not going to stop there. We will continue to help, support and bring the power of poetry to the lives of young people, networking them into new creative worlds.

The fruits of our young writers' efforts lie in this book. Between these pages you will find rich, thoughtful and funny poems that demand to be read and talked about. These poems are not for

display purposes only. Read them aloud, share them with a friend,  
or have one with your breakfast each morning.

SUNDRA LAWRENCE  
*Founder and Director*  
February 2008

## About Write Lines

**W**RITE LINES IS an independent not-for-profit organisation that runs dynamic poetry projects for young people in and around London.

Our aims are to:

- Get young people excited about poetry and draw out their voices
- Offer young people coaching on crafting and developing their poems
- Increase literacy skills and confidence through writing and performance workshops
- Offer platforms for young people to showcase their work through publication and performance
- Network young writers into wider poetry networks
- Increase awareness and knowledge of the creative industries
- Offer opportunities to culturally and academically diverse young people

How we do it:

We choose leading writers and educators (poet coaches) from culturally diverse backgrounds to work with groups of students in schools over a period of time. Our poet coaches work with the students to develop a range of poems that they perform at an official showcase event, their poems are also published in a book by a leading poetry publisher and broadcast on radio.

Write Lines was created by writer and arts programmer Sundra Lawrence in 2006, It has been funded by the Arts Council England,

the John Lyons Charity, and contributions from participating schools towards the cost of the project.

If you are interested in finding out more information please contact us at [info@writelines.com](mailto:info@writelines.com) or visit our website <http://www.writelines.com>

## Words From The Mayor



**T**HIS PUBLICATION IS the result of a lot of hard work from school children across five Harrow Schools. It is an inspiration to anyone seeking to focus creativity in the young. The poems included are rich, diverse and powerfully evocative of the issues faced by young people today.

I want to congratulate everyone involved in the work that went into producing this publication and everything that led up to this. The result is a tremendous achievement for all.

The Worshipful Mayor of Harrow,  
Councillor JEAN LAMMIMAN



# NOWER HILL HIGH SCHOOL



**Poet Coach:** JACOB SAM LA ROSE

'Jacob always pushed me to my full potential ...'

'... I learnt how to evaluate people's and my own work'

'it was something new you rarely see, poetry workshops for teenagers today.'

'I learnt what it's like to get up on stage and how to be unembarrassed'

'He is very cool, he is funny, but serious and I like his hair.'



KAJA METT

## Summer Night

SLIDE YOUR FINGERS across the glossy window,  
feel the transparent gleam of non-existent light  
making up the surface ;  
let your hand reach through it, reach through  
the slim shiny fog  
that isn't glass after all.  
Let it touch the night, taste the navy air,  
fiddle with the sky and make  
the glitter shiver,  
hope that it will fall on the eerie rooftops.  
Let your arms embrace the trees,  
enter their silky dreams,  
touch the streets and feel their glow,  
meet the ghosts  
unfolding their phantom wings ;  
be the sound, the smell, touch and sight,  
be the night,  
summer night.

## Soldiers

OUT WHERE THE air stands red  
exhaled by dear Mother War,  
fine soldiers march to their old lands;  
freedom is all they've got.

Both suffering and faltered lives  
are tattooed on their blood-soaked lips;  
enemies' death once prayed for  
now is the dirt on soldiers' skin.

And as they march through muddy fields  
back to their small mundane homes,  
army chants are all they have, because  
victory's the greatest gift  
only in songs.

## Music?

PEOPLE . . . SWITCH OFF the day, log out of their lives,  
force the 'play' button deep into stereo walls—  
their nerves buzz with energy awaiting the sounds to vibrate out  
from the vibrant speakers to wake them up.

Like sharks on the sea they surf on anarchic waves  
of undestroyed punk, Sex Pistols, bands' vivid-rough dreams,  
which scan through their brains, knock out and resurrect;  
paralyse the synapse, motivate the heart.

The yell of guitars influenced the nation to roar;  
the rotten voice stormed right down to the top.  
From the murky Thames and Parliament gates,  
straight to the west woods all's yellow and pink.

Cursing the God that saved the Queen;  
twisting the UK's conservative youth's style;  
rebellious, invading, expressing their minds  
in the most anarchic, antichrist, highlighted ways.

The vicious soul's gone but message remains  
unchanged outside the core of one day's government.  
They didn't know what they wanted but got it straight—  
punk forever distorted seventies into anarchic state.

PHILIP DANIEL

## Will it Last

WALKING IN THE woods, alone with my thoughts, I hear birds, insects, an odd squirrel. Then I hear what I have been looking for: the sound of water. Cool, clear, refreshing water rushing over a cliff to be caught by the rocks below. I run towards the soul cleansing sound and like a wave receding back into the ocean, the wood stops and opens onto the magnificent sight of a waterfall, and I think to myself will my actions change this? Will it last forever or will I have to change to keep this perfection alive?

## Fear

THE FEAR OF my childhood was finding a need to get up out of the safety of my bed and wander into the dark unknown that lies behind the door, like a man not afraid to kill a child like me. But that is nothing when held against the fear I hold now, the image of a broken man on the verge of madness living on the streets disowned by family and friends, a shadow of my former self.

## CHIEDU NWAGAGBO

### Heard

I FEEL LIKE they are taking over my life  
Always with me

Not letting me have any freedom  
But why?

Why I do not know  
Maybe they don't trust me

I talk and my voice gets echoed  
But today my voice will be heard

## Violence

I'M STILL PONDERING

In my life I'm wondering

Are all these knives and all these tools what we're sponsoring?

We need to stop the disrespect and disobedience

If one of us just took the stand I bet we will see the difference

I knew a great boy

Oh no, he was a great man

He had his mind set

He had a plan

But don't think of it as though he lost his life

Because I know that he's in heaven watching us with Jesus Christ

Are all these knives and all these tools what we're sponsoring?

In my life I'm wondering

I'm still pondering.

## Feel it in the Air

I'M TRYNA BE simply the best like Tina and scorcher  
But you can't see through me like water  
I'm tryna buss without rolling with the nines like north star  
I write so much instead of calling me a poet  
I guess you can call me an author  
And am taller than 4ft4 Starr  
So when I say I can feel it in the air  
I literally mean I have peeped through the clouds and seen it  
I seen it in the air since 1995  
Trying to get more money than MC Hammer in heaven  
But I have got to try before I reach this  
Maybe I have to chill with Jesus  
I roll with the cross  
'Coz he is the boss  
But it's going to be many more years before I can reach this.

KRISHNA PATEL

## My Parents

THEY'RE THERE WHEN I need them the most,  
there to give me the kick of motivation,  
there to give me those words of wisdom,  
there to sand down the rough edges of bad times,  
there to give me the push, to help me go further,  
but now they treat me like a baby.

I work hard to earn their trust,  
clean the house, stick to my curfew,  
listen and obey.

If they had the chance they would hold my hand when we  
cross roads.

As for what they say and do, I understand  
they do it out of love,  
make sure I'm safe,  
call me up every 5 minutes when I go out,  
make sure I make the right decision,  
literature, or language and literature.  
for that, I show them love and respect,  
listen and obey,  
but now it's time they let me go.

## Traffic Life

RED LIGHTS IN front,  
White lights to my rear,  
Destination, who knows?  
You get there, do what you need to do, then leave.  
No second chance to make a first impression,  
No second chance to make a judgment.  
Very simple, life is a one chance game,  
Rules and instructions? There are none,  
1 life, 1 that can't be thrown away,  
1 life, make the most of it.  
Think and understand, is there a destination in your life,  
Or,  
Do you follow the wind, on a path of uncertainty?

HEENA PATEL

## The Dark

SILENCE HAUNTS ME,  
I'm the last person in the world  
Alone in the corner of my room  
I hear the whispers in the invisible shadows  
A brush of sweat  
As my eyes widen with nothing to see  
Scared in a corner, staring into the black that haunts me by night  
I try to be as silent as possible  
The sound of my shallow breath echoes in my ears  
Breathing  
Faster and  
Faster  
Under the covers not daring to peek out  
Alone in the corner of my room  
Outlines of creatures objects by light  
Things lurking around you  
Creatures pounding your heart until you hold your breath  
The door so close yet so far  
The lights turn off my heart ripples a cold current around my body  
I look out into the uninviting garden  
It's dark  
And the stars are my only hope  
I turn around  
My fear  
Drifting  
Through the room  
I'm not alone!



# BENTLEY WOOD HIGH SCHOOL



**Poet Coach:** DAN COCKRILL

‘I learnt that poetry has no boundaries and I learnt how to have fun with the words’

‘it was a great experience and I will cherish it and hold it dear to my heart’

‘The poetry workshops were fun, interesting and helped us to learn more about poetry technique’

‘I learnt how to write a good poem and how to make it stand out . . . ’

‘ . . . yes I love writing and now I can become more confident with sharing my work’



## Something to Say (Part One)

I HAVE SOMETHING to say

slam of door  
a gunshot being fired  
tiny birds like arrowheads  
dart across the sky  
a sky that bleeds white  
as aeroplane lines appear  
like wrinkles on an wise woman's face

a bird song stops the world from fighting

the falling waterfall  
the droplets join the queue  
to splash again and again  
a bowl of spicy gloop  
stirred to perfection  
a perfect fairytale  
told by a perfect mother

the perfect road lies untouched

the hubbub of the busy street  
'2 4 1, 2 4 1'  
'fiver, fiver, everything's a fiver'  
'juicy lemons, get your juicy lemons here!'  
a phone rings  
'hello'

I have something to say

the wind plays catch with Tesco bags  
leaves conceal clod and clay  
red, yellow, green  
syrup flavoured petals  
fall one by one  
soldiers in an imaginary war

trees with faces taunt and tease  
sway and whisper in the breeze  
secret messages  
'war is over, war is over'  
the branches reach out  
as if to tag your skin

hostile plants threaten  
to bite and sting  
bitter air cuts my soul  
as the Saturday girl sweeps  
the trees have had their haircut

I have something to say

graffiti slashes street names  
and plastered on every front door  
'Neighbourhood Watch'  
'Friend or Foe'  
as the abandoned house lets out a sigh  
'why oh why did you leave me  
why oh why?'

busy body buzzing neighbours  
chant their business

'what's he up to?'  
'what's he doing?'

the post box gives a snigger  
it's rectangle mouth digesting letters  
addressed to Auntie Pat

rude boys and yobs  
emerge from the park  
barking like Pit Bulls— 'who let the dogs out?'  
through stricken midnight street

I have something to say

trees line the pathway  
giant hands protecting you from sunlight  
planes dominate the skies like monarchs  
a wicked wind flows between every strand of hair

trapped prisoners  
forced to stay inside  
by the cruel cold of the day

familiar faces remain unknown  
tears sting  
eyes sore  
as the wind whips the whites red raw

I have something to say

this was the day my only grandfather passed away

and mum's sharp words  
split and splinter  
my dad's heart  
'these kids don't know you exist'

a flood of rain  
washes the crumbs of life  
off the window pain  
down the gutter and drain  
the sky cold and stiff  
like a dead swan

the graveyard  
a gate to the end  
the weary eye  
of Lady Forever  
in the shadows  
of the church

a lifeless forgotten wood  
a burning inferno

four traffic cones  
soldiers standing to attention  
guarding a blood red sign that reads  
'Road Ahead Closed'

we have nothing more to say

## Something to Say (Part Two)

WE HAVE NOTHING more to say

red buses zoom into the grey  
cars clutter side roads  
roofs smothered  
in muddy brown  
terracotta splashes  
curbs tucked up tight  
snuggled in littered leaves

a lone shoe  
flattened gum on the pavement  
a punctured football  
a soggy jumper  
the same old fragile man  
the same unsold car  
the same old chilly breeze  
the same old

all forgotten

we have nothing more to say

'squeeze me, got any more of those juicy lemons?'  
'sorry mate, they're all gone . . . but I've got some of these  
squashy tomatoes'

weeds weave their way  
through cracks  
while broken hearts float

along rivers  
that echo underground  
as epitaphs written on tombstones  
sing their sorrows

a short stout girl  
wishes she was different  
a young boy  
desperate to blend  
a blazing beacon  
doves engulfed  
by a myriad of vultures

a bitter blue wind  
turns my cheeks beetroot red

Autumn  
cold October  
leaves and lives spinning  
like hurricanes  
earth playing with air  
a game going on for centuries to come and go

we have nothing more to say

leaves whisper hello  
wind let me come with you  
on one of your many journeys  
show me diversity  
a haunting laugh—my answer  
is there truly peace to be found  
after times of violence

telephone masts  
with spider-like arms  
cling to houses  
forming webs in the sky

helicopter blades  
chop my thoughts  
scattering them into a thousand pieces

clink and clatter  
hum and drum  
a train soars

dim shimmer of streetlight  
shrinking balls of fire  
give emergence of dark angels  
preying on the shreds of humanity  
we cling onto

and four traffic cones  
soldiers standing to attention  
guarding the blood red sign that reads  
'Road Ahead Closed'

but wait

I do have something to say

## SOPHYA POLEVAYA

### Days

DAYS BRING THE sun up without a warning,  
Pulling you out of bed,  
To say good morning.

Days bring news you are hoping to hear,  
About the times to come,  
Looking ahead without fear.

Days suddenly force on you puzzling aims,  
Pushing you over the limits,  
To win those games.

Days making you ready for the yawning moonlight,  
Wrapping you in tiredness,  
To say goodnight.

CHLOE JARRET

Dear Teddy

HE DID IT again.  
The bruising, the crying,  
It's only half past ten

Bleeding, swearing, 3 broken hearts to fix  
But please don't tell daddy teddy  
Or you know I'll get the dark whip

My inner rainbow has no shine  
No colour to paint my soul  
I wish, just wish, it wasn't mine

Until that multi-coloured, holy day  
A wind swept angel landed on my shoulder  
And saved me from my secretive, forbidden cave

Teddy, now I sleep peacefully 'til the morning sun  
That's why, I'm so glad  
My foster carer, had come.