

Featured Writer Keenan J. Krum

Keenan J. Krum, 21, has been developing characters and creating worlds ever since he played NES (Nintendo Entertainment System) at his grandma's house as a kid. *Why is Mario doing that?* he'd wonder. He's been writing stories—in his head, in his journal, and on his blog—ever since. This past fall, Keenan participated in a Write Around Portland workshop as part of Springdale Job Corps' job training program for young adults. After graduating from Springdale Job Corps, Keenan says he's going after a job at Nintendo.



Language

Keenan J. Krum

There is language all around us, and while it surrounds us, there is much we have yet to understand. There is English, Japanese, Spanish, road signs, even a person's individual behavior is a language of its own. There is language all around us. We speak it, hear it, see it, feel it, language is something we experience in our lives every single day, but it's only when we can truly understand it that language becomes the music it wanted to be all along. Language, like music, is art, and like art, only when it is understood can that art be truly realized and appreciated.

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Interview with Featured Writer Keenan J. Krum

Interview by volunteer facilitator Kelsey Allen.

What sparked your interest in writing?

Reading *The Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter* and a lot of comic books. I liked reading about worlds and thinking about what if I could create my own. I started writing stuff in elementary school.

How did you hear of the Write Around Portland workshop?

It was at a Monday morning meeting here at Job Corps. I didn't know what to expect from it, but I like writing, so I decided to try it out.

What was it like?

It was fun getting to meet others around me, getting to interact with other people, seeing their skills and sharing mine.

The hardest thing for me when it comes to writing is figuring out what I'm going to write about, so having a prompt as a jumping off point was helpful.

What kind of things did you end up writing about?

I definitely like to write based on personal experiences because it's easier to make it more detailed, because I saw the details myself. When it comes to fantasy, it's just creating stuff that I like to see, creating a world that I wish I lived in.

I have a character I created called Melinda Kivi (Kivi is based off my nickname Kiwi). It's a female character because I like reading about and seeing strong female characters, like Lara Croft or Samus Aran. So I started with a female character. Using her, I create her in different video games that allow you to use character creation. I use all those games to fuel her backstory, her motivations, what kind of person she could be so that when I create her in stories I can form that around her.

How did it feel to get feedback about your writing?

It felt nice. Not a lot of people see my stories because I don't go around advertising what I did. It was nice to have that feedback.

What was it like to hear others' stories?

It was cool. I don't read a lot, so I'm not exposed to other people's work aside from movies and comic books and manga.

Did you see that something you said is featured on the back cover of the anthology? This workshop has not only opened myself up to a greater potential, helping my writing improve, but it has also opened my eyes to see the people around me... Could you say more about that?

I know I love writing. I guess sometimes I forget that other people around me also love writing. So whenever I'm writing, I think, Oh, I wonder if anyone else is writing right now? What are they writing about? So it's kind of nice to see the people who are doing those things and what they can do.

What was it like seeing your piece, "Language", published in the anthology and then reading it at the community reading?

It was really cool being able to see people's reactions and having a physical form. I've typed out all my stuff, but I haven't actually put it in a book, so it was cool to see it in a physical form with all these other stories. And I wasn't expecting being on the back of it as well. That was a pretty cool surprise.

It was interesting hearing the story that the title, Know These Mountains, was based off too. I didn't really know what to think about it at first, but it definitely got me thinking about a lot of different things. That guy was pretty cool. Talking to him afterward, he seemed nice.

How did participating in the workshop affect your writing?

I'd say it improved my writing. I have a little more drive to do it. Before when I was trying to write, I had trouble finding things to write about. So now if I want to write something, I'll look up prompts online. I do the first one that pops up.

What was your favorite part of the workshop?

I liked the free writes. I used to not write on a daily or weekly basis, so trying to force my mind to figure something out quickly and having a time limit, like seeing what I can do in that time—and of course, seeing what others can do.

What would you tell someone who's considering taking a Write Around Portland workshop but isn't sure if it's for them?

Definitely do it. It's fun to explore your horizons and your own skills and see what you can build onto them. It's a really great program. It's sort of like Job Corps in a way—you go here trying to do something specific, and then you learn all these other things along the way. It was a really good experience.