

2023



A LETTER
FROM
**THE
EDITOR**



**EDITOR
MCCONKEY**

Another Terrible Year at Fighting Words

Dear Readers,

For those of you who live under a rock, I'm Editor Mc Conkey. Yes, I'm the cranky Editor-in-Chief at Fighting Words. No, I won't come out of the office to talk to your class. Read the website if you want to know more about me. I refuse to waste my time describing my (handsome, sharply-dressed) self to you.

Now, enough about me. On to the important things. Namely, what a terrible year it's been at Fighting Words: with new, horrible special projects like Tales to Scale, the launch of the cross-border edition of the Story Seeds project, as well as a deluge of new workshop programs as Gaeilge - it's impossible to get a moment's peace around here!

That's not even to mention our tedious, annual initiatives like the Irish Times supplement of youth writing and playwriting happening online and in person in conjunction with theatres such as Linenhall Arts Centre in Castlebar, the Mermaid Arts Centre in Bray, the Everyman Theatre in Cork and the Abbey Theatre in Dublin.

But the worst thing - the very worst thing - are the swarms of children who insist on tormenting me every day with their "talent."

If I've said it once I've said it millions of times:

KIDS CAN'T WRITE STORIES!!!

Yet they continue to darken our doorsteps each morning. With their abominable creativity. Their harrowing imaginations. And their *shudders* smiling faces. Barricading the doors did nothing to deter them from participating. Apparently, in 2023 alone, Fighting Words will have delivered 989 school workshops and 120 outreach workshops from 20 centres countrywide, of which 341 are with DEIS schools, and engaging 36,500 young people.

Oh, the inhumanity! The never-ending horror of it all!

If that wasn't bad enough, I've also heard reports that new centres have cropped up around the country, with Waterford being the latest addition to our growing list that now numbers twenty in all.

My message to these new centres: Run. Quickly. Before it's too late.

Usually, I get summers off to indulge in my many splendid hobbies – trimming my nose hairs or cutting my gangrene toenails, for instance. But nooo, not this year.

Fighting Words hosted 13 summer camps nationally, including Limerick, Monaghan, Wicklow, and the first-ever summer camp in the Liberties in Dublin.

Cast your eyes below and behold a mere sample of my suffering:



Film Making in Limerick



Creative Writing at the Ukrainian Centre, Rathmines, Dublin



Fiction Writing Camp, Dublin

Has your stomach turned yet? Mine certainly has. And I haven't even touched my Krispie Kreme doughnuts yet.

You'd think our team of hundreds of trained volunteer writing mentors would make things easier – at least they're not children, after all. At least they don't insist on publishing their trifling stories every day. But you'd be wrong. The volunteers are just as bad as the children, maybe worse. Every day they show up with their chipper attitudes and off-putting selflessness, and every day they laugh when I tell them to remove the children plaguing our centres.

Laugh. At me. Can you believe it?

Owing in large part to our volunteers' stubbornness to share our participants' stories, we have published a staggering amount of work this year: *Analecta Issue 2* (the anthology series of teen writing), *Scéalta na gComharsan*, *Everybody Hates Mondays* and *Maths Madness*. Two editions of stories by primary schools as part of the Story Seeds project: *Story Seeds Cork* and *Story Seeds Limerick*... the list goes on and on, resulting in many volumes of work cluttering my office.

And don't get me started on our normal workshop publications. On any given day, I'm asked to print and upload stories from our different centres. Can you believe the audacity?

We've had to expand our Dublin office to include The Annex space, just to house them:



Ah, The Annex. What a wonderful space it was. And empty. In a sense, the space was so wonderful because it was so empty. Over the first few gloriously quiet weeks I managed to catch up on a lot of scowling and nose-hair trimming.

But alas, my happiness was not meant to last.

Little by little, workshop participants started to appear. First as once off workshops, then workshops as Gaeilge as part of our new Irish-language programme in Dublin, and now there are simultaneous workshops in both spaces every single week. What's more, we host weekly drop-in writing groups on Wednesdays, to add to the teen writers who already join us for our online Write Club and Club Cleite (Write Club as Gaeilge) across the country.

Not only do we have our teen version of Write Club in person, but as of last year we also, terrifyingly, host Word Warriors (a writing club for 8–12-year-olds). These fledging writers seem harmless now, but, trust me, in a few short years they'll be eligible to join Write Club themselves. And then... the thought doesn't bear typing...

You might think I'm exaggerating. But see how the children delight in mocking me:

"Ur so grumpy Editor Mc Conkey haha"

"I loved today but I hate you, Editor Mc Conkey."

"I had so much fun today, but Editor Mc Conkey you are way too grumpy and mean."

And those are testimonials from just from one 5th class group!

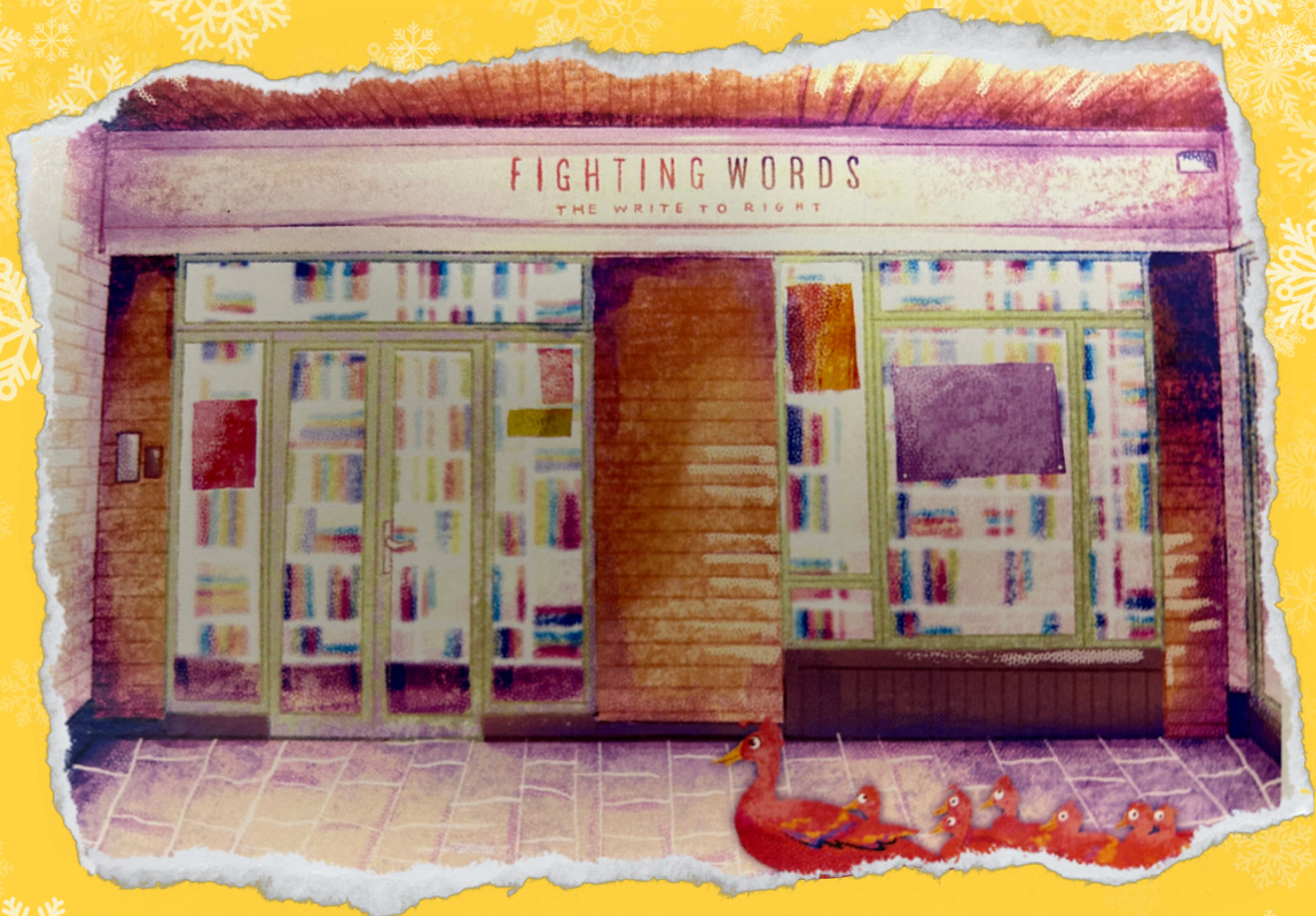
I blame our funders and partners. They ensured that we have the resources to cover all costs this year. They're also the ones who ensured the Fighting Words could keep up with this ridiculously high demand for workshops - all at the cost of my sanity

If any of you are reading this, ask yourselves: was it worth it? I hope so.

Upon advice from our Board, I've been asked to advise that this year has not been all bad. Along with our workshops, camps and publications, this year saw 100,000 visitors to our website, three editions of Scaip an Sceál, the launch of Inner Light (which featured the concert in Vicar Street with partners the Irish Red Cross and Ukrainian Action in Ireland), as well as initiatives in Donegal, Kerry and Limerick, and the culmination of the GAA, Words of Love and Printers projects.

There! Are you satisfied? Is that enough of a "light note" to end it on? I swear this annual report is the worst idea, and you board members are nothing but a bunch of good-for-nothing

Note from the Board of Fighting Words: the above has been redacted for legal reasons. For more information about the work of Fighting Words, visit: www.fightingwords.ie



**Thank you
For the Terrible Year at Fighting Words**

2023

