

**Write Now** is a unique talent development programme for 16–18 year olds that aims to nurture young people's creative writing abilities. Participants are supported through mentoring, workshops and networking as well as having an opportunity to take part in **The Times and The Sunday Times Cheltenham Literature Festival**.

Here's Write Now participant Emily with her poem 'That 80s Band'.

Saturday night, and it had gone dark.

We could only see because of the glowing lights of the attractions. It was empty around us – everyone else was crowded around the main stage, squished in like sardines, listening to that 80s band your parents like.

We were running around with no real purpose, unable to keep the grins off our faces, even though our feet ached after standing up all day.

We found a helter-skelter, towering above us in its colourful glory. A gaudy red and gold castle for us to conquer. Then we were all fumbling in our pockets, scraping together the coins so we could all have a go.

round and round and round

The sound of that 80s band your parents like was our background music, our theme song, echoing around us.

round and round and round

I could feel the wind whipping my face, my hair blowing out behind me, dancing with the breeze. I was laughing, we were all laughing, but nothing was actually funny. My chest leapt with giggles as we went rocketing down.

It started to rain, then. Just a trickle, at first. The gentle patters brushed my face, mingling with the tears of laughter, but soon a downpour was upon us.

My t-shirt clung to my body, keeping me in a wet embrace. We were getting soaked – we didn't care.

Once it became unbearable, we all piled into the café, one after the other. It was a bus, an old red London bus, but they served tea, and tea was what we all needed.

So we sat there, crowded round a table on the top deck, although there were far too many of us to fit, sipping our tea in the old red London bus and looking out through the window at the rain and that 80s band your parents like. The heat of the tea on my lips filled me with warmth. A familiar taste, but a welcome one.

“This is the most British thing I’ve ever done,” I remarked, and we all laughed. It was like we were unable to stop, that evening.

And for a minute, the earth stood still, letting us have our moment.