



# Adult Literacy and Numeracy

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- 45% of adults in Scotland do not have the knowledge and skills required to understand and to use information from texts (Scottish Survey of Adult Literacies Report 2009)
- Lower literacy skills are linked to poverty and people with lower literacy scores are more likely to have health problems, suffer from depression, be unemployed.
- Less likely to participate in society.

- We know that low levels of literacy are linked to physical and mental health issues and a lack of participation in society

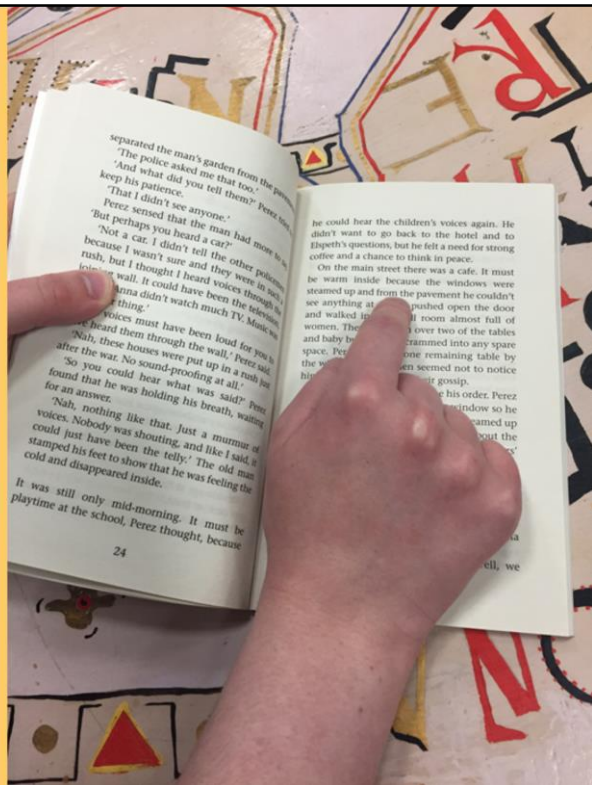


- Learning is at the heart of everything we do.
- Increasing women's confidence, skills, knowledge and understanding and nurturing their desire to learn more.
- Using our collections to remove barriers to participation, to increase women's cultural capital, to enable women to participate fully in society and to find their voice.

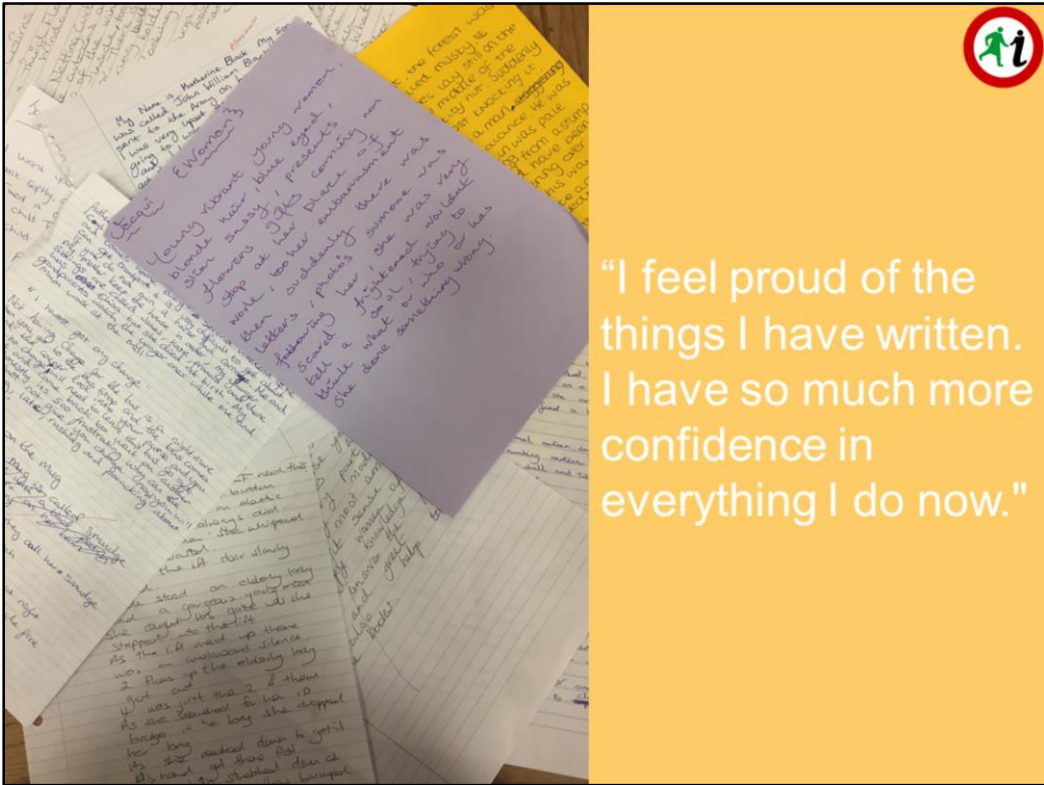
We use a social practice approach – about learners developing capabilities in making decisions, solving problems and expressing ideas and critical opinions about the world.



“Before, I was so isolated. I was excluded because I was different. These classes have made me belong to something and feel good about myself.”



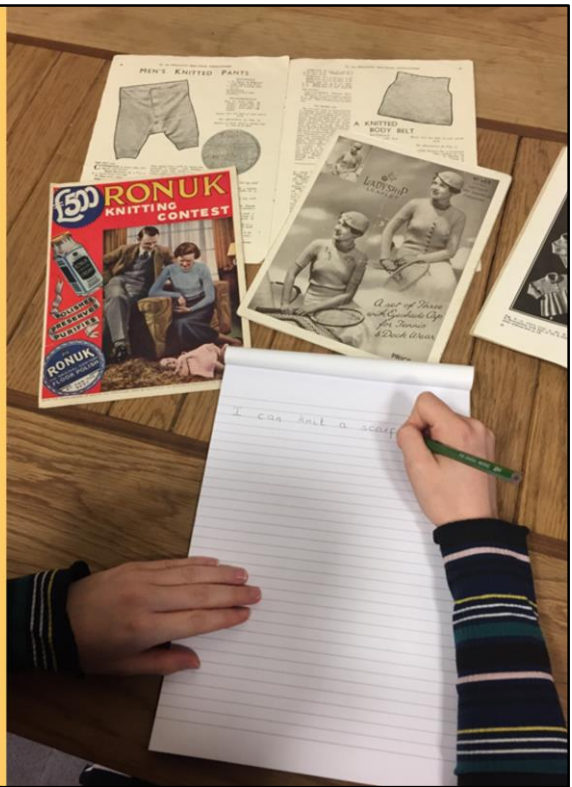
Learners from all backgrounds – women who have experienced abuse, women who've been trafficked, refugees and asylum seekers, women with mental health issues, physical disabilities.



- Women who face many barriers to learning. Many have had bad experiences of learning in the past.



"One day I hope I can help other people learn that they too have a talent and to believe in themselves"



- Women come for many different reasons – because they've never learned to read and write, because they want to be able to help their children with their homework, because they're going back to college after a long break, because they want to be able to tell their story. Sometimes they come because they now feel the time is right to do something for themselves at last. Our museum and archive collections are truly accessible to all of those who come here and we give additional support to those who face barriers of whatever sort. Women don't just come in and do their literacy. What we do is fully integrated. We use the museum collection to inspire learning.



## Literacy learning taking place in the archive

- Literacy learner Mary Alice using GWL's collection to learn about women's history, improve her literacy and increase her confidence. We are cataloguing suffrage newspaper Jus Suffragii. In this session we discussed when women in different countries got the vote, trafficking, Excel spreadsheets, museum conservation, spelling, feminism, languages.



Taking the archive out into communities

I was asked to run a 10 week literacy course with a group of young mothers in another area of Glasgow. Two years later the group is still going strong. 3 of the group are also now involved in a community organisation to provide healthy and cheap meals to the community.





## Creative Writing For Fearties: Dear Me

Saturday 17th March, 1pm to 3pm, £2/  
Free, Women only

You asked, we listened; this Spring we have not one but two Creative Writing For Fearties Specials. This year sees the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Representation of the People Act when women over the age of 30 who met a property qualification were granted the right to vote. We're celebrating this auspicious occasion with a Creative Writing Special using the striking pro- and anti-Suffragette postcards from our collection. With their intriguing images and miscellany of mixed messages, there is a wealth of material to mine for creative writing gems.

We have regular Creative Writing For Fearties sessions – a supportive and encouraging place for women to try creative writing. Again, we use items from our collection to inspire creativity.



Every year we hold a writing competition called Bold Types. Shortlisted authors come and read their poems and stories out in front of our judges and an audience.



The winners receive a big bag of books and a mentoring session with one of our lovely judges.



In our weekly Story Café sessions where women get together over lunch, listen to stories and poems being read out loud, and discuss what they have heard. It is a no-pressure, accessible group suitable for women who are new to reading, or women whose first language isn't English.



## Drama Queens

Our archive and library collections also contain plays – Edwardian suffragette plays, quaint 1940s drawing room comedies, 1970s Women’s Liberation plays and more modern works. Our Drama Queens get together and simply read plays. Armchair drama without the stage fright.

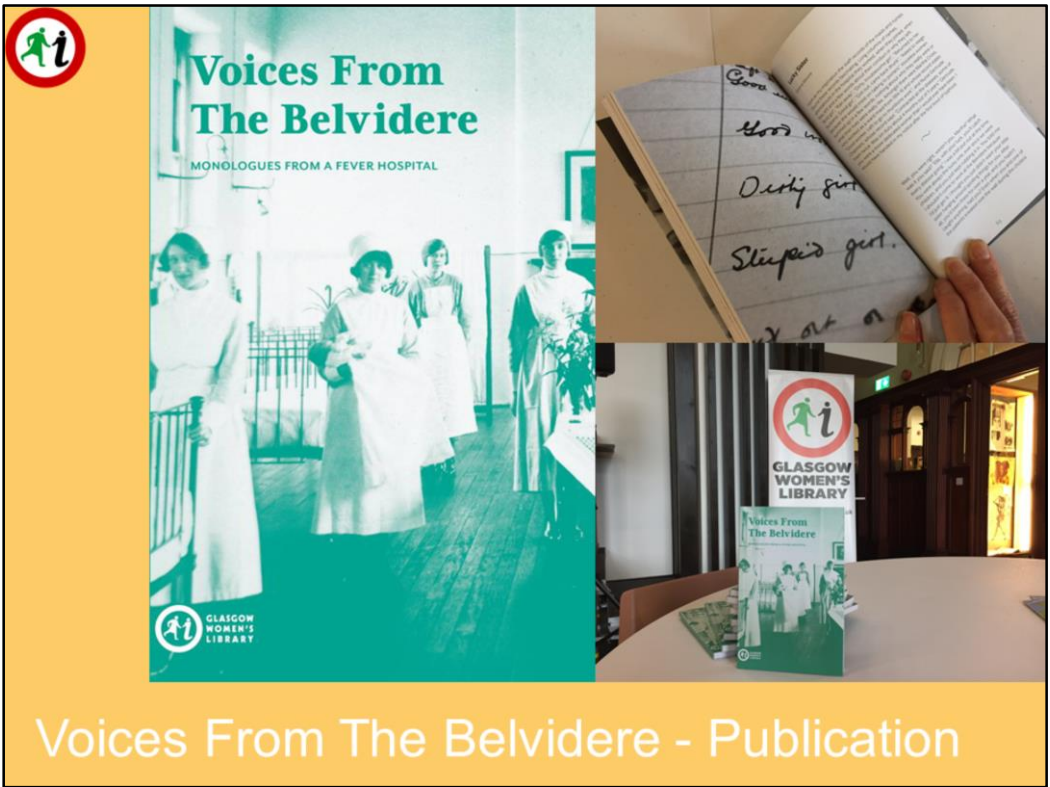


Over the summer, we've even been adapting a Muriel Spark short story to mark the centenary of her birth.



## Voices From The Belvidere

Archives, creative writing and drama come together once again in *Voices From The Belvidere*. We received a donation relating to a local woman who was a nurse in a fever hospital, long gone now but which was just along the road from us. Women researched women from the past who worked there or who were patients there in and around the time of WW1. Some of the participants then wrote fictional monologues for their chosen patient, nurse, scullery maid or the rare woman doctor.



## Voices From The Belvidere - Publication

The monologues were published





## Voices From The Belvidere - Performance

And all the monologues were performed by their authors. I'm particularly proud of the fact that, of the 17 monologues, 3 were written by literacy learners, who can now call themselves published authors.

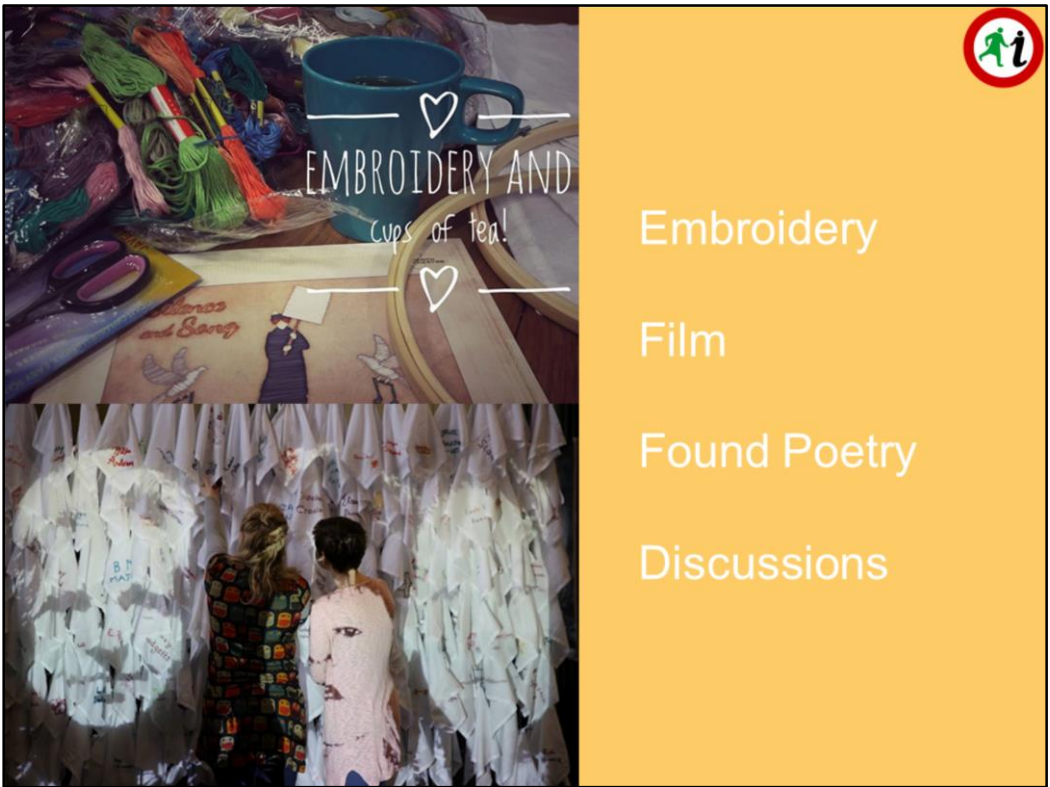


Silence and Song

Partnership with the  
National Theatre of  
Scotland.



We do a lot of work in partnership. This was a project with the National Theatre of Scotland around their play, 306 Day, about the wives, mothers and sisters of the 306 British soldiers who were shot at dawn for cowardice or desertion during WW1. We researched their names and embroidered them on handkerchiefs.



Those handkerchiefs then formed a screen on which a film was projected. We also did found poetry and had discussions around the role of women in WW1.



I love the fact that at GWL we are all given the freedom to be individuals and follow our own interests, too. I have the freedom to do what might be considered stepping out of my role as straightforward literacy and numeracy worker. I was appointed Writer in Residence for an advocacy organisation in Kirkintilloch, which gave me the opportunity to take items from our collection out to inspire creative writing. GWL also supports me in my creative writing PhD which is related to women's history. Literacy learners can be, and are, involved in every aspect of the museum, archive and library's work. And why shouldn't they be? Removing barriers to arts, culture and learning, including accessing museum collections, improving confidence and allowing diverse voices to be heard is what we're all about and literacy is an integrated part of that.