



Make Write - A Zine Workshop How-to

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Rationale and objectives: Our hope is to provide a supportive environment in which youth participants can engage in creative writing. Additionally we hope that our youth participants can form collaborative partnerships with adult writers, as well as with fellow youth writers from different communities within their city. Our original aim was a proposal on how this could be achieved within the Halifax Regional Municipality, but this proposal could be applied to any Canadian municipality and their corresponding library system.

After some initial research and consultation, we felt that while there were a number of young writers in the HRM, there was a dearth of environments where they could collaborate and form bonds. Furthermore, there was also a distinct lack of programs, workshops, and writing groups geared towards aspiring young writers

where they could hone their skills and develop their writing craft.

Our objectives:

- To teach and foster creative writing skills.
- To write and produce a collaborative zine.
- To demonstrate a broad range of writing – traditional and non-traditional forms.
- To aid in and facilitate the collaboration between youth and adult writers in the HRM.
- To teach youth participants how to plan, write, edit, and self-publish their own works.
- To showcase the writing of young writers in the HRM.

There are several developmental assets that we feel this program will help develop:

Other adult relationships—Youth participants will receive support from library staff and the writer-in-residence.

Community values youth—Youth participants see that adults in the community value youth as collaborators and writers in their own right.

Positive peer influence—Youth participants will forge bonds with and model behaviour after their peers.

Peaceful Conflict Resolution—Youth participants seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.

Interpersonal Competence—Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.

High expectations—Writers and library staff will encourage the young writers to do well.

Creative activities—Youth participants will spend two or more hours per week in workshop sessions and additional time in independent writing practices.

Youth as resources—Youth writers are viewed as writers in their own right by the community.

Responsibility—Youth participants accepts and takes personal responsibility for providing content for the zine and engaging in independent writing practice.

Planning and decision making—Youth writers serve as editors and publishers of the zine.

Self-esteem—Youth writers will take pride in their collaborative and individual creative output.

Personal Power—Youth writers decide the tone, look, format, and content of the zine as well as having input into the agenda and ground rules of the workshop. Self publishing and self directed learning will foster feelings of autonomy and confidence.

Sense of purpose—Self publishing will foster feelings of ambition in youth writers.

Length: Six sessions (suggested, but more can be included depending on the scope of the program). Each session will last approximately 2 hours with an allowance for at least 1 half hour of run-over time for each session. Employee commitment would include the session, the run-over (if required), clean-up, as well as set-up and preparation.

Description: A 6 session 2+ hour program led and facilitated a library staff member, supplemented by youth leaders/facilitators with workshops led

by a writer-in-residence. Each session will try to feature a different aspect of writing and/or a new small writing project or practice that will build on the skills from the previous week with the end result being a 32 page collaborative zine.

Target audience: Youth from a variety of diverse communities and backgrounds aged 14-18. The ideal participant would have an interest in creative writing, but the library should be more than willing to try and unlock the aspiring writer inside any youth.

Staffing requirements:

1 Youth Services Librarian to facilitate and supervise the program, aid participants in research, as well as to introduce relevant items in the library’s catalogue to the participants. This role could also be filled by a library technician or another Youth Services staff member with YA readers’ advisory and reference training.

1 Writer-in-Residence to lead workshops, offer advice, and demonstrate writing techniques. It would be helpful if the writer had a background in several different media (zines, self-publishing, perhaps even visual media), but it is not necessary.

1 additional library staff member to aid in set up, clean up and other tasks as required. This staff member does not have to be present, but it’s beneficial to have them “on-call” so to speak to ensure a good ratio of staff members to participants.

2 Youth volunteers (also participants in the program) to serve as discussion and activity facilitators and group leaders.

Volunteer/guest speakers as required. Possibly from the fields of filmmaking, illustration etc.

First choice would be to look amongst existing staff for these sorts of interests and backgrounds.

Youth inclusion methods and proposed publicity

methods: Teen library patrons who have an interest in writing will be encouraged to take part. Diversity in participants should be key especially along community and culture lines. This might involve extending the reach of the program outside the limits of our library. Information talks at area schools, planned in conjunction with the respective English teachers and English departments, can reach out to and target students with an interest in creative writing. These talks can be supplemented with talks at local youth groups and Boys and Girls Clubs—particularly those outside our own neighbourhood and community. A poster campaign inside the library and area high schools could also run in accordance with these talks.

Well-placed phone calls and programming releases to various community groups that have a youth mandate and a diverse clientele (such as LOVE, Phoenix House, HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development in Halifax) could also help identify teens who would benefit from this program. These means can be supplemented or duplicated by press releases and community radio announcements that will be sent out to local news media (newspapers - both daily and weekly, radio, tv, etc.) as well as to community oriented newsletters and mailing lists.

Additionally, it would be beneficial to recruit two teenage facilitators who would serve as participants in the program, but who would also function as aides and leaders in discussion. These facilitators could be teens identified by and recommended by staff or by teachers, youth group leaders etc. These facilitator positions could be rotated on a session-by-session basis. The ultimate purpose with these positions would be to have participants who could function as

liaisons between the library and their peers and fellow participants.

Community partnerships (example for Halifax Regional Municipality):

Community Partner	Rationale for Inclusion/Role
LOVE (Leave Out Violence)	To aid in the recruitment of participants who fit the criteria of our target audience.
Phoenix House	To aid in the recruitment of participants who fit the criteria of our target audience.
Heartwood Centre for Community Youth Development	To aid in the recruitment of participants who fit the criteria of our target audience.
Writers’ Federation of Nova Scotia	A resource for writers’ resources.
Anchor Archive Zine Library/Roberts Street Social Centre	A resource for writing tools and writers’ resources - due to their extensive collection.

Materials needed: legal and standard printer/copier paper, pens, Sharpies, mechanical pencils, rulers, scissors, cardboard, glue sticks, old magazines culled from the library, stickers etc. Other suggested (but not necessarily easy to acquire) items: stamps, donated or repurposed

typewriters, lettraset (which can often be found at thrift stores)

Additionally, it may be useful for the librarian to have sample zines and zine resource guides on hand for inspirational or demonstrative purposes.

Suggested Reading (others resources may be substituted):

Biel, J. (2003). *Stolen sharpie revolution: a diy zine resource*. Portland, OR: Microcosm Publishing.

Block, F.L & Carlip, H. (1998). *Zine scene : [the do it yourself guide to zines]*. Girls Press.

Cometbus, A. (2013). *Cometbus*. [zine]

Friedman, S. (1997). *The factsheet five zine reader: The best Writing from the underground world of zines*. New York: Three Rivers Press.

Gibb, L. (2013). *Broken pencil*. (periodical)

Kalmar, V. (1997). *Start your own zine : everything you need to know to put it into print!* New York: Hyperion Books.

Todd, M. & Watson, E.P. (2006). *Whatcha mean, what's a zine?* Boston: Graphia.

Wolfgang, K. (2000). *Lowjinx #2: Understanding the horrible truth about reinventing minicomics*. Collinsville, CT: Noe-Fie Mono-Media.

Wrekk, A. (2009). *Stolen sharpie revolution 2: A diy resource to zines and zine culture*. Portland, OR: Microcosm Publishing.

Equipment needed: library printer and photocopier; Kinko's photocopiers (off-site)

Outline of activities:

Week 1: Introductions, collaboration, and first small project

The participants will introduce themselves, but rather than the typical icebreakers, which some find awkward, they will participate in collaborative writing exercises, such as "exquisite corpse", in which they each take turns writing one line of a story or poem after the other. This will help build the collaborative nature of the program that will be necessary in the final product of a collaborative zine. Afterwards, they'll be introduced to zines and mini-comics and asked about their expected goal for the program. In the second half, there will be a further discussion of mini-comics and the participants will be asked to create a mini-comic, which is a simple project materials-wise, and given the proliferation of successful web comics featuring stick figures, need not only be for the artistically gifted. There are numerous patterns that can be found online to create one from a single page from folds and cuts, so the teens can take it home and create their own on their own time, if they have further interest. There will be a ten-minute break for snacks at the midway point, and at every break, the young people can peruse the materials and resource guides on hand for ideas for the zine if they are interested. These activities foster social competencies (interpersonal competence) and productive use of time (creative activities) (Search Institute, 2006).

Week 2: Discussion of art forms and media/collaborative collage

In this week's session, there will be a facilitated discussion (with possible guest speakers depending on the background of the staff and writer-in-residence) on storytelling through both written and visual media, and using both forms of storytelling in the zine format. The participants will each make either an autobiographical or a "self-portrait" collage, although if they choose another theme for their collage, the facilitators should certainly be flexible. There will be a break at the midway point with snacks and drinks provided. Further discussion will take place led by the youth facilitators about what the participants would like to see in their collaborative zine in regards to tone, theme, format etc. - setting the stage for later planning conversations. Choosing to have the participants lead their own discussion will ensure autonomy with the tone and theme of the zine. These activities foster social competencies (interpersonal competence) and productive use of time (creative activities) (Search Institute, 2006).

Week 3: Constructive Criticism

The participants should by now know each other as collaborators and peers and should begin to feel more comfortable sharing their own writing. This session will feature a round table discussion of criticism led again by the youth facilitators focusing on what makes good constructive criticism and how bad criticism can negatively impact a writer. Participants will be encouraged to discuss their anxieties when it comes to criticism and everything will be done to ensure a judgment free zone. The writer-in-residence will share good and bad reviews that they have received and talk about how the reviews affected

and/or informed their own writing. There will be a break with refreshments at the midway point. At the end of the session participants will be asked to bring a piece of their own writing to the next session. This piece of writing could be a new piece or an older piece from their journal - genre is left up to the writer's discretion, but it should fit in with the previously decided upon theme and tone of the collaborative zine. These activities foster positive values (caring), constructive use of time (creative activities), social competencies (interpersonal competence, and perhaps peaceful conflict resolution) (Search Institute, 2006).

Week 4: Workshop individual pieces and feedback

Each participant will bring their potential zine contribution—whether it is a piece of short fiction, song lyrics, non-fiction piece, or poem etc.—to share and receive constructive feedback from the group, facilitated by the writer-in-residence, with the support of the library staff person. This process will help shape the pieces so that they fit the theme and tone of the zine. They will be encouraged to work on their piece at home and incorporate the criticism they received. There will be a break with refreshments at the midway point.

Week 5: Final product

In this session the group begins laying out and making the actual zine. They will learn about mock-ups and layouts and then they can begin work on their own pages with their recently edited and workshopped piece from Week 4. The workshop will be lead by the writer-in-residence with participation from a local volunteer/guest speaker with experience in zine making. There

will be a break with refreshments at the midway point. These activities foster social competencies (interpersonal competence) and constructive use of time (creative activities) (Search Institute, 2006).

Week 6: Final product

The participants will continue with the activities above then, proofread. When all the pages are assembled, one test copy will be run off the library copier and celebrated with a pizza party. The remaining copies, one for each teen and five for the library collection, will be printed. The sense of accomplishment for the teens at seeing their work in print contributes to positive identity: personal power, self-esteem, and sense of purpose (Search Institute, 2006).

Evaluation Method and success measures:

Step 1: Pre-workshop

- Pre-workshop ‘ask the audience’ questionnaires to inform and help develop the workshop content, as well as to document the current state of the youth participants. This will be delivered at registration and can be circulated as a word or .pdf document via email, in person at registration in paper form, or mailed out or faxed to the participant.

Step 2: Beginning of workshop

- Agree upon objectives and discover what kind of agenda and outcomes the youth participants wish to set.

Step 3: Ongoing throughout the workshop

- Seek feedback throughout the workshop or during break times

Step 4: At the end of a workshop

- Last day feedback forms – using Halifax Public Libraries’ program surveys, but also using free format to allow for the (at times) non-traditional nature of this workshop and its participants.
- Revisit participant initial expectations and ask that expectations met and those not met be identified

Step 5: Post-workshop

- Identify success stories from the workshop and make sure to allow for participants who are of the ‘I can say more than I can write down’ type by conducting in-person or over the phone interviews.

References

- Roberts Street Social Centre. (n.d). Zine facilitator workshop outline in Zine-making workshop facilitators. Retrieved from <http://www.robertsstreet.org/workshops> .
- Search Institute. (2007). 40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents in *Search Institute*. Retrieved from <http://www.search-institute.org/content/40-developmental-assets-adolescents-ages-12-18>.



Zines can come in many forms from black and white photocopied and/or bound like Aaron Cometbus’s eponymous and long running *Cometbus* (above) to colour minicomics like the work of Kurt Wolfgang (below left) or newsprint like the punk institution and collaborative zine *Maximum Rockroll* (below right). Experimentation should be encouraged!

