

Additional pieces of writing by young women



These pieces were written by young women in a writing group led by playwrights Abi Falase and Anna Bennett.

Themes covered

1. Transit – by Olamatu Jabbie

- Friendships at school and how transitioning from Year 11 to Sixth Form can impact these dynamics
- Self-image
- Labelling

2. When I Grow Up – by Lucie Lutte

- Attitudes to what we wear
- Restrictions experienced by some young women

3. She's Proud of Me Already – by Athena Sunderland

- Pregnancy
- Choices and sacrifices
- Mother and daughter relationships

4. I Feel Like a Walking Tap – by Lucie Lutte

- The menstrual cycle
- Emotion

5. Boys Will be Boys – Martha Croxen

- How girls and boys are treated differently

6. First Steps – Cleo French

- Therapy
- Friendship groups

1. Transit

By Olamatu Jabbie

Scene 1

(Nori and Ayo are sitting at a bus stop waiting for their friend.)

NORI: She has five minutes before we leave.

AYO: We can't go, it's tradition for all of us to do it together.

NORI: Obviously **Chantel** doesn't care about that.

AYO: Give her a bit longer. You know it's rush hour.

NORI: I live 40 minutes away and I still made it on time. She lives round the corner.

AYO: (under breath) Who said she's coming from home.

NORI: What was that?

AYO: Huh?

NORI: What did you say?

AYO: I was singing.

NORI: I'll tickle you right now if you don't spill.

AYO: Ay Ay chill, no need to get crazy here.

(Nori playfully pokes Ayo on her side.)

NORI: Go on. You're dragging it now.

AYO: (whispers) She's with Shawn.

NORI: Huh?

AYO: She's out with Shawn.

NORI: Who?

AYO: SHAWN.

NORI: Nah I heard you. I just can't believe how stupid she's being.

AYO: Hold on, she told me that things are blessed now.

NORI: You can't bless things with an idiot like that.

AYO: The messages looked sincere.

NORI: What the heck?! Why am I only learning about this now?

AYO: Because of your current reaction.

NORI: Or because she feels guilty.

AYO: Look at it for her point of view.

NORI: What, the backstabbing one?

AYO: I don't think she wants to hurt your feelings. That's why she didn't say anything.

NORI: Well, she's doing a crap job.

AYO: Cut her some slack.

NORI: No, she better cut this crap out when we get to sixth form. These antics are causing a breach in our friendship.

1. Transit (cont.)

By Olamatu Jabbie

AYO: You're overreacting now.

(Chantel runs towards the bus stop and embraces Ayo from the side.)

CHANTEL: I'm soooo sorry I'm late. I had a mare with my curler.

(Ayo cocks her head to the side.)

AYO: Your hair is straight.

CHANTEL: Erm.. exactly, had to straighten my hair instead.

NORI: Maybe all that heat has seeped into your scalp, melting all the sense in your brain.

CHANTEL: Wh-What? Why you are being rude?

NORI: Why are you chilling with Shawn?

(Chantel slowly turns to Ayo and rolls her eyes towards her.)

CHANTEL: This is why I don't tell you anything. You can't keep your big mouth shut.

AYO: Nah it's not entirely my fault. My life was threatened.

NORI: Honestly didn't take much. I think that time was a new record.

CHANTEL: Your tea rights are getting revoked.

AYO: It was the waiting; I couldn't hold it.

CHANTEL: I was only 20 mins late.

NORI: You were 'only' 20 minutes late because you were snuggling up with man.

CHANTEL: I mean I wasn't just out with him. We were hanging out with some others from the year.

NORI: Oh, the cool clique.

CHANTEL: Okay cringe, don't know why we called them that.

AYO: Because that's the energy they were giving.

NORI: Funny that you've changed your tune now, considering you came up with the name.

CHANTEL: In year 8! We're 16 now.

NORI: So, you think it's okay to just ditch your mates for some raggamuffins.

CHANTEL: It wasn't like that, I just lost track of time.

NORI: With people we don't like.

CHANTEL: I mean some of them have changed, they're not all pricks anymore.

NORI: So, you've forgiven them.

AYO: Do we have to bring that up.

CHANTEL: Why can't you get over it.

NORI: Because it didn't happen to you. You weren't humiliated in front of the entire school year.

CHANTEL: They apologised, didn't they?

NORI: They were forced to... You know what... It's fine, if you want to hang out with the people who ruined secondary school for me go ahead. You lot go to the arcade without me.

(Nori starts to walk away from the bus stop, but Ayo grabs her arm and brings her back to the seat.)

1. Transit (cont.)

By Olamatu Jabbie

AYO: No, I'm not letting that happen. We are ALL going to do this.

CHANTEL: I'm not the one being difficult.

NORI: You're just being a bad friend. Chilling with the same people who make me feel like crap.

AYO: She didn't know that you still felt like this.

NORI: So, she's just ignorant to everything that doesn't involve her.

CHANTEL: Are you calling me self-centred.

NORI: If the shoe fits babe.

Chantel: Are you jealous of me or something, because I'm not stuck in year 8 with the same mindset and dress sense like you.

AYO: Chan chill.

CHANTEL: No, she's always looking down on me because I want to be a bit different or test other things. So no one can make new friends now?

NORI: What's wrong with your old ones. The ones who were actually there for you, before your glow up.

CHANTEL: Nothing. I- I just want more sometimes.

NORI: Wow... we're not enough?

(Ayo turns her head and sees the bus up the road. She places her hand out to signal the driver.)

AYO: You two still coming?

(silence)

AYO: This might be the last time we get to do this together.

(The bus is in front of them, and the driver opens the door and Nori looks to Chantel, before grabbing her wrist and dragging her on to the bus.)

Scene 2

(The Girls are walking around the arcade in silence. Ayo looks at the two girls before shaking her head.)

AYO: We've been spinning around the dance mats for 20 minutes in silence. If someone doesn't say anything I'm going to call my dad to jump on with me.

(Silence)

AYO: I'm grabbing my phone right now.

CHANTEL: Okay, okay... I'm sorry for not telling you about Shawn and the others.

NORI: Thanks, I guess.

(Ayo shoves Nori with her elbow.)

NORI: I mean I'm sorry too. I just didn't expect things to change so soon. I thought we would at least have the summer.

1. Transit (cont.)

By Olamatu Jabbie

CHANTEL: What you on about?

NORI: You switching up on us. I know you see our trio as a matter of convenience and you're ready to find new people you actually vibe with, but I see you as my real friend.

CHANTEL: Nori, what's wrong with you. You are my real friend.

NORI: But we're not enough.

CHANTEL: I don't know why I said that. You've always been by my side in my darkest moments. Don't let this one tiff make you feel a way about us. We fight like this because you're my sister. So, you got me for life. Both of you.

NORI: I just can't keep up with everything, you two always being dressed up and 'slaying'. And I'm just here like expired bread.

AYO: Is this why you're acting like this, because we've discovered lip liner?

NORI: Nah it's more so the energy you guys have. When we step into a room, everyone feels your presence and I'm just dashed to the side.

AYO: I only feel this confident with you two by my side. I don't even clock the people watching.

NORI: But I do. They stare and ask me if you're single or how cool you look. Never anything to do with me.

CHANTEL: I didn't know you felt like that.

NORI: That doesn't make me feel better that my feelings were invisible to you too.

CHANTEL: No I mean, you always give such a powerful aura, that intimidates people.

NORI: Not everyday strong, sometimes I want to be an approachable babe.

AYO: Why? You don't need to change yourself so that people find it easier to engage with you. Let the people who are worthy of your energy discover it.

CHANTEL: Mwah, No bars.

NORI: Yea, maybe you're right. I don't need to change to make myself palatable.

CHANTEL: Yep, we need that fiery energy to keep us in check especially at college.

NORI: Don't think I forgot about Shawn.

AYO: Let's put that to bed for now. I have a high score to uphold. Who's jumping on the mats first.

CHANTEL and Nori: ME!

AYO: I'm going to miss this you know.

CHANTEL: The bickering?

Nori: Losing at dance mats 4 times in a row?

AYO: No. Us being 16.

(Chantel chuckles to herself.)

CHANTEL: I'm not going to miss my mum telling me what to do and that.

1. Transit (cont.)

By Olamatu Jabbie

AYO: I actually won't miss that. But we won't be able to get away with the stupid antics when we're adults.

NORI: I guess you're right. We won't be this young again.

AYO: Sooooo, let's make this summer the best one yet. One to tell the grandkids.

(**Ayo** jumps on to the mats and drags **Nori** hand and they select an upbeat song,

Chantel cheers from the side.)

The End

Themes and questions for discussion

1. Transit – by Olamatu Jabbie

Themes:

- Friendships at school and how transitioning from Year 11 to Sixth Form can impact these dynamics
- Self-image
- Labelling

Questions:

1. What is happening in the scene? Is this true to life?
2. Why do people get “labelled” as being a certain type?
3. What aesthetics are the characters presenting?
4. How could **Nori** “get noticed” whilst still being true to herself?



2. When I Grow Up

By Lucie Lutte

INT. CINDY'S BEDROOM. DAY

(Two girls in their early teens are shopping in a clothingstore looking for new outfits.)

CINDY: Shola?

SHOLA: What?

CINDY: What do you think of this top?

SHOLA: It looks a bit like a disco ball.

CINDY: Yeah you're right a bit too much on the sparkles.

SHOLA: I mean look at these boots! Beyonce could never.

(Shola tries on the boots and tries to walk in them but almost falls. The girls laugh.)

CINDY: Do you remember that day all the boys wore skirts to school?

SHOLA: No! When was that?

CINDY: Oh yes that's right you were ill that day. The boys came in wearing skirts to protest for girls, not being allowed to wear trousers. They all got detention but then Miss Madly changed the rules when the BBC got word of it.

SHOLA: She didn't want the smoke!

(Cindy giggles.)

CINDY: Girls legs get cold too. And some of us like wearing trousers.

SHOLA: So much for the 21st century and women equality.

(Beat)

SHOLA: (CONT'D) It's funny you know, Miss Madly reminds me a bit of my mum.

CINDY: What Miss Madly? No way your mum isn't a fire breathing dragon who thrives on punishing children.

SHOLA: Yeah but she does force me to wear skirts and tight clothes, to make me more feminine and lady like.

CINDY: I'm sorry.

SHOLA: It's fine.

CINDY: I'm sure your mum has her reasons for being so strict. Adults are weird.. they're like kids but with wrinkles.

SHOLA: And money don't forget money.

CINDY: True.

SHOLA: If I had money I would move away as far as possible to like Australia.

CINDY: What and leave me?

SHOLA: You can come with.

CINDY: It's fine, I'm allergic to spiders and snakes with two heads.

2. When I Grow Up (cont.)

By Lucie Lutte

SHOLA: There are no snakes with two heads?

CINDY: Anything is possible in Australia.

(The girls return to their work for a moment.)

SHOLA: Your crazy you know what right?

(The girls continue to look for clothes in silence. Cindy watches Shola for a moment with pity.)

SHOLA: You do know you can come to my house anytime to wear whatever you want. No one is going to judge you there and besides it's either that or I'll sell the lot to Vinted..Lord knows I need to sort out that closet!

CINDY: Thank you Shola.

SHOLA: Don't mention it. Us girls need to stick together.

Themes and questions for discussion

2. When I Grow Up – by Lucie Lutte

Themes:

- Attitudes to what we wear
- Restrictions experienced by some young women

Questions:

1. Do you think there is a right way to dress for young women?
2. How do older women judge what younger women are wearing?
3. How do the characters perceive older women? – do you agree with them?
4. What's good about being a girl?



3. She's Proud of Me Already

By Athena Sunderland

Bathroom floors are classic for heavy news,
Where I was when I learned of you,
And so I put on my old shoes,
And went for a stroll.

The lights out by the front door glanced through the little square window,
Blurry, a yellow beam across my flat belly,
Like a rising sun,
I couldn't quite make it out.
So I turned off the telly.

Light trickled in quickly over the sky above the water.
Water far too cold for my elbow.

I learned that once.

Beams like a church marching band,
The sun waving over the steeple spike like a fork punching into an egg yolk,
A sight unplanned,
For my day.

So I'll tell you about my days so far.

There is not a moment that passes that I lose the words to say to you.
Because how can I tell you?
How do I tell you I loved,
Love you.

How do I be a mother without you?

And so I take the cut up fruit my mother gives me when I'm sad,
Chunks that hug the last bits of garlic from the chopping board,
And save a piece for you.

3. She's Proud of Me Already (cont.) By Athena Sunderland

The long boats on the canal wave to me in the mornings before work.
They remind me of Rosie and Jim.
And now every morning i sing the theme,
To you.

And on the way home again,
I walk the scenic trail, back by the water,
Past the tipsy hipsters and gawking men,
And think, did I fail, you?
I avoid my favourite candle lit pubs,
The owner a regular customer of mine,
So I ignore the free Friday drinks
For you.
My mum never drank either.

Themes and questions for discussion

3. She's Proud of Me Already – by Athena Sunderland

Themes:

- Pregnancy
- Choices and sacrifices
- Mother and daughter relationships

Questions:

1. What do you think has happened?
2. What is the importance of water in the poem?
3. What other imagery is the writer using?
4. Also mentioned – safe spaces



4. I Feel Like a Walking Tap

By Lucie Lutte

I feel like a walking tap

A groan here

And another groan there

The urge to explode like a packet of Ketchup is overbearing and it's not even Heinz more like Tesco's everyday Value.

I feel like a walking Tap

Every time Mr A or Mr B ask me if I'm okay

I feel like dashing the Pythagoras theorem right back at him!

There's no amount of over-the-counter medication that I could take to manage

This river

This stream

This wave of emotions that I'm feeling inside my very core. Oh, why Eve!

Why did you have to listen to that snake? Some of us don't even like APPLES.

I feel like a walking tap

But this doesn't have to be a tale of misery and gloom I'm serious let me bloom

You see without a tap there's no water Without water, there's no life

So I'm going to be the best tap

The tap that will pass all her exams and will beat all the boys who laugh at me in a race because I CAN.

I can do anything

Be anything

I Love you body

You are simply a dream

4. I Feel Like a Walking Tap (cont.)

By Lucie Lutte

Immediate
Theatre

Themes and questions for discussion

4. I feel Like a Walking Tap – by Lucie Lutte

Themes:

- The menstrual cycle
- Emotion

Questions:

1. What does “the tap” represent for you?
2. What does overwhelming emotion feel like for you?
3. What are the challenges of having a period in school.



5. Boys Will be Boys

By Martha Croxen

I'm sitting at the kitchen table, staring into my bowl of soggy shreddiees, swirling them round with my spoon and watching the milk break down the little checkered pattern until a small heap of mush sits at the bottom.

Mum is on the phone. Her over-the-top, exaggerated laughter rings in my ears, invading my thoughts. Then she says it. 'Boys will be boys!'

A shrill chuckle follows - laughter that she uses in order to dismiss what this boy has done, to forget his actions, whatever they are, and move onto another topic of conversation.

I look up. Boys will be boys. I hate that expression. Boys will forget their homework, but that's ok, they're just silly boys.

Girls, on the other hand, are disorganised, forgetful - they need to sort themselves out. When I forget my maths worksheet on circle theorems it's an automatic detention ("don't even THINK about arguing with me young lady!"), when it's my male classmate who swaggers into the room 10 minutes late, after a bit of banter with the teacher he is told with a fond smile that he just needs to make sure he's on time next lesson.

Boys play football all afternoon, of course they do, classic boys!

Girls should focus on their studies if they want a proper job (of course, a job that they can quit the second they meet a man and have children - ideally in their late 20s/early 30s).

When my brother loses his temper and flings something across the room, well, that is simply his overpowering male hormones.

When I get angry at something and start shouting, I am being an ungrateful madam who needs to be put in her place.

Boys will catcall. Who can blame them? They're just boys.

Boys will slap a Girl's bum - it's not like they have control over themselves, let alone where they put their hands.

And then you have girls. Girls are never 'just girls'. Girls are bossy, or lazy, or disorganised, or slutty, or not quite slutty enough. Girls are too loud, or too quiet, too thin or too fat.

I look up from my cereal, currently resembling the slush that lines the streets a few days after it snows. I take a deep breath in, ready to take her up on what she says, tell her what's wrong with it, that I'm sick of all these excuses that society finds for men. I want to tell her all the things that have been bubbling up inside me, swirling round my head like a washing machine going slightly too fast.

But I don't. Instead, all that comes out is a heavy sigh, like a balloon with a pin-prick – slowly deflating as all the air leaves it.

5. Boys will be boys (cont.)

By Martha Croxen

Themes and questions for discussion

5. Boys will be boys – Martha Croxen

Themes:

- How girls and boys are treated differently

Questions:

1. Does this piece ring true for you?
2. Why is this set at the breakfast table?
3. What could you do differently?
4. How would girls feel more supported?
5. How could boys be more supportive?



6. First Steps

By Cleo French

GIRL and **THERAPIST** sit opposite each other accompanied by a deafening silence. **GIRL** looks exhausted and as if she's been crying but not recently, more so a permanent state of her appearance. **THERAPIST** is leaning forward as if desperately trying to make conversation and **GIRL** is sunk as far into her chair as possible.

THERAPIST: I understand how challenging this must be for you. I thought it might be useful to use these last few minutes to discuss some ways of coping with difficult situations moving forward, especially with you returning to school next week... how are you feeling about school at the moment?

GIRL: Fine. Yeah.

THERAPIST: Well, that's good. I was wondering whether you'd spoken to your friends recently, do they know you're coming back to school?

GIRL: No, I haven't... I haven't heard from them for a while. I don't really think we're friends anymore but it's OK. Like, it's fine.

THERAPIST: I'm really sorry about that. What about anyone in your form, so you can have someone to be with at lunch and break?

GIRL: Everyone's sort of got their groups now so, like, I can't just, you know, join... it would just be weird. But I've got loads of work to catch up on, so I'll probably just go to the library.

THERAPIST: I know it may seem like that, but I'm sure there are plenty of people who want to be your friend.

GIRL: I don't think so... I don't really think I'm the kind of person people want to be friends with.

THERAPIST: Why do you say that?

GIRL: I dunno. It's hard to explain, I guess.

THERAPIST: Try.

GIRL: Well, everyone's already got their groups so there's no room and, even if there was... I will never be nicer than their nice friend or funnier than their funny friend or prettier than their pretty friend. So, I guess I just don't see the point in trying so hard to make friends with people who already have someone like me but better.

THERAPIST: I think the point might be that it will make you feel happier or maybe less lonely.

GIRL: Loneliness isn't what makes me unhappy.

THERAPIST: What is making you unhappy at the moment?

GIRL: I don't know. I think it's more that I know what it's like to not be lonely. I think it's just the shift, knowing what I'm missing out on, that's what hurts more.

She begins to get too upset to finish what she was saying.

6. First Steps (cont.)

By Cleo French

THERAPIST: Look, it's clear you have still got a lot of big emotions going on at the moment. I know our sessions together are ending, but have you thought about asking your mum to put you on the list to get more sessions?

GIRL: Would it be with you?

THERAPIST: I can't guarantee that, I'm afraid, but I can assure you everyone on our team is lovely.

GIRL: I don't think I can do that... wait another 10 months to get six hours with a total stranger I don't trust yet have to tell my whole life story to, and when I do finally trust them and begin to get a sense of calm for even just a moment, it's over and I have to go on dealing with all the same stuff from before yet it's worse because I know that nothing has changed or will ever change but this time I have to do it all alone knowing that I won't feel different. And I'm sorry, I really am, because I do feel like these sessions have helped but it's just not enough time... no miracle has taken place, I don't feel cured or reborn or different at all, I'm still sad and angry on top of the fact that now I don't have anyone to talk to anymore.

Her tone has shifted from angry back to sad again.

GIRL: contd. I just don't know what to...

Her sentence is interrupted by the quiet beeps escaping from **THERAPIST's** watch. It's five o'clock.

THERAPIST: Sorry, continue.

GIRL: No, it's fine, I was done. I'm sorry for shouting, it's just...

THERAPIST: I know and all I can say is I'm really very sorry. I know you may not see it right now, but I think you've made immense progress these last six weeks, I'm really very proud of you. A letter will arrive in the next few weeks evaluating our sessions. There's nothing personal or anything in there, just essentially saying how great you are, because it's true and, believe me, you will come to realize that very soon.

GIRL smiles, her face appears to be not used to smiling, so it's slightly awkward and wonky but a smile, nonetheless.

GIRL: Thank you, thanks for everything. Bye.

THERAPIST: (smiling) Bye-bye.

THERAPIST watches as **GIRL** walks out the door and is left with the all-too-familiar feeling of hopelessness but before this feeling has a chance to sink in a new **GIRL** walks in. She looks exhausted and as if she's been crying but not recently, more so a permanent state of her appearance.

6. First Steps (cont.)

By Cleo French

Themes and questions for discussion

6. First Steps – Cleo French

Themes:

- Therapy
- Friendship groups

Questions:

1. What do you think happened to the girl that meant she was off school and offered therapy?
2. Why does the girl say she is “sorry”?
3. Do you agree with the description of friendship groups?
4. If this girl was returning to your class, what would you do to support her?

Notes:

- Suggestion: to create the character, hot seat and then act out the scene

