

Program Plan: Young Writers Circle

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Program Rationale/Objective

What do the horror novel *Frankenstein* (1818), the 1950s school tragedy *The Outsiders* (1958), and the feminist lifestyle publication *Rookie Magazine* (2011) all have in common? Despite their many differences in both content and form, each represents the immense talent of a teenage writer. Running counter to our prevailing conceptions of who can be 'an author,' the teenage writer is no less capable than their adult counterpart of producing incredible work. Young adults have historically been the subject of stories, but there is a strong historical precedent of them writing their own stories.

Not every young writer needs to be the next S.E. Hinton; however, the act of writing itself (whether 'good' or 'bad') can be an important creative outlet for teenagers and foster positive emotional development. Creative expression through writing is an effective way for teenagers to explore and communicate their personal identity; artistic and creative expression can unleash a whirlwind of emotion and can often say what speaking cannot (Thomas, 2011, p. 8). Research has shown that practicing creative writing with young people can foster communication skills, manage their increased levels of social isolation, and aid within the healing processes of mental illness (Synnes et al., 2021). These experiences are not standard in the lives of teenagers, as they are more often taught to write critically or as a means to an end rather than creatively.

This program arises out of desire to create a space for teenagers to learn, collaborate, and find community in other young people who are interested in creative writing. For most teens, creative writing is tied up in their schoolwork – though some creative writers emerge. Creative writing classes and workshops can not only be expensive but are also typically only offered to adult participants. This program is designed for teenagers who either want to be a writer or adopt writing as a hobby, or for those who simply want to enjoy reading creative writing produced by their peers. Through this program, the library can better serve young people and their commitment to literacy by holding a space for creative practice and collaboration.

Program Description

Young Writers Circle is a weekly interactive writing workshop designed specifically for older teens (aged 14-18) and hosted in a public library setting. The workshop can host up to fifteen participants during a typical session. Each session lasts one hour and contains two segments: guided writing activities and a writing show-and-tell. The subjects of the workshop will include (but are not limited to): poetry, short stories, writing jokes, writing something that scares you, the editing process, overcoming writer's block, and offering constructive feedback. Writers are encouraged to come as they are: whether they have already drafted their first novel or have never put pen-to-page – the program is designed to support creativity at all levels.

Young Writers Circle will also offer teens a chance to have their written work published via social media and website channels. At the end of each school year, program participants will be able to select their favorite pieces of work to be published in an online journal called *Young*

Writers Circle: Yearly Review. Hosted on the library website, the journal will celebrate the talents of program participants while also providing a first chance at publication for teens within a safe and supportive setting.

Scheduling of the program

Young Writer's Circle should take place on a weekday during after-school hours (ideally 4:00 – 5:00 PM), twice a month. This will ensure the opportunities for teens to participate regularly without burdening their schedule.

Staffing requirements

Young Writers Circle Program Coordinator

The *Young Writers Circle* program coordinator is responsible for hosting the workshop each week, and leading participants through interactive activities. The coordinator should possess strong communication and instruction skills and be comfortable supporting teenagers from all backgrounds.

Community partnerships

Based upon participant interest, there is potential to collaborate with local authors and poets during workshops. The program coordinator should meet with partnership representatives beforehand to ensure that they understand program goals and objectives.

Proposed Budget

The annual budget for *Young Writers Circle* is \$2000.00 annually. This budget does not include the cost of the staffing required to plan and execute this program. On a week-to-week basis, the program may range between \$60.00 to \$185.00 per session.

- Writing materials (\$20.00)
- Snacks (\$40.00)
- Honorarium for guest authors and instructors (\$125.00)

Equipment/materials needed

Library space: This program will ideally take place in an open space in the library where teens can participate without (relative) interruption. There should be enough seating and tables for all participants, while also ensuring the necessary accommodation for people living with physical disabilities. NOTE: Although community and meeting rooms may be utilized for *Young Writers Circle*, they run the risk of feeling too similar to a classroom setting.

A speaker/sound system: Light music will help lighten the mood, foster creativity, and support a space that feels relaxed and far away from the classroom setting participants are familiar with.

Writing materials: Notebooks, loose-leaf, pencils and pens. Laptops should be available for writers who prefer to conduct their practice on a keyboard.

Program evaluation method

This program will be evaluated via an outcome-based evaluation.

Intended outcome: Teenagers will practice creative writing and have their work published.

Indicator: The publication of *Young Writers Circle: Yearly Review* will act as an indicator of the intended outcome. Each participant is permitted to submit one piece of their work for publication – any writing that was completed during or outside of program hours is eligible. The only requirement to entry is to have been a participant in *Young Writers Circle* program at some point throughout the school year. The ideal scenario would be to have at least 50% of the participants of *Young Writers Circle* submit to the journal.

References

Pritchard, & Sainsbury, E. E. (2004). *Can you read me? creative writing with child and adult victims of abuse* (1st American pbk. ed.). Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Thomas, B. (2011). *Creative Expression Activities for Teens: Exploring Identity Through Art, Craft and Journaling*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Synnes, Romm, K. L., & Bondevik, H. (2021). The poetics of vulnerability: creative writing among young adults in treatment for psychosis in light of Ricoeur's and Kristeva's philosophy of language and subjectivity. *Medicine, Health Care, and Philosophy*, 24(2), 173–187. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11019-020-09998-5>