



NEW WRITING  
NORTH  
YOUNG WRITERS



## Utopias & Dystopias

The word Utopia derives from two Greek words; ou which means 'no' and topos which means place. Translated literally a utopia is 'no place', and utopias are commonly understood to be places that we can dream of but that cannot truly exist. A dystopia is a utopia in which something has gone wrong. Famous examples of utopia's include *The Wind in The Willows* by Kenneth Grahame, *Winnie the Pooh* by A.A. Milne, *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis and *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott. Examples of dystopias include the books *Animal Farm* and *1984* by George Orwell, *The Hunger Games* series (Suzanne Collins), *Lord of the Flies* (William Golding) and *The Handmaid's Tale* (Margaret Atwood).

### Warm Up:

Ask yourself: what are the problems facing today's society? Are we dealing with them? Make a big list. What would your perfect world look like? What would your worst world look like? How does our current world compare?

### Get Inspired:

Watch the following trailers:

[The Hunger Games](#)

[Christopher Robin \(based on characters from the Winnie The Pooh series\)](#)

[The Chronicles of Narnia](#)

### Give it a Try:

#### Exercise One:

Complete the sentence 'a dystopian world in which...' at least 5 times eg. 'a dystopian world in which humanity became overpopulated and cities fell into ruin 100 years ago'

Complete the sentence ' a utopian world in which...' a few times eg. 'a utopian world in which there is no crime' at least 5 times

Choose one or 2 then SWITCH the emphasis to the world being either utopian or dystopian eg:

- A dystopian world in which humanity became overpopulated and cities fell into ruin 100 years ago BUT now humans live in peace with nature and understand how not to repeat their mistakes
- A utopian world in which there is no crime, BUT this is because the government executes people who display too much emotion.

## **Exercise Two:**

From the exercise above (or your imagination) choose an example of a utopia or dystopia. Write about what could go wrong in a utopia that could quickly turn it to a dystopia.

What could people living in a dystopia do to try and make their world better?

Think about: LAWS of your world, POWER (who has it and who wants it)

## **Challenge Yourself:**

Thinking back to the workshop on building your protagonist and using the characters, settings and situations – outline a basic blot of a new dystopian/utopian story. Who are your characters? When is it set? Where is it going? Push it to it's boundaries.

This workshop was devised by Zoe Murtagh for New Writing North Young Writers.



Zoe Murtagh is a writer, performance artist and poet. Her work is vibrant and interactive, creating playful disruptions to everyday life. Inspired by music that makes you tingle, science lessons and Kate Bush's dancing she creates work around themes of identity, heritage, the environment and friendship in a way that is fun, insightful and might even put a bit of fire in your belly. She is the current recipient of Northern Stage's 'Title Pending Award for New Theatre' and recently took part in 'Words First' poetry competition with BBC Radio 1Xtra and New Writing North. She has recently completed writing her debut short film 'After The Break' which was written through BFI Network and Film Hub North's Script Lab and has since been commissioned by New Creatives - a talent development scheme supported by Arts Council England and BBC Arts and delivered by Tyneside Cinema. She is a freelance artist with BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art and has made work for Live Theatre, Camden People's Theatre, GIFT Festival and Curious Festival.

New Writing North Young Writers is a programme for young people aged 12-19. We run creative writing groups, masterclasses and programmes in schools across the North East. We support young people to express their ideas, to work with professional writers and artists, to create and share new work, and to meet other young writers.

We would love to read your writing! Share it with us on social media using #writingfromhome or by emailing [youngwriters@newwritingnorth.com](mailto:youngwriters@newwritingnorth.com). Search for New Writing North Young Writers on Instagram, Facebook or Twitter, where we will also be sharing regular writing prompts. Each week we will select a Young Writer of the Week whose work will be shared on our channels.

Find other writing workshops and much more on our website [www.newwritingnorth.com](http://www.newwritingnorth.com)

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