

Press release

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Ubisoft inspires Excelsior Academy games creatives

Students taking their first steps into video games design and film-making learned from one of the industry's premier companies responsible for creating some of the world's most popular titles.

Ian Mayor, senior narrative designer at Reflections, a Ubisoft studio based in Newcastle, inspired students during a workshop at the city's Excelsior Academy whose interest in gaming led them to write and direct their own short film, *Blanks*.

The film is part of a year-long programme with Young Writers' City, a New Writing North project that encourages students to experience and enjoy creative writing in a wide variety of ways, from poetry and the spoken word, to rap and scripting their own music videos.

Ubisoft is the world's third-largest video games publisher and has created numerous smash-hit titles including Assassin's Creed, Just Dance, Watch Dogs 2 and The Division.

Around 400 Excelsior students have taken part in the Young Writers' City project to date, including a class of Year 10 students whose interest in gaming led to writing and directing their own short film, *Blanks*, inspired by the unpredictable and exciting world of video games. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kdEm-SJ6Rbl>

Students launched *Blanks* to a group of peers with Ian from Reflections in the audience, ready to show them how to apply their creative writing talents to building whole worlds in video games.

Ian said: "It's a pleasure to see students so engaged in creative work, whether it be writing, performing or making films – and fantastic to see they are inspired by video games.

"*Blanks* shows a genuine understanding of game-worlds and has a lot of fun with the concept. On this evidence, I'm sure the students taking part in Young Writers' City will go on to bigger and better things."

Craig Taylor, Executive Principal at Excelsior Academy, said:
“Ian’s world-leading knowledge of the gaming industry will inspire our pupils to look to video gaming as an exciting career opportunity.

“Our film-making with Young Writers’ City shows the depth of talent we have at Excelsior Academy and our pupils can see the opportunities that exist in our region for creative talent having Reflections based just a few miles away across the city.”

Anna Disley, Executive Director, Programme and Impact, at New Writing North said:

“Young Writers’ City is about encouraging young people to find and express their own creativity. Gaming plays a big part in the lives of many of them, so the opportunity to meet the people who create their favourite games and to have the chance to write their own will be a real boost to their creativity and their aspirations which Young Writers’ City will continue to help them develop.”

Ends.

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Notes to editor

Young Writers’ City is a project from New Writing North’s Cuckoo Young Writers’ programme, based in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. It aims to get more young people from the city involved in creative projects and offer them the chance to experience all types of writing in their own communities. Young Writers’ City provides opportunities to support young people to make their own work and share their work with audiences and readers. Young Writers’ City is funded by Newcastle Culture Investment Fund.

New Writing North is the reading and writing development agency for the north of England, and is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation www.newwritingnorth.com. It works in partnership with regional and national partners to produce a range of literary and performance activities including flagship projects such as

The Northern Writers' Awards, Cuckoo Young Writers, the Gordon Burn Prize and Durham Book Festival.