

# Letters SOLIDARITY

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ACTIVITY PACK



# Introducing Letters of Solidarity

Lockdown has been long and gruelling. For many, seeing friends and family has meant relying on technology and isolation from people, new routines quickly became commonplace. Few people living in the world today have experienced an event like it.

Letters of Solidarity asks: what was it like for you? We want YOU to tell the world about your experience of lockdown and offer messages of support to your neighbours, friends, and family, and we will showcase your letter to audiences in Nottingham and across the world.

At the heart of Letters of Solidarity is our desire to hear about your experience of lockdown. What was it like? How did you feel? What was going on in the world around you?

Express your voice and get published online

The focus of the campaign is to express solidarity. This might be a confusing word - or a word that may suggest lots of different ideas. We'll be sharing plenty of material about solidarity over the summer months, so keep an eye on our social media channels and website.

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@nottmcityoflit  
[nottinghamcityofliterature.com](http://nottinghamcityofliterature.com)

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**Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature** is always on the lookout for young creatives.

We want to empower you to get creative! Express yourself in whichever way you feel comfortable. And let us showcase you and your creativity.

Remember: **solidarity, letters, creativity**

Turn the page to read a special letter addressed to you...

Dear You,

*Inside my grandmother's old trunk, beneath photo albums and an old rug, there's a locked wooden box. Inside the box there's a stack of handwritten letters, from school friends and an old love. When I'm feeling nostalgic (and there's no one at home) I read those letters and remember who I was and the things I experienced, the way I felt when I was younger. Letters are a powerful way of conveying our thoughts and feelings, a lasting legacy of our lives.*

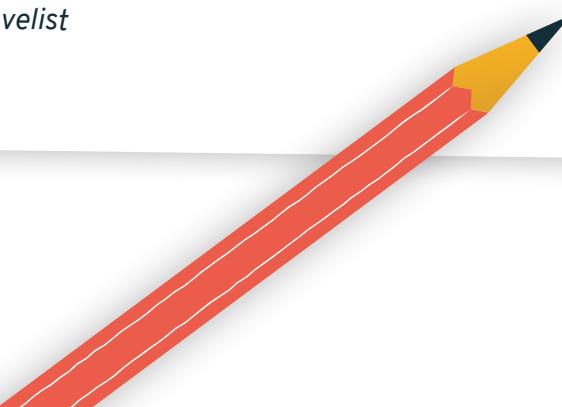
*I've lived through riots and referendums and environmental disasters but no-one in our lifetime has experienced anything like coronavirus. As one country after another has put safety measures in place, we have all experienced the same seismic shift in our lives, the same surreal events. The closure of schools and businesses for months on end, strict confinement to our homes, social distancing, the wearing of masks in public, not being able to touch.*

*Covid-19 isn't a disaster witnessed on the news, at a distance, but lived at close quarters. We are (all of us) the news. We all know how it feels to be cut off from the people we love, to have our lives disrupted and face uncertainty about the future. Many of us have shown our support of NHS staff, stuck rainbows on our windows, been forced to communicate with our relatives and friends through panes of glass. Keep safe, has become a standard farewell. There's never been a time of greater unity, greater empathy, greater solidarity.*

*You've had lots of time to think, trying to make sense of what's happening. We'd like to hear those thoughts, expressed in the form of letters. Handwritten or typed, we don't mind. Every letter you write will be read with care and attention and love. We'd like to publish some of them on our website and in the form of an anthology, so they can be kept forever. We want to hear how you've coped, what you've learned about yourself and others, what you feel passionate about. It might not relate to Covid-19 at all but a social issue that's been preying on your mind, making your blood run cold.*

*We don't want to dictate what you write or how you write it. The following prompts are just a guide. You can use or ignore them. You might have come across letter writing tips before: "Be concise. Use proper grammar and punctuation. Be formal and polite." Well, forget all that. These are creative letters and anything goes. Use the angriest, funniest, strongest, silliest, most powerful words to express yourself, without fear of offending. Write as you speak. Write from the heart. Add your name at the end or sign off 'Anonymous' and feel free to add sketches. Write a letter you can one day look back on, as I look back on mine, to see what you went through aged ?, how you felt. A window on your younger self and the bizarre, unprecedented events of 2020.*

**Eve Makis, Novelist**



# Contents

The pack is designed to be dipped into as you please. We've got letter-writing ideas and templates to help you get started, tips and inspiration including information about how you can get published in a new anthology.

You can choose to follow the contents in order and do one or all of the letter writing prompts. You can do them on your own or with other people, morning, noon or night.

We encourage you to enjoy this time to pause, reflect, write and share your work online with Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature.

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## 1. Get Creative!

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## 2. Letter Templates

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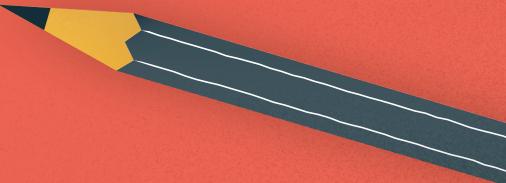
## 3. Submit your Letter

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## 4. Further Guidance & Resources

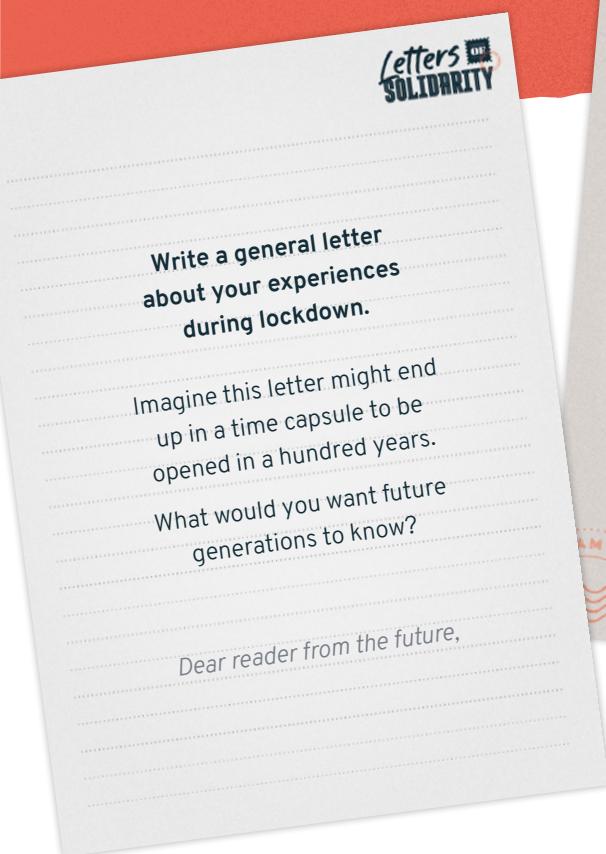


# 1. Get Creative!



In this section, we have lots of great ideas to help you get writing. Use the handy letter templates included in this pack to write your answers to the prompts. Or simply use the templates for when you write your final letter.

How you write your letter is up to you! Write your letter by hand, take a photo of it and share it with us on social media. Or post the letter to our address. Be sure to use the prompts in this pack to help you get going or in case you get stuck. **Pick up a pen, your mobile phone or laptop and get writing!**



You're planning to throw a big party after lockdown.  
Write a letter of invitation.

It can be real or imaginary. Don't worry about the budget.  
Be as extravagant as you like.

Time and place:

Play list (or band):

Food:

Theme:

Entertainment:

Write to one of your friends inviting them. You could start like this: *Dear Tyler, You're invited to the biggest party the world has ever seen. With ice-statues (not of slave traders) and a guest appearance by everyone's favourite grime artist...*

Dear...

Every crisis creates an opportunity for change. Is it time to rethink inequality, ageism, our relationship to the natural world, our historical legacy? All the things Covid-19 has brought into sharper focus. Is this our chance to reshape society and make it fairer for those who live on the margins? To pay our key workers a proper wage? To live more sustainably? Has coronavirus made you think about things in a new way? Or an old way but more intensely?

Write a letter to someone in power and tell them what's worrying you, what you'd like to change (and how, if you can think of solutions).

You might like to imagine you have five minutes in parliament to air your views. You can write about your direct experience or some social issue that's weighing on your mind right now.

It might help to write a list of your concerns before diving into the letter.

Dear Prime Minister,

You know the old cliché about silver linings. What positives have you experienced over the past few months? Escaping school or the pressure of work. Spending more time with pets and family? Learning to code or make chocolate cake? Slowing down? Letting your hair grow? Escaping the pressure of having to pretend your life's perfect, every day of the week?

Make a list of things you've gained or learned:

Now write a letter to someone close about your positive lockdown experiences. You can mention everything or focus on one thing. Your letter could be a detailed description of something you've learned. Perhaps, you'd like to share a recipe?

Try to write with your senses if you can. If you've learned something new describe the feel, the sound, the taste, the smell of it.

Dear...

## Letters SOLIDARITY

There's never been a better time for communicating our feelings. Mental health is openly discussed in today's society. Something dramatic doesn't necessarily have to happen for you to feel bad. It's a strange and unsettling time for all of us.

**Write a letter about any difficult feelings or experiences you've had during lockdown.** Or write about someone you know whose experienced difficulties. Mental health doesn't just affect the sufferer but those around them, who are sometimes forgotten.

Don't hold back. Don't censor your writing. You can keep this letter anonymous, if you like. Address it to someone you'd like to tell.

A parent, friend or therapist.

Dear...

Is there someone or something you've missed during lockdown? A friend. A family member. A pet. A team sport? Hobby? Had enough of the Belarusian football league and long to sit in the stands with your buddies and a pie? To hear the roar of the crowd. Write to that person or thing, telling them what you miss.

What have you missed about the person or thing? How do they or it make you feel? List some memories related to the person or thing?

**Write a letter to the person or thing telling them everything you've missed. Incorporating some detail from the list above.**

Dear...

We've all come to realise who the heroes are in society. Those who look after our health, keep us fed and deliver our parcels.

**Write a letter of thanks to your hero through lockdown.**

Dear...

## 2. Letter Templates

Have you found your five letter templates?

Use them by writing your responses to the prompts from Section 1. Or simply use the templates for when you write your final letter. Display one of them on your bedroom wall and send one of them to us. We want to showcase your letter at Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature.

### 3. Submit your Letter!

Sign off your letter with your name, as someone or something else, or as anonymous.

We encourage letters to be submitted via our website at  
[nottinghamcityofliterature.com/letters-of-solidarity](http://nottinghamcityofliterature.com/letters-of-solidarity)

Or post it directly to social media and don't forget to tag us in!  
You can find us on Twitter, Instagram or by email.

If you do not have access to the internet, you can send your letter to:

**Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature**  
**44-54 Freckingham Street**  
**Nottingham**  
**NG1 1DQ**

If you submit your letter by post, please include *your* postal address or email so we can contact you to say thank you.

If you are under 18 and you are sending us your letter by post, make sure you get the person who looks after you to fill out a consent form. We've included one in the pack for you.

#### What will we do with the letter?

All letters will be published online at [nottinghamcityofliterature.com](http://nottinghamcityofliterature.com).

50 letters will be selected for a new anthology launching in February 2021.

We will look to broadcast the letters on radio and other print and online media.

To join the discussion online and to share your letter, use the hashtag  
**#SolidarityLetters**

## 4. Further Guidance & Resources

If this pack is anything to go by, it will be enough to keep you busy and creative for days, but we've put together a list of three best free resources you can enjoy during this time. If you want to continue your creative journey then read on...

1. **Join our free creative writing workshops** led by Nottingham writers. Register by email contactus@nottmcityoflit.org or call 07495 548 448
2. **Explore this great list of free literary activities**, downloadable books and read-alouds by famous authors: <https://challengenottingham.co.uk/activities-for-children/f/enjoy-reading-audio-books-and-creative-writing-1>
3. **Lose yourself in the online museum for letters.** Letters of Note is a collection of the world's most entertaining, inspiring and powerful letters: <https://lettersofnote.com>



If you have a question about your letter or anything about the activity pack, please email **contactus@nottmcityoflit.org** or call **07495 548 448**

# About Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature

Nottingham was designated a UNESCO City of Literature in 2015. Our vision is of a city where everyone is reading and writing their way to a better life. We believe literature has the power to transform the world we live in because it helps us understand each other better.

We run reading and writing projects for young people and support the city's amazing places like libraries, bookshops, theatres, museums, galleries and theatres. We also showcase amazing people and their brilliant work. That includes you!

In this time of global disruption and uncertainty about the future, we are amplifying and showcasing the power of young voices. We think that being creative is one of the best things you can do – to help you make sense of and process the moment we are living through, and to be inspired by Nottingham writers and their words.

## Contact us:

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**[nottinghamcityofliterature.com](http://nottinghamcityofliterature.com)**

**[contactus@nottmcityoflit.org](mailto:contactus@nottmcityoflit.org)**

**07495 548 448**

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With love, strength and solidarity from,  
**Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature**

This pack has been made for you by the creative vision and dedication of Eve Makis and commissioned by Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature in collaboration with Nottingham Castle Trust and with funding from Arts Council England, ChalleNGe Partnership, Nottingham Trent University and The Thomas Farr Charity. We are grateful to the contributing writers and educators who helped shape and develop the Letters of Solidarity programme: Panya Banjoko, Josh Osoro Pickering, Cathy Mahmood, Ioney Smallhorne, and Makermet Creative.

## Notes



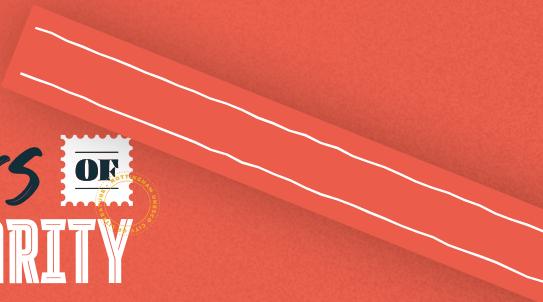
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Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



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# Letters OF SOLIDARITY



Share your words using **#SolidarityLetters**

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