

The 2023

SprinNG Writing Fellowship

Report

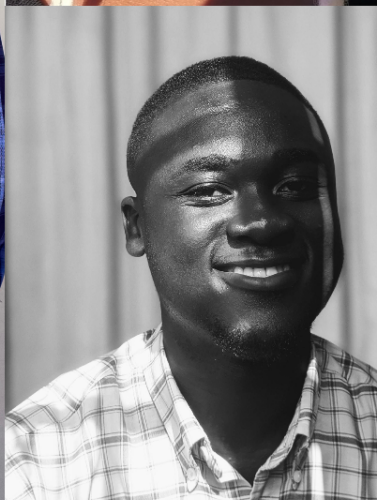


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SprinNG

www.SprinNG.org



Established in May 2016 as Springg Literary Movement and re-branded as SprinNG in December 2019.

Our mission: "SprinNG is a Literary Movement and **Society for the Promotion, Revitalization, and Improvement of New Nigerian Generations** in writing and literature."

Here are our key projects:

- **Publication:** We publish reviews, poems, stories, essays, and fiction, all of which engender the soul of national literature.
- **Nigerian Writers Database:** We founded and manage a Nigerian Writers Database that hosts the biography of 400+ writers.
- **SprinNG Lit:** This page on our website dedicated to promoting other literary websites worldwide and informing writers of opportunities outside what SprinNG offers.
- **SprinNG Writing Fellowship (SWF):** This annual creative writing fellowship, provides 6-weeks of free mentorship to select writers with resources such as airtime, paid access to books, and more.
- **SprinNG Advantage Program (SAP):** This program supports young African writers interested in pursuing a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Creative Writing abroad.
- **SprinNG Advancement Fellowship (SAF):** This 3-week fellowship helps develop career content and improve professional communication skills for diverse academic and career goals.
- **SprinNG Women Authors Prize (SWAP):** We discover and promote female Nigerian authors with this prize - combating the unequal gender representation and participation in Nigeria's literary industry.
- **SprinNG Annual Poetry Contest:** This contest with a unique theme celebrates our anniversary.

You can donate to SprinNG: www.springg.org/donate

Email: Contact@SprinNG.org

Social Media: @SprinnGLM

The SprinNG Fellowships

SprinNG provides three fellowships to support Creative Writing and Career Advancement.

SprinNG Writing Fellowship (SWF):

This program focuses on six (6) genres of literature: Poetry, Fiction, Non-Fiction, Book Review, Play/Drama, and Blogging. For six (6) weeks, mentees will contact their mentors and send them writing pieces to get reviews and commentaries. Mentors and mentees will aim to work on at least one (1) piece of writing in their select genre per week. The SprinNG Writing Fellowship is only open to writers who have yet to publish a book (eBook/hardcopy).

The communication medium between the mentors and mentees throughout this program will be via email, phone calls, WhatsApp, and text messages. In addition, all mentees will be provided weekly N500/ ₦10/R29 airtime during the program and paid access to an online bookstore to read books that support their program learning.

SprinNG Writing Fellowship (SWF) Eligibility

- Applicant must be a Nigerian, Ghanaian, or South African citizen residing within the country.
- Applicant must be between the ages of 18 and 25.
- The SprinNG Writing Fellowship (SWF) is only open to writers who have not published a book (eBook/hardcopy).

The SprinNG Writing Fellowship Timeline

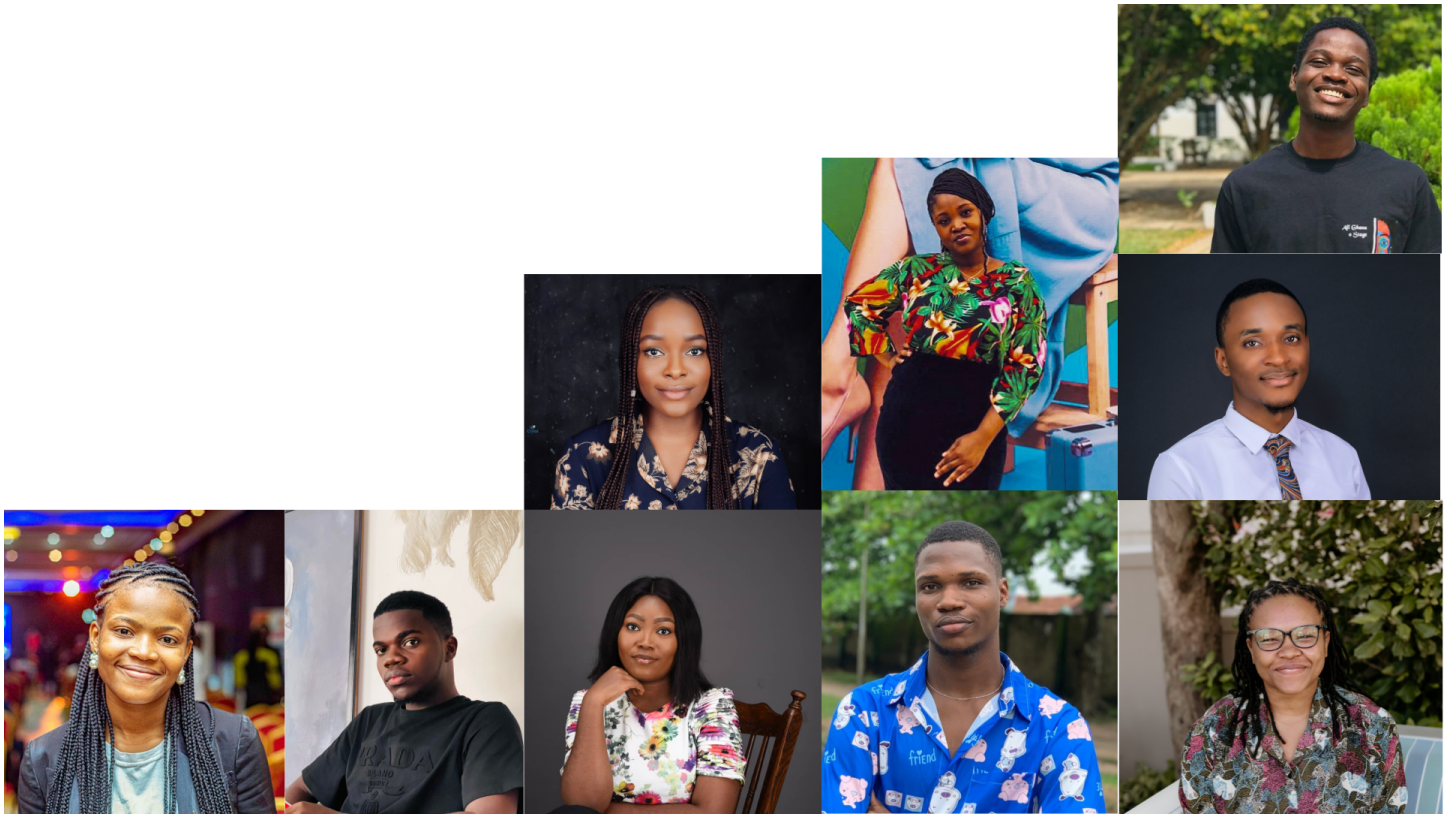
- January 1 – April 15: Application opens and closes
- March: Mentors announcement
- April 15 - May 15: Application review
- May 15: Finalists notification
- May 21: Mentorship pairing
- June 1 – July 15: Fellowship Period
- July 15 – 20: Fellowship rounds-up
- August/September: Mentees profiles and fellowship reports
- December: Publication of mentees anthology

SprinNG Advantage Fellowship (SAP)

The SprinNG Advantage Program is a comprehensive and free MFA application support system designed to empower and guide young African writers through the application process. The fellowship includes:

- *SprinNG Advancement Fellowship (SAF)*: A 3-week program that helps develop career content and improve professional communication skills to attain academic and career goals. The fellowship covers six core courses: Resume Writing, Cover Letter Writing, Personal Statement Writing, Interview Preparation, Answering Interview Questions, and S.M.A.R.T Goal-Setting. Participants are provided concise learning materials, including videos, worksheets, short guides, and assignments to build their career portfolios for pursuing opportunities like jobs, internships, fellowships, university admissions, and more. In addition, they will receive feedback and guidance from SprinNG to perfect their career content and stand out.
- *SprinNG MFA Academy*: The SprinNG MFA Academy is a two-week intensive guidance program for those who complete the SprinNG Advancement Fellowship. They are paired with a dedicated mentor who reviews their application packet and provides valuable feedback on their writing sample and other application documents.

The 2023 SprinNG Writing Fellowship Report Summary



On April 9, 2023, SprinNG, in collaboration with Botsotso, officially announced the expansion of its Writing Fellowship to South Africa—the second of its kind since its expansion to Ghana in 2021. This decision in line with our commitment to the development of young African writers and promotion of African literature, was an important milestone that marked our 7th Anniversary in May. Celebrating our growing community, we reflected on how far we have come, our goals, mission, impact, and how much farther we can go. The amazing support we have enjoyed within and outside the literary community has led us to where we are and given us hope for the future.

Aside from hosting our first set of South African mentees and mentors this year, we received a total of 1,163 applications from Nigeria, Ghana, and South Africa, which was almost twice the number of applications we received last year and a testament to valuable impact of the fellowship. Most importantly, 79 contemporary writers accepted to serve as mentors this year, which allowed us to have backup mentors available to step in for situations where another mentor was unavailable. Hence, unlike last year, when we accepted and paired 44 mentees with 40 mentors, this year, we paired 77 mentees with 74 mentors, with 65 completing the fellowship requirements and receiving their certifications.

Every year, by reading the mentees' feedback forms, we go through indescribable and enjoyable moments of gratitude for the invaluable human and financial resources that make it exceedingly possible for mentees to have a meaningful and life-changing experience; empowering them to actualize their creative writing goals. The mentors, through their impeccable teaching, guidance, commitment, encouragement, and feedback, have not only sharpened the mentees' creative skills and given them access to knowledge that would transform their art, but in addition, built their sense of self and confidence, and equipped them with soft skills for career development—all of which has been documented in this report.

Notably, and in line with our dedication to continually creating ways to ensure a better fellowship experience and learning environment for both mentees and mentors, we will be reviewing and redesigning the fellowship manual for subsequent editions of the fellowship to become more concise and customized per genre.

SprinNG is tremendously grateful to the Botsotso team for ensuring we had a smooth and easy expansion to South Africa and to the CGWS team for their consistent support and collaboration since we expanded the fellowship to Ghana. Additionally, we are exceedingly grateful to our mentors for believing in our mission by saying yes to us when we approached them and for honouring us with their time, exceptional talent, and knowledge.

This year, we also had a group of 10 mentees who served as peer captains, managing the distribution of resources such as weekly airtimes and contest prizes to their peers. This allowed the SprinNG team and the mentees to be more efficient in their collaborations and strengthened our connections.

A special shout out to the mentees for their commitment to the learning process and expectations, and many thanks to the SprinNG Alumni Relations Manager Adedolapo Lawal and SprinNG Founder Oyindamola Shoola for managing this fellowship and their dedication to ensuring that mentees have a seamless and memorable fellowship experience.

Facts and figures from the 2023 mentees and mentors of the fellowship:

All mentees agreed that

- Enough thought was put into the fellowship.
- The weekly emails were useful in helping them start their week.
- The fellowship helped them to push boundaries in their writing skills.

98.5% identified that the fellowship improved their confidence and provided a sense of direction to their creative writing pursuits.

93.8% acknowledged that the weekly airtime was useful in supporting them during the program.

90.8% noted the group chats were helpful in expressing their concerns and asking questions.

87.7% found the contest as a motivating factor in their fellowship experience.

87.7% said they would re-apply to be SprinNG fellows in a different genre and category.

83.1% noted the fellowship impacted their professional development and etiquette.

56.9% found the WhatsApp group chat useful in conversing and connecting with other mentees.

93% of mentors said they wanted to be mentors again.

Fellowship completion timeline:

- 9.2% of mentees completed the fellowship in 7 weeks
- 44.6% of mentees finished the fellowship in 6 weeks
- 36.9% of mentees completed the fellowship in 5 weeks
- 9.2% of mentees completed theirs in 4 weeks

SprinNG will continue to stay true to its mission of supporting young African writers and creating more opportunities for their creative development and nourishment. Thank you all for your support.

Best,
Ebukun Gbemisola Ogunyemi
Director, SprinNG

List of Graduating Mentees
Class of 2023 - Congratulations on this milestone!

Abdulbasit Ajibade	Emelda Asuquo Ita	Nnaemeka Nnam
Abdulrazaq Salihu	Ement Amaku	Nomonde Ngema
Adesiyun Oluwapelumi	Emmanuel Temitope Shonibare	Obianuju Chris-Chinedu
Adewale Olasupo	Eunice Abayomi	Okafor Michael Onyebuchi
Akeem Oyinkansola Shalom	Fadairo Tesleem	Olunlade Moyosore Joy
Alobu Kelechi Emmanuel	Falegan Rachael Oluwatunmise	Omotoke Solarin Sodara
Anderson Moses	Favour Evioghene Brown	Oruaroizino Praise Onogberio
Anne Miapna'an Pedo	Gift Davies	Phelisa Sikwata
Anthony Morrison Kwavah	Glomygia Chimnmuanya Orji	Prosper Chibuzor Ifeanyi
Asare Yaw Jamuel	Hope Nadine Minnies	Rahab Yusuf Adamu
Ayeni Jonathan Ayomide	Ifeanyichukwu Dominion Anyabolu	Ruqayyah A. Aderibigbe
Babatunde Olatunji David	Ikpenyi Michael	Safiyya Jogee
Bhasani Mlambo	Isa Saleem Adam	Siphosethu Thobela
Chiamaka Ukpai	Jameel Mayowa Olojoku	Stephen Eniayewu
Chidera Adiel Chukwu	James Nana Abakah Aggrey	Thandolwethu Mulambo
Chidera Solomon Anikpe	Jibril Nana-Aisha	Uchenna Edwin Eze
Chidinma Nnalue	Joemario Nyeti Jospeh Umana	Uwachukwunenye Princess Anna
Chinwendu Madufo	Joshua Opanike	Vanessa Essien
Chisom Benedicta Nsiegbumam	Lusanda Nosipho Mabaso	Yetunde Omotayo
Chukwuma Blossom Chiamaka	Manoko Precious Thathane	Yondela Stuurman
Damilola Ruth Oyedeji	Mpama Enunosowo Lawrence	Zainab Abubakar
Daniel Joe Ntekim	Mubarak Said	

List of 2023 Mentors

We thank you for participating in this opportunity of service to improve and revitalize African literature through mentorship!

Abdulwasiu Ishola	Iliya Kambai Dennis	Osahon Oka
Adedayo Agarau	Itiola Jones	Oyindamola Shoola
Ajibola Tolase	Ivana Akotowaa Ofori	Philile Nkabinde
Akpa Arinzechukwu	Jakky Bankong-Obi	Praise Osawaru
Ashley Moyo	Jeremy Teddy Karn	Rahma O. Jimoh
Ayodele Ibiyemi	Jide Badmus	Roseline M. Anya Okorie
Brian Walter	Joseph Hope	S.Su’eddie Vershima Agema
Busisiwe Mahlangu	Kemi Falodun	Sally Kenneth Dadzie
Carl Terver	Kizito Okorowu	Samuel Adeyemi
Chibuike Ogbonnaya	Lawretta Egba	Sherif Ogundele
Chideraa Ike-Akaenyi	Linathi Makanda	Sibongile Fisher
Chinonso Nzeh	Loic Ekinga	Sihle Ntuli
Chisom C. Nnanna	Malik Rasaq Gbolahan	Soonest Nathaniel
Dami Ajayi	Michael Emmanuel	Tamara Dogubo
Divine Inyang Titus	Michael Inioluwa	Timi Sanni
Echezonachukwu Nduka	Michael Imossan	Tola Ijalusi
Ebukun Gbemisola Ogunyemi	Miracle Emeka-Nkwor	Tomilola Coco Adeyemo
Edward Ejiro	Mustapha Enesi	Uchenna Emelife
Eketi Edima Ete	Njoku Nonso	Ucheoma Chidinma Onwutuebe
Elisha Oluyemi	Nzube Nlebedim	Uduak-Estelle Akpan
Emmanuel Faith	Olajide Salawu	Ugochukwu Damian Okpara
Ezioma Kalu	Ola W. Halim	Vuyelwa Maluleke
Gabriel Awuah Mainoo	Olly Nze	Zizipho Bam
Goodness Ayoola	Olumide Ojo Emmanuel	Zenas Ubere
Ilerioluwa Olatunde	Olumuyiwa Adesokun	

Honorary Ribbon & Star Recognitions

Double Honorary Ribbon & Star Recognitions: This SprinNG Writing Fellowship participant received a double honorary ribbon and star on their certification for demonstrating exemplary leadership consistency, perseverance, and achievement during the fellowship. In addition, they served as a Peer captain supporting 8-10 other fellows during the 6 weeks.

- Ikpenyi Michael
- Oyedeji Damilola Ruth

Black Honorary Ribbon and Star: The following SprinNG Writing Fellowship participants received a black honorary ribbon and star on their certification for demonstrating exemplary performance, consistency, perseverance, and achievement during the fellowship.

- Adesiyan Oluwapelumi
- Anthony Morrison Kwavah
- Ayeni Jonathan Ayomide
- Babatunde Olatunji David
- Ement Amaku
- Emmanuel Temitope Shonibare
- Favour Evioghene Brown
- Ibanomonde Ngema
- Ikpenyi Michael
- Joshua Opanike
- Manoko Precious Thathane
- Mubarak Said
- Oyedeji Damilola Ruth
- Phelisa Sikwata
- Prosper Chibuzor Iféányí
- Safiyya Jogee
- Zainab Abubakar

Green Honorary Ribbon and Star: The following SprinNG Writing Fellowship participants received a green honorary ribbon and star on their certification for demonstrating exemplary leadership during the fellowship, serving as Peer Captains, and supporting 8-10 other fellows during the 6 weeks.

- Asare Yaw Jamuel
- Eunice Abayomi
- Hope Nadine Minnies
- Ikpenyi Michael
- Jibril Nana-Aisha
- Oruarozino Praise Onogberiome
- Oyedeji Damilola Ruth
- Stephen Eniayewu
- Uwachukwunenye Princess Anna
- Yondela Stuurman

Gold Ribbon: The following SprinNG Writing Fellowship participants received a gold ribbon for winning one of the writing contests during the fellowship.

- Babatunde Olatunji David
- Anthony Morrison Kwavah

- Glomygia Orji

SprinNG Advancement Fellowship Scholarship Recipients: The following SprinNG Writing Fellowship participants received a N30,000 scholarship to the SprinNG Advancement Fellowship.

- Emmanuel Temitope Shonibare
- Mubarak Said
- Jonathan Ayomide Ayeni
- Safiyya Jogee
- Oyedeji Damilola Ruth

Notable Mentions – Contest Winners & Semi-Finalists

Contest Winners in the 2023 SprinNG Writing Fellowship: The following participants were semi-finalists and winners of contests included in the fellowship.

Why I Write – Week 1

The winner: Babatunde Olatunji David

Other Semi-finalists

- Chukwuma Blossom Chiamaka – First Runner-up
- Jameel Mayowa Olojoku – Second Runner-up
- Prosper Chibuzor Ifeanyi – Notable Mention

Poetry Contest – Week 2

The winner: Anthony Morrison Kwavah

Other Semi-finalists

- Glomygia Orji – First Runner-up
- Abdulrazaq Salihu – Second Runner-up
- Uchenna Eze – Notable Mention

Flash Fiction Contest – Week 3

The winner: Glomygia Orji

Other Semi-finalists

- Jonathan Ayomide Ayeni – First Runner-up
- Anne Pede Miapnaan – Second Runner-up
- Rahab Yusuf – Notable Mention

2023 Fellows Biographies and Commentaries

We asked our mentees the following questions...

What part of the fellowship did you find most thoughtful, surprising, or engaging?

Did the fellowship boost your confidence and sense of direction about your creative writing pursuits?

Did you face any challenges during the program?

What is your honest appraisal of your mentor?

How did you improve during the program?



AbdulBasit Ajibade

Mentor: Olajide Salawu

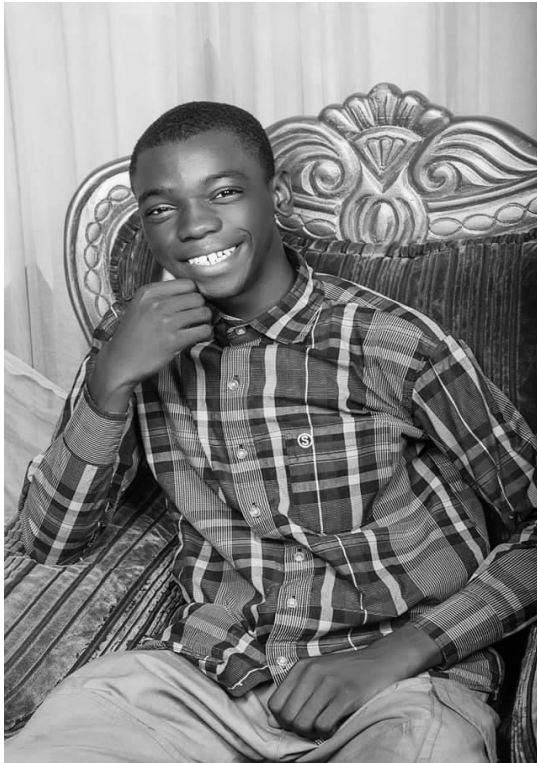
Matching mentees to mentors was surprising for me. I never thought the fellowship would have a personalized mentor-mentee setup.

I have improved my confidence and sense of direction in my creative writing pursuits because of the program. I met with two mentors and picked one or a few things from each for use in my creative writing journey.

Although, at the beginning, I had the challenge of not being able to get quality time with my mentor even though we had great chemistry, and I was happy to work with him until I was later transferred to another mentor. The second mentor was also very busy; thus, our communication was reduced to weekly emails of written pieces and reviews.

My mentor was great, and I will remember him for the review of my work. Overall, I think I have improved my approach to creative writing and the need for originality in my writing pieces.

AbdulBasit Ajibade is a Nigerian poet, academic writer, and designer residing in Ibadan. His writing delves into various themes such as pain, afro mentality, culture, human experiences, ars poetica, and reflection poems. AbdulBasit's work has been featured on esteemed platforms, including Cultural Weekly, Woven Poetry, TushStories, Haikuniverse, FunDza WT, The YellowHouse, Wikipedia, and others. He utilizes poetry to express his innermost thoughts and maintains a personal diary. Notably, AbdulBasit holds certifications as a design thinker from Google and IBM, which influences his perception of poetry, sometimes likening it to pixels. He is also a staunch advocate of cold Zobo and Capri-sun.



Abdulrazaq Salihu

Mentor: Akpa Arinzechukwu

One of my major takeaways from this program from my mentor is to be more confident in my work; now, I'm thinking of starting a podcast because, during one of my reading sessions with my mentor, he said I had a good voice and would do well in podcasts. I've also learned my poetry would do way better with musicality.

My mentor is a great person; I love him so much. He's so humble and the best listener I've met. He's so selfless, too; he'd always allow me to choose how I wanted to work on our tasks for the week, keeping in mind how convenient it was for me.

By partaking in the program, my method of reading got more depth. I inserted music into my writing. I became more confident in my voice. I learned that simplicity is a major factor in writing. I also learned writing is as much hard work as it's a simple one. I found the gathering of links in the manual for literally all the genres of literature most thoughtful.

Abdulrazaq Salihu, is a Nigerian poet and Hilltop Creative Arts Foundation member. He won the Splendours of Dawn poetry contest, BPKW poetry contest, Poetry Archive poetry contest, Masks literary magazine poetry award, Nigerian prize for teen authors (poetry), Hilltop creative writing award, and others. His works are published/forthcoming in Bracken, Poetry Quarter(ly), Rogue, B*k, Jupiter Review, black moon magazine, Angime, Grub Street Mag, and elsewhere. He's the author of *Constellations* (poetry) and *Hiccups* (Prose). He tweets @Arazaqsalihu and his Instagram handle is Abdulrazaq.salihu.



Adesiyan Oluwapelumi

Mentor: Samuel Adeyemi

I found the conversations with my mentor most engaging. They were exciting with so much to learn, discuss, and argue about. He streamlined the conversation medium and made it easy for me to relate with him freely without feeling shy or tense.

Now, I write more with intentionality, saying only things I mean in the best way I want to tell them. My mentor opened my eyes to light—that my work goes beyond getting published or being accoladed for its good imagery, but what it gives the reader—he made me know that is the value of a really good poem or what makes the poem good in the first place. I want to immortalize myself in my works so that even ten years from now, someone can read and be blessed or humored by the

language or healed by my words. Poetry, I've learned, is water; it can fill a void, wash sins and filth, and most of all, ease ache. So yeah, I'm more objective now regarding how I want my career to project from this moment.

My mentor is brilliant, amazing in conversations, and calm. I also love how he handles his reviews in such a constructive manner. He's also kind; there are times we work on poems into the night, and I am just grateful for the time he dedicates. I will remember him for his friendliness and gentle spirit.

As a result of this fellowship, my use of language has improved greatly. I became more intentional with my choice of words. I no longer choose a word because of how brilliant it sounds but because of its relevance to my piece. Also, I've been taught to delve deep into my personal experiences and use them to achieve concreteness in my work. I'm already working on that, too, and I've seen some improvement. I have also improved in the musicality and rhythm of my work. Also, my works are becoming more comprehensible for the reader, even when using very deep or simple imagery. I have understood I don't need to sound difficult to make sense. I have been experimenting with form, too, a lot. I have discovered a form I really love for its fragmentation form that allows the reader to focus on the whole poem at once before concentrating its attention on singular images. My sense of imagery got sharper. I can imbue reality better with my work now without being too philosophical or abstract. Most importantly, I learned how to read a poetry book the proper way. I also learned how to converse better.

The whole experience was STARLIT!

Adesiyan Oluwapelumi is a poet/essayist from Nigeria. He writes to explore the intersectionality between memory, religion, language & selfhood. He is the winner of the Cheshire White Ribbon Day Creative Contest (2022) and a finalist in the WeNaija Literary Contest (2023). His poems are published/forthcoming in Poet Lore, Poetry Column-NND, West Trade Review, Tab Journal, Poetry Wales, IHRAF, Brittle Paper, Switchgrass Review, Rogue Agent, and elsewhere. His essays are featured in Opinion Nigeria, LILAC journal, and Briefly Write. His horror short story "Daymare" is published in Afristories. A 2023 Adroit Journal Summer Mentee and a 2023 Fellow of The SprinNG Writers Fellowship, he reads poetry for the Kitchen Table Quarterly. He is also the Assistant Editor of Lean and Loafe Poetry Journal and a member of the Northern Writers Forum. He was once a poetry reader at Five South. His poem, "Potpourri," selected as an Honorable Mention in the Aster Lit Winter Awards (2022), was described by the judges as an inventive poem using mundane images to create a novel life to grief. He is the author of *Ethos* (forthcoming from Ukiyoto Publishing) and *Tomorrow is a Dove* (forthcoming from Inkspired Publisher). He enjoys listening to soul blues and playing chess during his leisure time. Twitter: @ademindpoems Instagram: @ademind17 Facebook: Adesiyan Pelumi



Adewale Olasupo

Mentor: Zenas Ubere

First, I think the fellowship was great. I liked that we were given materials. Also, the pairing with the mentors felt so right. I enjoyed the flexibility with which I worked with my mentor. It paved the way for me to stay persistent in the fellowship despite all odds.

I think this is the highlight of this fellowship—reading stories and works of people I may never get to read without my mentor's instruction really opened my eyes and broadened my scope. I am now aware of my limitations and how I can explore my creativity in different ways. I am also grateful because I have developed patience with stories, I may not particularly find interesting to read.

Yes, I experienced challenges during the fellowship. I always wanted to move ahead with my peers, but this was completely off my hands, as I got sick and had to take over two weeks off to get better. It was so sudden, and I didn't prepare for it. It also degenerated into mental issues that made me feel incapacitated. I contemplated withdrawing from the fellowship, but my mentor and friends were supportive, and I am grateful that I pulled through.

Zenas is one of the people I am grateful to have met this year. He was very welcoming and willing to be as flexible as possible in helping me achieve my fellowship goals. I am also grateful he recommended books/stories he knew I wouldn't like. And, of course, I learned a lot from them. I liked that he created time to have weekly meetings to discuss my work and give other writing techniques. Without his willingness to be as flexible as possible, I wouldn't have finished the fellowship. If he is ever going to read this, I want him to know how grateful I am. I will remember him for his ability to listen as much as he gives his own expert opinion.

With this fellowship, I discovered multiple ways to explore my creativity and tell my story. I learned a few editing skills that helped make my story appear professional and also developed the desire to read more stories that I particularly will not find interesting to read. Additionally, I developed an inner strength to share my story with a wider audience. I have always kept my stories to myself or a close circle of friends; this fellowship has fueled my desire to share my story with a wider audience. The last would be my ability to stay on the course and finish the fellowship. I persevered despite all odds, and this fellowship also strengthened my fighting spirit to get things through despite the challenges.

I want to share my sincere appreciation to the organizers of this fellowship. It is no small feat to put together a program of this scale and importance. I couldn't be more grateful. The impact will stay on forever.

Adewale Olasupo is a Nigerian writer who grew up in Ibadan. He graduated with a B.A. in English from the University of Abuja. From childhood, he has been an avid watcher of the world and believes storytelling is a powerful tool to capture the true sense of our existence. When he is not writing, he volunteers his time to a charitable cause that seeks to make the world a better place.



Akeem Oyinkansola Shalom

Mentor: Praise Osawaru

I found the weekly feedback most thoughtful.

Although the time and date of the fellowship kept colliding with my SSCE exams, I improved my confidence and sense of direction regarding my creative writing pursuits with the help of the fellowship. I also improved in my use of punctuation marks, imagery, and metaphor.

My mentor, Praise Osawaru, is a good mentor, and I will remember him for his consistent calls.

Akeem Oyinkansola is an emerging Nigerian poet and short story writer. She aspires to study Nursing at the prestigious University in Ife (Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, Osun State). She is a member of HCAF (Osun State), a spoken word performance poet for Truemy Voice Community, and a content creator for Precious Fountain Foundation Nigeria and Comfy Book Club, where she was awarded the Best Poet of the Year 2022. She writes mostly literary fiction and poems that border on feminism, family, nature, culture, and religion.

Some of her works are published in Fiction Niche, Ake Review, COG magazines and journals, Pagechap, and Comfy Book Club Journal. She loves writing and reading literary books, especially poetry anthology. Her favourite poet is Niyi Osundare, and her favourite novelist is Chimamanda Adichie. She says 'hi' on Instagram as @Oyinkansolawrites and tweets as @oyinkansolawrit.



Alobu Kelechi Emmanuel

Mentor: Jakky Bankong-Obi

The inclusion of weekly contests was most thoughtful and engaging for me. Also, the weekly check-in of our well-being and patience in listening and answering our complaints is commendable!

The few weeks with my mentor rekindled my faith in my work. Prior to the mentorship program, I've been battling a little bit with imposter syndrome. But with the words of my mentor, "Follow your instincts, Emmanuel... no work of art is right or wrong," I have gained grounds in believing in "my nonsense," and it has been really amazing! On the 6th week of the fellowship, I started a writing thread; I am trusting the process.

Aside from a slight schedule hitch, I didn't experience any challenges during the fellowship. My mentor, Jakky Bankong-

Obi, is an open-minded individual. I love and admire the fact that she gives room for me to share my own insights. She listens and, most of all, encourages me to believe in my work. I will remember her for these words: "Emmanuel, above all, know that no one understands your writing better than you do... always follow your instincts!"

My mentor made me challenge myself by trying a form of poetry that is entirely different from what I'm used to. I wrote a poem after "Martins Deep," and I couldn't believe myself! Second, writing reviews for the poems recommended by my mentor gave me a sense of purpose. Throughout the fellowship, it was one of the activities I enjoyed most. In addition, my communication skill was thoroughly tested. Writing emails, making calls, and drafting messages to my mentor in the course of the fellowship developed me. Also, the SprinNG Mentee's manual was very helpful. Through it, I've learned a lot, not only about poetry, but about "words" itself—a writer's silent burden.

Overall, SprinNG has brought me out of my comfort zone to explore. I'm exceedingly glad I signed up for this. Again, the fellowship is an exquisite one. I commend the team's efforts, Oyin, Ebukun, Adedolapo, and others. It was really a job well done.

Alobu Emmanuel is part of the Noble Poets' (NPs) Collective and resides in Lagos, Nigeria. His works are featured/forthcoming in Agape Review, Red Penguin Collections, Nantygreens, Celestite Poetry, Eboquills, Hotpot magazine, Echoes of Fantasy anthology, and elsewhere. He was the social media manager of The Writers' Pen Nigeria (TWPN).

Alobu enjoys leisure time in the garden, where he once worked as a horticulturist. When he is not writing or observing nature, he listens to nostalgic music. He tweets [@noble_alobu_](https://twitter.com/noble_alobu_).



Anderson Moses

Mentor: Iliya Kambai Dennis

Learning about styles and poetic diction was something I found really engaging during the programme. Since I joined the fellowship, my growth has been visible. I have learned, relearned, and unlearned so many things about writing and everything it entails.

The challenge I faced during the fellowship was mainly about the poor power supply in my state, which often led to the rescheduling of classes.

My mentor put in so much energy, which brings about the fellowship's success on my part. My classes with him were inspiring, with various lessons on writing. He always showed up and followed the SprinNG syllabus. Again, he is an easygoing mentor, acting in a dual position as a teacher and big brother. In conclusion, I would like to meet him as my tutor in the near future. I will remember him for his honesty, dedication, and passion for mentoring.

Notably, I have improved on the art of writing, most especially poetry.

Anderson Moses is a poet and graphics designer from a small village in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. He is an undergraduate History and International Studies student at the University of Uyo. His works have appeared or are forthcoming in Brittle Paper, Nantygreens, Eboquills, Arts Lounge, Creativity Magazines, Synchronized Chaos, Afrocritik, One Black Boy Like That Review, and elsewhere. He was also a contributor to the Pot of Ink anthology and a member of the Uyo book club.



Anne Miapna'an Pede

Mentor: Divine Inyang Titus

I love that SprinNG always did temperature checks to determine how we were doing weekly. It felt nice to know that the organization cared about us. It is really commendable.

Before I started the fellowship, I had never written a poem, but here I am, dropping bars almost every day. I received validation for my strengths and constructive criticism for improvement areas that boosted my confidence, and I understood where to focus my effort.

Honestly, I must admit there were moments when everything felt overwhelming. Initially, fearing negative feedback, I hesitated to share my work with my mentor. Additionally, our schedules didn't always align, leading to some challenges. On top of that, there were occasions when I faced problems with electricity, and my phone even crashed. It was undoubtedly a tough period, but I'm relieved and proud to have persevered and reached the end of it all.

My mentor, Divine Inyang Titus, is simply amazing. I tried so hard to keep up with him because whenever he started talking about a story or poem he really liked, every other thing faded away. He becomes so animated that it's almost as if he wrote the piece. I really hope to get immersed in my stories like that. My mentor talks the way he writes, as such, every piece of his that I read was simply astonishing.

My mentor taught me how to seduce readers with my writing, so I hope to captivate everyone who reads every piece I write. I learned new writing techniques, styles, and genres that can enhance my creativity and versatility in storytelling. My mentor also gave me constructive feedback, which helped me refine my writing and grow as a storyteller. The weekly tasks also helped me set goals and meet deadlines. I've also finally started allowing people to read my stories. I used to be so scared of getting negative feedback, but I feel like a totally different person now. I've also been learning how to manage my time effectively by setting up writing schedules so that I manage my time effectively.

Anne Miapna'an Pede is a creative writer who has recently ventured into the intriguing world of ghostwriting. A graduate of Veritas University Abuja. She is passionate about telling the untold stories of the infamous tribes of Northern Nigeria. Her writing is an intoxicating blend of romance, body positivity, and thriller. When she's not writing, she reads or spends time with her furry companions—a loyal dog and a charming cat.



Anthony M. Kwavah
Mentor: Ivana Akotowaa Ofori

The mentorship aspect of the fellowship is the most thoughtful. I've been part of workshops and creative writing classes in university, but I've never had the chance to be guided one-on-one for as long as six weeks. And the fact that readings were selected based on what my needs were was also very helpful. The weekly Zoom calls allowed me to get to know my mentor better and bond with her.

I am thinking of putting together a collection of short stories, and the four stories I've been able to workshop during this fellowship make me confident that I have at least four solid stories. I have also discussed publishing with my mentor, and she has given me a fair idea about the pathways I could take.

I didn't face any significant challenges during the fellowship. Luckily, the fellowship began to wind down as the stress started to kick in. The fellowship was a great experience for me, and the fellowship manual was very useful as well.

I couldn't have asked for a better mentor. I had known her from a distance, so it was thrilling to know she was my mentor. She was very responsive and helpful right from the very beginning. In addition to the general readings, she thoughtfully selected readings to fit my needs in terms of what I was currently writing or some technique she wanted me to pay attention to, as well as essays on craft and the writer life. She made time for a 40-minute Zoom call every week where we talked about how things were going, readings, and my weekly submissions. I received critical feedback on my weekly assignments, and I've seen my drafts become better in many ways. She was instrumental in making the fellowship a smooth experience for me due to her commitment and diligence. I would remember Akotowaa for the great reading selections.

I learned about focalization, the importance of foreground and background in storytelling, as well as the danger of overshadowing. Additionally, I learned the need for grounding, polished my fiction formatting, and corrected small but significant mistakes that affected the quality of my work.

Anthony M. Kwavah is a Ghanaian writer of short stories, poems, essays, and reviews. His fiction and poems often explore family dynamics and other human relations, the struggle between conformity, personal freedom, and spiritualities. In 2020, he won the maiden edition of the Samira Bawumia Literature Prize in the short story category. His winning story, *Pilolo*, is published in the All Ghana A Stage prize anthology. His non-fiction work has also appeared in Kenga magazine.

Anthony is an alumnus of the 2022 Mo Issa Writers' Workshop and the 2023 SprinNG Writing Fellowship program. He can be found on virtual spaces as [@theRainbowMoth1](#) on Twitter and [@the.rainbow.moth](#) on Instagram. Anthony also runs the blog [@review.ton](#) on Instagram, where he shares his love and opinions on Ghanaian and African music, arts, creativity, and culture.



Asare Yaw Jamuel

Mentor: Michael Imossan

Being taught by a renowned poet was the most interesting aspect of the fellowship for me. I am now certain of how to weave or coin a poem figuratively.

My mentor is very good at teaching and at the genre we have chosen. I will remember him for his calmness, tolerance, patience, and veneration.

I was able to learn how to use metaphors appropriately and how to use aphorisms appropriately. I learned how to arouse the interest of my readers and write based on appropriate themes. I also learned a high level of commitment and dedication.

Asare Yaw Jamuel is a Ghanaian poet, novelist, quote writer, and literary dramatist. His poems have appeared on renowned platforms such as Brittle Paper, Poetry Soup,

Storymirror, Your Quote, Miraquill, Baskadia Bitcoin, Writco, and others. One of his novels has also appeared on Webnovel and Light Reader. He was the first Ghanaian to top the Story Mirror T30 Cup Edition Writing Competition (India) and, thus, received an honorary awarding certificate as a literary lieutenant. He is an alumnus and a peer captain of the SprinNG Writing Fellowship. He spends his time between the cities of Accra and Legon, making attempts at beauty. As a member of the Commonwealth Writing Community, he is passionate about writing.



Ayeni Jonathan Ayomide

Mentor: Osahon Oka

The contests were a really engaging part of the fellowship. I have improved my ability to write poetry, and now I'm more confident in my ability to write it. Also, I'm looking forward to having a piece published in a literary journal in 6 months.

While I didn't have any particular challenges, I struggled with keeping up with my mentor and responding to messages on time, but I found a way to prioritise it and reply as soon as I possibly could.

Mr Osahon is a really good mentor, and he's really good with poetry, too! Quite a lovely person to learn from. I particularly enjoyed his challenges, his reviews, and recommendations. I will remember him for "simple poetry that's hard to forget."

Participating in the fellowship taught me how to read poetry properly. I also learned the difference between writing poetry and prose and was able to see it. I could see the stories tied up in the simple things all around me, and I could see beyond wordplay. I learned to write better poetry. Although I do not feel my poetry has gotten to the point where it is great, it has greatly improved for sure, and I am looking forward to what is coming next. Additionally, my fiction writing has improved. Poetry has allowed me to see new perspectives on writing and positively impacted my fiction writing.

Jonathan Ayeni is a writer, a poet, and a microbiologist. He has works of fiction published in Artmosterrific, Black Phoenix, The Muse Africa, LightIn Anthology, and elsewhere. Jonathan's writing explores the simple things of existence. He crafts his lines to create immersive journeys, stimulating the senses and leaving indelible impressions. His unique voice, nurtured by his Lagosian roots, weaves together a storytelling background, cultural references, and the beauty of life with its challenges. Through his devotion to art, Jonathan continues to evolve as a writer and poet, pushing the boundaries of his craft. With every piece, he aspires to touch hearts and minds, leaving a knowing feeling. Jonathan loves music and listens to Eminem, NF, Witt Lowry, etc. He absolutely adores Chimamanda and Wole Soyinka's works.



Babatunde Olatunji David

Mentor: Emmanuel Faith

The most thoughtful part of the fellowship was the weekly airtime. It really helped me to be very active and meet up with all schedules with my mentor. The most engaging part was reading a lot of pieces from each year's anthology of the SprinNG writing fellowship.

My level of confidence has been bolstered to a very high level. From winning the week one contest to the many positive reviews I got from my mentor, I can confidently say I feel invigorated towards my writing career.

My only challenge was that my mentor was changed, and for the next two days, I felt like a ship without a bearing as I did not know what to do, so I had to wait till I was assigned a new mentor.

My mentor is a very loving, jovial, and happy man. His level of empathy is unrivaled, and to be very candid, he is a generous man as he wants to purchase a book for me from Roving Heights and have it delivered to my doorstep. This is the perfect definition of a man with a heart of gold. He is a very good man, with all emphasis on the "good."

I learned how to minimize adverbs and adjectives in my poems. I also learned the SPIDER approach for all forms of poetry, and I believe I can dissect almost any poem now. I learned how to edit my poems much better and things to look out for when editing. Additionally, I learned how to use line breaks effectively and efficiently. Lastly, even though it sounds funny, I can read poems better now by observing all necessary falling and rising tones in the poem and understanding the message being relayed to the full extent.

Babatunde Olatunji David is a young Nigerian poet and lover of many genres of literature who writes to stay alive. He writes about life—its complexities, difficulties, and intricacies while scribbling the peculiarity of being a boy-child. Babatunde is currently studying Materials Science and Engineering at Obafemi Awolowo University. He has his work forthcoming in Arkore Arts and hopes to publish more soon. He loves listening to emo rap and melodramatic music. Catch him on Facebook @Babatunde Olatunji David and on Twitter @Olatunj11274296.



Bhasani Mlambo

Mentor: Ebukun Gbemisola Ogunyemi

I think Ibukun writes deciding to be my new mentor was the most thoughtful thing in this fellowship. Before she came, I wasn't really connecting with my previous mentor, and I sort of gave up on this fellowship and the opportunities it was offering.

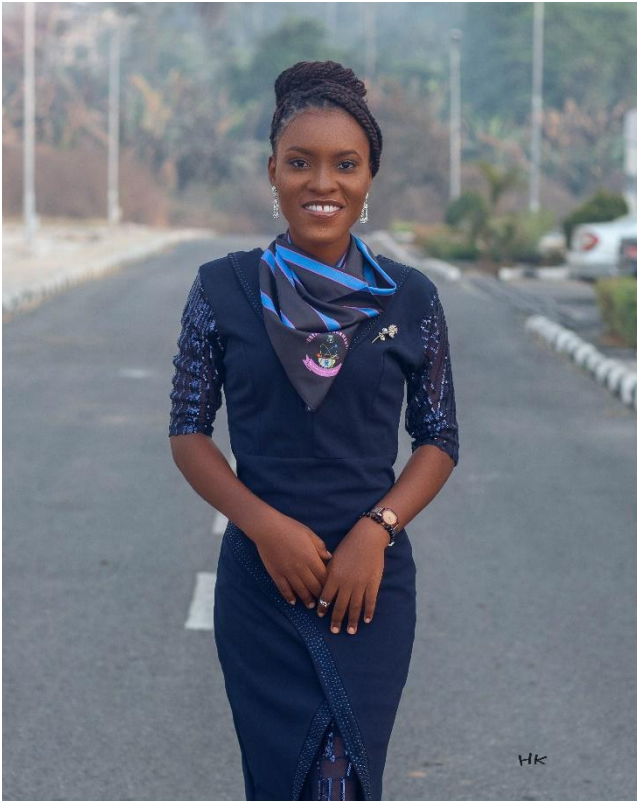
I have improved, but I still need plenty of work with my writing; I need to stretch some more. I think my mentor leads a very busy lifestyle. I will remember her for her kindness. I think her kindness is so grounding. It feels good to talk to her.

As a result of the fellowship, I read more than I usually do. The programme taught me that with the little time you have in the day, always make time to read. I learned about the downside of publishing; I used to think that when you publish, the work is over, but in all honesty, the top of a mountain is the bottom of another. The work doesn't end, and you are never just one thing. You have the rest of your life to figure it out. I learned about being more direct and saying what I really mean—getting to the point. I also learned about writing shorter sentences, so I don't lose or overwhelm my readers.

I loved the competitions that we had to participate in. For me, it wasn't about winning anymore. I was just so excited to see what the winners and runners-up of the competitions wrote, especially the short story and poetry competitions. I loved their entries so much; their work just inspired me to read more and try to write something each day. Writing is a lifelong commitment that has no end.

Bhasani Mlambo is a writer and student who considers herself an African Feminist. She is deeply fond of the art of storytelling and the idea of freedom and centers the themes of gender and blackness in her work. Although her preferred form of storytelling is poetry, Bhasani engages in other forms of creative writing to express herself. She believes that writing encourages the ends of freedom yet to come. Her work can be found in Varsity Newspaper, HerChapters UCT, Between 10and5 and Yesterdays, and Imagining Realities: An Anthology of South African Poetry.

Bhasani is a Fellow of the seventh cohort of the SprinNG Writing Fellowship, a mentorship program for developing Nigerian, Ghanaian, and South African writers. She enjoys jazz music and spending time with those she loves. She hopes to teach, read, and write poetry for a living one day.



Chiamaka Ukpai

Mentor: Lawretta Egba

I loved the fact that one mentor was assigned to a mentee. I initially thought it would be one mentor to about 10 mentees program, but I was pleasantly surprised.

During the program, I moved to a new town that was not connected to electricity. Even though I still have access to light because I work in the hospital, the power supply there was still erratic, which is one issue I did not anticipate before the program, and I was not really prepared for. This created some gaps as my mentor was usually available amidst her tight schedule and I wasn't. This caused a lag in our communication. However, my mentor was really understanding throughout the process and always came through as much as she could.

My mentor is a phenomenal woman. She was really helpful throughout the course of this program, and I must say that I have been really inspired by her art and personality. My mentor and I happened to have a lot in common and this

relationship that has started between us is one I would not want to let go off even after the program. Permit me to say this was a perfect match. I will remember her for her reassurances, gentle corrections, and smartness.

I got better at the structuring and formatting aspects of my articles. My use of punctuation improved, and for someone who is not a big fan of poems, I drafted a poem during the course of the program, which is major for me. I learned a few 'tricks' on how to draw inspiration for writing. I also learned how to draw the attention of my readers from the first paragraph of my writing. Overall, the fellowship was a wholesome experience, but it was quite demanding and kept me on my toes for the most part. However, it was worth it.

Chiamaka Ukpai was born in Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria. In the 6th year of her primary school education, she represented her school in a National Spelling Bee contest, facing stiff competition but still coming out tops. Her educational journey continued at Our Lady & St. Francis Catholic College (OSCCO), famously known for its academic excellence. At several points during this phase, she represented her school in competitions and made them proud. She eventually graduated secondary school as the 2nd best student in the National Examination Council (NECO) exams and was given state recognition. She continued her education at the Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile-Ife, where she studied Pharmacy, and in 2022, she graduated with distinction and a number of awards of excellence amidst the rigorous drilling process. She is passionate about putting out academic content, which spurred her to write every page of her 100+ page final year thesis and get an award for the best thesis in her department. She intends to go into academic research and possibly become an academic. She currently edits manuscripts for publication, writes blog posts for business owners, and creates website content. She is also a practicing pharmacist undergoing the mandatory 1-year of National Youth Service. She is passionate about universal access to standard medical care, specifically for those in rural areas and others who cannot afford to pay for it out of pocket, so she gives and goes for medical outreaches. She also loves research, learning new things, and trying out new recipes.



Chidera Adiel Chukwu

Mentor: Nzube Nlebedim

I consider the fellowship plan very thoughtful and engaging. I loved the themes for each of the five weeks of the fellowship. The themes, which include Why I Write, How I Write, and Who I Am, among others, are inspirational and reflective. They helped me to look within myself, say a self-discovery. In addition, they helped me to navigate throughout the fellowship from the simplest motive of my writing endeavours to the most complex ones.

In the fellowship, I understood how to make my goals more realistic and attainable using the SMART goal-setting acronym. In addition, I am more confident in my strength and contribution to society as a young writer. I am now aware of my weaknesses and will continue to improve against such weaknesses.

I found the programme overwhelming at a time, but I wouldn't attribute it to the program timeline or structure. It was actually because my phone got spoilt during the process, and I had to borrow phones to keep up. Most times, I would stay up to 3 days without access to a smartphone, and in this condition, I missed some key announcements. As for the programme, the scheduling and structure are fine. Any determined and disciplined fellow can align with it.

My mentor has a vast amount of knowledge of literature. In the course of the fellowship, he introduced me to certain terms, styles, and genres that I was oblivious to. Secondly, he was prompt, disciplined, and time-conscious. He sent his feedback within an hour of my submission, and as much as he was quick in sending his reviews, he was also very comprehensive in his feedback. It used to amaze me how he could easily detect an error in a story I edited several times. He was also consistent and kept an energetic spirit from the beginning to the end of the fellowship. Lastly, my mentor was supportive. He encouraged me to submit to some literary magazines and supported me with guidelines during the submission process. He is highly knowledgeable.

I gained more knowledge of literary styles, writing procedures, and some good literary magazines to boost my writing. I have learned how to keep a focus on expectations, deadlines, and time management. I am now able to pay attention to even the minute details in my writings and other people's write-ups and find better ways to express and communicate my deepest desires, ideas, and life dreams through my words. Also, I improved my discipline and consistency. I believe that with the exposure I got from the fellowship (including the lessons and the high profiles of the mentors), I would become more consistent and productive in my writing endeavours.

Chidera Adiel Chukwu is a story writer, poet, and essayist of Nigerian descent. Her work cuts across themes like coming-of-age, identity, loss, grief, equality, and the abysmal issues in her country, Nigeria, and extensively in Africa. In 2022, she received the Gold Finalist award from the Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition. Inspired by the works of Prof Chinua Achebe and Prof Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, she believes her writings can portray the ignored and hidden aspects of life in society and renew the stories of people of African descent.



Chidera Solomon Anikpe

Mentor: Chibuikwe Ogbonnaya

The fellowship has successfully opened my eyes to my craft. It has made me more aware of the things I write, how I write them, and why I write them.

I faced some challenges during the program. The most resonant of these challenges was the required readings and the time allotted to finish them. As a student/worker, my schedule did not often allow me to read all the required works in the time needed to complete them. However, I was always excited by the weekly contests and how they prompted me to want to write better than I've ever done.

My mentor is quite easily the best person I could be paired with. They were very understanding of my schedules and challenges. They pushed me to write out of my comfort zone, and we were very lenient when I could not finish most of the assigned readings. I am

eternally grateful for their kindness. I will remember them for their selfless ability to accommodate me in their already hectic schedule.

I am more aware of my use of language in writing. I am now very open to revising my plots and receiving creative feedback. I have greatly improved my syntax structure. I am now able to juggle different elements of a storyline in a single plot. My prose structures are now well-defined and coherent. I have learned to pay closer attention to character personalities. I have become more open to accepting that my work might need more polishing, even when I think it's perfect.

Chidera Solomon Anikpe (He/Him) is a queer Nigerian storyteller whose works of prose and poetry often revolve around topics of grief, human sexuality, gender identity, and societal bigotries. He is the second-place winner of the 2023 Grouse Grind Prize for Literature and was shortlisted for the ALITFEST short story competition in 2023. Chidera is also a 2023 SprinNG fellow and a volunteer reader and editor for PencilHouse. His works are published and/or forthcoming in Brittle Paper magazine, Iskanchi Press, The Kalahari Review, The Movie Magazine, SprinNG Literary Magazine, The Talon Review, So To Speak Magazine, ALITFEST Anthology, and Prism Magazine. Connect with Chidera via Twitter [@Chidera_Anikpe](#).



Chidinma Nnalue

Mentor: Sally Kenneth-Dadzie

It was very thoughtful how often the leaders followed up on the polls they used. Mehn, Ebukun, Adedolapo, and Oyindamola, you guys were amazing—the warmth, swift responses, everything.

I am clearer about pursuing my dreams of becoming a novelist, and now I see the use of building a readership on a blog. I also know more about storytelling, so I am more confident.

My mentor was always available. I never had a hard time communicating with her. In fact, I loved speaking with and learning from her. I hope that more people get to experience her light/knowledge. I only found the fellowship challenging because I work full-time as a writer, so it was a little hard to keep up after writing at my 9-5. Besides that, the program was flexible and really good. My mentor was the real deal. I know I would have benefitted more from her tutelage had I been more forthcoming with submitting my assignments early.

My earnest desire is that more fellows get to experience the force that is Sally. She was patient but also firm. She taught me stuff that all the YouTube videos I had been watching for months didn't teach me. I only hope to make her even the least bit proud by putting my learnings to use. I will remember her for her availability, the resources she provided me with, and her honest but kind feedback.

Before the fellowship, I would focus on the plot. I didn't even know how important characters were or how to develop them. I learned that in the fellowship. I understood story structure more. I also learned how to punctuate dialogue. I wrote poetry for the first time in years. I know to always ask questions as I write. To ask 'Why?' I understand archetypes better and realize that characters should feel true to life.

I am super grateful to have been a part of the fellowship. All of this goodness. Free of charge? Gosh. It's huge. I am super thankful. Thank you, SprinNG. Thank you for the caliber of mentors you bring to the fellowship every year. I am glad I applied. Thank you for this investment in young writers like me. God bless! Might I add I love you all. I will miss the fellowship. I just might reapply for Non-fiction.

Chidinma Nnalue is a storyteller living in Lagos, Nigeria. She has always been enthralled by words, leading her to devour literature, especially books written by African storytellers. Presently, she uses those same words to evoke emotions and tell stories that encompass diverse themes. Her works mostly center around women, family, and love-driven relationships. You can find her telling stories on her Medium page.



Chinwendu Maduforo

Mentor: Ejiro Elizabeth Edwards

The weekly tasks were very thoughtful. I believe they helped me with ideas of what to work on, especially when I struggled. It was also helpful in pushing myself to get things done.

Before my conversations with my mentor, I always had doubts about my writing and what I should write about. But I read her essays and some others, which I found very helpful and inspiring to make me want to write, honestly. It was more like a challenge to leave my comfort zone was thrown at me, and I accepted that. I hope that I am able to sustain it.

I had work-related issues at some point during the training. It got me overwhelmed, and my excitement waned at the time. So, doing a lot of things became really overwhelming. However, my mentor has a very high sense of empathy, and I believe that kept me on; even when I feel really out of it, I have found her encouragement and feedback a huge motivation. I will remember her for her empathy in trying to understand the things that influence my writing.

I am more to writing about uncomfortable situations now. I believe my senses are more alert to things necessary in telling a story, especially non-fiction. I have a better insight into poetry. My reading habits improved, and I have been exposed to new writers that I have grown to love, e.g., Jamaica Kincaid.

Chinwendu Maduforo is a Creative Writer, Content Creator, and PR Professional from Nigeria. With a passion for written words and a dedication to her craft, she expresses herself on her blog - ozii.home.blog—a platform she uses to take on different topics that explore the human experience and the complexities of life. As a Nigerian writer, Chinwendu draws inspiration from her personal experiences growing up in the Nigerian Society. She also credits her love for music, visual arts, her unwavering desire to understand the human condition, and her unyielding need for exploration as a major inspiration for her creative direction. She enjoys music, movies, seeing new places, spicy meals, and discovering things that fill up her old soul.



Chisom Benedicta Nsiegbunam

Mentor: Uchenna Emelife

I enjoyed the prompts on why, how, what I write, and who I write for. When faced with these questions, I learned so much about my writing and myself. I was vulnerable at many points, but I watched myself grow so much in such a short time. Writing a current bio and a future bio helped me see the gaps between where I am now and where I hope to be and pushed me to develop practical steps toward that goal. Breaking down how the mentees' manual should be read weekly was so thoughtful I wanted to hug whoever came up with that idea.

Three weeks into the program, things became overwhelming because of school and tight schedules. Plus, the location of my campus has a terrible connection.

Before the fellowship, I never showed anyone my work because I lacked confidence, but now I'm open to feedback and criticism;

that is a huge growth for me.

My mentor was really understanding and knew more about me and my work than I ever did. He understood what I needed to read, taught me how to properly read a writer's work rather than just the plot or story, and was approachable. Our connection was perfect from the very first moment (it made me wonder how the matching of mentors and mentees was done). He assigned me duties that I found challenging, but in the end, I saw tremendous growth in myself. He had a thorough understanding of what it takes to be a mentor. He made me believe in my writing for the first time—no one has ever made me feel so confident.

I improved in the development of the plot. I gained confidence in writing. I learned how to learn from other writers' works. Exploring the weekly prompts helped me meet myself more and better understand the craft. Even though it's not perfect, I improved my efficiency in combining writing with schoolwork. I improved using paragraphs and metaphors and learned about the sensitivity of topics like gender roles, stereotypes, etc., and how to approach such topics with care and an unbiased mind.

I loved the fellowship experience and am grateful to SprinNG, the contributors and sponsors, and my mentor.

Chisom Nsiegbunam is a Nigerian storyteller and movie enthusiast. She expresses her creativity through fiction, movie screenplays, video scripts, and poetry. Her works have been featured on Poemify, WSA, and elsewhere. She is an alumna of the KAP Film and Television Academy and works as a poetry editor for Writers Space Africa (WSA). Apart from writing, she is a Faculty of Health Science and Technology student at Nnamdi Azikiwe University but hopes to have a Literary Arts Degree someday. When not reading or writing, she obsesses over artworks and the taste and scent of Chamomile and Hibiscus tea.



Chukwuma Blossom Chiamaka

Mentor: Mustapha Enesi

I have definitely improved in my sense of direction. Let me say I used to write mindlessly before—just writing as it came to me without any knowledge of what I could do to make it better. But now, I'm more aware of what I need to do to improve. Through this fellowship, my eyes were opened to the things I couldn't see, and I have to thank my mentor for that. I can confidently say a path has opened before me, and I know where to move from here.

The airtime support was really thoughtful. I don't think I've seen this anywhere else. The organization and attention to detail were superb as well. I appreciate the organizers for a job well done.

The major challenge I faced was scheduling issues. As a student in medical school, it was sometimes hard to juggle it with the fellowship. On my mentor's part, he was also busy with work and other things around him. We managed to find ways around it, but that was a problem from the get-go.

My mentor is a person who is passionate and enthusiastic about short story writing. It is difficult not to be influenced by his enthusiasm. That was one of the things that fueled my drive during the fellowship. I would look forward to our calls with so much expectation and excitement because I knew I would learn and did learn a lot. Mustapha Enesi was a very intentional mentor; from how he spoke, one could tell he really wanted me to improve and grow. He was also very encouraging when I would demerit my work, telling me how he started that way. That was really helpful in many ways; it built my resolve. I also learned to survive criticism from him. He was usually very frank about what needed changing and why it needed to change. I was wary of showing my work before, but I managed to grow a tough skin under his mentorship and realized he only wanted the best. Most importantly, Mustapha Enesi is a mentor with proper knowledge of his craft. Through his teaching, I was exposed to a lot of aspects I wasn't aware of; he pointed out the things I was blind to in my writing as well, and for that, I am grateful. I will always remember my mentor for his passion for story writing and his dedication to helping me improve.

I now have a clearer direction on where to go next from here. I said in my application that I'd been in a bubble, but now, I've been exposed. I learned to take criticism. There were many times I did not like my writing being criticized, but as time went on, I got used to it. I learned the elements of story writing. Like the backbone structure itself, and I know how to infuse those now. I began to improve on the things pointed out and grew the courage to put my work out there for people to see.

Chukwuma Blossom Chiamaka's writing seeks to explore untold stories from all walks of life: the intricate lives of the poor and the middle class. She is a 2023 SprinNG Fellow studying Medical Laboratory Science at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Anambra State. She is a big fan of Christian fiction and fantasy fiction. When she is not testing specimens in the lab or somewhere writing, she is watching Korean dramas, going through cooking vlogs, or learning a new language. She writes from Anambra, Nigeria.



Damilola Ruth Oyedeji

Mentor: Ojo Olumide Emmanuel

I have been able to identify some areas where improvement is needed. The manual was quite rich and carefully put together. My writing process is more put together and now more structured.

Mr. Olumide is a very dedicated man. He is also quite understanding. I find him knowledgeable about poetry. We have different writing styles, so at the beginning of the fellowship, I didn't agree with what he thought my poetry should look like. It was quite difficult to accept his feedback at first since we had different writing styles, but it became easier as we continued. I realized that all he wanted was to make me see that poetry is a renewal of language. As the inquisitive person I am, I asked him a million and one questions, and he never ignored me.

His willingness to make sacrifices made me grow quite fond of him, and I began looking forward to his feedback. He is always ready to make sacrifices. Sometimes, he worked extra hours than we bargained just to put me through things and give me proper feedback. He has taught me a lot of things, and I think I am grateful for him. He is a very intentional person.

My most memorable experience with him was when he connected me with Jide Badmus to discuss one of his poems.

With the help of the fellowship, I have a clearer writing process and effective language use. I have also learned to use vivid imagery, mastered effective line breakage in poetry, and effective use of punctuation marks in poetry.

Damilola Ruth Oyedeji is an educator and storyteller based in Minna. Self-named “Ariella,” she expresses herself through poetry, spoken word, drama, stories, and public speaking. Damilola’s story, *Nature’s Trick*, was included in the ANTOA Writing Contest 2021 shortlist. Her poems are set for future publication in Synchronized Chaos Magazine and elsewhere. She is certified in Film and Television Production by KAP Film and Television Academy.

She directed the winning plays at HIASFEST 2022 and 2023. With the unonym of Ariella, she has been writing for several years on the Be’you’tiful with Dami blog. She is an advocate for self-discovery, inclusion, and hope in trying times. She is a fellow of the SprinNG Writing Fellowship. Reach her on social media: Instagram: [_dami_ariella](#), LinkedIn: Oyedeji Damilola, and Twitter: OyedejiDamilol5.



Daniel Joe Ntekim

Mentor: Olly Nze

I'd have to say that I found the conversations with my mentor very engaging.

Before I started this fellowship, I was quite low on confidence, and I was always second-guessing myself in terms of writing about the things that captured me. The time I've had here has given me a nudge to the direction I want to be in.

Although I wasn't able to connect with my mentor in the last few weeks, I found him quite calm, knowledgeable, and able to make a situation as relaxing as possible. I will remember him for his calmness.

I have improved in terms of sentence structure. I was able to gain a sense of authority in my writing and a keen sense of confidence in exploring the things that appeal to me. I think I also improved quite a bit in terms of scheduling my time and priorities.

Daniel is an aspiring fiction writer based in Lagos. He has published a couple of short stories on Brittle Paper, Afritondo and his personal blog (theundergroundthinker.com), where he also writes personal essays. He is currently working on his first novel and short story collection. His writing is focused on grief, pain, the interplay in relationships, and also dysfunctional family dynamics.

Some of his favorite writers include Fyodor Dostoevsky, Emily brontë, Jane Austen, Sally Rooney, John Williams and Ngozi Chimamanda. Some of his favorite books include Purple hibiscus, The thing around your neck, Conversations with friends, Stoner, Crime and punishment, and Sense and Sensibility. He's also very passionate about photography, landscape, and street photography in particular, and is as keen on learning everything about it as he can.



Emelda Asuquo Ita

Mentor: Soonest Nathaniel

The most thoughtful aspect of the fellowship was the orientation provided prior to the following six weeks; I still greatly appreciate that. Furthermore, reading the fellowship manual was highly engaging, as it encompassed the best articles, conversations, and guidelines that served the fellowship's purpose. I believe the most surprising moments were experienced through communication with my mentor, as the pairing was truly excellent. It led me to marvel to a certain extent.

This fellowship has shed light on several aspects of writing I was unaware of, ranging from personal insights to how the outside world experiences my work. It has provided valuable information about the writing process, literary websites, access to study materials and books, publishing, and post-publishing. In general, it has given me valuable insights into navigating the ever-evolving world of writing.

In the later weeks of the fellowship, I felt overwhelmed as I struggled to meet the deadlines. However, I perceived this as an integral part of the learning process, as it ultimately contributed to my personal and character development.

My mentor consistently demonstrated kindness from the beginning of the program. He always offered constructive criticism and valuable suggestions to improve my poems without pressuring me to accept them. He believed in my independent thinking and respected my creative mind. However, he wasn't vocal about certain works he didn't want to review, and there were times when he chose not to comment on poems that didn't resonate with him. Deciphering his silence on those occasions became a challenge for me. Nevertheless, he effectively showcased the endless possibilities one can explore with poetry. His creative journey serves as a great inspiration to me. Additionally, he consistently advocated for my success by sharing various writing opportunities with me. I consider him instrumental in my progress throughout the fellowship. I will always remember my mentor for his immense belief in me and his unwavering optimism.

During the fellowship, I learned the rules governing the appropriate use of literary devices, how to push my limits as a writer, develop a sense of professionalism, handle criticism, and become a better critic of my work. Also, I recognised the importance of stamina as a writer.

Emelda Ita is a Nigerian poet who explores the intricacies of the human experience through her works. Her poems illuminate themes such as fear, confinement, inner struggles, identity, mortality, and the search for meaning and transcendence. Through her poetry, she aims to inspire a deeper appreciation of human beings' shared experiences and emotions. She writes monostiches spontaneously and finds joy in learning through osmosis as part of her writing process.



Ement Amaku

Mentor: Ugochukwu Damian Okpara

Evidently, every part of the fellowship took a lot of thought, but the part that stood out for me most was the weekly airtime. I must say it was a big support for me as a struggling student. So, it is a wonderful thought. I love how the SWF manual contains a lot of insightful pieces: interviews, biographies, and lists of literary websites one can submit to. It surprised me because it makes making submission choices and decisions easier.

*I indeed have improved, especially in my use of lines in poetry. Before starting the mentorship program, I actually didn't know when to break a line. In fact, I didn't even know why it is important to break a line 'til I read an article my mentor recommended for me: *The Function of the Line*.*

Additionally, I improved in writing a narrative poem. I'm still improving in my use of strong, sharp metaphors. It's a gradual process. I'm beginning to separate my traumas from my

writing. I'm still learning. I've learned the proper way of titling—the capitalization of titles; I struggled with it before the fellowship.

To be pretty honest, I found the program really overwhelming at some point. But I'd say it's more of me than the program. I have ADHD and tend to lose concentration and interest easily. So, I struggled to write most of my pieces for the weekly reflections. But at the end of the day, the fellowship was something I worked hard to get, so I struggled to stay in line 'til the finish.

My mentor is a professional. He did his best to help me wherever he noticed I was lacking. One thing I love about him is how he was always so patient with me. It's one of his good qualities. Plus, did I mention that he started a week before the official date mentoring would begin? Yes, he did. I will remember him for being patient and there for me.

Ement Amaku (he/they) is a nonbinary poet and storyteller from the Igbo tribe of Nigeria. Currently, they are studying for their B.A. in Linguistics and Languages at Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Their work has been published in various literary magazines such as Brittle Paper and Afrocritik. Their writing explores themes of queerness, mental health, culture, politics, death, healing, loneliness, and other topics they feel strongly about.



Emmanuel Temitope Shonibare

Mentor: Rahma Jimoh

Yes, I always knew I was a writer, but joining the fellowship gave me the validation I have always craved. Being mentored by someone I have always admired and being in a community of writers has improved my confidence in my writing and made me see more possibilities in my future pursuit.

My mentor consistently acknowledged my improvements and took the time to recognize and celebrate my achievements, which was incredibly uplifting. What I appreciated most about her was the constructive feedback she provided. While she offered praise when I was doing great, she was also honest and direct when there were areas for improvement. This balanced approach has helped me grow as a writer and challenged me to strive for excellence

continuously.

I will never forget my mentor for her caring concern and the simple yet powerful act of offering me a break and encouraging me to take it easy when I experienced a breakdown.

I improved during the program in several ways. I developed a deeper appreciation for poetry through reading more and admiring it, learned to ensure clarity in my poems while still allowing for hidden meanings, honed my punctuation skills to enhance the reader's experience, became proficient in word economy to convey my message concisely, and most importantly, I learned to believe in myself and embrace the boundless possibilities as a writer. I enjoyed the weekly contest the most. It was a drive on its own.

Emmanuel Temitope Shonibare is a versatile Nigerian writer with expertise in poetry, non-fiction, and occasional forays into fiction. His works cover a wide range of compelling themes, including love, family, mental health, sexuality, acceptance, death, grief, and divinity, sharing with readers a unique perspective. In addition to his writing, Emmanuel channels his creativity through sewing and fashion illustrations, experimenting with his personal style. He aims to inspire readers to embrace their individuality and believes strongly in the power of self-acceptance. During his leisure time, he explores various cuisines and engrosses himself in captivating novels and films of diverse genres, all while continually expanding his literary repertoire and nurturing his artistic growth.



Eunice Abayomi

Mentor: Ezioma Kalu

Reflecting upon my experience at the SprinNG Writing Fellowship, I can confidently say that it has greatly enhanced my confidence and sense of direction in my creative writing pursuits.

The program provided me with a nurturing and supportive environment where I could immerse myself in the craft of storytelling, surrounded by fellow writers and mentors who shared my passion. Throughout the fellowship, I was exposed to a multitude of writing techniques, literary theories, and diverse perspectives. The structured nature of the program helped me develop a clearer sense of direction in my creative writing pursuits.

I learned about various avenues to showcase my work, discovered different writing markets, and gained practical knowledge that has been invaluable in navigating the literary world. Beyond the technical aspects, the fellowship fostered a sense of community and camaraderie among the participants. The opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals who share a passion for storytelling was truly inspiring.

Engaging in discussions, sharing ideas, and exploring different creative approaches allowed me to broaden my horizons and discover new paths for my writing. SprinNG has undoubtedly been a transformative experience for me. It has bolstered my confidence, provided me with invaluable knowledge and skills, and instilled a sense of direction in my creative writing pursuits. I now feel more equipped and determined to pursue my dreams as a short story writer, knowing that I have the support of a vibrant writing community and the belief in my abilities that the fellowship has helped cultivate.

My mentor, Ezioma Kalu, helped me more than I expected during this fellowship. I saw a clear improvement in my work with each story I wrote. She always told me to add drama to my story (I am not a dramatic person at all), so that was very hard. My mentor did not stop at teaching. She guided and encouraged me. It was such an honour to meet her. I will remember my mentor for her encouragement.

Through the fellowship, my confidence improved. My ability to draw inspiration from anything was also enhanced. I am now able to separate myself from my characters when I write. I found my writing style during the fellowship. Overall, I am a better writer.

Eunice Abayomi is a fiction (including romance, horror, and mystery) and poetry writer with a passion for exploring love, self-discovery, family, and friendships. Her goal as a writer is to inspire or motivate the reader, to tell a story or share personal experiences, and to reflect on and process emotions or ideas. She has never published any of her stories, and she picked up writing to escape reality into a new world. In the future, she hopes to write dramas and many more fiction. In addition to their writing, she enjoys reading books by Francine Rivers and Lori Wick, among other great writers. Eunice's favorite Nigerian writers include Chinua Achebe and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Eunice Abayomi enjoys reading, writing, and playing games in her free time. She recently completed her undergraduate degree in Electrical and Electronics Engineering. She is also passionate about the emotional well-being of the people around her.



Fadairo Tesleem

Mentor: Rasaan Malik Gbolahan

I found the one-on-one session between mentors and their mentees very thoughtful, and yes, I have become more intentional about my writing.

I honestly didn't have any problems—not with connecting with my mentor and not scheduling issues.

RMG is so sweet, generally. I've known him even before the commencement of the fellowship. He's always been supportive regardless of his tight schedules. I will remember him for his words. He's so good at giving

constructive criticism.

I have gotten better at writing forms like Ghazals & Sonnets. I have also improved in consistency and self-accountability.

Fadairo Tesleem (TPC vi) is a Nigerian poet and a member of The Poetic Collective. He was on the shortlist for 2022's Spectrum Poetry Contest, Abubakar Gimba's Prize for Nonfiction & Africa Teen Writers' Award (poetry category). His poems are published in The B'K Magazine, Geez Magazine, Dillydoun Review, Protean Poetry, Kreative Diadem, Consequence Forum, & host of other publications. Tesleem is a recipient of the Olongo Africa Poetry workshop.



Falegan Rachael Oluwatunmise

Mentor: Kemi Falodun

Before the classes, I used to just write, but after conversations with my mentor, I felt a better sense of direction. I learned the importance of reading and how much it improves one's writing. I also learned how to really edit my work, which is something I didn't really enjoy.

Yes, at first, it was easy, but things came up, and due to our schedules, it was a little hard to reschedule, so we had to do a review of two weeks in one week.

My mentor is very calm and listens. I love how she breaks down her reviews and gives very good corrections that are easy to apply. I appreciate how she recommends things to read and how she encourages me to read. I will remember her willingness to recommend works that would make her look better.

I read more, not just to read but also to learn. I learned how to also look at the works of others in fields similar to mine. I realised the importance of editing my work rather than settling for a first draft. I learned how to seek opinions. My perspective was also broadened. For the fellowship organization, I loved the rapid responses via the WhatsApp group. The recharge card, too, was so thoughtful and so useful.

Falegan Rachael Oluwatunmise is a student at the University of Ibadan, where she is currently studying Agronomy. She has a keen interest in climate change and environmental sustainability, and her interests have led her to partake in various activities, one of which is the Green Switch Academy, which is an academy that aims to educate people about waste management and foster an eco-conscious mind within them. Her zeal to educate people can also be seen in her writing. She is a writer with articles published in more than one magazine, one of which is the annual Verdure Magazine, a publication of the Department of Agronomy. Apart from published articles, she was among the top ten contestants of the Nigerian Maritime Authority and Safety Agency (NIMASA) essay competition for 2020. She writes articles covering environmental sustainability, reusable pads, and gender equality. Some of her writing can also be found on Medium.



Favour Evioghene Brown

Mentor: Jide Badmus

Before SprinNG, all I knew was that I had a talent, one I held onto because it was literally the only thing I could do. I wrote when the words beckoned and for contest submissions only. Being a part of this fellowship gave me a better understanding of what poetry is. It also made me aware of the many opportunities available in the literary world. I now know what to do to build my literary profile.

The first challenge I had was scheduling. I got a job between the time I applied and when the fellowship began. It was quite difficult juggling both. I'm just grateful my mentor was understanding (I didn't share this with him early enough, though). Secondly, my mentor and I see poetry differently. We have different styles, so we kind of had a rocky start.

My mentor is nice and understanding. He is very concerned with how much his mentee learns and how well the knowledge is applied. For him, the reward for the time spent teaching is marked improvement. I will remember him for brevity.

With the help of the fellowship, I learned about the things to look out for when reading a poem, e.g., the significance of line breaks used by the author. I have learned to write less wordy poems. I learned that a poem is more than the thought behind it; it is the proper use and placement of words to express the thought that counts.

Favour Evioghene Brown is an Aquaculturist and a creative writer specializing in short stories and performance poetry. She thinks of the pen as an extension of the writer's mind, an omniscient entity that sees all, knows all, and understands all, speaking through ink markings on paper. Favour writes because she can and enjoys the thrill of being a creator. Her works span a variety of topics, including the redemptive power of the gospel, the many shades of love, self-discovery, and suicide. Her literary accomplishments include having her essay 'better yesterdays' featured on the Shuzia website, making the shortlist for the 2022 Shuzia Short Story Prize as well as making the honourable mentions list for the 2nd edition of the pendustry annual writing competition held in 2021. Favour finds the human mind intriguing and is more concerned with the whys of human activity than the whats. She is currently a volunteer blog content writer for the Make Me Foundation.



Gift Davies

Mentor: Kizito Okorowu

Before the fellowship, I had not shared my work with fellow writers for constructive criticism. Now, I feel I've been able to take a step forward in my writing career.

At some point, I was overwhelmed. However, attributing all the reasons I was to the fellowship would be dishonest. The fellowship did test my limits, though, and developed a new part of me that could handle pressure.

My mentor was very flexible and not uptight at all. He was also committed to seeing things done at the right time, regardless of how busy he was. He made the fellowship even more comfortable for me and was always very detailed and

prompt with his feedback. I will remember him for his easygoing manner.

During the fellowship, I explored other forms of writing. I was able to learn to write in a way that inspires the audience to listen or take action. I improved my sentence structure, time management, and how to keep to word counts.

The constant check by people, not necessarily our mentors, and their commitment to seeing us follow through was very thoughtful. The organization of contests was also engaging.

Gift Davies is a creative writer and blogger of Nigerian descent. Her contagious passion for helping people lead the 'triple-H' life of- health, happiness, and holistic growth has seen her successfully nurture a tribe of raving followers of her critically acclaimed blog, the Rediscover Life Blog. The membership of over 500 monthly visitors from various countries across the globe is a testament to the human embodiment of giftings called Gift. Gift has been featured in notable publications and headhunted by agencies on ghostwriting projects, making her one of the young creative talents to watch out for. She is pursuing a bachelor's degree in economics at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. She sees writing as a creative outlet for giving perspective to her understanding of the impact of local and global economic trends on the well-being of the average citizen. Her academic background in Economics adds depth and uniqueness to her writing, allowing her to tackle diverse topics with a well-rounded understanding of the world. Gift sees her writing as a tool for impact, and when not writing, she can be caught having a banter on who the GOAT is in soccer or moonlighting as a wannabe shrink sharing nuggets on wellness to her friends and family.



Glomygia Orji

Mentor: Roseline Mgbodichinma Anya Okorie

I particularly loved how the fellowship was paced and how the program took into account the mental health of its mentees and tried to avoid becoming overwhelming at any point.

Before this fellowship, I mostly only wrote as a hobby or coping mechanism. Now, I believe I'm inspired to pursue writing as a career, and I have a better idea of how to go about it than I did before the fellowship. Also, I know we do not need external validation from others to believe in our work, but if I'm being honest, winning one of the fellowship's contests and being the first runner-up in another was a major confidence booster.

My mentor was very helpful and understanding. Roseline Mgbodichinma was nothing but amazing throughout this fellowship. From her honest reviews to her wonderful contributions and kind words to the way she followed me up with understanding, patience, and grace regardless of how busy my schedule got, and how she made herself available to the best of her ability despite her own busy schedule, and how she made me feel comfortable with being vulnerable about my work and my writing process. It was truly a pleasure being her mentee. I will remember her for telling me to write without putting so much pressure on myself, especially on the days I had writer's block.

I learned how to write with intention—I've been able to understand how line breaks work and their importance in driving a poem forward. I've been able to leave my comfort zone and explore other forms of poetry, like longer poems, which I never liked before this program. I now understand and appreciate other poems that are not free verse poems. I've learned the importance of reading my works aloud and not just in my head to ensure they sound right. I've improved at editing my work and removing the fluff.

Orji Glomygia is a brilliant Nigerian writer, writing across various genres. As a storyteller, she delves deep into the human condition, skillfully capturing the essence of our collective experience in her prose, poetry, and nonfiction essays. Her works can be found in the *We Are Deathless* anthology, on her blogs, and across her engaging social media accounts. When Glomygia isn't writing, you will find her buried within the pages of a book or the scenes of a movie or within layers of fabric and a sewing machine. You can reach her on her social media @glow_mygia and read more of her works on her blog, medium.com/@glomygia7.



Hope Nadine Minnies

Mentor: Busisiwe Mahlangu

The way the program was structured was surprising and quite engaging. It helped me be more intentional with what I write, who I write for, and why. It also helped me want to write better with more intention behind every story.

Because of how each week was structured, I was able to question my intentions and stories. This helped me to edit my work better and work on the structures of my poems.

In the beginning, it was hard to find a time that worked for both my mentor and me, but we eventually got around it. I felt a week to write, edit, and submit wasn't enough, especially with how much the fellowship structure demands us to question ourselves and our work. By the time submission time is upon you, you are not done implementing the feedback you've been given, so you

submit what you can and hope for the best.

With my mentor, I had my doubts at first as I know her and have encountered her a couple of times. I did not know if we would have been able to work together, but time proved me wrong. We enjoyed the calls we had because we got to write and discuss poetry. We learned from each other and are eager for the next call. She pushed me to do better in my writing and to avoid my comfort zone so that we could see actual growth in the work, and I hated and loved it all at once. She was always prepared during our calls, had the writing exercises ready, had feedback questions ready, had questions about the articles ready, and always ended the call with feedback on the writing exercises. I will remember her for pushing me out of my comfort zone.

Now, I am more intentional with the words I use. I am aware of the bad habits I have when it comes to writing and have found a way to combat them. I have started experimenting with other forms of poetry. My editing has become better. I have learned that I don't have to wait for inspiration or a writing challenge.

Hope Nadine Minnies is a poet and scriptwriter based in Pretoria, Gauteng. She started writing in 2019, focusing on themes around the everyday lives of black boys/men. She is a former member of the band E.A.R.T.H., where she played the shaker, wrote scripts, and performed poetry. In 2022, she hosted a poetry radio show, The Poetic Frequency, on Tshwane FM alongside Noxolo Desire. Hope is part of a poetry movement, Speak Child, that helps nurture young aspiring creatives in a safe environment. She is a secretary at Brother Moe's Poetry and Literature Foundation. Her performances include Botaki's poetry night, where she also runs workshops. She is a fellow at the SprinNG Writing Fellowship studying IT at Boston City College.



Ifeanyichukwu Dominion Anyabolu

Mentor: Jeremy Teddy Karn

The fellowship structure, where a mentee is assigned to a mentor, is very thoughtful. This is a commendable initiative where the mentor has enough time to evaluate and monitor the growth and input of the mentee.

My confidence and sense of direction in my creative writing pursuit have really been refined. This programme is like a teacher who held me by the hand, teaching, instructing, and opening my eyes to things I didn't know before—essential tools in my creative writing pursuit.

After the first two weeks, my initially assigned mentor became absent for some reason. The momentum and energy dropped. I reached out to one of the group admins, and after some clarifications, I was paired with another mentor who finished the programme with me.

My mentor is an easygoing person, open to ideas. He always explains each concept we discuss with the simplest words and examples and gives me stuff to ponder. He also keeps to time. Above all, he is a great teacher. I will remember him for how he explains difficult things in the simplest ways.

I improved and learned harmony of tenses, musicality in poetry, detailing, imagery in poetry, finetuning metaphors and similes, and common mistakes to avoid, e.g., writing cliché, effective use of language in creative writing, different poetry forms and types of feet in poetry, shadow writing, and revision and editing.

Ifeanyichukwu Dominion Anyabolu is a student at The Federal College of Dental Technology and Therapy. His muse comes from Igbo culture, family, societal norms and vices, nature, love, metaphysical, and philosophy, which form the central themes of his writing. His poems have been published in anthologies such as "Multifarious Shades of Life" and the Poetry Soup's "It's Poetry." In 2020, he received the award "Most Creative" by Mawlif TV. He co-founded the group "Penspire" which is a collection of poets, writers, and art enthusiasts on Facebook. You can also connect with him on Instagram: @ifeanyichukwu_natty.



Ikpenyi Michael

Mentor: Carl Terver

The time spent with my mentor and the weekly feedback are very engaging. I can now tell some of the things that give my work life and how to stay consistent in my writing journey.

During the fellowship, I discovered I had more flair for poetry and fiction than essays. I found I was trying to fit into writing essays because of my academics, which means my creative ability would have been harnessed better if I had gone for what I love. At some point, I became overwhelmed due to my other engagements and the demanding nature of the programme. But thank God I pulled through, which means the programme has made me an improved writer and person.

My mentor is wonderful. He finds ways to push one, help one grow, and keep improving, though he seems busy often. I will remember him for his words, "if only you will stick to writing every day." I learned that I need to write to improve every day, and there are many books I'm yet to know of.

Michael Ikpenyi is studying for a law degree at Ebonyi State University, Abakalili, and is currently the editor-in-chief of Erudites Africa. He has written and performed numerous poetries at Speak Africa. He is the author of The Examination Success Guide. A strong advocate of a better Nigeria, Africa, and humanity, he cherishes quality leadership, human resource development, and management.



Isa Saleem Adam

Mentor: Itiola Jones

The SprinNG Writing Fellowship was inspiring and very thoughtful. The engaging part was putting us all in a group and, above all, connecting us to mentors across the world.

I have learned a lot from this program. So naturally, poems I thought were publishable before are now under constant, thorough revision (I learned that too.) It has also given me a snapshot of what my next steps would look like. I never knew I could apply for an MFA with my background in the sciences until I joined this fellowship.

My mentor is a busy person, so there were definitely scheduling issues, although very few and far apart. Itiola Jones was exceptional. She took her time to explain things I was ashamed of not knowing and did so with so much respect. She made me feel comfortable with her methods. She was always available, and she let me know it every time. She, above all, was a nice person, so nice that she checked in on me when I did not win the essay contest (I still appreciate that). I will remember her as respectful, capable, dedicated, and very pleasant.

The fellowship gave me a sense of direction and an idea of how to build a successful literary career. I learned things I did not know. I was reintroduced to a lot of things I knew but wasn't conscious about. The fellowship improved my writing. I was forced to consider a lot of mistakes I might have been making, and I had the opportunity to correct them with supervision.

Saleem Isa is a Nigerian poet and freelance content writer. He is studying microbiology at Ahmadu Bello University Zaria and hopes to be an author in the near future. His works explore the grey areas between opposites, mundane, unnoticed occurrences, and the dystopian crevices of the human mind. You can reach him on Instagram (@saleem_adam_) and Twitter (@tales_paper).



Jameel Mayowa Olojoku

Mentor: Michael Emmanuel

The part of the fellowship I found the most engaging was the pieces recommended by my mentor. I was engrossed in and fascinated by the different devices different authors employ to deliver their message, all of which are as effective as they are unique.

Quite candidly, I didn't write a lot before the SprinNG Writing Fellowship. My confidence was like a shrunken leaf denied of watering because I was dealing with perfectionism and a mentality of waiting until I had a story in my head fully before putting any words to paper. The fellowship helped dissuade that notion completely and, with its various activities and attached deadlines, buoyed the shrunken leaf into a robust, healthy, and productive one.

The challenges I faced mostly had to do with efficient time management as there was lots to do within a short time frame, but even this became better managed over the course of the programme.

Michael is a patient, brilliant, thoughtful mentor with an incredible grasp of effective literary devices, storyline construction, and descriptions. His mode of correction is very friendly and yet pointed and unpretentious. Character-wise, I couldn't ask for a more patient, kind, good-natured, and talented mentor, and I thank SprinNG fellowship for attaching me to this remarkable young man. I will remember him for his patience and brilliance, particularly regarding the subtle ways he shows the former.

Because of the fellowship, my confidence improved tremendously. My time management skills have also improved. I now read creative pieces with a more informed eye. I have learned the importance and benefits of perseverance and patience. My skills as a creative are now broadened due to the various positively challenging tasks I had to handle throughout the programme.

Jameel Mayowa Olojoku was born in Port Harcourt, Nigeria and studied Biochemistry at the University of Ilorin, Ilorin. His works explore various facets of the human experience, focusing on themes of loss, family, prejudice, and the intersection of identities. Amongst other things, he sings, dreams, and spends hours on his lapto.



James Nana Abakah Aggrey

Mentor: Sherif Ogundele

The best part of my experience with the fellowship was that moderators were super involved and supportive.

I feel like a lot of the fog around (my) writing has been cleared in my mind. I have ways to go, but I have never been more determined to hone my craft. It can be hard to feel like poetry is a relevant art form today, but it is; my mentor and all the incredible writers I've encountered in the fellowship are a testament to that.

The fellowship got off to quite a rocky start for me. Between contact issues with my mentor and taking ill during the first week, I was almost convinced I wouldn't make it. The communication hitch occurred a couple more times during the fellowship. I think it was exacerbated by the fact that my mentor and I lived in different time zones. I would sometimes call too early or too late. There were definitely times when it was all quite overwhelming, but I think that was less a result of the fellowship and more of my own life interfering.

My mentor was good. He gave me great, direct feedback on my work and was always curious to understand where I was going with what I was writing. We had great conversations about poetry and philosophy, and he enriched my perspective. Our communication issues fixed themselves in time, so we got through enough of the fellowship material, but I feel like we didn't get enough time together just as a mentor and fellow. I maintain that most of the challenges were really just life getting in the way, and so, all in all, I am grateful for the time he spent with me. I have followed my mentor's work, and I really like that I was paired with him. I have learned a lot from him and look forward to keeping in touch.

From my perspective, I don't think what I experienced has marked a shift in my writing, and I think that is just as valuable, if not more so. That probably sounds vague, but I'm not sure exactly how to pontify it, so I'll say this: I want to be a better writer, and where I wasn't sure how to do that before, this fellowship gave me a mental framework (a manual too) for doing that and plugged me into a community, which I sorely lacked before and didn't realise would inspire me so.

Nana Abakah is a Ghanaian writer and poet whose love for writing is only matched by his love for music. He is constantly contemplating the world and writing about its wonders. He is either singing or geeking out on new tech when away from the writing desk. His writing explores the life of the mind and the love of all things beautiful. His work has appeared on Ta Adesa. Nana is currently exploring new interests in typography and brand design. Find him on Twitter @abakah_.



Jibril Nana-Aisha

Mentor: Mustapha Enesi

I feel like confidence stems from knowing your writing is good enough, and I have improved a lot during this programme. The programme provided over three hundred literary websites for us mentees, and I'm pretty sure that's more than a nudge towards a creative writing path or career. The contests were very thoughtful, and although I didn't win any, participating felt really nice. Also, reading all those free articles and books was really engaging and exciting.

I faced some challenges in the scheduling aspect because my free time kept clashing with my mentor's work hours, but that was always resolved between my mentor and me.

My mentor was a great teacher who was always present when I needed him; his knowledge was beyond inspiring. Therefore, he wasn't just a mentor; he became a role model to me. He is really easygoing, and although he supported me to the fullest, his availability is even more fantastic; he was always available to attend to us even with his work and all, and that's what I would remember him for.

I have improved a lot in the area of punctuation. I was honestly horrible at it and still make little mistakes now, but I know I'm way better. I've also learned a lot about writing in general, mostly about the structure of a story. I don't just see writing as a narrative that explores themes anymore, so I know I've improved greatly in that aspect. Time management is also something I've learned to be conversant with as I juggle many things at once, but I've had to give myself a schedule that can fit the fellowship. I developed better storylines thanks to my mentor and his writing on-the-spot activity. I do that in my free time now; I sit by myself and see how many stories I can come up with and how well I can link them together. I think of it as exercising the brain.

It's been an excellent and educative program for me, and I have learned more than I expected to learn, so I am highly grateful.

Jibril Nana-Aisha is an Igala writer. Her writing focuses on patriarchy, mother-daughter relationships, coming of age, and the pursuit of happiness. She is a recent SprinNG fellow and writes from Lagos. Besides writing, Nana finds joy in cooking and crocheting.



Joemario Nyeti Joseph Umana

Mentor: Ajibola Tolase

Before the program, I didn't pay much attention to some aspects of the art, like paying close attention when reading poetry and my lack of curiosity. I enjoyed the "Why I Write" contest. I really appreciated this part of the fellowship program because of the introspection it put all of us into, making us understand our reason for doing what we're doing.

I know there are other amazing mentors, but I'll continue to say that Mr Ajibola Tolase was the best mentor. I could never have asked for another that this fellowship gave to me. If I were to do this program again under the same category, he'd still be the same mentor I'd seek. I know I could be a nutshell, but he was very patient with me, trying to ensure I got what I needed. He is also very understanding. I was

writing my exams while running the program, and he helped me not feel overwhelmed by the whole experience. I love Ajibola Tolase, and I thank SprinNG for assigning him to me as my mentor. I will remember him as an extraordinaire, learned, patient, and understanding man.

Through the fellowship, I gained an understanding of why I write and chose the genre I write. I also learned how to establish a relationship and read a poem closely.

Joemario Umana is a Nigerian creative writer and poet whose poems are available and forthcoming in the anthology publication of NSPP 2022, GWAPA, Arise Nigeria, Loch Raven Review, Punocracy, Eboquills, The Kalahari Review, Lunaris, Poemify, Ngiga Review, Spillwords, Nantygreens, Nairaland and elsewhere. He's also an alumnus of The Poetic Collective writing fellowship and the 2023 SprinNG Writing fellowship program. He is also a member of The Writers Manger Network (TWMN), an Akwa Ibom state literary and literacy hub. His works have drawn literary appreciation to themselves. He is pursuing a bachelor's degree at the University of Maiduguri, Borno State. He tweets @ Jo_marioumana.



Joshua Opanike

Mentor: Su'eddie Agema

I learned I need to write and read as much as possible to become better, and I realized things that could make my writing process better. For example, I am familiar with using prompts, but it didn't occur to me that I could use them that way until I saw it in the manual. The tasks helped keep me on track. The fact that I was responsible for something made it impossible for me to fizzle out.

Mr. Sueddie is kind and honest. He is also an excellent teacher; I will remember him for the authors he introduced me to.

I learned how to write better, I learned how to overcome writer's block, I learned about outstanding authors and pieces, I learned how my writing career can kick off, and I learned to read.

Joshua Opanike is a writer, humanist, and media enthusiast based in Ogbomoso, Nigeria. He writes fiction and non-fiction. In his stories, Joshua strives to present the humanness of humanity. Joshua, who has interests in movie production, is an alumnus of the KAP Films and Television Academy. Some of Joshua's works have been published in The Cable, The Nation newspaper, Atelewo, and elsewhere. He was a finalist in the 2022 WeNaija Literary Contest. His writings can also be found on Medium @olajoshua10.



Lusanda Nosipho Mabaso

Mentor: Michael Inioluwa

Indulging into the world of other mentees and discovering how they think and present their work was immensely engaging for me.

The fellowship caused me to be confident in my writing. I've begun taking control of anything I write and become one with it. I do not miss the few points of creativity that I missed before.

A challenge I faced during the fellowship was constantly feeling under pressure with less feedback on how I was doing. I also had communication barriers between myself and my mentor.

My mentor is a brilliant man with a great perspective on literature and life. He has experienced more than I have, evident in his reasoning, what he reads and provided me to read, and the guidance he would offer. I will remember him for the short stories he would send me to read.

With the fellowship, I read and learned more in the process. It was like an exchange, whereby whenever I got to experience the world of other writers through their work, I got to improve mine. My poetry-writing skills also improved greatly, as I did not know how to write poetry in the past. I was sure to learn why I was writing and who I was doing it for. I learned about my writing style and identified how I write, and I got to improve that. I was also sure to set my goals and reasons clearly for even being a writer. I got to improve my English, too, because my language would improve as I read through other articles. Finally, the manual came with several ways to improve one's writing, language, formats, and more, and that all was really necessary for me at this point.

Lusanda Mabaso is a South African fiction and nonfiction writer focusing on short stories, poetry, and essays. She is a storyteller and a political activist. She is a Rhodes University student studying towards a Law and Political Science degree; she holds a qualification in Radio Broadcasting, focusing on Radio presenting and voicer over artistry, and has received training from Lenasia's local radio station, Radio Islam International. Her focus when not writing is modeling, which she does professionally under SYNC management, and being a qualified first aider under the Rhodes University First Aid Society. She received a YOUNGA youth delegate scholarship, which she, along with her literature works, plans to use to advocate for the youth's legal and political stance and voice for those unable to express themselves in today's democracy.



Manoko Precious Thathane

Mentor: Ashley Moyo

I have found the confidence and affirmation needed for my voice in creative writing. I have more confidence to get my work out there and submit my work without the blinding fear of criticism.

At first, I struggled with imposter syndrome, and then, at times, I felt the fellowship was too fast paced. However, I just loved how personalized the fellowship was. The fact that I had a mentor who would focus solely on me, and my progression was well thought out.

My mentor was professional. She edited the work with so much thought and consideration. She was encouraging and did not let her busy schedule get in the way of assistance. We communicated mainly through mail, and she made sure to reply to every mail I sent. For some of the work she did not extensively review or add comments to, she assured me she had read them and was happy with them. I am grateful to

have been paired up with her. I will remember her for her love for poetry and how she easily helped me see it in a different light with just one paragraph defining it.

I got better at using the tenses, as I struggled a lot with that initially. My diction and the use of the English language improved. I now know and do not take for granted that I should read more than I write if I am to be the best. My confidence in my writing journey has improved, I no longer feel like an imposter, and most importantly, I have learned that as heartbreaking as it is that the first draft will not be the final draft, editing your work is one of the core things you do to ensure quality work.

I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to be part of this fellowship.

Precious Thathane is a South African creative writer. Her work substantially consists of fiction dabbled with creative nonfiction and poetry. She is the second prize winner of the Avbob Poetry Sepedi category (2021). Thathane's works appeared on the Fundza Literacy Trust website and other online literary platforms like Inside My Purse, Voices Unite, and Weekly Rumbings. She draws inspiration from other writers, especially women of color who have dedicated their contribution to the art to be an unrelenting force that would cushion generations of their likelihood. When she is not writing, she reads and admires nature or the blues of music.



Mpama Enunosowo Lawrence

Mentor: Olly Nze

The immediate and kind responses by the facilitators whenever someone had an issue, was the most thoughtful aspect of the fellowship.

I found the fellowship quite overwhelming at many points, but that was simply because I was taking it on alongside writing tests and exams in school.

My mentor was patient, empathetic, and also very intelligent. I was glad I could talk to him about where I was and how challenging showing up was, and not feeling judged. He was pretty understanding and was always encouraging. I will remember him for constantly affirming me.

There has been a lot of improvement and confidence elevation. I no longer hold back on fully expressing myself while I write. I

also learned to express myself more and write without being obsessed with page limitations. I learned to articulate my thoughts and points better. I learned to write stories that are true to me and the stories I really want to write. I learned to always provide context clearly in my stories. I equally learned to take my readers on a journey.

Enunosowo Mpama is a Nigerian writer and editor whose work depicts African society's diverse facets and complexities. Her work explores themes such as Romance, African rural lifestyle, Gender equality, Global economics, and Climate change. In her quest to tell the stories of Africa, she skillfully employs fiction and non-fiction mediums. She has been published on Tell! Africa, Whipik Stories, Dark Hues Magazine, and others. In 2021, she was nominated for the Rising Star Creative Writer of the Year Award by Tell! Africa. Her work is inspired by her lived experiences, the works of writers she feels most connected to, and her research. She is a writer for The Journal of Intersectional Social Justice—a student-led initiative highlighting the range of subjects falling under social justice. When not writing, Enunosowo dedicates her time to volunteering for social impact organizations and is pursuing a Law degree from the University of Calabar.



Mubarak Said

Mentor: Michael Imossan

In the first week, I had an issue discussing a suitable time for communicating with my mentor. But we figured out the best schedule that we were both okay with. I enjoyed the discussions with my mentor.

Throughout the fellowship, I enjoyed all the moments with my mentor, especially the voice call, voice notes, and how he gave feedback on my work.

I learned many things that I didn't know before during the fellowship. My grammatical construction and use of words and punctuation have greatly improved. I will remember my mentor for his generosity and desire to see me learn.

Mubarak Said, TPC XII, is the 3rd runner-up in the 2022 Bill Ward Prize for Emerging Writers poetry category. He is a winner of the March edition of the Threposs Poetry Contest. He was longlisted in the Gimba Suleiman Hassan Esq Poetry Prize and a guest contributor at Applied Worldwide, US. He is a member of the Jewel Literary and Creativity Foundation and Hilltop Creative Arts Foundation. His works are forthcoming from and published in World Voices Magazine, Brittle Paper, Eboquills, Icefloe Press, Literary Yard, Beatnik Cowboy, Wellerism, Teen Literary Journal, New Feathers Anthology, ILA magazine, the Yellow Magazine, Ariel Chart, Afrihill, Arts Lounge, Icreative, Piker Press, Madswirl, Inspired Magazine, Pine Cone Review, Double speak Magazine, Memory House Magazine, Sink Magazine, Aural magazine, Arting arena, Synchronized chaos, Susa Africa, culture cult press, south broadway press, thebezone magazine, williwash, hot-pot magazine, Peppercoast Lit, Literary Cocktail, Applied Worldwide, Opinion Nigeria, Today Post, Daily Trust, Daily Companion, and elsewhere.



Nnameka Nnam

Mentor: Adedayo Agarau

I enjoyed the competitions, and with the help of the fellowship, I have better control of my language and better sense of direction in terms of forms and structure. I learned how to say more with less. I learned how to write with short sentences and structure my poems to properly convey a feeling.

My mentor was great. We just had a difficult time in the beginning, settling on a challenge. He has a sharp eye and can spot things out sometimes in a humorous way too. It helped me relax. I will remember him for teaching me how to pay attention to appearance and form.

Nnaemeka Nnam is a Nigerian poet who exists on the margin. His poems explore grief and love and how they intersect. He has been published at Nnọkọ Stories, W&S UK, and elsewhere. He is an alum of Sprin NG writer's fellowship 2023. He was also a participant in the 2023 Idembeka Creative Writing Workshop facilitated by Francess Ogamba and Kasimma. Nnaemeka

encourages you to embrace love, sadness, and joy as they come. When he is not obsessing over books on Instagram, he wishes upon a star.



Nomonde Ngema

Mentor: Linathi Makanda

I loved mental health days. They were thoughtful and made me realise that the organization understands that, as a writer, one needs to take time to inspect mental health. The winning pieces also inspired me; they helped me visualise what a winning piece looks like.

My mentor and I explored a lot of spaces that I can bloom in. She also taught me not to rush the identification process of my creative self and to try not to box myself. I'm definitely more confident now and more knowledgeable.

Honestly, my mentor and I were good with timing. Sometimes, we'd have great editing ideas at the last minute but navigated through them. Week 3 was overwhelming because I had other commitments, and writer's block tried to suffocate me, but my mentor shared a podcast with me that helped me carry on.

I am grateful to the fellowship for pairing me with my role model. Ms. Makanda is nothing short of brilliant. She worked with all my struggles and polished them. We participated in many literature endeavours, and she taught me a lot, beginning with how to express myself perfectly. I'm honoured to have been her mentee. Her commitment is heartwarming, and her knowledge is inspiring. I'm really grateful for her. I'll remember that my mentor and I laughed a lot. She loves laughing, and that, I feel, makes a home out of bones.

By participating in the fellowship, my choice of diction improved. My first impression of my mentor was that she had the correct and perfect words for every conversation. Absolutely stunning! I was impressed and intrigued to extend my vocabulary. Also, I learned how to be precise. Our biggest motto is being intentional about what I'm trying to convey.

Additionally, I improved in the area of tone in writing. My meetings with my mentor covered a great deal of them, and I was able to tap into that and navigate through the perimeters of sound to find my own voice. I also got better at formatting. My mentor taught me the importance of intentionally formatting, setting, and conjoining sentences and using them to align in effects.

Nomonde Ngema is a creative devotee. Born and raised in the rural areas of Northern Kwazulu-Natal, her creative spirit blossomed in that environment, fueling her hunger for healing, empathy, and passion as a driving force in her writing. Ngema's writing is diverse and is steered by the flow of her emotions succumbing to diction and semantics. Some of her works are housed in digital spaces, such as Poetizer and her blog titled "Diamonds and Lemons." Ngema also uses her social media platforms to make an impact on something that was seen as otherwise mundane. She creates film bodies for her poetry collection and the Sonder experience. Her creativity is limitless, as she explores genres such as poetry, creative nonfiction, and narrative with themes that echo the melodies of love, tragedy, collateral beauty, and becoming. Nomonde strongly believes in using her gift of creativity to serve others. She is intentional about her literary works; her eye sees creativity, where the mind sees trouble.



Obianuju Chris-Chinedu

Mentor: Ayodele Ibiyemi

I was able to trace my niche with my mentor's help and overcome many mental obstacles, which gave me a clearer sense of direction.

My mentor was incredibly busy. I really wish we had more time to connect. He is easy to approach, relate with, and work with. His criticisms are highly constructive and thoughtful. He is very friendly yet highly professional. There's so much I still have to learn from him.

The fellowship helped me to push past my mental obstacles and impostor syndrome. Though challenging, I found the contests highly engaging. I discovered I had a challenge putting sentences together, and a solution began to form as the program went on. Also, I was able to read other works and critically evaluate the pieces. I discovered other niches and was able to find my place. Notably, I fought hard and won against some mental blockades in writing, and I believed in myself again, which shows in my writing.

Obianuju Chris-Chinedu is a creative writer and literary reviewer, born and based in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. She has joined several literary bodies like Project Nigeria Bookclub and Clouddust, where she honed her skills in flash-fiction writing and word-building. She started a blog in 2019, during a break in her just-beginning career, and began reviewing books. In 2021, she officially joined a readers' organization, reviewing books by authors across local and international waters. She still works as a reviewer while pursuing a master's in economics. Obianuju has yet to publish work as she focuses more on finding her niche and exploring her passion. However, with the SprinNG Writing Fellowship, her dream seems closer to reality than ever. Besides her passion for literature, Obianuju is a natural hair enthusiast and is bidding her time to become the next Rapunzel. Above all, she enjoys the simple things of life, such as a can of cold Pepsi on a stormy day with a book in hand.



Okafor Michael Onyebuchi

Mentor: Timi Sanni

The most engaging aspect of the fellowship was the diverse range of perspectives and experiences shared by my mentor, which challenged my assumptions and expanded my understanding of the writing craft.

The fellowship program greatly enhanced my confidence and provided a clearer sense of direction in my creative writing pursuits. Through the mentorship and interactions with my mentor, I gained valuable feedback and insights that boosted my self-assurance in my writing abilities. Additionally, the program helped me identify and refine my writing goals, providing me with a stronger sense of direction and purpose in my creative endeavors.

During the program, I faced a few challenges. The main challenge was balancing the demands of the fellowship with my existing commitments and schedule. Managing my time effectively became crucial to fully engaging with the program's activities and meeting

deadlines.

I found my mentor to be exceptionally knowledgeable and insightful. His expertise in writing was evident through his thoughtful feedback and guidance. He provided constructive criticism while highlighting my strengths, which boosted my confidence in my writing abilities. Also, my mentor was highly supportive and approachable. He was readily available to answer questions, address concerns, and provide additional resources. His prompt and thorough responses helped me stay on track and make the most of our mentorship sessions. I will remember my mentor for his insightful guidance, patience, and unwavering support, which helped me unlock my full writing potential and navigate my creative journey with confidence.

The SprinNG Writing Fellowship encouraged me to step out of my comfort zone and explore different genres and forms of poetry, allowing me to broaden my writing repertoire and experiment with new techniques. Also, through feedback and mentorship, I honed my understanding and application of various writing techniques, especially descriptive language use, leading to more polished and engaging narratives. Through the iterative process of revising my work based on feedback, I developed a more discerning eye for identifying areas of improvement, and I gained the ability to revise and refine my writing to enhance clarity, coherence, and impact. Engaging with diverse perspectives and receiving feedback from my mentor helped me refine my unique writing voice and develop a distinctive style that resonated with readers better. Finally, the program provided a supportive and nurturing environment that boosted my confidence as a writer, allowing me to take more risks in my writing, trust my creative instincts, and share my work with greater self-assurance.

Okafor Michael is a Nigerian poet whose works explore grief, love, and family themes. His influences include Ocean Vuong and Chinua Achebe. In April 2021, Michael was named Joint winner of the Poets in Nigeria 10-day poetry challenge, adding to his list of writing-related awards. His works have appeared or are forthcoming in Writers Space Africa, The Borderline Review, Shuzia Magazine, Riverbed Review, and elsewhere. He is currently a 500-level student in the Department of Medical Radiography at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. You can connect with him on Twitter: [@okaforMichael_](https://twitter.com/okaforMichael_)



Olunlade Moyosore Joy

Mentor: Chideraa Ike-Akaenyi

I never knew about writing magazines prior to the fellowship. I just write as a hobby, and most times, I don't feel so confident to share my pieces with people, but I would say that the fellowship has boosted my confidence to the extent that I think I am ready to try publishing my pieces in magazines.

Ms. Chideraa was an exceptional mentor throughout the writing fellowship. From my first interaction with her, she effortlessly dispelled all my fears and doubts about the peer mentoring process. Her availability and effective communication were commendable; even when she wasn't available, she always provided timely notifications. What truly sets Ms. Chideraa apart is her objective approach to criticism. She offers feedback and constructive suggestions in a thoughtful and unbiased manner. Rather than simply sugar-coating or glossing over areas of improvement, she challenges me to strive for greater excellence in my writing. Her feedback has been invaluable in refining my skills

and pushing me to grow as a writer. I am immensely grateful for the guidance and mentorship provided by Ms. Chideraa. I feel lucky to have had the opportunity to work with such an exceptional mentor. I will remember her for our engaging and enlightening discussions about each text she recommended.

During the program, I experienced significant improvement in several key areas like plot structuring, language, character development, and dialogue: showing rather than telling. I liked every bit of the fellowship, but I would say the contests were most engaging because of their challenge; I loved bringing my A-game to the submissions.

Moyosore Olunlade is a writer specializing in fiction and drama with a passion for exploring themes of love, morality, and societal issues. She holds a Bachelor's in Theatre and Film Studies, specializing in Applied Drama and Playwriting. She is currently pursuing her Master's degree in Theatre and Film Studies at Redeemer's University. Born and raised in Nigeria, Moyosore draws inspiration from the vibrant cultural fabric of her surroundings, infusing her writing with rich textures and relatable characters. From a young age, she discovered a profound love for literature to shape perspectives and evoke emotions. One of her notable works is the play *The Turmoil*, which addresses police brutality in Nigeria and has been staged twice at Bunmi Julius-Adeoye Theatre (BOJA), Redeemer's University, Ede. It was awarded the Best Theatre Arts Production Prize in 2021 at the same university. She also received a nomination in the Best Playwright category for the Theatre Students Award (TSA) in 2021. Moyosore is working on her debut novel, which explores the theme of postpartum depression. She looks forward to the future when her stories find a platform for readers to engage with and enjoy. She dedicates her time to developing her skills, studying the works of renowned authors, and refining her writing style.



Omotoke Solarin-Sodara

Mentor: Elisha Oluyemi

I found the weekly airtimes most thoughtful, and with the help of the fellowship, I have now understood my writing style and the type of stories I tell. It's different, and SprinNG gave me a mentor who writes exactly like me, which was so thoughtful and spot-on. I now have confidence in what I write, and I cannot wait to send them out.

Yes, I faced some challenges during the fellowship. First, the tasks were overwhelming because I had a 9-5, so I only got to write at night. I found myself rushing sometimes; it was bad from week 2 to week 4. Then, scheduling was a problem. My mentor is a busy person, and that's fine, but sometimes, he sends me my tasks in the middle of the week and sets the deadline to Friday. He allows for more time, but then, the pressure becomes even more, and how I write is very different. It's not at once. I need time to think of the story and write my first and more drafts before I conclude. It was quite a struggle,

but I scaled through.

Elisha is smart and lovely. He doesn't correct you harshly or make you seem less intelligent. His constructive criticism is spot on. He pushes you to be better and helps you along the way. He is a very helpful and understanding person. I will remember him for "stop using commas before your dialogue. It should be used after the speech before the dialogue tag."

I learned the unity of actions and got better at metaphors. I understood my style and became better at storytelling and plot structure.

Omotoke Solarin-Sodara is a writer, an experienced communications manager, and editor from Nigeria. She is an English and Literary Studies graduate from KolaDaisi University, Ibadan. She is also a graduate of Terra Academy for The Arts. Under the name Tk Solarin, she writes in the psychological thriller, magical realism, and mystery genres. Her works have appeared in the Kalahari Review. In 2017, she was shortlisted for the Flash Fiction Prize by Farabale Africa. She has also hosted book chats with the SprinNG Women Authors Prize, Kaduna Art and Book Festival, and Ake Festival. Driven by her passion for writing, she started a small community for African writers and a book club in 2020. She runs a newsletter called 'LowKey Clueless' where she interviews Nigerians about their struggles through life. She loves books, and for her, reading is an escape from the chaos of Lagos life.



Oruarozino Praise Onogberiome

Mentor: Joseph Hope

One part I love about the fellowship is the selection of the mentors; while reading their biographies, I believe SprinNG picked the best in Africa. Another is the 500 Naira airtime weekly distribution. It was thoughtful to know that one thing that could hinder the mentees from being enthusiastic about the fellowship is the lack of airtime, so solving that problem was a great win. Furthermore, the manual was helpful; the whole compilation and the coordinators were so understanding and ready to help.

Confidence and a sense of direction are evident when growth occurs, and growth is one thing I've achieved in this fellowship. I have dreams about going global in my creative writing pursuit, and SprinNG has handed me the map I need

to find my way there.

My first challenge was having a change of mentor, which slowed down my first week. Another challenge I had was finding a convenient time to talk to my mentor due to the fact that he's busy and only gets to respond to me till later in the evening. I also had the challenge of understanding when assignments are supposed to be submitted before a deadline, but it got clearer with the help of the emails.

My mentor is very much ready to teach and motivate me to learn. There was a day I got stressed out, not just about the program but from my personal life; I had to call my mentor and explain why I couldn't keep up with his assignment. He was ready to talk to me about the mental foxes that spoil the creative vine. I will remember my mentor for his patience and encouragement.

By participating in the fellowship, my writing confidence improved. Also, my ability to read wide and venture into other writing scopes, like fiction and nonfiction, improved. Notably, I learned how to connect imageries, as my mentor explained to me. Also, I learned how to understand my audience; the fellowship manual is one of the best books I've read. And lastly, corrections and more corrections strengthened my roots. I am so grateful to be mentored by Joseph Hope.

Praise Onogberiome is a Nigerian poet and storyteller. She believes her poems bring light and healing to the minds of her readers. Her poems have appeared in Akpata Magazine, a literary magazine established at the University of Benin, Salamander Ink magazine, Kalahari Review, and other notable magazines. She is studying English and Literature (Education) at the University of Benin. She hopes that her poems reach the hearts of men and build a bridge between their uncertainties and hopes. She plans to set up writing clubs for primary and secondary schools. When she's not writing, Praise is drawing or listening to Ted Talks. You can find her on Instagram and Twitter @Praisegberiome.



Phelisa Sikwata

Mentor: Vuyelwa Maluleke

I found my mentor's feedback on my work very thoughtful. Her ability to continuously invite me to probe my work further was encouraging.

Although I am still aware of how I intend for my work to show up for me first and in the world, I have been writing from the point of sharing memories—getting things out of me, and now I am also invested in how I write these memories, paying attention to the worlds, voice, so forth. One step running forward, one step stuck in golden quicksand.

As much as I appreciated that we were repeating, I found myself leaning onto my "WHY I APPLIED" to continue. I also would've appreciated more video call check-ins, not necessarily on a weekly basis but at certain times.

Even though I am big on engaging, I also appreciate space and being trusted—no moment in our mentorship process was a sense of co-dependency. Her feedback does not hold the intention to make the writer feel inadequate; it is respectful to the writer and the work. And Vuyelwa is thorough. I will remember for her "technique sharpens perspective."

As a writer, I am more intentional about how the poem reads. I give myself time to write 'the picture whole'—I try not to write as if I'm being chased. I read poetry and am trying to move away from the personal journal feel about my work. Finally, I also learned that more editing is always needed.

Phelisa Sikwata is a poet and aspiring comic writer based in Cape Town, South Africa. With her evocative poetry, she explores the depths of her inner world, giving voice to her Black Queer identity and shedding light on the unspoken narratives within her family. Her contributions to esteemed anthologies like CYPHER's *Imbewu Yesini* (2016) and the collaborative comic book *Planet Divoc-91* (2021) have showcased her exceptional talent and fueled her determination to publish her collection. Phelisa's performances have captivated audiences on various platforms, leaving a lasting impact. Notable highlights include her participation in the *Brave New Voices Festival: Queeriosity* (2017), where she mesmerized the crowd with her powerful words. She is the founder of an LGBTQI+ project that focuses on research and healing work, called *inQ.U.E.E.Ries*, which was featured in prestigious events like the *Naked Word Festival* (2018), *Open Book Festival* (2019) and had its 'in conversation' exhibition (2022).

Her dedication to social impact is evident in her recent participation in the *HSRC-ISPI Conference: TransVERSING the CITY* (2022). This experience has been instrumental in her blossoming career as a Social Impact Designer at *Pivot Collective*, where she effectively utilizes poetic inquiry and her keen sensitivity as valuable research tools. She strives to make a positive difference in society through her work, leveraging her artistic gifts to address pressing social issues. With her unique voice and unwavering passion, Phelisa Sikwata continues to embark on the journey to publish her collection. Her impact on the literary and artistic landscape is set to grow even more profound.



Prosper Chibuzor Ifeanyi

Mentor: Echezonachukwu Nduka

The allocation of airtime to mentees was very thoughtful, and the facilitators' collaborative efforts to ensure that airtime is delivered were commendable.

I have engaged in career-changing conversations with my mentor; luckily, he is on the path to building one for himself. So, he properly engaged me by outlining the scope of what it is I might desire out of my writing career. My mentor is one of the most hardworking and dedicated people I have seen: a true leader and a kind human. I will never forget him for his nostalgic jokes and allusiveness to music.

Through the fellowship, I learned discipline and the unfettered art of communication. I read just about anything and learned the craft of enjambment, which I had struggled with before the programme.

Overall, I think I have improved as a person, dedicated to a course, and charted different territories.

Prosper C. Ifeanyi writes from Nigeria. His works have recently appeared/are forthcoming in South Dakota Review, Magma Poetry, Black Warrior Review, New Delta Review, Salt Hill, The Westchester Review, The Offing, The Indianapolis Review, and New Note Poetry Anthology.



Rahab Yusuf Adamu

Mentor: Ucheoma Onwutuebe

The manual is one the most helpful guides I've read about writing. It is thorough and concise. The feedback form was so thoughtful. It allows the mentee to reflect on the new knowledge and insight they've gained at the end of every week. It causes one to pause and think about the week in writing about it. Also, it assisted me in understanding my path and realizing that I could do this writing craft if I focus and renew my consistency.

There were challenges in connecting with my mentor due to her busy schedule. Also, it was a bit overwhelming at some point because the one week for assignments and reading was limited since we also had other activities like school apart from the program.

I think my mentor understood my style and the types of stories I was trying to write. Our weekly assigned pieces gave me such stories to study and imitate. I will remember her as a tender nurturer.

I have improved in punctuation and capitalization, description and storytelling, and infusing emotions into my writing. Also, I've been consistent with writing or sharing my work. I've felt the stories swirling in my head

begging to be told, but I've resisted, busy with everything that's not writing. Maybe because of the deadlines, I've found the strength to write during this program. Before the pieces come out in discordance, and at first glance, I discard them as worthless. But I've come to understand the importance of rewriting and editing. During this program, I've learned a lot, not only in improving my craft but also in time management and discipline. All of which I am beginning to utilize in my life.

Rahab Yusuf is an emerging writer from Kano State, Nigeria. Her writing has appeared /is forthcoming in Kalahari Review, Brittle Paper, Literary Yard, Applied Worldwide magazine, Spillwords, and elsewhere. She explores diverse themes but mostly writes about Gender equality, mythology, history, and mundane northern experiences. A SprinNG Fellow (2023 cohort), her work has been shortlisted for the "Why Governor Inuwa Again Essay Writing Competition" organized by the Gombe state government. She is a member of the Creative Club at Gombe State University and the Gombe Jewel Writers Association, and co-founder of live4lifeIntiative, a youth-based organization focused on empowering young girls and women living in rural areas. When not reading or writing, she volunteers on Girlchild advocacy or engages in climate change campaigns. Rahab is a student at Gombe State University, and you can connect with her on Facebook - Rahab Yusuf.



Ruqayyah Adedamola Aderibigbe

Mentor: Muyiwa Adesokun

The best part was that we had a mentor each to ourselves. Also, I found the fellowship a bit overwhelming, combining it with school and exams.

My mentor is nice and accommodating; he tries to create an environment that doesn't feel tense whenever we're communicating, and he never gets tired of correcting me on fluff. I will remember him for his critical review of my work.

I have improved in my tenses, use of imagery, eradicating fluffs, meeting deadlines, and communicating more effectively.

Ruqayyah A. Aderibigbe (she/her) is a Nigerian writer and an English language major sophomore at Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu Ode, Nigeria. She is an alumnus of the SprinNG Writing Fellowship and currently a member of the poetic collective that comprises a group of young Nigerian writers pushing themselves towards their respective writing goals. She won the Yellow House Library Poetry Prize and has works published/forthcoming in The Kalahari Review, African Writers Magazine, Salamander Ink Magazine, rigorous & elsewhere. She writes to heal, loves taking evening strolls, and tweets @RuqayyahAderib1.



Safiyya Jogee

Mentor: Miracle Emeka-Nkwor

I was thoroughly impressed with the work we were required to do each week. Every week, there were new prompts to work on; everything was an idea we could use in our writing. Additionally, I enjoyed reading published short stories in my writing genre.

Before the start of the fellowship, I had some insecurities about my writing and the content within. Given the nature of this fellowship and the one-on-one mentoring, this gave me confidence that I was receiving feedback based on the errors of my OWN work. Additionally, I now know what genre I write in, what mistakes I make, how to fix them, how to look for plot and character errors, and how to fix them. I am confident in where I stand and where I envision myself going.

Two of the major issues I experienced were time constraints and load-shedding. There was a significant amount of work to do during the week, coupled with the additional editing and feedback of the previous week. At times, it can become overwhelming. Secondly, I live in South Africa. We have load shedding every day for up to 12 hours. If not the load shedding, the network would constantly go down, which can be overwhelming and stressful, as you're trying to submit work and you're constrained because you have no Wi-Fi, data, or electricity.

I thoroughly enjoyed having Miracle Emeka-Nkwor as my mentor. She was very helpful, inspiring, informative, and motivational. She gave me ample feedback on my work where I felt I was making progress; she reminded me to be polite and supportive to other writers when giving my own feedback; she showed me where I was going wrong, the errors I make in my writing, and how to fix them; she has shared notes and Google links with me that I have found very helpful. I will remember how inspirational, motivational, and informative she was.

I have improved in my dedication. I submitted all my feedback forms, assignment submissions, and prompts on time, to the best of my ability, regardless of obstacles. Also, I overcame writer's block, which I've struggled with for a long time. Over the six weeks, I wrote more than I've written in the last six months. I also got better with my punctuation and grammar. I am much more thought-conscious about using the correct words, punctuation, and grammar in my short stories than ever before. Additionally, I have tried my hand at prompts and plot lines out of my comfort zone. I feel I have given myself the chance to try something new. Above all, I am very motivated and inspired to start writing my own pieces. This fellowship was highly inspirational and lit an intense fire within me.

Safiyya Jogee is a South African writer who writes dark fantasy fiction that embodies horror and supernatural elements. She graduated cum laude from the University of South Africa with a bachelor's degree in creative writing. Safiyya co-edited and published UNISA's first-ever anthology, "Wistfulness of Time" (2022), which boasted a collection of twenty poems and eleven short stories. She is also a beneficiary of the SprinNG Writing Fellowship of 2023. Storytelling has been a significant part of her life for as long as she can remember. She is currently weaving a web of her dark fantasy novel, which she hopes to publish in time. She plans to further her studies in Creative Writing, first with a postgraduate degree and then a Master's (she has yet to decide on a final course). She enjoys reading as many good books as possible in her free time and looks forward to watching the latest Marvel movie.



Siphosethu Thobela

Mentor: Brian Walter

The weekly check-ins on everyone's well-being were very refreshing and appreciated, especially because some had a bumpy ride during the fellowship with their mentors or personal lives. Having a platform that cares about one's current emotional state most definitely positively affects their performance.

I realized I needed to travel more to gain more experience and knowledge about my writing and those around me.

My mentor is semi-retired, so we had to squeeze me into his busy schedule, communicating at odd hours when we're both available, or we'd have to wait a day or two to fully exchange inputs and ideas. The busyness of my mentor meant when we spoke, we needed to get down to business. However, there were occasions when I was confident that I had a great mentor (week 3- fiction contest). I was inspired by one of his

students he watched on Zoom and appreciated the extra mile he took to ensure that I not only understood what was needed of me but enjoyed it as well. Brian was patient throughout my fellowship experience and made me feel at ease. I will remember his taste for poetry writing.

I have improved in many ways. My writing is tighter and full of more imagery, even with fewer words. I have learned to write on broader topics, even those I can't relate to. Given the chance to be imaginative enabled me to create fictional characters and make them come to life. Writing depends on who you want to read your work and how to reach them, something I definitely appreciate having learned.

Siphosethu Angela Thobela is an avid reader, an aspiring poet, and a TEFL and Digital Marketing student. Born in Eastern Cape in 2002, she moved to Gauteng to live with her parents. She grew up surrounded by strong women who fiercely encouraged female solidarity, which inspired her deep-rooted feminism, environmentalism, and humanitarianism. She enrolled in the SprinNG Writing Fellowship (2023) to help harness her writing. She wishes to travel through her country, South Africa, to gain more knowledge and experience as a writer before traveling elsewhere.



Stephen Eniyewu

Mentor: Oyindamola Shoola

Studying how my mentor provides feedback on my work and what she comments on the most has helped me see what I should focus on as key areas of improvement in my writing.

The only issue I had was not having proper mentorship at the beginning of the fellowship, which sort of affected the timeline for the fellowship at my end.

My mentor, Oyindamola Shoola, takes her time to read and comment. She listens, gives honest feedback, and she communicates well. I will remember her for her simplicity and desire to see me get better.

I enjoyed the adrenaline rush that comes with writing for the contests. I improved in my use of punctuation. My storytelling, editing, and proofreading skills improved. Also, I improved my flash fiction and prose poetry writing skills.

Stephen Eniyewu is a student and soon-to-be graduate of LAUTECH, Ogbomosho, with a bachelor's degree in Physiology. He is a creative who finds expression in spoken word poetry and photography. His poem featured on Dear Fa(r)ther - an EP focused on provoking conversations around the struggles of the boy child and fatherhood in Nigerian homes. He was a quarter-finalist at the foremost poetry slam in Nigeria - War of Words, Season 8. He emerged as the winner at the Red Cross LAUTECH Poetry Slam 2019, 1st runner-up at the Maudition Talent Competition, and 1st runner-up at the Dare Health Foundation Spoken Word Competition 2020. Stephen interned at Emmanuel Pixels—a fast-growing photography company in Nigeria. He also worked with Rubies Technologies and TEDx LAUTECH as an assistant photographer. Stephen enjoys music, and you can connect with him on Twitter @stepheneniyewu.



Thandolwethu Mulambo

Mentor: Sibongile Fisher

The sessions with the mentor were quite engaging. Writing and reading criticism is one thing; talking through it out loud is another. I found that talking through your process and what led you to make certain decisions is quite a valuable and engaging experience. The amount of material versus the time we had to write then surprised me as I thought I would have no problem managing my time, but the challenge was welcome.

I entered the program knowing I wanted to start my first novel. Beyond scripts and select short stories, I hadn't exercised writing these stories sufficiently. The program helped me pull out the types of stories I've always said I wanted to write. It also helped me take note of the format and structure more, as my focus was always more on the creative output. Because of the program and conversations with my mentor, I have seen that I can do more with my short stories (sending them out for publications and competitions) outside of compiling them into a book.

I faced a scheduling and time management challenge. Reading various materials, processing them, and writing work within 3-4 days was overwhelming. Most of the time, it was difficult to sufficiently incorporate the criticism because I hadn't had enough time to sit with it. My improvements would show in the task for the next week more than the reworked task.

My mentor is very insightful and very helpful. She challenged me sufficiently and inspired me to perceive myself and my work more positively and professionally. She did honest reviews and went as far as suggesting more ways to implement ideas. The reading material she gave me indicated that she paid attention to what I said and wrote down to the last detail—it was always relevant. I will remember her for her love for black speculative fiction and for pushing me to push boundaries in my imaginary worlds.

As a result of the fellowship, I adopted a more professional communication and conduct. I adhered (to the best of my ability) to structure. I shortened my sentences. I learned to write sentences that drive the narrative forward instead of providing context or "scaffolding," as my mentor put it. I pushed my imagination and moved away from writing "safe" stories.

Thandolwethu Mulambo is a multidisciplinary queer writer based in South Africa. They aspire to be on a best seller's list and write critically acclaimed theatre productions, movies, and series. They primarily write short stories, poetry, plays, and television and film scripts. With a unique focus on magic realism and black speculative fiction, Thando writes work that blends imagination and reality, evoking profound emotions and exploring the intricacies of the human experience. Born in Krugersdorp and raised in the small mining town of Randfontein, Thando developed a deep appreciation for the arts at a young age. Thando attributes this inspiration to their parents, who religiously took them to theatre shows and encouraged their love for literature. Their passion for storytelling and performance led them to pursue a degree in Dramatic Arts from Wits University, where they honed their skills as an actor and explored their gift for the spoken word. They have co-written and co-directed a theatre production that won the Standard Bank Ovation award at the National Arts Festival and graduated, having won the Wits University Luis Gluckman Award for Best Creative Piece produced. They joined the Woke Arts collective and Moonlit as one of the poets. Thando is also a thought-provoking blogger, delving into topics of spirituality, God, and blackness. Their online platform serves as a space that inspires introspection, encouraging readers to explore their spiritual paths and embrace their unique identities. Through imagining new worlds, Thando challenges societal norms, confronts injustice, and celebrates the beauty and resilience of black culture, spirituality, and ancestry.



Uchenna Edwin Eze

Mentor: Tomilola ‘Coco’ Adeyemo

What stood out was how the fellowship went the extra mile to get me subscribed to a movie streamer’s platform so that I could keep up with the demands of my genre. I had honestly not seen the possibility of them bearing an extra cost for a single student. I found this to be both surprising and thoughtful. Writing of the kind I do, playwriting, is mostly considered old-fashioned by people in my clime. The reason is partly (and quite erroneously, I must add) because it does not adhere to prose and poetry’s grace and flowery tones. It was increasingly difficult to stick to the path at some point, owing to my mailbox swarming with rejections, but with the program came a new perspective, a new approach to storytelling, which gives the same effect, if not more, as used in prose. This, I believe, will undoubtedly serve as a fuel of confidence in my bragging rights with writers in other genres.

In all honesty, Tomi is attentive and kind, with a great personality to add. She is excellent at what she does, adding a sprinkle of swagger and authority befitting the job. But what is even more enthralling of her aura is her thoughtfulness on issues. Throughout the fellowship (not minding that things got wonky along the way between us), she made my learning experience convenient. With a gold-rimmed heart fashioned after the magnanimity of a loving god, Tomi sharpened my blunt sense of storytelling with an extra subscription from her pocket to Amazon Prime Video, just so I could see the movie “Goodfellas,” which was not on Netflix. And to think that she did this immediately after we got back to working again is a testament to her loving spirit. Tomi is a terrific storyteller, telling and teaching stories with all the ingredients of what a great story should have. Tomi breaks down your story effortlessly, like she was in your head at the time of crafting and draws out more compelling and realistic stakes you could not have imagined. She is what I aspire to become, and so far as 2023 is concerned, she is my MVP! I will remember her for “a good story is like an Igbo pot of soup; it has a bit of everything for everyone.”

The best part of the program for me was the realization that all I needed to write a good script was a great story. In other words, everything else aside, the story comes first. And in the words of Tomi: “Do not do anything until you figure out your story.” This is the biggest impact yet. Also, I learned and mastered the tricks of writing loglines. I improved on story tropes and conventions. Additionally, synopsis writing used to be an uphill task for me, but with the program came a chance to confront it head-on, and I did; it is something I am no longer scared of. The essential foundations of scriptwriting, which I previously ignored, were touched. Aspects such as character bible, film treatment, and film breakdown were demystified, making me feel better equipped to handle scripting. I discovered during the program through the weekly contest that I actually have a thing for poetry. I might consider venturing if there is room.

Most importantly, this experience will go on to be my earliest career springboard so far. The miracle of meeting someone like Tomilola is only possible through the safe landing ring of SprinNG for connecting writers. It’s all love from here.

Uchenna Edwin Eze is an emerging playwright and screenwriter with screen credit for ROK Studios. He is a final-year English and Literary Studies student at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, where he recently served as the associate drama editor of the department’s journal No. 50, *The Muse*, founded by Chinua Achebe in 1963. He sometimes experiments with other forms of writing, with prose works published in *Fiction Niche*, *Africanreed*, and *The Muse Journal*. Away from writing, he sharpens his creativity as a destructive tailor.



Uwachukwunenye Princess Anna

Mentor: Tamara Dogubo

Every part of the program was thoughtful and thorough. I found feedback polls most thoughtful and engaging. They showed that the SprinNG team cares about each mentee's welfare. Provisions were also made for mentees to express themselves fully. The second question on the weekly feedback asking how one felt at the end of the week had the same effect. The weekly airtime sent out to encourage and support us during the program was also thoughtful.

For a person with a science background like me, the most I was taught Literature/English was in secondary school, combined with my love for reading, which has helped me along the way. Deep down, I felt like an impostor, like I was sitting down to dine

without washing my hands properly. However, being a mentee in SprinNG has gifted me a beautiful start, and now that I have proof of training, I feel more confident to pursue writing. Thank you, SprinNG, for this wonderful beginning.

Initially, I had challenges combining the program with my final year project, but that was only due to my inefficient schedule. With the help of my mentor, this was resolved.

Tamara is deeply in love with her craft and is ever willing to share and teach. Her words are uplifting, challenging, and encouraging. Her colloquial way of speaking lightens and brightens the atmosphere. She sees how much one can improve and opens your eyes to see the same; when she explains a certain concept, she describes it as deeply as possible and paints real-life scenarios. Tamara's classes are colorful. She does not just teach; she helps you find it within yourself. I will remember her for her words and sincerity.

I have improved using punctuation, metaphors, sentence structures, and 'sensationalism.'

Uwachukwunenye Princess Anna is a Creative Writer and Poet whose works explore various themes from humanistic perspectives, including mental health and spirituality. Over the years, her works have graced various platforms across Nigeria. Most notable are the "YES SHE CAN" workshop for women by WEWE NETWORK AFRIQUE (2021), "THE WOMEN ECONOMIC FORUM" organized by SHE-ILD INITIATIVE in commemoration of the International Women's Day (2022), TEDxIkenegbu (2022 & 2023), amongst others. She was shortlisted for the La Casera "SPOKEN WARS" in 2022 under the pseudonym "Uwahanna" and has staged poetry productions ever since. A graduate of Microbiology, Princess Anna is constantly at the crossroads between science and arts but finds a meeting point in harnessing the therapeutic nature of expression. She draws inspiration from the works of Maya Angelou, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and many more great writers across genres. She enjoys nuanced conversations and long evening walks when she's not studying or reading.



Vanessa Essien

Mentor: AbdulwasIU Ishola

I liked the personal reflection questions, especially the 'Why I Write.' It's a fundamental question to ask yourself as a writer, yet I had never asked myself until the assignment. Answering that question gave me so much clarity into why my writing is and the expectations I have from writing.

I found the manual extremely useful. One of my reasons for applying for the fellowship was to learn about the publishing industry and the administrative (non-creative) processes involved in becoming a published writer or even just entering professional writing circles. I especially loved the chapters in the manual on questions to ask before publishing a book and how to write a biography. I also found the

articles and writers' interviews very insightful. The assignment on Why I Write allowed me to reflect on my writing process. The contests also allowed me to explore other genres and realize how I use writing elements from other genres in my preferred genre.

My mentor and I were always very busy, so even though a new week usually started on a Sunday and ended on a Saturday, we began our weeks on Saturday and ended on Tuesday. It was the only way that worked for us. But it was stressful as we had to fit in discussions and back-and-forth corrections on my writing in such a short time so we could meet the weekly Wednesday deadlines for the feedback forms.

I liked my mentor a lot. We were both respectful of our time. He wasn't demanding. We understood we were both busy and always scheduled work in a way that was convenient for both of us. If either of us couldn't meet a deadline, we communicated this politely and were understanding. He was always very kind in sharing his feedback—giving praise where due before criticizing. This made me less sensitive and more open to taking correction. We had few real-time conversations (e.g., phone calls), settling more for texts that were responded to hours later. But when we spoke on the phone (in week 4, I think), we briefly veered into personal stuff, getting to know each other, and realized that we liked a few of the same authors and books. I will remember him for being kind and thorough.

Participating in the fellowship helped me to become more open to reading and writing other genres. Before the fellowship, I never thought I would write poetry or attempt a science fiction/ dystopian piece. I became more organized and deliberate in making time to write. I was able to see my writing from another person's point of view and realize some weak points in my writing, such as long-winded sentences, unnecessary run-on sentences/comma splices, etc.

I'm more knowledgeable about the writing industry and resources available for budding writers trying to break into the industry, e.g., fellowships like SprinNG and the numerous literary magazines where a writer can be published. I was aware of a few of these resources, but now I know about more. Above all, I am more open to criticism.

Vanessa Essien is a Nigerian writer and feminist. She centers her writing around women and the lives they live. She was a fellow of the 2023 SprinNG Writing Fellowship. With many short stories in her portfolio, Vanessa has been published in AFREADA, while the rest of her stories are self-published and can be found on her Medium.



Yetunde Omotayo

Mentor: Uduak-Estelle Akpan

Before joining the programme, I had reservations about my writing abilities and struggled to find a clear direction in my creative work. However, the structure and guidance provided during the programme have been instrumental in helping me overcome these challenges.

The fellowship was overwhelming, especially because it coincided with my move to a new apartment and job. Juggling all of it together was hectic. My mentor also had a very busy schedule, so I could not meet many deadlines.

One of the most remarkable qualities of my mentor is her exceptional communication skills. She actively listened to my concerns, providing clear and thoughtful explanations that allowed me to gain confidence in my writing and improve. Her constructive feedback is always delivered with kindness and understanding, helping me identify areas for improvement. She is also very patient. My mentor will be remembered for her unwavering support, guidance, and constructive criticism that

empowered me to unlock my full writing potential.

I learned to adopt a more structured approach to my writing. I gained a better understanding of outlining, organizing ideas, and creating a cohesive narrative, improving my work's overall clarity and coherence. One area where I noticed substantial improvement was in crafting captivating openings for my pieces. The feedback loop helped me identify my strengths and weaknesses, enabling me to focus on areas that required further refinement.

I was encouraged to experiment with different writing styles and genres throughout the fellowship. This exposure expanded my versatility as a writer and allowed me to discover new ways to express ideas and emotions. The writing fellowship provided a transformative experience, and I emerged as a more confident, skillful, and disciplined writer. While there's always room for improvement, I believe the fellowship played a crucial role in my development as a writer.

Yetunde Omotayo is a passionate writer, born in Plateau, Nigeria, and raised in the National Veterinary Research Institute, Vom—an environment that nurtured her curiosity and deep love for learning and literature. With an ICAO diploma from Zaria, Kaduna, Yetunde pursues a career in Aircraft Maintenance Engineering while maintaining her commitment to literary arts. Her love for literature finds expression through reviewing and blogging about the written art forms she engages with. Omotayo 's writing is set apart by in-depth engagement with many themes, including love, spirituality, and religion. Driven by the tugging need to ease her mind of an overflow of thoughts, she finds solace in putting pen to paper. Yetunde considers writing an outlet for sharing her perspectives and an exercise in consistency and determination. As an avid reader, the love of words and the many possibilities they afford inspired the establishment of, and continues to sustain, the running of Yetunde's blog on Medium, where she shares her insights and thoughts on books. When she is not giving her time to engineering and literary pursuits, Omotayo is deeply involved in social justice issues such as addressing period poverty, menstrual health and hygiene, and gender-based violence advocacy. Her dedication to these causes is fueled by a desire to make a positive impact, which she does by raising awareness with her writing. Yetunde is a SprinNG alum, where she further honed her book review craft with the goal of consistently putting out objective and balanced reviews of works she has read.



Yondela Stuurman

Mentor: Nzube Nlebedim

I enjoyed the weekly feedback.

Previously, I had no idea where to begin my writing career; I didn't even have confidence in my writing. I only possessed the passion for it. Now, I know my strengths and my weaknesses. I am more confident in the reality where I am a writer and successful. It showed me just how much work to put in, and I cleared my path a little.

I found the program overwhelming at some point. There was quite a bit to cover.

My mentor is strict and honest but also sensitive. He encouraged us to put an A+ effort into our assignment. I appreciate his honesty a lot. I will remember him for his candor and his love for Marvel movies.

My use of grammar and punctuation. My importance of language and imagination. My self-esteem, my ability to articulate myself and my ideas.

Yondela Stuurman is a teacher, writer, poet, and illustrator currently based in Johannesburg, South Africa. Her roots can be traced to the Karoo in the small town of Komani, South Africa. She is a teacher with a BA in Political Science, International Relations, and Organisational Psychology from Rhodes University, a bachelor's in education, and an honours degree in Creative Writing from Wits University. She is the recipient of the Sole Wonyika Prize for Literature (2026) for her sci-fi/fantasy novel. She was shortlisted for the 2026 Caine Prize for her short story Untitled and the winner of many poetry competitions. Her essays are featured in Dangerous Women Project, Isele Magazine, Shallow Tales, and Brittle Paper. She also writes for the Bubblegum Club and the Daily Maverick.



Zainab Abubakar

Mentor: Nzube Nlebedim

For me, every part of the fellowship came with its own feelings and realizations.

When I started writing, I didn't pay much attention to how my protagonist and certain things about them could lead or carry the story. I also did not know that the voice I assigned to my story would be based on the protagonist's profile. As my mentor said, if your protagonist were an old professor, surely there would be a way he would speak that you'd know, yes, this person speaks like so and so. For me, it was as though I pushed my voice into the narrative and just used my protagonist as a cover-up.

My mentor is really open to communication and giving feedback. He also likes to carry one along in discussions and doesn't hold back on constructive criticism.

I'll remember my mentor for making our communication space comfortable and open to opinions, for his feedback, and for the many ways each conversation opened new doors to more.

I improved in character development, which meant getting to know my protagonists and knowing how they carry the story. I also would say I have realized that stories often take time to form. Initially, it felt like I might have rushed the process. Also, I got to give a name to the little bursts of scenes rushing through my pen—writing vignettes motivated and inspired me. I improved in the process of editing my work. I would also like to point out that this fellowship has helped me focus on a particular niche in my writing.

Zainab Abubakar is a Nigerian storyteller and poet whose work is motivated by the everyday activities of life, focusing on loss, love, family, grief, and identity. Her work has been published on various platforms and print magazines such as Lunar Review, the Madrigal Press, Arkore Writes, and the Revue. She believes that words have no limit and considers them powerful weapons to navigate life. You can reach her via Twitter [@z_boukar](#) or Instagram [@_zboukar](#).

Thank you!

We are grateful to the mentees for their honesty and transparency in their feedback about the fellowship and their experiences. We also appreciate you taking the time to read the experiences of the 2023 SprinNG Writing Fellowship mentees. All their thoughts, both positive and identified areas of improvement, will be considered in the upcoming years of our work.

Best,
The SprinNG Team