A Lockdown Writing Workshop
by Ned Glasier and Company Three

We ran this workshop for a group of 12–16 year-olds meeting on Zoom on a Monday afternoon, when we’d normally have our regular session. We wanted to make a space in which we could listen to how everyone was doing, to experiment with writing exercises and develop some poetry which we could then audio record.

Welcome and introduction

Highlights
Go to every person and ask them to tell you a highlight of their week. This is a positive way just to check-in and give everyone space to speak, without things getting too deep or difficult.

Games
Fetch – Name an object that everyone might have in their home. A wooden spoon. A cushion. A bottle of shampoo. Something living. Everyone runs to get it. The first person gets 5 points, the second 2 points, the third 1 point.

Mystery Leader – Decide on one detective and put them in a breakout space. Name a leader, who does repetitive actions that everyone follows. The detective returns and has to guess who is leading.

Lists
Everyone writes lists using the prompts below. Introduce them one-by-one, but allow the group to write in whatever list they like. Try and write with detail – “an old, red, plastic-topped table”, not “a table”.

- Things I can see right now
- Things I’ve done in the last 48 hours
- Things I’ve heard
- Things I miss
- Questions in my mind (big and small)

Description
Ask everyone to go to their window and look out. Choose one thing they can see outside – perhaps this is something that changes with time (like a tree, or a carpark, or a building site). Ask them to describe it in detail for someone who can’t see it.

Free-writing
Start with the prompt ‘Lockdown is…’ and write whatever comes out of your head. Don’t stop writing for 5 minutes. If you get stuck just keep writing the prompt again and again until you become unstuck.

Writing review
Go back through all your writing and underline ten lines, phrases or combinations of words that feel interesting to you. Write them up onto a blank piece of paper and look at them afresh.
Creating the poem
Play with the order of your lines.
Edit them – cut words or lines that no longer feel right.
Add to them – add in words to help join things up.

Sharing
Everyone shares a few lines of their poem.

Feedback and thank you
Collect feedback from everyone and say thank you.
Set the optional extension task:

(Optional) Audio Record
Take your poem and record it as a piece of audio on your phone.
Remember the following advice when recording:

Recording sound on your phone
Put it on airplane mode
Do it in a ‘soft’ room
Do it alone
Hold it like you’re on a call
Speak slowly and clearly
Keep still

Share the sound files with each other when you’ve done.