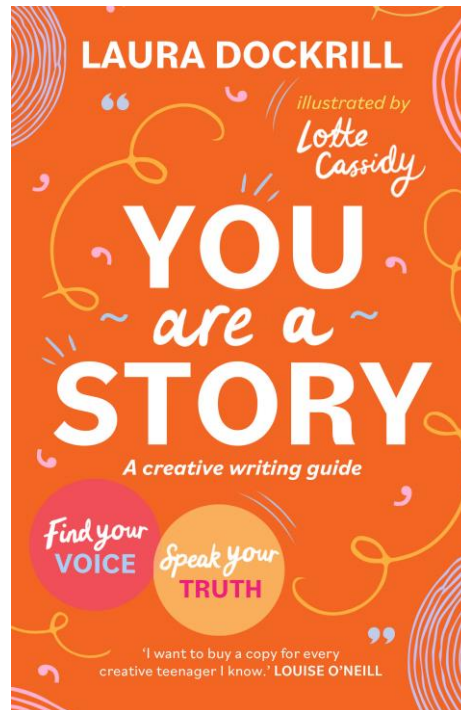


## You Are A Story! Writing for Yourself with Laura Dockrill



**Level:**

S1 – S5 / Key Stage 3

**Explore themes of:**

✓ Creativity ✓ Mental Wellbeing ✓ Emotional Regulation ✓ Writing

**Subject Checklist:**

✓ Expressive Arts ✓ English Language ✓ Practical Activities ✓ Health and Wellbeing

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### At a Glance – To Discuss Before Reading

1. What is writing to you? Think about times you have enjoyed writing or used it - in or out of school. If not writing, what about art, music, cooking?
2. What makes you feel inspired? Where do your ideas come from?
3. What writing do you enjoy? Authors, podcasters, online video creators, TV shows, movies all involve writing. Does other people's writing affect how you express your own creativity?

## Read the Extract

Taken from the Intro and Chapter 1 of Laura Dockrill's *You Are A Story*:

[You-Are-a-Story-interiors-Extract-Intro&Chapter1](#)

### Activity 1: *Why Write?*

Writers write for different reasons, artists create art in ways unique to them, and it feels different to each and every one. Humans are naturally inclined to creativity in all sorts of forms.

1. **(Pages 17-19)** Think about why you create art in whatever form you prefer, and how it makes you feel. How do you feel *while* you're creating? How do you feel when you're finished? Do you show other people? Whatever your answer, why?
  2. **(Pages 25-26)** Talking with a partner, discuss what is 'mindfulness' to you? Does writing or creating feel similar to how you imagine mindfulness? Or does something else make you feel 'mindful' in the same way?
  3. **(Pages 29-30)** Exchange writing with your partner, either from one of the book's short exercises or something from class or home that you are happy to share. Now, instead of critiquing it based on spelling, grammar, style and story, etc. like you usually might when peer reviewing, try to understand what your partner was feeling and thinking when they wrote it and put yourself in that headspace. Does this change how you feel about the writing overall? Is it different from how you feel when you create?
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### Activity 2: *Writing as Medicine*

In the book, Laura Dockrill speaks about her personal experience using writing and creativity as an outlet and a tool in navigating her negative emotions.

When we don't have someone to talk to about something, or even when we can't fully articulate difficult thoughts, writing can help us process our emotions in a controlled way.

- **(Pages 31-36)** Have you used writing to explore feelings that you had trouble understanding? This could be in a story, a diary, or just venting your thoughts onto scrap paper to throw away. If not, try it now by writing a short paragraph. Think about how your perspective changed before and after writing.
- **(Pages 227-228)** The author writes about how CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) helps her process negative or difficult feelings. It's easy to try this yourself, and it is done by writing. Either individually or with a partner, try to go through a CBT exercise either based on a fictional situation or something you're willing to share. Here's how to do it:

*Take an event or a feeling that is upsetting and write it down. Like your friend passed you in the street and didn't say hi.*

*Then, write down your feelings about it. You might be annoyed or sad, maybe you think they're ignoring you or have fallen out with you. You might be jumping to the worst possible conclusions about it.*

*Then, finally, try to find evidence to support these feelings. Not just what your worries are saying - hard proof. You'll notice that it is nearly impossible to find.*

*This can be a simple way of reminding your brain that the truth is always there if we stop and look carefully, and our emotions can lead us the wrong way sometimes.*

*If this works for you, you can use it whenever you feel unsure about your creativity.*

*Remind yourself that everyone deserves to make art and to tell their stories.*

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### **Activity 3: Warming Up Your Writing Brain**

When creating can seem like an intimidating task, we can use small exercises to kick-start the imagination. These can be great for idea generation, or shaking off the dreaded writer's block that can stop us from putting pen to paper. Try some of these and see what you come up with!

1. **(Pages 48-49)** Try keeping a dream diary for a week. Afterwards, think about how this has affected your writing - has it made you more imaginative, or more in touch with your thoughts and feelings?
  2. **(Pages 52-54)** Try out free writing. Free write for five minutes based on just what comes out naturally. No rules, just write. Then afterwards try five minutes of free writing with a selected theme.
  3. Using a newspaper - pick an article and think about how you could transform it into a narrative of your own. Is there a side of the story that is missing? What if the events in the article happened to you, or a celebrity? Or in another country? Use the outline of the news story to fuel your imagination and craft something uniquely yours.
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**Now that you have your tools in hand, you can write. Show off! Impress yourself!**

**This book has countless exercises and prompts to return to if you are ever stuck or just want a jumping-off point for a new story. Next time you write a story or a reflective essay for class, remember what you learned. – And remember to have fun with it!**

Keep your eye out for more awesome books from Laura Dockrill, as well as the other authors from the Edinburgh International Book Festival!



*Actual Investors*