

## Junior Cycle English Assessment Task

### Writing as a process: an interview with Sinéad Gleeson – transcript.

My name is Sinéad Gleeson and for the last maybe fifteen/sixteen years I've been working as an Arts journalist, so I write a lot of features, I write interviews, I review books, write opinion pieces and I also work in broadcast journalism, which is radio and television. So, in terms of what I write myself, the last couple of years I've actually been writing some of my own work, which is fiction, non-fiction, essays... potentially a novel. So I'm interested in both forms, whether that's creative non-fiction or fiction.

I had a piece published this year that a lot of people responded to because I suppose there was a lot of things in it... and it's interesting because the piece is set when I was a teenager. It was about a time when I was ill and I had to have a lot of surgery and I went on a school trip to Lourdes and I got to go magically because I was the person on crutches and they all thought I was going to get cured – which I didn't! Am...but...and again this comes back to the idea of experience. Something might be happening to you now that you might think isn't worth writing about or that you'll never write about it but often if you let it just sit somewhere in the back of your mind...

#### INSPIRATION

In terms of finding ideas, ideas are everywhere. And one place you can start is with yourself, your own life, your own interests, your own family, your family history, where you live, where you'd like to live, your friends, your pets, anything you like, there's inspiration all around you. Am, also I think... I love Maeve Binchy the great Dublin writer used to say that she loved getting on the Dart and buses because she would use her eyes and ears as tape-recorders and basically shamelessly eavesdropped on people's conversations because you know, sometimes, truth, as they say, is stranger than fiction.

So there are ideas everywhere and I always say to people who want to write, you cannot be a writer without being a reader, so you should be reading and you should be reading a lot. And also it can be very easy to fall down a rabbit hole of liking crime novels and only reading them, so vary your reading, read all sorts of things, and read newspapers, read online.

## FEEDBACK AND COLLABORATION

I think a lot of people assume if you're a writer that you are working on your own but that's not entirely true because if you have a publisher or an editor or an agent you'll have somebody else reading your work. But in terms of sitting down and doing the actual writing, it is just you and that can be really hard because it's only you who can motivate yourself and if you don't have somebody waiting for your manuscript or you don't have a teacher waiting for you to send in a piece, there's no reason for you to finish it so it's the best excuse in the world to slack off and not do it.

I've edited three anthologies and that's a really interesting process because you're reading loads of other people's work and it is a collaborative thing because you go back and forth and you say 'you know I think there's something catastrophic happens in this story, but you, if you just hinted at that a little bit earlier on in the story I think it would be better'. Or 'this ending doesn't work' or 'did you realise that you've...there's been a lot of... you're repeated this, did you mean this paragraph to be here?' So in that sense, being an editor is a way... I got to read an awful lot of short stories and I've learned from how other people write them and how their process is.

## ADVICE

I think writing is also a thing that anybody does to make sense of the world, to make sense of things going on in their own lives. Even if you like to write but don't want to be a writer or don't want to be published, even keeping a diary can be really good for your mental health, can be really good for helping you figure things out, it can be really catharsis [sic], rather than having a big row with somebody on the internet, go and write it all down and then you don't get into trouble on twitter. So writing is a very useful kind of tool for our wellbeing. So I didn't show it to anybody, but one thing I do regret is that I didn't start writing when I was younger. I wish I had done it. So, and, you know, there are people like Claire Hennessy who's up for an Irish book award this year, who published her first books in her teenage years. You know, so it's never too young to be a writer or to be published or to be successful but I wish I'd written... so don't waste any time like I did.