

Writing Through



Annual Report 2020

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Executive Summary

Writing Through is an organization that teaches thinking skills, language fluency, and self-esteem through the creative writing of poetry and stories, in English, to some of the world's most at-risk populations. It is a program which was started, tested and proven to work in Southeast Asia, notably Cambodia, Vietnam and Singapore, and has now expanded into the United States.

Writing Through grew out of a series of workshops started in 2010 by the novelist and poet, Sue Guiney, in one educational shelter in Siem Reap, Cambodia, called Anjali House. From there, it grew into an organization now helping students and adults in schools and NGOs throughout the world. These workshops have allowed both children and adults to build their confidence, expand their imaginations and express themselves in ways far removed from what they already know. Early in its lifespan, **Writing Through** was already being recognized within the international community of organizations working to improve literacy throughout the world. Now as it enters its sixth year of existence, we look forward to continuing to expand its reach around the globe.

We began 2020 with the assumption that we would continue to solidify and expand on the work accomplished in 2019. But as we all know, 2020 was not to be like other years. Although we provided our workshops as planned during the first quarter of the year, by March the pandemic was shutting down schools and economies around the globe. All of our partners put their own programming on hold. New relationships were stopped cold. **Writing Through**, like everyone else, was forced to switch gears or close down.

But the **Writing Through** staff used the creativity it teaches to pivot our approaches and find new ways to reach our students. We put all of our workshops online, starting with a group of free single-session poetry-writing workshops using issues around the pandemic as their themes. By mid-summer, we had provided seventeen workshops, hosting participants from eleven countries. We also added journal writing as one of our methodologies. These workshops were such a success that they encouraged us to put all our workshops online, and now as we enter 2021, we can offer the option of workshops held either in person or via various modes of online teaching.

As we became more comfortable with remote teaching, we started to reach out more energetically to potential partners around the United States and create new programs appealing specifically to American needs. Already in 2021, we are running a new High School club program in Los Angeles county, scheduling workshops in marginalized communities in the Philadelphia and Atlantic City regions, and offering advanced workshops to library groups in conjunction with our new partner from Harvard University, Hope Storytelling. If anything, the global crisis has underlined the impact of what we do, and has spurred on greater growth. Even in Cambodia, the hub of our activities, we are creating new partnerships to supplement our existing ones, and continuing to offer our programming in Singapore and Vietnam. In many ways, we are now busier than ever.

Yet despite changes, our basic pedagogy and philosophy remains the same. Our bespoke workshops are broken down into themed sessions where a combination of both individual and group writing activities are performed. On the final day, participants take part in a class celebration. Their work is compiled into a magazine and they present a final piece to their peers, teachers, and community. Each workshop is run by a Facilitator and Shadow, with an assistant local teacher, if necessary (usually the students' permanent teacher), who acts as a translator. By working alongside local teachers, we also fulfill our additional goal of teacher training. **Writing Through** insists that, while all workshops are conducted in English, the level of English fluency in the participants is of limited importance. Developing skills in English is a bonus goal, but the Facilitators encourage participants to think in their own language, in order to focus on what they really want to say. The English vocabulary and grammar grows from there.

Many countries in the areas where we work have educational systems whose structures do not encourage conceptual thought or critical thinking; they are often academically rigid, relying on memorization rather than creativity or imaginative discussion. We have also come to realise that throughout the world, classrooms can often become places of fear. **Writing Through** believes that a frightened student cannot learn, and so we create safe and fun classrooms that allow the students to use their minds in new ways. We are helping these students quite literally find their own voices. The sense of pride at our Big Events which showcase these newly found voices is palpable.

The challenges of 2020 were a shock to us all. But throughout this terrible year, **Writing Through** stayed true to its mission statement:

...to use creative writing as a tool to develop thinking skills, language fluency and self-esteem in marginalized and at risk populations throughout the world. Writing Through is non-sectarian and operates wherever its services are needed.

We are more committed than ever to our goals, and more certain that the world needs the skills that we teach.

Letter from the Founder

Dear Friends and Supporters,

*As I began to write this annual letter, I first reread all that I had written at this time last year. It was a humbling experience. In many ways, the world we live in today is a very different place. The ravages of a worldwide virus have both brought us together and torn us apart. COVID-19 has devastated not only our health, but many of our economies and political systems. Like everyone else, we at **Writing Through** had to think long and hard about our own viability, whether we were still needed in this new world of ours, and if so, how we would continue. 2020 was a year full of pulling back and pushing forward, full of despair and hope, but the more we worked together the stronger grew the belief that our mission is needed more than ever. Surrounded by sickness and lies, we all need the skills to examine, observe, understand and creatively grapple with our new world. We are even more committed to the belief that artistic expression is the direct link to developing those skills. How do we develop the thinking skills so crucial to living in today's world? We develop them in ourselves and others through techniques that unlock the creative use of language. We develop them one poem, one story at a time.*

In this, our fifth Annual Report, we will outline how we have continued to solidify our work while also meeting the unexpected demands of 2020. We have learned new techniques and created new methods of delivering our workshops. These have actually allowed us to reach more people than ever. In last year's report, we said that:

Writing Through is not about a geographic location, but rather, it is about a methodology and approach to education which is unique, successful, and fun.

We are now delivering our workshops to areas as far away from Cambodia as West Covina, California, as well as many marginalized communities and groups in between.

*As we enter our sixth year, we can look forward to growing as an organization, and as a positive force within global education. But we never could have come this far or weathered the storms of 2020 without the interest and support of our friends. Thank you for joining **Writing Through** in the belief that developed thinking skills, increased self-esteem and improved literacy are among the most powerful weapons we have to combat the risks so many of us face in our world.*

Ever onward,

Sue

Sue Guiney, Founder and Executive Director, Writing Through

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What We Accomplished in 2020

38 workshops in 4 countries
207 students
140 poems, stories and journals written
60 fully trained Facilitators
5 new partner organizations added

During 2020, **Writing Through** conducted 38 separate workshops across Cambodia, Singapore, Vietnam and the United States. We had participants taking part not only in these four countries but also in Canada, Mexico, India, Thailand, Laos, China, Germany and the United Kingdom. These workshops were run by nine different Facilitators (some facilitating multiple workshops), with eleven different partner organizations. We also held free online workshops and one community workshop in Siem Reap open to the public. In 2020, we added three new partner organizations. In Singapore we joined with the Institute Of Technical Education (ITE), encouraging their students to undertake community service by joining with Very Special Arts Singapore (VSA) in a one-time workshop. In Cambodia we partnered with the Ponheary Ly Foundation, promoting access to quality education for children and youth across Northern Cambodia. We also began our work with Asian Outreach Cambodia, whose mission is to equip and empower rural communities through training and resource development. Our first partner in the United States is the Youth Advocacy Club of West Covina High School. This is our pilot of a new program targeting American High School clubs.

Publications and Profiles

We had our third and final book launch for our publication entitled *Writing Through: An Anthology of Poems from the Magic Pencils*. This was held at Cloud, in Phnom Penh. We had a great turnout including board member, Jenny Pearson, and partners from EYC and EDM. We were also thrilled to be able to have several young Phnom Penh poets join to learn more about the **Writing Through** pedagogy and programming.

Journalists from the **Phnom Penh Post** also attended the event, and wrote a feature about **Writing Through**; ['Writing Through' promotes thinking skills](#)



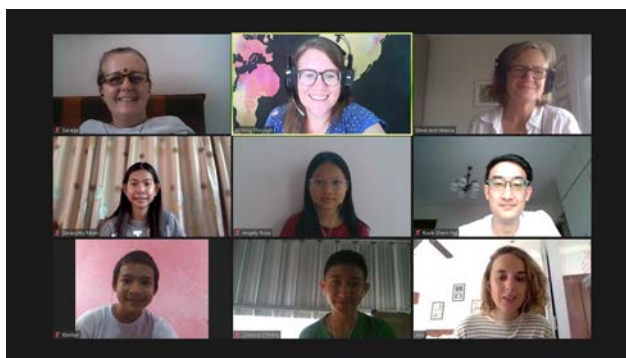
We once again participated in HOWL, whose mission brings writers, audiences and spaces together to create one-off 'pop-up' literary events. We were in attendance at the first Phnom Penh edition which launched the anthology [Face Masks and Hand Gel](#), *A Year Of Living Covidly*. This publication includes poems by Jess Blackledge and Kristin Schuster plus an essay written by Sue Guiney.

Our First US Government Grant

Between 2019 and 2020, we were able to complete our first US government grant which came from the U.S. Embassy in Singapore. Through the U.S. Embassy, we connected with our new Partner, Persatuan Pemudi Islam Singapura (PPIS), a nonprofit organization supporting women and children in Singapore's Muslim community. Because of the pandemic, some of the segments of the four-part project needed to be postponed and then held online. We were delighted, though, that the entire project was completed successfully, and we look forward to continuing our relationship both with PPIS, and the U.S. Embassy. We also look forward to pursuing other partnerships via other embassies in our host countries.

Moving To Remote Learning

Beginning in March, all of our upcoming workshops were cancelled as each organization was dealing with restrictions in their own regions. Around the world, most people were in lockdown. We recognized the profound emotional toll this was taking and decided to do something about it. The techniques of **Writing Through** not only help people express themselves, but they can also help to empower and connect them. We took our philosophy and pedagogy and began experimenting with doing workshops over Zoom. Through much experimentation and the patience of our participants, we were able to offer free online workshops. We had participants join from around the world, writing either group poems or our new journal writing format. In Singapore they were in *Circuit Breaker*, in Cambodia students were sent back to their villages, in India they couldn't leave their homes even for essentials. Yet, our participants came together and learned about what was happening in other countries, compared experiences and connected through compassion. The feedback we received was extraordinary.



These were such a resounding success that we decided to move full workshops online in two separate formats. The first is where we 'zoom' in while each participant is on their own device. But we also developed a method for when the participants do not have access to their own devices. Here, we are projected into the classroom where the students view us on a single computer and, with the help of a local teacher, we can conduct the workshop as if we were all meeting in person.



Once again we were able to participate in the Singapore Writers Festival. Singapore had a very quick and strict lockdown named the "Circuit Breaker" and as a result this year's festival was moved online. The Singapore Writers Festival (SWF) is regarded as one of Asia's premier literary events. Over three consecutive years of working with Very Special Arts (VSA) and the Jazz Association of Singapore, we produced a one-of-a-kind experience at SWF, integrating different art forms, spoken word and jazz. This year we first worked with the benefactors of Very Special Arts Singapore online for the writing sessions. Then, our Facilitator, Andrea McKenna, and Shadow, Angelene Chong were able to attend intimate, in-person sessions to prepare the students for presenting, speaking into a camera and reading along with live jazz musicians. The results were phenomenal as seen [here](#).



Expansion

In 2020 we began our expansion into the U.S. Through our newly developed online curriculum, we were able to cover large geographical distances and reach diverse groups in new regions. Our in-person workshops were cancelled but we were able to create after-school programs for American high school students at West Covina High School. Not only did we work with our usual methods, we were also able to add discussions about application writing and community service to aid them in planning for their University applications. This new program further reinforces that our techniques are advantageous to everyone and encourages us to continue with this expansion.

We worked with new partners in Cambodia, including the Ponheary Ly Foundation in Siem Reap and Asian Outreach Cambodia in Stung Treng. In Singapore, we worked with the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) and have begun relationships with several more. Although they were unfortunately not able to take place due to closures this year, we look forward to working with them in 2021 and beyond.



Organizational Development

After four years with **Writing Through**, Jess Blackledge made the difficult decision to return to the UK to be closer to her family. We will miss her greatly but she will stay on as a volunteer. Upon researching the industry standards of job titles in the nonprofit sector, we have changed the job titles to match. Kristin Schuster is stepping in as Deputy Director and we welcome Bryony (Bee) Rice in the role of Operations Coordinator. Sue Guiney has also taken a new title of Founder and Executive Director.



Deputy Director - Kristin Schuster



Operations Coordinator - Bee Rice

In November, we held what will be the first of our annual Very Big Events. We welcomed nearly thirty board members, staff, facilitators, partners and volunteers to join together and celebrate all of our accomplishments. It was inspiring to hear stories of personal experiences and the way **Writing Through** benefits its volunteers as well as its students. At the event, which was held via Zoom, we also celebrated our volunteer of the year, Andrea McKenna. With our new online format, we can continue to bring people together from all corners of the world.



As the Black Lives Matter movement grew in the United States and then throughout the world, we created our own Anti-Discrimination statement,

standing together with indigenous populations and people of color around the globe. Our policy statement can be read [here](#).

Program Development

This year we were able to develop new advanced formats of our workshops. As we continue our relationships with partners, we are seeing ways that we can adapt our curriculum to their strengths and needs. We were able to do an advanced workshop with the Society For Wings where we taught more detailed writing skills while also pushing our participants to delve deeper into their creative writing. The work that was created is astounding.

We also worked with Liger Leadership Academy for the second year and were able to create a new workshop that extended from their classroom curriculum. The students were studying George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and Sue was able to help them to expand on the novel's themes to create their own short stories. This creates new opportunities to collaborate with teachers and help enrich their syllabi.



The more we sustain long term relationships with our partners, the more we can create new formats and strategies to benefit the skill sets of the participants and fill gaps in their curricula.

Internships

Despite the pandemic, we were again able to host two summer interns from Wesleyan University. Although they were not able to travel to SE Asia as other interns had done in previous years, Anna Marti and Anna Nguyen were able to gain important knowledge and experience while also making real contributions to **Writing Through** programming. “The Two Annas” helped us move to remote learning while both assisting and participating in early online workshops. They also wrote reports on the U.S. educational system, needs of the Vietnamese student population, developments in remote educational software, and other

issues facing us as we adapt and grow. We thank them both for their hard work and continued enthusiasm under difficult circumstances and look forward to their continued participation in the **Writing Through** family.

Our Programs

It should be noted that not all of our Partners hold workshops every year due to their individual funding or scheduling challenges. Below is a list of our most recently active partnerships.

Cambodia

Ponheary Ly Foundation promotes access to quality education for children and youth across Northern Cambodia. We held our first workshop with PLF with the dorm students who were able to stay in Siem Reap despite COVID restrictions.



Asian Outreach Cambodia's vision is restoring hope and dignity to Cambodians by breaking the poverty cycle in rural communities. Their mission is to equip and empower these rural communities through training and resource development. They welcomed us to their Hope Center in Stung Treng.



Anjali House is the place where the **Writing Through** workshops started and developed. Our workshops now hold a prominent place in the center's annual schedule. We also provide teacher development programs and oversight as needed. Our Big Event was generously hosted by the opulent Memoires Palace Resort and Spa.



[Children of the Mekong /Enfants du Mekong](#)

is a French organization, based all over SE Asia. They have six centers across Cambodia, and after several workshops with **Writing Through**, proposed that they receive one workshop at each of their centers across the country, each year.

While *Children of the Mekong/Enfants du Mekong* continues to officially include **Writing Through** as a permanent strand of their programming, due to COVID restrictions we were forced to postpone our 2020 workshops.



[Empowering Youth Cambodia \(EYC\)](#)

runs four learning centers, operating as combined schools and community centers, in Phnom Penh's poorest communities. We are looking forward to continuing with them in 2021 as our 2020 workshop was postponed.



[Liger Leadership Academy \(LLA\)](#)

educates promising youth of today to develop socially conscious, entrepreneurial leaders of tomorrow. They provide a residential scholarship program for economically disadvantaged students that combines a comprehensive, internationally competitive education with an innovative STEM and entrepreneurship curriculum. Liger believes a meaningful investment in the right few will change the lives of many. This year's workshop was developed to encourage them to use the themes they encountered in *Animal Farm* to inspire their own short stories and the results were phenomenal.



[PEPY Empowering Youth](#)

works with young adults and students to develop youth leadership, learning opportunities and access to education for underprivileged Cambodians. This year we held our biggest workshop yet with sixty students.



[The Chelly Foundation](#) brings about positive changes to the lives of children and their parents in the Chumkiri area of the southern province of Kampot. This very rural area has been heretofore all but ignored by development workers. We were unable to schedule a workshop for 2020 but are looking forward to 2021.



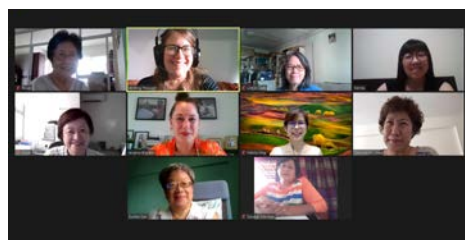
Singapore

Our work in Singapore continues to grow with our valued partners. Through them we continue to focus on the often underserved portions of the population, such as youth and adults with disabilities, and mature women coping with the challenges of aging.

[PPIS](#) is a nonprofit social welfare organisation dedicated to working with women of all ages in carrying out their multiple roles in society. PPIS runs three core community services namely Family Services, Student Care and Early Childhood Education. With sixteen centers island-wide, the services work together to provide quality and holistic support as well as developmental programs for women and their families. We were able to complete both a **Writing Through The Workplace** workshop with them and a full workshop with the students all online. This workshop series was funded by the U.S. Embassy in Singapore.



[Society for WINGs](#) is a nonprofit organization established in 2007. WINGs' focus is on promoting active ageing for women of lower income brackets by providing knowledge, teaching skills and support in planning their financial future and living a healthier and more active lifestyle. **Writing Through** conducted three workshops this year in January, August and



October, one in person and two online, including an advanced workshop.

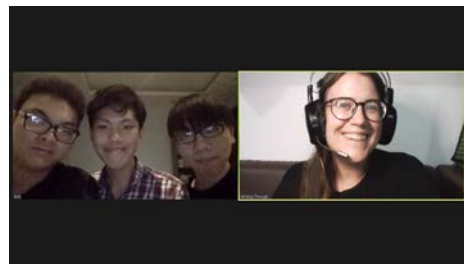
[Very Special Arts \(VSA\)](#) offers fine arts programs to children and adults 6-72 years of age who have physical or intellectual disabilities. These may include: Down syndrome, autism spectrum disorder, and cerebral palsy. We were thrilled to welcome many of the beneficiaries of VSA and some of their staff to our free online workshops. They thoroughly enjoyed them and it helped prepare them for our online format of this year's workshop. We held two online workshops and the rest were in person. They wrote poems and practiced presenting their work before being filmed for the inaugural annual Singapore Writers Festival, which took place virtually.



Vietnam

In 2020, we were unfortunately not able to travel to Vietnam and had to cancel our planned workshops. However, we hosted an amazing second workshop with EWW and are hoping that in 2021 we will be able to form new partnerships while strengthening existing ones.

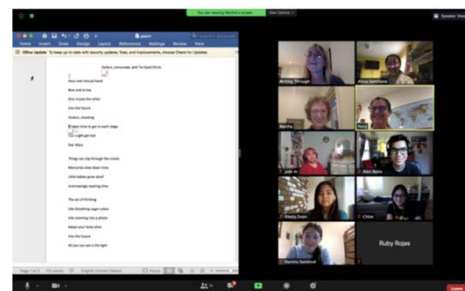
[Exploring the World of Writing \(EWW\)](#) is a group of students from around Hanoi, between the ages of 12-17. They have joined together through their love of creativity and writing specifically for **Writing Through** workshops. They will be using this experience to help them with their university applications.



United States

This year we expanded into the U.S., thanks to our online capabilities and the hard work of our volunteers living across the country.

[Youth Advocacy Club \(YAC\)](#) is a student-led club organization focused on tackling academic, financial and cultural barriers inhibiting student success on West Covina High School's campus, inspiring students to be advocates for themselves and their peers.



Hope Storytelling Project is a library-based poetry project started by two students from Harvard University, which began over discussions from 2020. It recognizes the importance poetry can have in not just combating loneliness, but in providing healing for individuals. We have collaborated over writing the lesson plan and will roll out the programs in Las Vegas and Cambridge, Massachusetts in 2021.

Mighty Writers - We connected with the incredible people at Mighty Writers Philadelphia and Atlantic City who help lead underserved youths to think clearly and write with clarity so they can achieve success. We look forward to working with them in the future.

Endorsements and Feedback

The students understood what 'dream' means in reality after the workshop because they only thought dreams were about what they saw while sleeping. They could use critical thinking to think and imagine for what they expected the image would be.

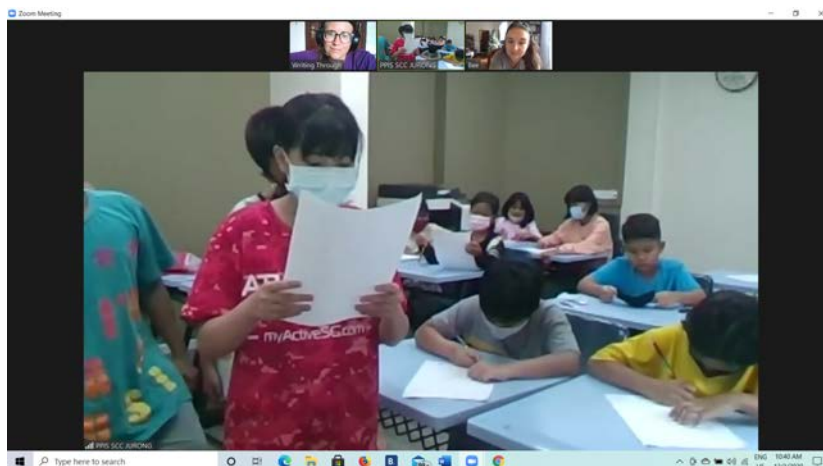
Sophany Try, Anjali House, Cambodia

We are beyond grateful for all that you have achieved with our artists. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Finally, I would like to share with you what happened next for one of our students, who is so so shy and who didn't want to say a word during all the workshops, or even show her face during any of the videos. She just participated in another video, in which you can see her facing the camera, and reading out loud what she wrote. She participated in a commissioned work where she drew some of the flavors for a coffee company, and will also participate in their new video. Her finding the confidence to do this is also thanks to all of you. So THANK YOU!

Magali Finet, Programmes Manager Designate, Very Special Arts, Singapore

I loved it! I loved how Sue led the group and the group poem encouraged creativity in a very non-intimidating way. It felt comfortable and inviting regardless of writing level, and was a very cool experience to see what ideas can just flow when you stop thinking so much. I often feel as though medical field writing has beaten a lot of creativity out of me, so it was really refreshing to see that those qualities can still be pulled to the surface.

Jessica Rubinstein, United States - Online Workshop



At first, the students were reluctant to share as they were shy and afraid to make mistakes. However, with the Facilitator's patience and motivation, the children were confident in giving ideas and participated actively... They were able to speak up and share more after the first session as they had warmed up and enjoyed the session too. The quiet ones had also gained confidence to speak up more. They displayed lots of confidence in giving answers and ideas as well as speaking in front of the class during the presentation.

Zaleha Ahmad, Supervisor, PPIS Student Care Center, Singapore

I had a lot of fun at the workshop! I think the brainstorm with images was a great way to start us thinking about the topic and generating words. I have never written a group poem, and I honestly found that experience a bit difficult (in a good way!). It was cool to hear everyone's ideas and to collaborate on a project. Working together and listening to each other in this way is such a valuable/rewarding experience. We maybe could have benefitted from discussing main themes/ideas/motifs that came out of the brainstorm before writing the poem. If we had a clearer idea, as a group, what direction we wanted to take the poem, it may have been a little easier to write. Overall, this was a wonderful experience, and I am so excited to work for this incredible organization.

Anna Marti, Writing Through Intern, USA - Online Workshop

The students said they were worried about not being able to express themselves in English but they exceeded their own expectations and were really proud of themselves.

Kao Ay, Ops Director Ponheary Ly Foundation, Cambodia

Writing Through has shown me a lot about how writing is not about being perfect but is about enjoying the process. The rules and magic pencils are very interesting which inspire me to write. And last but not least, Writing Through is an incredible resource for me. I genuinely cannot be more happy because of Writing Through.

Cheatra, Cambodia - Online Workshop



It was great to participate with a group in exploring feelings and impressions of the current state of the world due to the pandemic. Made me reflect and I have actually started a journal.

Grace Lebherz, Canada - Online Workshop

I've only attended one session however I thoroughly enjoyed it. It was a new experience that was surprising and challenging for me.

Hayley Atkins, Laos - Online Workshop

I really enjoyed it and loved being able to bounce ideas off other people from around the world. The environment was also extremely inviting and comfortable, which made discussion even more rewarding and rich.

Madison Mehta, Thailand - Online Workshop



I thought it was very good. In some ways the technology made it easier. Seeing the prompts and writing, reviewing the brainstormed ideas, and hearing those speaking was much easier. I think limiting the number of participants to ten was a good idea.

Steve Scena, Mexico - Online Workshop

I particularly enjoyed the word generation from images section of the workshop. I had fun making poetry with other people because the idea of writing poetry can be very daunting.

Rowan Beaudoin-Friede, United States - Online Workshop

Who We Are

2020 was a year of transition. Our long-term Assistant Director, Jess Blackledge, moved back to the UK in November. As the organization grows and adapts, we put in place a new team with new responsibilities and titles, while continuing to rely, as always, on our network of Facilitators, Shadows and Volunteers.



Some of our key personnel are:



Sue Guiney, Founder and Executive Director

Writing Through began in 2010 when the writer and teacher, Sue Guiney, presented the first creative writing workshop at Anjali House in Siem Reap, Cambodia. The program grew out of her experiences, positive and negative, from

a volunteer trip she took to Cambodia with her family in 2006. That trip led to her writing the first in her collection of novels set in modern day Cambodia, *A Clash of Innocents*. After several years, other NGOs in the area began to hear about the program and request it for their own students, leading her to found the nonprofit, **Writing Through**, in December of 2014.

Ever since the first workshop was run in Siem Reap, Sue has devoted her writing and much of her teaching to Cambodia. From 2011-2013, she was Writer-in-Residence in the SE Asia Department of The University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), the world's leading institution for the study of Asia, Africa and the Middle East. She has traveled around the globe discussing her experiences in Cambodia and drawing attention to that country's needs. Her Cambodian novels are among the only literary fiction written for an English-speaking audience about modern day, post Khmer Rouge Cambodia. The second in the collection, *Out of the Ruins*, was published in 2014. The final novel in the trilogy is due for publication in 2021.

Sue is also an internationally recognized poet. Besides her own poetry collections, her work has been widely published in literary journals and anthologized in collections devoted to global human rights issues.



Kristin Schuster, Deputy Director

Kristin is from Montreal, Canada but has spent the last twelve years living, working and traveling across three continents. After completing her university studies in Psychology with a special focus in both developmental psychology and behavioural neurobiology she decided to take a break to see a bit more of the world. This led to a new career as a tour guide and tour leader, making history come alive for thousands of guests. During a European winter she volunteered as an English Teaching Assistant in a college in Hanoi and fell in love with South East Asia, relocating there permanently in 2013. She has lived in Siem Reap, Cambodia since 2016 working in fundraising and communications and as a science teacher. She is thrilled to pass on her love of public speaking and to help students explore their creativity.



Bryony Rice (Bee) – Operations Coordinator

Bee is from a small village in Devon, England. She has been living and working in Cambodia for just over twelve years. She has held many different positions over the years from the personal assistant to a Thai businessman, to a sales manager in a small shop, volunteer coordinator and up until recently a full-time English teacher. Her love affair with Cambodia began before she'd even set foot there and continues to this day. She comes from a family of writers and loves to write in her free time. She now lives in Siem Reap with her wife. She has greatly admired the work of **Writing Through** for years and is thrilled to join the team.



Kim Dibb - Accounts Manager

Kim Dibb is from Vancouver Island, Canada. She is the Chief Financial Officer for Mustimuhw Information Solutions, Inc., a company providing health record software and virtual outreach solutions to First Nations across Canada. Prior to this role, she worked for over a decade with the Cowichan Tribes First Nation as the Comptroller and, in her early career, she served as a Logistics Officer in the Canadian Forces and in total spent twelve years with the Department of National Defence.

In 2015, she went on her first pro bono assignment to Siem Reap, Cambodia through the organization Accounting for International Development. She would return there in 2016 and 2017 to assist NGOs in developing financial

management competency. She has been the Accounts Manager for Writing Through since 2019.

Kim is a Chartered Professional Accountant with a Bachelor of Commerce degree from the University of Guelph.



Ming Xia Ho, Social Media Manager and Singapore Administrator

Apart from building **Writing Through's** social media presence and facilitating workshops, Ming strives to create impactful relationships with her interpersonal skills, experience, and knowledge. When away from the keyboard, Ming is either hitting the ground to connect, inspire, and empower entrepreneurs at Draper Startup House, or exploring ways to creatively engage with people through human-centered art projects.

Since joining **Writing Through** in May 2018, Ming has made several guest appearances on stage as a panelist and speaker (The Travel Intern, Bukit Batok YEC EAGLES Award Ceremony, etc.), advocating for education, creativity, thinking skills, and self-esteem, in alignment with **Writing Through's** beliefs.



Wendee Wolfson, Chair, Board of Directors

Wendee Wolfson is a Leadership Coach and Consultant to corporate executives, entrepreneurs, nonprofit directors, and family business leaders through her individual practice at Brickworks Advisors and through affiliations with Mobius Executive Leadership, the Georgetown University Executive Masters in Leadership program and the Halcyon Incubator Program for social entrepreneurs. In previous activities, she has consulted to families in business together, creating and facilitating programs on leadership development, and has worked with nonprofit boards to develop strategic initiatives and implement leadership transitions as a consultant and as a board member.

Wendee began her career and spent several years in the financial services industry. She was a founding partner of a venture fund focused on women entrepreneurs, and an angel investing group of women, funding entrepreneurial startups. She is currently a lead advisor to the Next Wave Impact Fund, formed for the purpose of educating and engaging more women in early stage investing into social enterprises.

She has a BA from Brandeis University in French Literature, an MBA from the Yale School of Management and a Certificate in Leadership Coaching from Georgetown University.



Trisha Craig, Member, Board of Directors

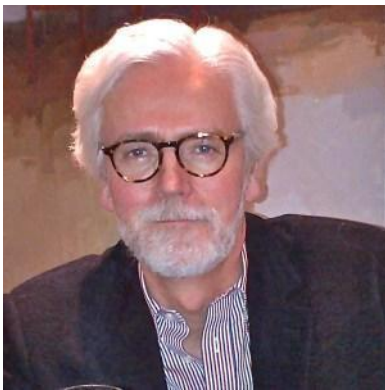
Trisha Craig is Dean of International and Professional Experience at Yale NUS, Yale's new liberal arts college in Singapore. Previously she was director of Wheelock College Singapore. Prior to moving to Southeast Asia, Trisha spent a decade as director of the Center for European Studies at Harvard University. Trisha is a political sociologist with a focus on institution building and has worked as a policy advisor and taught in many countries including El Salvador, Spain, the United Kingdom, Qatar, China, India, Thailand and South Africa. She is co-author of the book, *The Quality of Life in Rural Asia*, published by Oxford University Press, the author of many articles and a frequent contributor to the *Straits Times*, *TODAY* and *Times Higher Education* on issues of education and makes regular media appearances discussing global politics and elections. Trisha holds a PhD from Yale University and has served on the boards of a number of nonprofit organizations and government commissions.



Jen Flynn, Member, Board of Directors

Jen Flynn is the Senior Director for Global Outreach at Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Prior to Harvard, she was the Director of Educational Programs and Partnerships at EF Education, developing digital content and new media initiatives, designing academic programs, and building strategic relationships between EF and other educational organizations, including Apple, PBS, and Advanced Placement of the College Board. For more

than six years, she worked at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University in a number of positions, most recently as Director of Advancement Outreach and Alumnae Affairs. She has advised universities in Brazil, Poland, China, England, Scotland, the Middle East, Australia, and around the US in alumni engagement strategy and organizational capacity-building, and has served as a presenter at many professional conferences. She received her Master's degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, with a dual concentration in Administration, Planning, and Social Policy, and in Technology, Innovation, and Education; and received her Bachelor's degree with a double major in English Literature and Performing Arts from Colby College.



Don Guiney, Member, Board of Directors

Don Guiney is a retired US capital markets lawyer, who practiced in London for twenty-six years, representing issuers and underwriting banks in a wide range of complex cross-border capital raising transactions. His last position was serving as Senior Counsel at Baker & McKenzie, the global law firm. Prior to joining Baker & McKenzie, Don was a partner for sixteen years at Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, a major international law firm based in London. Don has been involved in volunteer and pro bono work throughout his career. He has been the leader of the largest youth baseball and softball organization in the UK for over twenty years. For his service to the cause of youth sports in the UK, Don was named a torchbearer in the 2012 Summer Olympic Games in London. He has served as the President of the Harvard Club of the United Kingdom, the largest Harvard alumni organization outside the US. He is also a member of the Harvard Alumni Association Board of Directors. Don has volunteered at Anjali House each year since 2010, and joined the Anjali House Board of Directors in 2013. Don received his AB degree from Harvard College and his JD degree from Columbia Law School.



Jenny Pearson, Member, Board of Directors

Jenny Pearson has lived and worked in Cambodia since 1995. She has qualifications in social work and public sector management and previously worked in the public sector in England. She arrived in Cambodia as a volunteer and went on to found and direct VBNK, Cambodia's leading capacity development institution. She has played a leading role in developing the capacity of the not-for-profit sector in Cambodia, introducing creative methodologies into capacity development approaches. She has served on the boards of several prominent development organizations. In 2007 she was a visiting fellow at the Institute of Development Studies in the UK.

Jenny is now part-time at VBNK and spends the rest of her time consulting and writing, drawing on her years of experience to contribute the voice of practice to the international discourse on capacity development. She is the author of 'Creative Capacity Development: learning to adapt in development practice', and a range of other works including the OECD Working Paper 'Training and Beyond: Seeking better practices for capacity development'. She also works as a coach and facilitator, helping individuals and groups integrate learning into their working practices for enhanced performance. She holds dual British and Cambodian citizenship and lives in a village outside Phnom Penh with her adopted Cambodian family.



Don Spencer, Special Advisor to the Board of Directors

Don Spencer is a Managing Director and Founding Partner of Siguler Guff & Company, a global private equity investment firm headquartered in New York City. Siguler Guff focuses on finding or creating investment opportunities arising from market inefficiencies, such as market disruptions, capital starvation or government policies.

Don previously was a Senior Vice President and portfolio manager in the Private Equity Group of PaineWebber, Senior Vice President and general counsel of Atalanta/Sosnoff Capital Corporation, an institutional money manager and, prior to that position, was an associate attorney for three years with Atalanta/Sosnoff's counsel, Shereff, Friedman, Hoffman & Goodman, where he specialized in representing financial services companies. He started his career in 1980 at Sullivan & Cromwell, where he represented financial services as well as investment banking clients.

Don is President of the Board of Managers of Oakwood Friends School, a Quaker boarding school in Poughkeepsie, NY. He served for many years in different capacities on the Board of the Adelpic Literary Society, the alumni association of the Alpha Delta Phi Society of Wesleyan University, a co-ed "fraternity".

Mr. Spencer holds a B.A. from Wesleyan University and a J.D. degree from the New York University School of Law.

Our Thanks

Writing Through would like to publicly thank all of our Facilitators for their hard work and expertise in running our workshops, our Volunteers for their efforts to support the administration of our organization, and our Donors for their generosity and belief in our mission. We at **Writing Through** will always regard all these individuals as part of the **Writing Through** family.

Our Facilitators

Selin Ahipasaoglu	Ryan Erickson	Katy Oglethorpe
Shahnaz Ali	Mike Fitzgerald	Jake Pedersen
Nidhi Arora	Sue Guiney	Jenny Pisani
Jordan Ashmore	Sita Der Horst	Barbara Rittner
Jamie Assendorp	Kitty Johnson	Martha Scarborough
Maxime Berclaz	Amy Kean	Steve Scena
Jess Blackledge	Freeda Kinkelin	Kristin Schuster
Patty Bierley	Kate Lilienthal	Jeff Siggins
Raelee Chapman	Venezia Lim	David Spencer
Angelene Chong	Charlotte McEleny	Katarzyna Sumislawska
Sophia Cliff	Elaine McGough	Marijke Van den Hurck
Helena Cochrane	Sally McHale	Ming Xia Ho
Lucia Damacela	Jeanne McKay	Sybille Young
Ally Dishong	Andrea McKenna	Anupama Zain
Kerry Driver	Myrtis Mixon	
Lisa Edmondson	Suzanne Moreau	

Our Volunteers

Camille Britton	Sophie Gregoire	Bronwyn Sharman
Karen Christiansen	Florence Helliard	Amy Stillman
Bob Craig	Anna Marti	Jessie Suong
Robin Craig	Dani McArthur	Julia Tran
Kimbra Cutlip	Wayne McCallum	Tamsin Tran
Ann DeForest	Clara Mok	Tesheia Vanderhorst
Kim Dibb	Anna Nguyen	Sam Walker
Sara Faxon	Dhooleka Raj	David Xiang
Nicole Friets	Linda Rappaport	Alisha Yi
Gila Glattstein	Amy Schaap	

Volunteer of the Year Award

A big congratulations to the winner of our Volunteer of the Year Award 2020, Andrea McKenna Brankin! During an exceptionally difficult year, Andrea was always there to give advice, and ensure that our crucial Singapore connections remained strong. We are very grateful for her hard work and devotion to the **Writing Through** mission.



Our Advisory Council

Patty Bierley
Lucia Damacela
Lisa Edmondson
Dhooleka Raj
Linda Rappaport
Barbara Rittner
Martha Scarborough
Amy Stillman
Wendee Wolfson

Our Supporters

Our Partners are able to pay only a fraction of the real cost of our workshops. This year we received even less in administrative fees than in previous years. The rest of our budget must then, of course, fall onto the shoulders of our individual and institutional donors. We are endlessly grateful to them all.

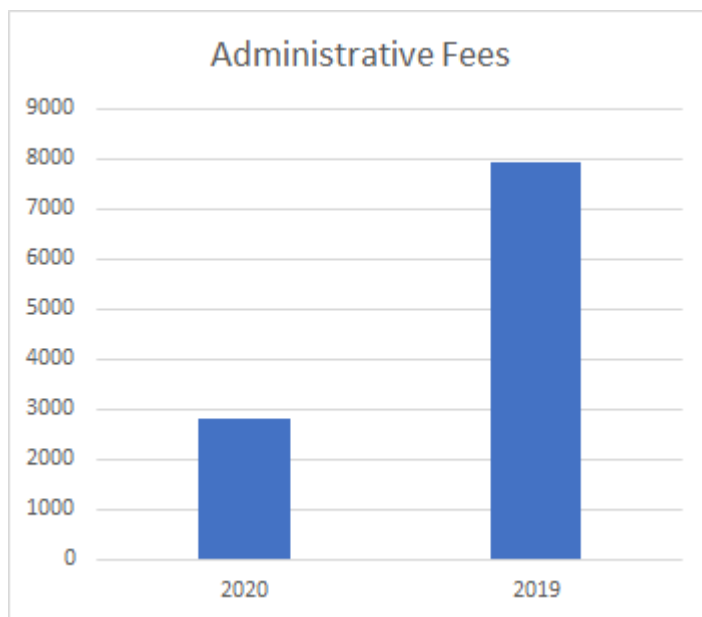


Chart 1 - 2020 administrative fees compared to 2019 fees received

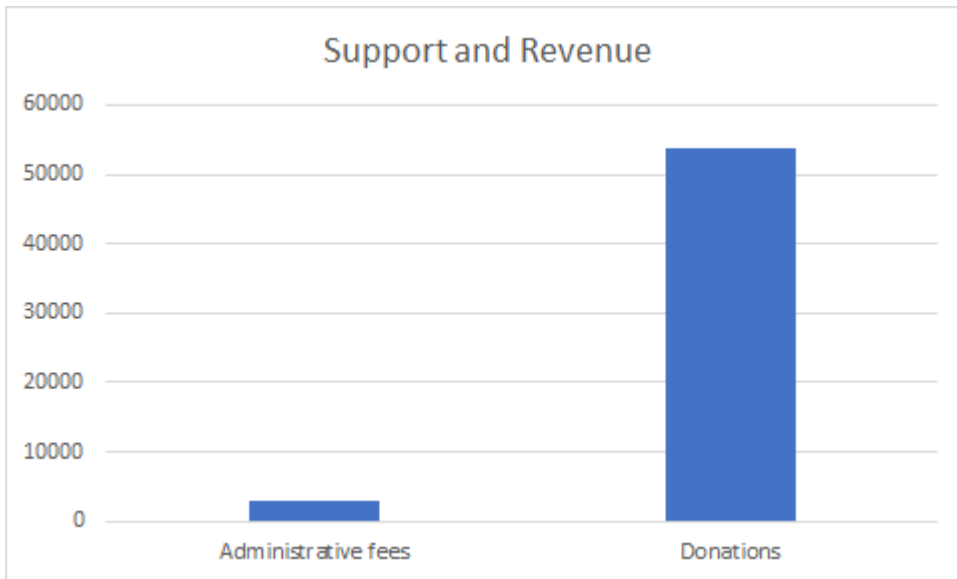


Chart 2 - 2020 administrative fees compared to donation amounts

The majority of our donations come from individual donors but we are beginning to see more institutional donations and are looking forward to more corporate sponsors.

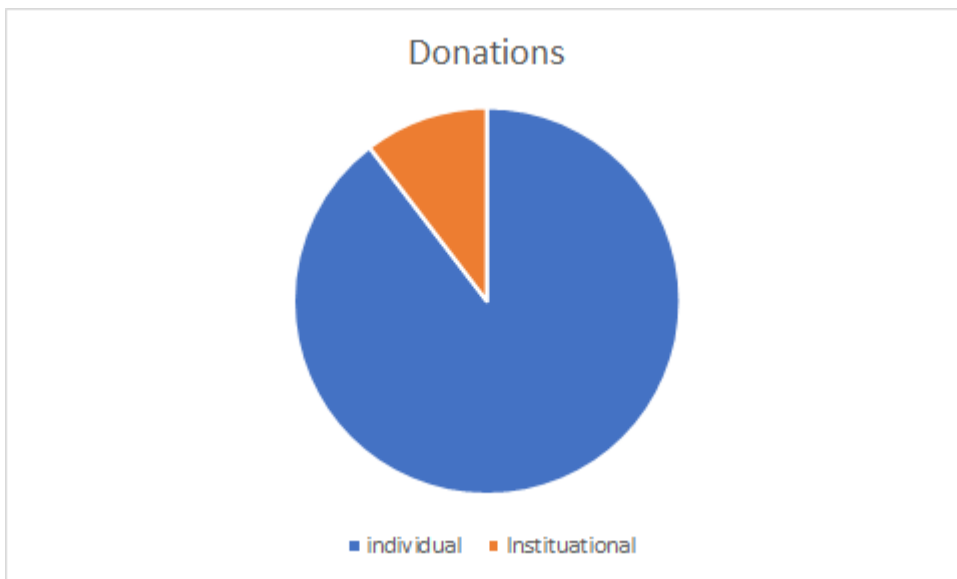


Chart 3 - Individual donations compared to donations from foundations or institutions.

Our thanks go out once again to:

U.S. Embassy Singapore
Takeda Pharmaceutical Company

Donations of \$1000 and over

Ed Annunziato
Katharine and Michael Berman
Sarah Boothby Kendall
Darcy Bradbury and Eric Seiler
Karen and David Brush
Trisha Craig and Tom Brenner
Robin and Robert Craig
Jennifer Flynn and Richard Yieh
Kathy Goldman
Jamie and Jeffrey Harris
Linda and David Lakhdhir
Malvina and Jose Longoria
Linda Rappaport and Len Chazen
Amy Rugel
Alyssa and Jocelyn Spencer
Mary and Jerome Vascellero
Wendee Wolfson

Donations of \$500 and over

Bob Bowie
Ann and Bill Dobbs
Resa and David Eppler
Suzanne Huddleston and Bob Manson
Adrienne and Paula Mulligan
Cassie Murray and Bill Plapinger
Steven Okuhn
Carol Ostrow and Mike Graff
Cris Russell
Martha and William Scarborough
J.D Smith
Sally Williams-Allen

Donations of under \$500

Peg Albert
John Anderson
Ann and George Angell
Patty Bierley
Peter and Diane K. Braun
Erik Butler
Karen and John Burgess
Helena and Stephen Cochrane
Nancy Beer Cohen and Neal Cohen
Ann DeForest and Joe Farrell
Kim Dibb
Ally Dishong
Deb Durkin and Arend Dijkers
Terry and Sylvia Edwards
Amy Faxon
Sara Faxon
Deborah Flaschen
Kay Gardener
Carol and Richard Gross
Betsy Hecker
Pat Kreger and Larry Cohan
Suellen Lazarus
Grace Lebherz
Monika Knuttsson and Bruce Kogut
Susan Milrod
Benedicte du Cheyron Monroe and William Monroe
Ellen and Richard Muglia
Deiva Rajendiran
Pauline and Pascal Rambaud
Leah Reis-Dennis
Leo Richardson
Margaret Schuster
Jessie Suong
Lisa Wong
Phyllis Yale and Tucker Taft

Financials

Writing Through Statement of Financial Position (Unaudited) As at and for the Year Ended December 31, 2020

Writing Through Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Net Assets – Cash Basis -- Unaudited December 31, 2020 and 2019

Assets		2020	2019
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$	60,521	27,636
Total Assets	\$	60,521	27,636
Liabilities and Net Assets			
Long-Term Loan*		21,000	
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$	39,521	27,636
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$	60,521	27,636

*On June 5, 2020, Writing Through received a long term Covid-19 Disaster Relief Loan from the US Small Business Administration in the principal amount of \$21,000, which will be amortized over 30 years and bears interest at an annual rate of 2.75%.

Writing Through
Statements of Support, Revenue, Expenses, and Changes in Net Assets - Cash Basis -- Unaudited
Years Ended December 31, 2020 and 2019

Changes in Unrestricted Net Assets

Support and Revenue	2020	2019
Administrative fees	\$ 2,797	7,928
Consulting fee revenue, LILT program		
Donations from individuals, unrestricted	48,312	48,470
Donations from individuals, restricted		2,000
Donations form Foundations & Institutions, restricted		6,400
Donations form Foundations & Institutions, unrestricted	5,600	
Merchandise	155	934
Other income	500	
Total Support and Revenue	\$ 57,364	65,732

Expenses

Program Services

Consulting fees, LILT program	\$	670
Salaries	14,898	11,877
Travel and per diem expenses	6,058	11,023
Workshop supplies and printing	1,234	2,071
Other expenses	42	142
Realised currency loss		92
Total Program Services	\$ 22,232	25,875

Writing Through
Statements of Support, Revenue, Expenses, and Changes in Net Assets - Cash Basis -- Unaudited
(continued)
Years Ended December 31, 2020 and 2019

Support Services		2020	2019
Advertising	\$		500
Bank fees		1,932	1,411
Business licenses and fees			355
Employee benefits		1,285	1,016
Office expenses		20	2,044
Online services		1,531	799
Salaries		15,194	14,902
Travel and per diem expenses		2,951	2,756
Website development and hosting fees			50
Other expenses		334	182
Total Support Services	\$	23,247	24,015
Total Expenses	\$	45,479	49,890
Change in Unrestricted Net Assets		11,885	15,842
Unrestricted net assets, beginning of year	\$	27,636	11,794
Unrestricted Net Assets, End of Year	\$	39,521	27,636

Work from our Students

Cambodia

Moon to Sun

By Sophyna, Aged 16

Asian Outreach Cambodia, Stung Treng

Everything in the world has to change
like from dark to light
or from moon to sun
but it's just a view
sun and moon never change

Although when we get up to see the sun
and the moon appears at night
don't believe your eyes
just believe in your brain
your thinking is enough
because everything can be changed
except sun and moon.



A Beautiful Day for Life

By Poly, Age 14

Anjali House, Siem Reap

The day is full of Sunlight
Some clouds fly in the clear sky
Birds release their sound to the world
A boy opens his eyes, he feels the wind blow
down to his face
He takes a deep breath and looks up to the tree that he slept under
He feels so fresh
Something gets his attention
He is so surprised, excited, like he never saw this before
It is a stunning colorful cloud showing in front of his eyes.



Utopia for the Herd

By Soucheng, Age 14

Liger Academy, Phnom Penh

The sun rises high above the sky, shedding light on those that are under it. A group of sheep gathered. They were slowly chewing the freshly grown grass, savoring each and every swallow. Lately, there had been food shortages. The herd population had grown bigger and bigger by the day. The muted cries of young lambs filled the air. Just yesterday, Lizzie, a teenage lamb, became an aunt to 10 newly born lambs.



The herd was crowded. Jack, the oldest sheep in the herd, is the leader of the pack.

He was the smartest amongst the pack or at least that's what the other sheep thought. Jack was aware that food was scarce and that as a leader, he had to come up with a solution. His stomach had been empty for days. Usually when he led his herd to find food, he would

get the biggest portion of grass. He would tell the other sheep that he was the brain of this herd. He used a lot of energy to lead this herd, so it's only fair that he receives the most food. The herd never seemed to question his actions. He had to come up with a solution that would satisfy his herd. So while eating his fresh patch of grass, he pondered; "I have led the herd everywhere on this land but there doesn't seem to be enough grass for them". Finally, he decided to give the old sacred tree a visit.

Meanwhile, an old grey wolf was scavenging for his food. He wandered around the forest until he reached the old sacred tree. The tree stood tall above the ground, his branches reached out in every direction, providing shade to those under him. He had been rooted there for millions and millions of years. His stem looked a little worn out from the different scratches and marks that were left by animals that wanted to have a taste of his heavenly fruit. The wolf was minding its own business and sniffing to see if he could pick up the scent of his next meal. Suddenly, his ear perked up. It picked up the sound of footsteps coming from one of the bushes. His tail wagged in excitement as his nose picked up the familiar scent. The scent of his prey. The wolf decided to hide behind the big tree, waiting for the right time to pounce.

The sheep made its way to the old sacred tree. The tree that even when blindfolded he could easily find. He came here most of the time when he needed to think very hard. "Oh, old sacred tree. I came here today because I am troubled. Food is now so scarce and hard to find. The population of the herd keeps growing by the day, making it very hard to find big patches of grass for everyone. What should I do?" the sheep asked. Seconds of silence passed by.

"I know a place, somewhere beyond the two mountains located in one of the caves that lay there. A place where fruits are always ripe. There, the never-ending

field of grass stretches further than the horizon. You will find the best grass in the land. Sweet and aromatic. There are also fields of flowers that never wither and birds that sing soothing melodies," the deep voice responded. The sheep then asked, "Are there even such places?"

"I have been on this earth for a very long time and have heard many animals talk about this wonderful place," the old tree replied. The sheep nodded absent-mindedly, his mind wondering about the place the old tree had told him about. He hurriedly made his way back to his herd. He was excited to share the news with his herd. When he finally reached them, he told them about his visit to the old tree and about the "utopia" the old tree was talking about. The herd erupted in cheers and excitement, each chatting and talking about how they envision the utopia. Jack led the sheep on a great expedition to find this so-called "utopia". For days, the sheep wandered high above the mountain, through the muddy trails and across the thick forest, stopping occasionally to rest their legs. "We're nearly there," Jack announced. The herd was excited.

"When I get there, I would no longer worry about saving my food," one of the sheep said.

"Yeah, we can just sleep and eat all day," another sheep added. The herd cheered in agreement. Everyone in the herd except Lizzie. Lizzie was a little skeptical. Not once while traveling could she pick up the earthy scent that the grass emits. Usually Lizzie would be able to smell it from miles away, but she dared not question the pack leader's decision; for if she asked questions, she would be undermining the herd and when everyone is running in one direction, the one running opposite from it seems crazy. So she reluctantly followed the herd leader. The sudden halt of the herd pulled her back to reality. Lizzie forced her way through the crowd to be able to see where she was. In front of her was a cave, a pitch black cave, dimly lit by the sun. "At the end of this cave will be our heaven," Jack instructed excitedly. "All we have to do is go into it and we will reach our utopia," Jack told everyone. So one by one, the sheep started walking into the cave. Lizzie though, was hesitant; there was no smell of grass. There was another rather disturbing smell. It was the musty smell of wet fur. Lizzie shrugged the feeling off. There must be something wrong with her nose, she finally decided. So she went along with the rest of the herd. After what felt like an eternity, the herd suddenly came to a stop making the sheep at the back bump into each other. Seeing that they had reached the end of the cave, one sheep shouted, "Where is all the grass?!"

A low growl could be heard coming from the end of the cave. "Ha! you foolish animals. You really think that there is a place where everything is enough and perfect. Especially in this crusty old cave!" a voice roared.

Chills ran down Jack's spine, when he realized that it was the same voice coming from the sacred tree. The herd knew exactly who the voice belonged to. The herd panicked, screaming and shouting in terror. Fear was evident in every one of their faces. As they were struggling to find a way out, they then realized that they had gone too deep and were now lost.

Vietnam

Use Money To Buy Time

By Tung, age 17

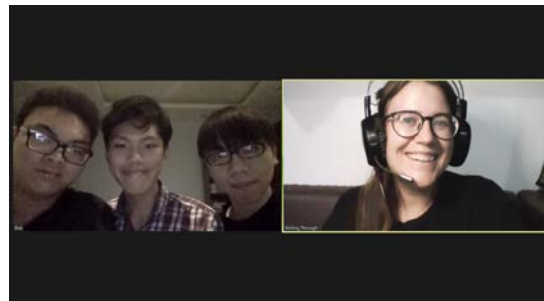
Exploring the World of Writing, Hanoi

The boy stunned by the shop
"Kid, see something you like?"
Gentle, the man smiled
"Is this the time shop?"
"Without doubt, it is"

"What can I do for you?"
"This is not a joke right?"
"Of course it's not"
"How can you give time to people?"
"By magic you can say"
"What can I trade for?"
"Money of course, dear"
The boy kept asking
"Can I sell you my time?"

Old man stunned by the shop
"May I help you, sir?"
Gentle the man smiled
"How much is one year?"
The man gave it no surprise.
"What do you think it will cost?"

"What will you do that one last year?"
"Just want to live a bit longer"
When we young, we spend time for money
When we get old, we spend money for time
You knew it all from the start right?
That I will come back."
Time is money
But money isn't all
It's the people you spend time with."
Silence the old man left



Singapore

Hope

A Group Poem from the Advanced Writers of Wings

Wings, Singapore

If I were a bird I would fly free
free me from these bars
Sun on my back
wind in my feathers
Out of the cage into the sky
into the blazing light
Above the clouds
From my fears
From my past
From my present
From COVID19
Feathers flap freely
Breeze on my face
Fear no more
Mask no more
wind blowing away the storm
Coaxed out of the cage
into the sunset
Hope beckons



Perspective (even in a bad situation)

*a group poem by VSA Writing Through workshop participants
Very Special Arts, Singapore*

Silence
Freedom
Peace
It's how you feel when you meditate
Even in a bad situation.
Hoping that the world will
Become normal soon
But what's normal nowadays?
Learning still continues
Even in a bad situation.
Respect others
Be responsible
Stay home to protect
Each other
Relationships still continue
Even in a bad situation.
Technology is more popular
We can contact each other
There is always a solution
Humanity still continues
Even in a bad situation.

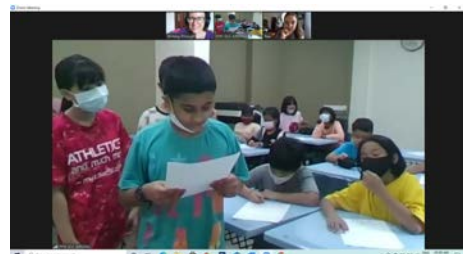
We are all fighting
We all want the world back
Life still continues
Even in a bad situation.

Skies

*By Nurlaila, aged 11
PPIS, Singapore*

Orange sky
The sunset is blended,
It close in a magnificent colour
People looked outside the window, admiring the
sunset before night Falls.

Black sky,
The night had begun,
Everybody went asleep,
As the wonders of the night arise from their sleep,
Prowling in the moonlight before the sun rises



Bright sky.
The sun rise and gave light once more,
The wonders of the night had returned to their nests,
As the wonders of the day rise up again,
Repeating the cycle once again.

United States

Dollars, Lemonade and Tie-dye Shirts

A group poem by the YAC Club of West Covina HS

Hour and minute hand
Bow and arrow
One moves the other
Into the future
Violent, shocking
It takes time to get to each stage
You might get lost
Star Wars

Things can slip through the cracks
Memories slow down time
Little babies grow aloof
Unknowingly wasting time

The act of thinking
Like dissolving sugar cubes
Like zooming into a photo
Keeps your body alive
Into the future
All you can see is the light

The Girl and the Runaway Train

by Nicole, 17 years old

Youth Advocates Club (YAC), California

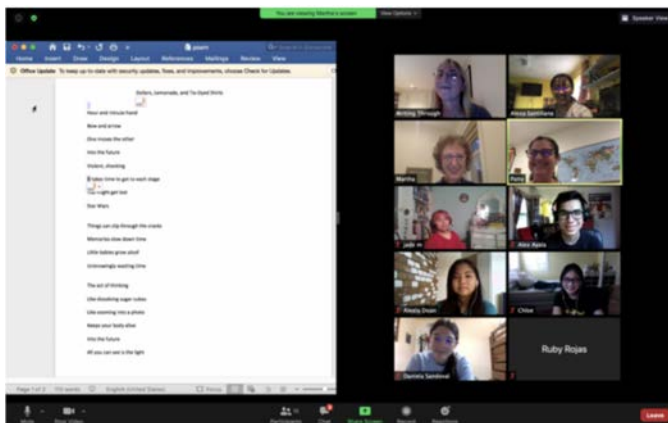
The bustling cold of NYC picked at all the residents' fingers and toes. It didn't matter if they were inside with the heater on all the way up, or if they were hustling for money on the corner selling hotdogs or souvenirs. The cold chased a small 12-year-old girl, her curly black hair bouncing as she ran into the underground subway. Her breath trailed behind her as she chased the intercom system announcing the departure times and platform numbers. Her white winter coat blended in with the snowflakes melting off of the material that stuck to her from the outside world. She thought to herself, "Why does time keep going when you are in a rush?" She looked at the directory and found her train, slowly

scanning the coloured line with her wool gloves filled with bacteria from the subway stair handles.

She continued to jog to the other side of the platform, bumping into strangers she never met and saw nothing but backpacks, purses, messenger bags, and everything else. She jumped up and saw the train approaching and rushed to the mob of riders, slowly squishing her way through so she could get a seat. The train's brakes screamed, and it left a metallic and burnt smell throughout the air.

She couldn't hear the intercom, all she heard was chatter and footsteps. She got onto the train cart and spotted a free seat next to the window. Her feet dangled from the silver seat and her red face huffed and puffed. "The doors are closing." An automatic voice blared as the doors shut and locked with metal bolts. The train sped away from the station and ran along the tracks underground. After a few moments, the train stopped and let new passengers in. A tall man with salt and pepper hair came and sat next to her, his cashmere winter coat hid his designer navy blue suit. His brown dress shoes had no wrinkles on them, and his leather lined gloves held a prominent briefcase. He looked at the young girl peeking out of the window. "Why does a small one like you ride the train? Your feet don't even touch the ground?" His pale white skin shifted and chuckled.

"Why are you on the train? Don't you have money?" She innocently said and shot



her attention back to the outside walls. Her feet swung back and forth as she patiently awaited her stop. She fixed her handmade beanie and stuffed her red ears inside of the fabric.

"I choose not to spend my money on things that waste time. I like saving the money I've worked for; 35 years' worth of money is a lot." He gazed to see the other

passengers on their phones, ears stuffed with headphones.

"Okay, so my feet can't touch the floor, but I need to be somewhere." The intercom came on and announced her stop. She fixed herself and got up.

"Slow down child, you age faster when you rush." He shuffled his knees so she could exit.

"Slow down sir, life isn't fun when you worry about how old you are." The doors unbolted and she walked out of the cart, no one rushing in and only a few people stood and spoke on the phone in different languages. She heard the train leave, her footsteps stepped away and climbed the slippery staircase. Her small head peeked out of the tunnel and she was met with falling snow, the hustle of the holidays, and the cultures all combining in sync.

She met her mother's smile and rushed over, slamming herself into her mother's goose coat and her fur gloves wrapped around her ears, warming the small

diamonds on her red ears. Her mother giggled and held out her hand, walking hand in hand with the young girl. The historic clocks ticked, and the traffic lights changed without interruption. They crossed the street and went to their industrial apartment, losing all sense of time and lived in their own world.

Online Workshops

Blurring Bridges

Group poem from an online workshop

Stay together
but not actually imagine a time
we would be apart
before we realize it
the world suddenly flips upside down
we are not as close as before
borders are now barriers
even as the world is changing
our friendships are not
we talk, we chat and we laugh
and so are our other relationships
we call, we share and we love
we still find a way to connect with each other
no barriers would be enough
because we would always build a bridge
once in awhile the bridge might not be stable
but we would always strengthen it together
We all can form a convergence
that can produce a shield that protects us
an orb that enchants our wish
keep us together
and forever young
even as the world fades and there are hazy skies
the future may seem questionable
eventually it will unfold
and the mystery can be solved



World in Hibernation

Group poem from an online workshop

The world has slowed down
And now everything is quiet.
I can hear the wine,

There are goats in my driveway
And deer in parking lots.
There is solace in distance
And peace in discomfort.
The smell of gasoline
Replaced with the smell of soil.
Society is changing
Paris is Burning
Get me out of here
I'm scared
No cars
No people
And I'm thinking
Do I really want you in my personal space?
What will happen after,
When we all wake up from this human hibernation?
Do we want to go back to normal?
What is normal?
A new normal
Distance
Quarantine
Isolation
Loneliness
Masks
Virtual socializing
Togetherness, safety
Love without masks
Can I give you this hug?
The world has slowed down,
It looks different now.
Is it the end?
Or just the beginning?



6 Feet / 2 Meters Apart

Journal Entry from an online workshop

I had never heard the term social distancing before but now it's everywhere I turn. I think this is the right thing to do. Even if we are healthy, we must not shake hands or hug each other. At first, I thought it was bad, but to be respectful for other people's health it is alright to be a little away from each other. This is something that I'm getting used to and something that everyone else is as well. It is a realization of how we should live for now on. This virus is probably one of more that can come along. It has brought us to a point where we are realizing the importance of health and social distancing is here to stay for some time. It will start to be part of our lives, part of our good manners to stay away a little bit. It frightens me that we can never be close again. The other day I went to bless a

baby, I wore a fresh mask, washed my hands, blessed him and gave him back to his mother. I could not exhale into the face of the baby. It does frighten me that we can't be close again but to me it is just the way life is evolving. I don't know how but we seem to have accepted it in such a short time. This is it. This is how it will be. The fear is evolving into a sort of acceptance. I feel like our months of sacrifice are for nothing. I feel like we are learning that the group is more important than one person. I can't be selfish. I feel like we are learning that money is more important than people. When I see us opening up and talking about economy, I wonder what is more important? Economy or someone's life. The health of the community will affect the health of the individual. Tolerance and compassion are much required. Community happiness is more important. If there isn't a consensus across all, it is going to be difficult. If a section will rebel against the new norms, it will get unpleasant. There are groups that are not abiding by the rules and they are a source of corruption of the disease to the healthy groups.