

Featured Writer Lily Sunset

Lily Sunset, 20, is from Portland and likes to draw, write and cook. She also appreciates her sleep. She participated in a Write Around Portland workshop in high school and several years later began writing again at another Write Around Portland workshop in Spring 2019. Lily is now working on writing a book that's like "*Stranger Things* and *Us* had a baby."



As the Wind Blew by Lily Sunset

It started with hello. On a warm Thursday afternoon in the summer. That deep, sweet and beautiful hello. Usually I'm not the type to have a full conversation about anything with a stranger, but something about him was hard to walk away from. As the conversation continued I realized he only lived down the street. That summer I was happy I had a new friend. We had so much in common. The season changed and so did the conversations, and just as that hot summer wind blew away so did the talks, the feelings and the care. And just like the beginning he was back to being someone who just lived down the street.

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Interview with Featured Writer Lily Sunset

Interviewed by workshop facilitator Rachel Peters

How did you hear about the workshop?

My mom. At first she was like "I went to this writing class" and I was like, "Uh, that's boring." But she came home and she had this really cool notebook. I wanted one, so I decided I was going to go just to get a notebook. So I went and I was like "I'm going to stay. I'll be back, I'll be back." And I kept coming back.

There was one workshop where you, your mom and your brother were all able to attend together. What was that like?

I was a little bit stressed because my brother likes to talk a lot. But it was fun. We don't do a lot of family things like that together—maybe play games or have a movie night—but me and my momma don't do a whole lot of stuff together.

What was your experience like in the workshop? What made you come back?

My experience was amazing. I didn't have any problems with anyone. I didn't feel uncomfortable. I felt a little nervous because I hate reading in front of people, but overall it was a really, really good experience.

I'm so glad to hear that. What did you learn from this experience?

I learned to concentrate on one thing. To expand my thoughts after hearing people write, after our prompts. To go out of my comfort zone.

What was it like to be included in the anthology?

I was very excited to be published. I was like okay, two times now. I'm doing something that I like and people are enjoying it as much as I'm enjoying it. It felt good.

You were in a Write Around Portland workshop when you were in high school. What was it like to be in another workshop as an adult?

I liked it because it was another outlet to get my feelings and emotions out, and to see how much I've progressed in my writing from freshman year to now. It was a nice entryway back into doing something that I stopped doing for a very long time.

Why did you stop writing?

When I got into high school, after that workshop, a lot of stuff happened. At school, with family, and instead of using that as a way to help get through it, it was like "I don't want to do anything." I stopped playing my instruments, I stopped writing, I stopped drawing. I kind of shut off.

How did it feel to start up again?

It feels great. My mom saw that it helped. And it did. It helped a lot. I feel better. It was nice to write what you want, instead of someone telling you "you have to write exactly like this."

What was it like to write and share in a community of people?

I always had one style of writing. Hearing them was like "that's a fun way to write" or "I kind of like that too—let me see if I can incorporate some of their ideas into my stories."

What was your favorite part of the workshop?

The whole thing. Having the space to write. And having you there. You made it fun and there was zero judgement at all. It was just a really comfortable environment.

Wow—thank you! I'm really happy to hear that. Would you recommend Write Around Portland to other people?

I would. My godmom and a few other people have asked me about it and if there were more going on. I was like yeah, look into it, because I would do another one and I definitely recommend it. It was really fun.

Any advice for people who are on the fence about going to a workshop?

Try it. Be open minded. See if you like it. Writing isn't for everyone. Even if you might not like it, you'll probably tell someone else you went, and they might go and see what it's like. Just be open minded.

Anything else you want to add?

I'm glad Write Around Portland is around. I'm really glad it's around. It's amazing. The past ten years, my life has been super crazy. There's been more bad outweighing the good. Then this just coming in, and I could take that spot and not worry about anything else. Definitely a really amazing outlet to get a lot of emotions and feelings out.