

## Wordsmiths Awards Testimonies

*“Wordsmith was the first time I remember being deeply inspired and having someone and something to look up to in my life. It helped me discover the way in which I could express myself, which I’d never had. I carried on the art of poetry it gave me, through Young Identity. Now studying at the University of Nottingham, I believe the experience of Young Identity has given me an edge over many of my peers as [it] made it much easier for me to understand, appreciate and respect other people’s ways of thinking. It has definitely given me the determination and focus to succeed in whatever I choose to do, so I can give to a future generation what Young Identity has given me. Poetry continues and will always play a massive part in my life thanks to Young Identity.”*

**Haamid Sharif, ex-pupil of Burnage Academy for Boys, and participant in Wordsmith and Young Identity workshops**

*“If you’re looking at the impact on a child’s education, the time spent in a Wordsmith Awards project probably does more to develop and empower young people than anything else that we do in school. It’s as good as that.”*

**Ian Fenn, Head Teacher, Burnage Academy for Boys**

*“Performing [at the WordSmiths Award event] was an extremely positive experience for the students, and had a significant impact on self-confidence for many of our participants.”*

**Rebecca Goodwin, Loreto Sixth Form College**

*“It is amazing to see the students continue to grow in confidence and how they have all worked together to help each other’s performances. The skills they have learnt and developed will certainly help them within their subjects at school and most definitely within their social and future working lives.”*

**Beth Nunn, Achievement Leader, Chorlton High School**

*“It has really increased their confidence and teamwork skills. Students who would not put their hands up to answer a question in class were confident to perform at the Showcase and by the end of the project there has been a noticeable impact on the attainment of the students involved: three are now above their target grades since completing the project; two have completed a reading age test and this has gone up by two years since completing the project - their vocabulary has greatly improved.”*

**J Gledhill, Whalley Range High School**

*“It can transform attitudes, re-engage the disaffected and help young people find their own voice. Confidence; creativity; release of stress and expressing emotions; expressing themselves orally which can translate into stronger, more exploratory investigation of texts; creative writing skills and expanded vocabulary / strength in using poetic devices; renewed positivity to education and school as an institution; strengthened relationships with teaching staff.”*

**R Webb, Head of English, Manchester Communication Academy**

*“Following their performance, pupils expressed how confident they felt in*

*themselves after having stood up and performed. The skills demanded of them, the composition and memorising of the poem, as well as the performance aspects will be invaluable in many life experiences. Furthermore, they were truly pushed beyond their comfort zone during the event, resulting in a great sense of pride and enjoyment in all the kids involved. A truly valuable experience for pupils and staff alike."*

**Rachel Preston, Loreto High School**

*"It was amazing to see my Year 9 students in a different light; their creativity astounded me, as did their willingness to come out of their comfort zone and perform on stage. For some, it was a once in a lifetime opportunity and certainly helped raise aspirations."*

**Sharon Dempsey, Head of English and Assistant Principal, St Peter's RC High School**

*"It has done great things for their confidence in school and allowed teachers to see them in a new light. Some of the students that the facilitators have worked with have challenging behaviour, but the facilitators have been great and kept them interested and motivated."*

**Rachel Hockey, Head Librarian, Chorlton High School.**

*"Year after year I am overwhelmed by the commitment, the confidence and the capability of our young people when they become part of the Wordsmith Awards. The progress made in ten weeks is astounding, with pupils developing real life skills and building meaningful relationships with their teammates."*

*"Wordsmith draws out the passion and individual voices from young people who are under so much pressure to fit a mould; it creates a platform for students to explore feelings and express opinions. It is the not-so-secret club where it truly is about the 'taking part' and the enjoyment – where self-reflection and evaluation occurs no matter what the outcome of the final showcase."*

*"We are proud to take part in Wordsmith each year and delighted to support the project's continued success and growth."*

**Becci Wadestone, Burnage Academy for Boys**

*"The Wordsmith coaches helped to inspire and motivate the children to be confident about writing and performing their own poems in a fun and highly engaging way."*

**Adam Hossen Rolls Crescent Primary School**

*"Wordsmith draws out the passion and individual voices from young people who are under so much pressure to fit a mould. It makes it acceptable to show feelings and express opinions. It's fantastic!"*

**Paul Barker Matthews, Head of English, Cedar Mount High School**

*"The Wordsmith project was a profound and life-changing experience for the students involved."*

**Saira Samir, St Margaret's RC**

*“Wordsmith gives young people the confidence to put pen to paper, the courage to perform in front of others and teaches them that poetry doesn’t have to be confined to the classroom.”*

**Rachel Hockey, Chorlton High School**

## Young Identity Testimonies (performers)

*“I have gained so much from Young Identity. The workshops are fantastically taught and the group is really supportive of everyone.”*

*“Living in Longsight anti-social behavior is abundant, the sessions are something to look forward to, and are a positive thing for me to attend, before attending YI Longsight when it started I did associate with friends who are now thugs, and due to YI I was set free from that.”*

*“Poetry is personal and often hard to share but with YI it is easy.”*

*“Their feelings and thoughts in an open and honest way in a way that is not really done anywhere else in society. That is so important to helping us grow up and to understand and express our feelings.”*

*“I would have never perform, but the workshops have given me that confidence to do so.”*

*“Young Identity has taught me to respect other people’s views as well as giving me something productive to do on a Tuesday night.”*

*“Confidence, self worth and inspiration.”*

*“I have really expanded my writing techniques, and have been able to up my performance and receive constructive criticism from fellow young identity members that has help me change/refine my writing.”*

*“It has made me more confident to share parts of my own life which others can learn from and it helped me to ‘close’ those parts of my life.”*

*“It has given me a sense of community and respect for other people.”*

*“Great opportunities to hone my craft, network and perform to a wide range of people.”*

*“Great experience from participating in regional and major events with artists from overseas and within the UK along with very beneficial opportunities with commission work and also a chance to share my art with others while feeling part of a community of writers.”*

*“A positive form of release and an insight into writing.”*

*“I have gained an understanding and appreciation for the power words and rhymes, whilst simultaneously coming to an understanding that I have been privileged enough to be but a small part of the Young Identity family.”*

*“I got to perform at the Royal Exchange Theatre and also got to meet Malorie Blackman who is my hero.”*

## Young Identity Testimonies (partner organisations)

*“It is important for us to know that Commonword’s Young Identity program exists and can benefit our younger users. It is clear to us as an organization that they are very committed to helping refugees and asylum seekers and this shows in how they run and manage Young Identity...The Young Identity program has given our users a voice and in return our users have gained confidence and feel better for having got their views across.”*

**RAPAR**

*“Projects like Young Identity, and others, are good, positive ways to engage with young people and start building bridges...Helping us engage with young people in a good way”*

**Leigh M’rabty**

*“It is good for young people to do something they enjoy, and showing others what they do (poetry nights) It also has an impact on other young people as they see what they do and it can also make a difference to them positively”*

**Sandra Stapleton – (Sugar Group )**

*“I feel it is imperative that young people in our community and in general are exposed to different ideas and experiences. Young Identity opens the minds of our students to a new kind of creativity...They have provided diverse activities in which our young people can become involved”*

**Ian Bubb – (Stretford High School)**

*“Young Identity are fantastic role models for aspiring young poets. I have worked with them on the wordsmith award where they have trained school teams, members of those teams go on to join YI and become coaches themselves. It’s a self perpetuating circle of creativity...I have attended very professionally conducted meetings; also I know they are only an email or phone call away.”*

**Guy Perry – (Xaverian College)**

*“By bringing together young people from different social groups using performance poetry as a way to get all the young people talking and working together. They all listen to each other because they are forced to when in the workshops. Young people who otherwise would not have intended to become friends and work together closely to produce some brilliant poetry.”*

**Afshan Lodhi – (Young Enigma)**

## Comma Press National Creative Writing Graduate Fair Testimonies

*“All in all this was a fantastic event which I was really thrilled to attend. Thank you!”*

*“Thank you for an excellent event. Just improving matching with agents might help, but I know this might be an impossible task. I think you did a wonderful job, especially as it was the first one. Thank you.”*

*“Great staff running the event - very organised, welcoming and helpful!”*

*“I thought it was a great idea, I had a great time and met up with lots of my virtual course peers. I pitched to two interested agents - one of whom gave me some detailed and useful notes on the spot. I would definitely come again and would recommend it to other writers.”*

*“It was an excellent event. I'd certainly recommend it to other writer friends.”*

*“It was a very useful conference and I had a great time. No complaints at all.”*

*“I think you did a great job, and let's do it again next year.”*

*“I'd just like to congratulate you on organizing a great event.”*

*“This seems to be essential ground for any creative writing undergraduate or graduate. I will be very disappointed if it does not get repeated in some way for next year.”*

## Comma Press Short Story Course Testimonies

*“Really enjoyed it - thank you.”*

*“The most positive, encouraging tutor I have ever had.”*

*“It's been brilliant! Excellent, excellent teaching.”*

*“Variety was great & deadlines.”*

*“I have loved attending this course, the group is great and Sarah is the most positive, encouraging tutor I have ever had.”*

*“Thanks for putting the course together.”*

*“I enjoyed it all. Found it really mind opening and inspiring.”*

*“Superb course - would love events in Leeds / Bradford.”*

*“The course has been absolutely amazing and has improved my confidence.”*

*“It inspired me.”*