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# Writing The Tyne Derwent Way

Pupils from Rowlands Gill Primary and  
Bridget Hamilton

 **Gateshead**  
Council



TYNE & WEAR  
BUILDING  
PRESERVATION  
TRUST

 **Newcastle**  
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## **Writing the Tyne Derwent Way**

Are you ready to step into the imaginations of pupils from Rowlands Gill Primary School as they adventure along the Tyne Derwent Way?

In July 2026, writer Bridget Hamilton worked with pupils in years 4, 5 and 6 at Rowlands Gill to explore creative writing inspired by three spots along the Tyne Derwent Way. Bridget writes young adult fiction and her debut novel for teens 'We Wait for the Stars' came out that same month. She has vast amounts of experience working with schools and community groups. Bridget encouraged pupils to use history, nature and their own imaginations to bring the Tyne Derwent Way to life.

Year 4 focused on the area surrounding the Staiths. They looked at what it was like when it was bustling with men loading coal from wagons onto ships. They looked at photos from Sirkka Liisa Konttinen from the late 1970s before they closed as a working structure and what it is like now. An important piece of mining heritage and a unique place to enjoy river views.

Year 5 travelled through time. They used sculptures you can see in the Riverside Park as magical gateways to Victorian Tyneside. Taking the date from a print in a newspaper children brought Pipewellgate in 1844 to life.

In contrast to these former industrial spots along the Tyne Year 6 used the beautiful landscape and history at Gibside as their starting point. They were introduced to Mary Eleanor Bowes, her ex-husband 'Stoney' who chopped down hundreds of trees to turn a quick profit selling them to the navy, and her son who planted thousands of trees shaping the landscape for future generations. Their writing celebrates Gibside as a wildlife haven.

The pages that follow offer a small sample of the creativity, imagination and talent shown by the pupils. Whether you're interested in local history, nature, adventure or simply great storytelling, we hope you'll enjoy reading their work and seeing these familiar places through the eyes of young writers.

Happy reading.

Elizabeth Kane  
Creative Producer Riverside Routes  
Gateshead Council Arts Development Team

## **Year 4**

I look out and see the reflective sunset and the Staiths below.

It's like a bridge.

I look out and see the city underwater.

I look out and see the city being colourful, spacious, and busy.

I look out and I was immobilised by the city.

I look out and smell the Staiths Café making meals for people.

I hear a bike skidding around the trail.

I look out and see the trees swaying from side to side.

I look out and see a blue and yellow sunset.

I look out and touch the wet, gloomy railings.

I look out and see a bridge  
split in half, decades ago.

*Ashton*



As I walked along the Staiths, I could see the busy workmen bustling around, giving signals to the boats, loading the coal on, or helping with the carts as they rolled along the tracks. It was midday, so I guessed the workers had just eaten. I could feel the cold wind hitting me as I continued my stroll across the Staiths. I could hear a loud crash of coal hitting a boat and it hurt my ears. I looked down off the edge, holding the railing, scared of falling into the cold River Tyne. On my left was a boat that was leaving, going off to deliver coal to London – or maybe even somewhere further away, in Europe.

When the boat had got so far that I knew I could not see it at all, I turned round. All of a sudden, I knocked into something, making me fall.

‘Oh no, I’m so sorry! Are you alright?’ said a man, holding his hand out to me.

‘I’m alright,’ I replied, allowing him to pull me to my feet.

‘Sure you’re okay?’ He checked.

‘Yes. Do you mind if I ask you some questions?’ I asked, hoping for a yes.

‘Not at all!’ he said. ‘It’s the least I can do after knocking you over!’

‘Do you work here?’

‘Yes, and I have done for years!’ he said.

‘What’s your actual job, then? Do you like it?’ I asked enthusiastically.

‘I’m a trimmer. I help load the coal onto the boats. The only good bit is when you get paid!’ the man said, laughing – and I laughed, too.

Just then, I realised I had been quite rude. I hadn’t asked his name!

‘Peter!’ came a loud voice.

‘Coming!’ the man shouted back. ‘I have to go,’ he said, running off.

Peter. So *that* was his name. After meeting Peter, I headed back home, crossing the bridge and watching the water splash at the sides of the Staiths.

*Mina*

## Year 5

As I wandered through Riverside Park, I came across a ginormous arch. It was nearly ten metres high, and it caught my eye instantly. The sign said it was called Rise and Fall. The colours were turquoise and silver. The air smell fresh and as I stood there, I imagined myself walking through a secret passageway. Behind it, the landscape glistened in the sunny afternoon. I heard the dogs barking across the bridge above me. The bottom of the sculpture reflected me. I heard people talking happily along the distant parts and bridges.

As I walked around it, I discovered a hidden lever. Curiously, I walked up to it and found pictures of the past. My shoulder accidentally pushed the lever down. All of a sudden, my stomach churned, and I felt myself falling down, down, down. Then everything went black.

When I woke up, everything was different. I was greeted by the thick, clotted stench of furnaces. To my shock, my new clothes were replaced with old rags and sandals. The houses were piled on top of each other, and the factories were so huge there was hardly any place for them. All of a sudden, I heard a sharp, strict voice come from the river. She looked mean, so I started to run and run and run. When I reached the river, I started to climb up a big grey block. When I reached the top, there were tonnes of coal. Some men

came up and chucked the container of coal that I was in onto a boat. I felt myself going down, down, down.

When I got back to the present, I was so happy. I ran home to tell everyone about my adventure.

*Alexa*



As I strolled through the glowing green forest, I spotted something colossal. The birdsong rang in my ears, the distant sounds of the river lapping behind me. Then I stopped, for I had arrived at my destination: the Rolling Moon.

I could feel the sculpture was cold, freezing cold. It stood there like the Millennium Bridge, the arch holding the moon towering above me. I could see myself in the shining steel: eyes hazel, hair blonde. The moon rose above it all, like the king of the castle. It made a spark of joy appear in my heart, growing and growing. There was a crunch of leaves beneath my feet and autumnal air filled my nostrils. A smile appeared on my face for I, Penny, was standing under the one and only Rolling Moon.

Suddenly I noticed a star etched into the structure.

‘Leo!’ I said, as I knew that was the constellation. And then everything happened at once. The ground disappeared beneath me, and the air turned a bright glowing blue. Fear plunged into my heart as I shot through at lightspeed. I couldn't hear anything because I was going too fast. And then I was lowered to the ground and blinked. And blinked. And blinked. Because I was in the past!

It was so busy I actually bumped into someone. I stared down myself and saw I was wearing a dress. The smell was like sewage. I was going to be sick. My

mouth tasted dry and my head began to spin, but what I saw next struck me like an arrow to the heart. The river was so polluted. It was a grimy brown colour. Was this really 1844?

I could hear the thrum of old boats chugging across the river. Horses galloping on the riverbank rushed past me and the smell of manure almost killed me. The ground was old and dirty. I spotted big clouds of pluming smoke rising from a factory. Then I realised the man I bumped into was talking to me, saying I was a clumsy girl and being very rude. I sat on a wooden doorstep and a tear ran down my cheek. I had thought of a new problem, even with the grinding and groaning noises. How was I going to get home?

I decided it would be best if I went back to the spot where it all started. But then I knew that I had made a mistake. At that moment, a horse came charging towards me at an unstoppable speed.

‘Watch out!’ yelled the man riding him. It was obvious that he was trying to stop him. I couldn’t move. A lump rose in my throat as I was knocked out. When I awoke, I was lying beneath the Rolling Moon, and I knew I had just had the adventure of a lifetime.

*Penny*

## Year 6

### Oak Tree

I am the colour of fresh lettuce. I live in a place where there is mud on the ground, most likely in a forest. My trunk is like a crumbling rock and has the scales of an armadillo. My body moves like a flower in the wind. I am almost as big as the Column to Liberty. If you saw me, you would probably ask... Am I the first to see this tree? How many animals live inside it?

8.30am. The sun was beaming through the gaps in the leaves. I could see the other trees swishing in the wind. Almost like they are running from something. I could see people taking photos of me.

It's getting lighter, so I will unfold my leaves. Soon there will be insects returning and people visiting once again. I am thankful for being planted here in the first place.

*Ellie*

## Great Crested Newt

I am black with a bright coloured crest - orange, yellow, or red. If you saw me (lucky thing) you would think I'm disgusting or, if *you're* disgusting, you'd think I'm cute. But some people just don't appreciate my beauty. My skin is wet and squidgy. My body moves like a snake. I live in muddy water. I am the size of a glue stick – a tiny little creature. I am right next to Gibside, in the river, underneath a bunch of leaves hanging over my home.

As I swim up towards the surface, the reflection of trees and leaves cast shadows above me. I climb up the river bank to the orangery for a snack. Bugs and tiny little creatures... but as light comes and the sun appears over the horizon, it's time to go home. Soon there will be parents dragging children along – always a fun sight to watch.

This is my sanctuary.

*Tom*

