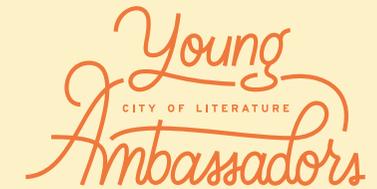


---

YOUNG AMBASSADOR CASE STUDY:

# A New Confidence in Reading and Writing



Abigail was sixteen when she heard about the YCLA scheme from a family friend who is a poet. She was already aware of the local spoken word poetry scene and through family connections worked as a shadow writer at a young writers' group. She stated repeatedly that she disliked reading, explaining in her evaluation interview that she had turned to writing as a response to severe dyslexia. In fact, it was easier to read on her phone, if she read at all, and she went as far as avoiding library lessons.

At induction, Abigail took home a book she 'would never have picked up', having low expectations. However, she read it all; in fact, she 'could not put it down'. Explaining that the novel interested her because of its representation of mental health and relationship issues, she liked it for its dark comedy and drama. This experience taught Abigail that 'a cover isn't everything. Read a book before you judge it.'

Abigail also took part in the book selection panel for Big City Reads. Although she was familiar with writers, she had never been in an environment where a group of people discussed and recommended books. She met and felt she

'became close' to other ambassadors, describing the day as 'uplifting'.

After GCSE exams, Abigail worked in the school library with years 7 and 8 on their reading and writing, performing her poetry for years 10 and 11. She also helped with author assemblies through the programme and shared her role as a YCLA with the school.

---

Being a Young Ambassador got a lot of people to know who I was. It made me scared and pushed me out of my comfort zone. Being a Young Ambassador, I had the opportunity to do so much. I met loads of people; I'm not scared of meeting people now. As young people, we should be making a difference.

Abigail's story demonstrates the value of reading and writing for pleasure, and the additional benefits this has brought her, reflecting the programme's aims of developing self-esteem and well-being through literary engagement. She commented that reading more, acting on NUCoL recommendations, has helped her develop academically; she moved from a level 5 in English Language and English Literature to level 8, a dramatic increase in capacity that has led to her choosing English at 'A' level. Moreover, her increased awareness of literature has nourished her writing, because she now often responds to characters or narratives she has read in her poems.

---

The way I write is very different. Before, I put writing over reading, but if I give myself time to read then write, the quality is better. Looking at how an author thinks has really helped me.