

Each month we will focus on an inspiring author based in or writing about Wales! You'll have an introduction to their latest book, what inspires them to write, and any advice they have for young writers!

Get to know

Joshua Jones



Joshua Jones (he/him) is a queer, autistic writer and artist from Llanelli, South Wales. He has an MA in Creative Writing from Bath Spa University, and has been published by *Gutter Magazine*, *The Pomegranate London*, *Poetry Wales*, *Broken Sleep Books*, and more. He has been commended by the Poetry Society and his story 'Half Moon, New Year' was shortlisted for the Rhys Davies Short Story Prize in 2021. His 'poetic installations' have been exhibited at Glynn Vivian Gallery, Swansea, Ty Turner House in Penarth, and elsewhere. His collaborative pamphlet with artist Caitlin Flood-Molyneux, *Fistful of Flowers*, was published in 2022. *Local Fires* is his debut fiction publication.



Summary:

Local Fires sees debut writer Joshua Jones turn his focus to his birthplace of Llanelli, South Wales. Sardonic and melancholic, joyful and grieving, these multifaceted stories may be set in a small town, but they have reach far beyond their locality. From the inertia of living in an ex-industrial working-class area, to gender, sexuality, toxic masculinity and neurodivergence, Jones has crafted a collection versatile in theme and observation, as the misadventures of the town's inhabitants threaten to spill over into an incendiary finale.

In this stunning series of interconnected tales, fires both literal and metaphorical, local and all-encompassing, blaze together to herald the emergence of a singular new Welsh literary voice.

What inspired you to write *Local Fires*?

I began writing *Local Fires* in 2019, when I began my MA in Creative Writing at Bath Spa University. Before then I was mainly writing and performing poetry. I had wanted to write prose for a long time, but I couldn't get over the barrier. I felt, because of my Autism and ADHD, which, for me, comes with impatience and short attention span, that I wouldn't be able to sit down and write.

When I did eventually begin writing the first stories that would make up *Local Fires*, I was inspired by real memories of my hometown, the people that live there and documented my experiences growing up. The awkwardness of my teenage years, experiences of toxic masculinity, casual homophobia, the generational despair of a town emptied of industry and employment.

How did you know you wanted to be a writer and when?

My mum says I always wrote when I was young, but I can't remember, and I haven't seen much evidence of it. But I was a big reader since primary school – often getting in trouble because I refused to do my work, and wanted to read instead. I was actually

punished for reading! I got into writing properly in college, especially poetry. I began performing spoken word in college after I discovered Arab Strap, whose vocalist, Aidan Moffat, primarily performs spoken word (and in a very strong Scots accent).

Do you enjoy other creative processes except for writing?

I like to make collage, and use experimental writing techniques including cut-up text. I have an occasional music project called Human Head. I also create installation art that utilises video, paint, sound, photography and found objects.

In what way have libraries influenced you during your lifetime?

Llanelli library practically brought me up, according to my mother. I would get hyper-focussed on reading, I loved it so much, but we didn't have the money to keep up with the rate I read. Libraries are crucial to families with very little income. I would do all-nighters in the library when writing my third-year dissertation. When I visit a new city I love to check out the library – when I went to Oslo last year on holiday, I spent an hour or two looking around the central library, which also had a bar/restaurant and a cinema!

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