



NEW WRITING  
NORTH  
YOUNG WRITERS



## Songwriting - Cultivating Resilience and Positivity

Hi there! Grab a pen and paper, and settle in to this tasty menu of writing activities.  
Share your work with us afterwards!

### Warm Up:

#### Finish the sentences...

You can complete these yourself, or if you'd like to make a song with someone else in your house, they could write down their own answers to these questions too. Then use the finished sentences as a starting point to write a song.

I feel grateful for...

Good things right now are...

I feel good at... so I'm going to focus on...

I can help someone else in my house by...

I can help someone outside my house by...

I can help myself by...

I can direct my energy into...

Something good about this new situation that I didn't expect is...

#### Inspiration

There are loads of brilliant songs that have a positive, uplifting message. Can you think of any examples? Here's a few to get you started....

[David Bowie - Heroes](#) written in Berlin while Germany was still divided by the Berlin Wall. It was inspired by two lovers kissing by the wall and has been described as "pop's definitive statement of the potential triumph of the human spirit over adversity".

[Bob Marley - Three Little Birds](#)

[Katy Perry - Firework](#) a pop banger celebrating everyone's uniqueness.

[Gloria Gaynor - I Will Survive](#) a defiant, disco classic.

# Give it a Try:

## 1. Make a Moodboard

Cut out images and words from newspapers and magazines, or print out pictures from the internet of things that make you feel good. These could be activities you enjoy doing or feel good at, places you've been and would like to return to, or places you've not been to yet. Stick or sellotape or staple them onto a big piece of paper, or lay them out on the floor and arrange them how you wish, so that when you look at your collage it inspires you.

## 2. Lyrics: Now let's write some words...

- **Make a mindmap.** Using your **moodboard** and **positivity sentences**, on a big piece of paper write down words that seem important, that you like, that spring to mind when you're thinking about how to feel positive/help someone else feel more positive.
- **Word Association** – looking at the words on the map, can you link them to other associated words. For example, if I have the word SKY on my mindmap, I might then add these words - blue, aqua, cobalt, azure, navy (colours), OR, vast, immense, big, endless, limitless, OR, clouds, white, fluffy, texture, cotton wool, etc.
- **Linking Ideas – what is emerging as important?** - Once you've got lots of words on your paper, can you see any patterns/groups of words that are about the same thing? You could do some colour coding here – use a particular colour for one set of words and another for a different set etc. What do you want to say in your song? And to whom?
- **Create sentences** – Are there any words that STAND OUT or that you LOVE and really want to use? Keep them, you could underline them – these could be the starting point for linking your words and ideas into sentences/lyrics.
- **Make four lines** - that make sense and start to express what you want to say. This could be a VERSE – where you're starting to tell the story of your song, or it could be the CHORUS, which contains the central message of your song and is the part that gets repeated.
- **Structure** – can you put your words in order – do you start with a verse or chorus? What happens next? Does the order make sense to the listener? Do your words fully convey what you mean? Can you be understood?
- **Pulse/beat** – Tap the table or click your fingers eight times and speak your first line – does it fit over eight beats? Do you need to change the rhythm to make them fit? There are multiple ways to say the same line over two bars of four beats (or eight beats) – so experiment. Find a rhythm you like, that sounds good to you.

## 3. Making a Melody – once we have lyrics and a rhythm, we want to sing them!

- Experiment with different ways of saying your line – you could say it like you're really angry, or happy, or sad, or surprised, or as a question. What happens to your voice in each of these examples?
- You could accent words that you want to stand out by underlining them. What happens to your voice with those accented words?
- Decide what shape the melody should take, using your voice and the way you say the line as a guide - and draw it. Then using pitch (up or down) try and sing your shape.
- You could use word painting ideas; the phrase 'rising up' could be sung ascending (voice getting higher) or the phrase 'digging deep', could be that your line descends (melody going lower) etc. Can you use the imagery in your line and what it's conveying as a guide to help create your melody?

When you've got one line of a melody it will help you with the next one, try and do this for each of your four lines.

## Explore Further:

- **Add contrast** – If you've completed your verse, you need to make the chorus sound different, so that the listener can differentiate between the sections of the song. If you've got lots of words in your verse, try and give the chorus shorter lines that are more sustained. If your verse is pitched lower, then bring the pitch up for the chorus so that there feels like a lift.
- **Add new information** – could you think about giving **new information to the listener** in each subsequent verse, so that each time the chorus comes round it takes on a **deeper meaning?**
- **Bridge** – Could the verses be more effective in a different order? Do you want/need a bridging section? A bridge section, that has new lyrics and a new melody, could provide a fresh perspective. It builds up to the final chorus/part of the song and imbues it with more meaning.

This workshop was devised by Liz Corney for New Writing North Young Writers.



Liz Corney is a musician living and working in the North East of England. She plays keyboards, sings and writes songs for The Cornshed Sisters, a four part harmony band, making pop, alt folk music with an emphasis on voices. They have made two records; 'Tell Tales' in 2014 and 'Honey and Tar' on Memphis Industries label and are currently working on their third.

She also plays keys, synths and sings for Field Music since 2015 with whom she has toured nationally and internationally. With the band she has played alongside the Northern Sinfonia for the live soundtrack performances of the film *Asunder* at the Sunderland Empire and the Barbican.

Other notable performances include Glastonbury 2016, Manchester Jazz Festival, Jools Holland, radio sessions for BBC 6 Music and Radio 4 as well as Belgian, French and US radio. She was musical director for 'Stitched – A Hip Hopera', a musical performed at the Sage Gateshead 2019 with students from Excelsior Academy in Scotswood, in partnership with New Writing North.

Liz delivers fun, high quality, inclusive singing and songwriting workshops and courses, for all ages and abilities.

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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