



broken but mending True Lives of The Fabulous Teenage Revolution

All the contributors to this book have faced illness of one sort or another. Their lives have been disrupted – sometimes for many months or years – and they’ve lived with pain, anxiety or exhaustion. Even more remarkable, then, is the energy and vigour that pulses through this volume of writing.

The students took part in three half-day workshops. Some had undertaken long journeys to get to the venues. Some were in considerable discomfort. Some were anxious about being in a new place. We worked quickly and intensively, mindful of the limitations of ill health. Writing exercises often began with an outside stimulus – a photograph, a texture, an object held in the hand. Flurries of word-gathering were followed by bursts of silent writing. And then the adventure of reading words aloud. Sharing and giving and receiving feedback. Courageous. Respectful. Attentive.

The finished pieces are a mixture of poetry and prose. Some are autobiographical, working with memory and experience. Some are fictional, demonstrating skills of empathy and imagination. There are strong themes – isolation, love, anger, despair, hope. Some pieces make uncomfortable reading – the landscapes are bleak, the storylines dark, the emotions raw, and the anonymous final section of the book – **Voices of the Revolution** - is deliberately provocative and challenging. But there’s beauty and triumph too – friendship, forgiveness, connection, delight. Although some students worked on longer pieces at home, building on the skills and techniques they’d practiced in sessions, the majority of the pieces are short. They have the feel of fragments – broken shards, perhaps. Concentrated glimpses of life, colour, feeling. Captured moments. The book’s title – chosen by one of the group – powerfully evokes a sense of resurgence and recovery. A reassembling of the pieces, bouncing back from adversity, stronger than before.

Sue Mayfield

‘Beyond Words gives a voice to young people with mental or physical illness who struggle to attend school. Immerse yourself in their wonderful worlds and learn about yourself. These young people are resilient and amazing and have important and amazing things to say. Beware – you will be moved.’

Professor Tanya Byron, psychologist, author and broadcaster.