



Resilience through writing: How the ‘Along Came the War’ project emerged

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Abstract

This individual narrative reflects on the production and use of a website, ‘Along Came the War’, as a platform to support students’ creative writing for wellbeing and sense of community and connection.

Keywords

creative writing, wellbeing, resilience, community

Everything began with chat correspondence on Telegram, where I organise my work with students. In February 2022, when the full-scale war broke out in Ukraine, I reached out to my students to support them and, in a way, myself. Our correspondence soon transformed into an unexpected yet invaluable channel of mutual support.

I began by asking them about their well-being, their thoughts, and their daily activities amidst the turmoil. On March 2, I decided to create a separate Twitter account, Along Came the War, where I would collect their answers and share them. This provided a unique form of feedback for the students; seeing their comments online helped them feel heard and understood. However, as the students' responses grew more detailed and thoughtful, they often exceeded Twitter's 280-character limit. Thus, with the help of my husband, I created a more suitable platform, a dedicated website with the same name: Along Came the War.

Throughout 2022, we posted texts and students' opinions almost daily. The platform quickly became a vibrant space for their expression and reflection. With the start of the new academic year, more students joined the project. Although the posts started to appear less frequently, the students remained enthusiastic and responsible, eager to discuss various issues connected to the war.

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The discussions covered a wide range of topics: choices to stay in Ukraine while others fled; the music that provided comfort; the sources of strength that helped them endure the beginning of a traumatic event, which is the full-scale invasion. We talked about how to support our warriors, debated the nuances of collaboration and compromise, and explored profound themes like good and evil. These were the kinds of conversations that university students typically have with their senior colleagues, now imbued with the urgency and gravity of the ongoing war.

Writing in English broadened our reach, allowing our words to be read worldwide. We shared the link to our site with friends abroad, amplifying our voices beyond the immediate circle. Additionally, I encouraged my friends to pose questions to my students, fostering a dialogue that transcended geographical boundaries. This exchange provided fresh perspectives and reinforced the students' sense of global connectivity.

As a teacher of a Creative Writing course, I found immense value in this ongoing project. It became an extension of my classroom, where students could practice their writing skills in real-world contexts. The act of writing served multiple purposes: it was therapeutic, offering a means to process emotions and experiences; it was a practical exercise, honing their ability to articulate thoughts clearly and effectively; and it was a way of thinking, encouraging deep reflection and critical analysis.

Looking ahead to September 2024, I am filled with hope and determination to continue this work. I aim to inspire young people to write, recognising that writing is not just an academic skill but a powerful tool for personal and collective resilience. Through writing, students can navigate the complexities of their reality, document their journeys, and connect with others who share their experiences or seek to understand them.

All in all, what began as simple chat correspondence on Telegram has evolved into a meaningful and multifaceted project. Our platform, *Along Came the War*, stands as a testament to the power of words in times of crisis. It highlights the importance of communication, community, and creativity in fostering resilience.