

## FREE READS 2020-2021: FAQs

### What is The Free Reads Scheme?

The **TLC Free Reads Scheme** offers **low-income writers** the opportunity to get free professional feedback on their writing via The Literary Consultancy, the UK's leading editorial consultancy. It is funded by Arts Council England and managed by The Literary Consultancy.

This scheme is open to writers of fiction, non-fiction, short stories, poetry, scripts and screenplays. Writers are hand-matched to a suitable reader from its list of 80+ professional editors and will receive either a partial or full read on their submission, with the feedback distributed the form of a written critique by TLC. The Free Read scheme particularly welcomes applications from writers belonging to groups currently under-represented in publishing including disabled writers, writers of colour\*, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

### How do I know if I'm eligible to enter the scheme?

You're eligible for the scheme if you're on a low income. The following may apply:

- You are in receipt of Job seeker's allowance, Disability benefit, Income support, Working tax credit, Universal Credit or Child benefits
- You earn less than the London Living Wage of £10.55 per hour or a £23k annual salary
- You are a full-time student
- You are aged 60 or over

You must be over 16 years of age to apply and your submission must be in English. You can read the full Rules and Guidance on entering the scheme via TLC's website.

### **My salary used to be annually £23k (or over), but since the pandemic, I have been furloughed, and now take in less than £23k annually. Can I apply?**

Yes you can. Please make a note of this in your application when sending through your evidence, along with (if possible), evidence that you are furloughed. This could be in the form of an email from your employer.

### **I identify as being on a low-income but don't fit the eligibility criteria, can I still apply?**

Certainly. If you identify as being on low-income but do not meet one of the criteria listed above then please get in touch by emailing Aliya at [aliya@spreadtheword.org.uk](mailto:aliya@spreadtheword.org.uk), as we are able to evaluate applicants' eligibility on a case-by-case basis.

### **Hang on - you've said you only accept applications from London writers. I'm not based in London – can I still apply?**

As TLC's regional partner for London, Spread the Word is only processing entries from London-based writers for the scheme. However, the Free Reads scheme is open to all writers residing in England through a range of partners. You can find a map of the partners operating in each region, as well as more information about the scheme on TLC's website. Please be aware that each regional partner will have their own deadline dates so be sure to check these out asap, so you can apply in good time.

### **Ok, I'm going to apply - what do I need to send in?**

Fab news! You'll need to send in the following:

- A completed application form
- A complete synopsis of the written work submitted. The synopsis must clearly show your story's outline and should not exceed 1,000 words. We highly recommend that you check out our Pocket Guide to Writing a Synopsis before sending yours in.
- Evidence of how you meet the scheme
- Your writing (up to 1000 words or up to 20 pages if it is poetry or script writing)

### **What do you mean by 'evidence'?**

You'll need to provide some documentation to confirm that you meet the criteria. This could be: benefits letter, payslips, confirmation of full-time student status, pensions slips or anything else that confirms your eligibility.

### **I'm not a fiction writer, can I still apply for a Free Read?**

Yes - the scheme is open to writing across fiction, creative non-fiction, short stories, poetry scripts and screenplays.

### **I have a disability and would like to enter my submission through a different format, i.e. audio, signed, other formats. Can I do this?**

Absolutely. We have the option open for participants to submit audio and visual submissions, and please get in touch with us if you would like to submit through a channel that is not available by emailing Aliya at [aliya@spreadtheword.org.uk](mailto:aliya@spreadtheword.org.uk).

### **My work isn't complete – can I still enter?**

Yes - the Free Reads Scheme offers either a partial or full manuscript assessment so there is an option to have part of your work assessed. However, you must be able to produce a clear synopsis of how your story develops. If you do not yet know the ending, that is absolutely fine.

### **How do I submit?**

You must submit via Submittable. You'll find the link to this on our website.

### **I'm a co-author for a piece, can I apply?**

No, only single authored work are accepted for a Free Read.

### **I applied last year for a Free Read, can I apply again?**

No. As per TLC's rules applicants cannot apply two years in a row for a Free Read. You're welcome to apply to our other opportunities on our website and to the Free Reads scheme next year.

### **When's the deadline to enter?**

There are two submission windows for writers to submit: Monday 20 July-Monday 2 November and Monday 2 November-Monday 22 February. Please note that you cannot resubmit your application in the same year.

### **I've sent it off – now what?**

Great news. For those who submitted by Monday 2 November, you will be notified on Friday 20 November if you have been selected for a Free Read. For those who submitted by Monday 22 February, you will be notified by Friday 12 March if you have been selected for a Free Read.

### **I've been offered a Free Reads, what do I do next?**

Congratulations!

You either will have been selected for a full manuscript assessment or a partial manuscript assessment – please check this in your e-mail.

In the same e-mail you will also be given guidelines on what to do next and how to submit your work to us. You'll have two weeks to put your work together and send it to us via email. We will then pass it onto TLC, who will match your manuscript to a suitable reader from its list of 80+ professional editors. They will provide a written critique of your work within 4-6 weeks of the application being processed. For those who submitted by Monday 2 November, you should receive your feedback by Friday 22 January. For those who submitted by Monday 22 February, you should receive your feedback by Friday 14 May.

### **I didn't get offered a Free Reads. Can I ask for feedback?**

Unfortunately not. We receive a high number of entries for this scheme which means it isn't possible to provide feedback on each entry.

### **My question isn't listed here – what do I do?**

Drop Aliya an email at [aliya@spreadtheword.org.uk](mailto:aliya@spreadtheword.org.uk), and we'll get back to you as soon as we can.