

About Lydia Syson's author events for schools

Lydia Syson is an award-winning Young Adult author with a passion for bringing alive neglected areas of history through fiction. Her novels explore the lives of ordinary young people caught up in extraordinary events, including the Spanish Civil War, the Battle of Britain and, most recently, the 1871 Paris Commune, France's last revolutionary uprising. Lydia Syson has worked with words and stories all her life: she started her career as a radio producer for the BBC World Service and then went on to write a PhD on poets, explorers and Timbuktu followed by a biography of the 18th century fertility guru known as 'the Electric Doctor', Dr James Graham. She is a National Literacy Trust trained author and a Royal Literary Fund writing fellow.

Lydia's events for schools are suitable for Key Stages 3, 4 and 5, and can be delivered with an emphasis on English, History, Spanish or French. Creative writing workshops offer insight into how a real writer works, with a focus on using primary source material of different kinds to fire the imagination.

Find out more about Lydia and the historical background to her books on her website: www.lydiasyson.com

Novels:

Liberty's Fire (published May 2015)

'Fascinating and terrifying!' *Teach Secondary*

This novel, set in Paris in 1871, was written with the support of an Arts Council grant.

That Burning Summer (published October 2013)

'a very different sort of World War II story, set on the Home Front and providing an intriguing insight into the rarely-mentioned role of Britain's Polish allies in the war effort', it 'simmers with tension and intensity' *Booktrust*

A World Between Us (published October 2012)

'an outstanding debut novel for teenagers' *The Guardian*.

Set among the International Brigaders of the Spanish Civil War, *A World Between Us* received a special Highly Commended Award from the judges of the Branford Boase Award and was also nominated for the Carnegie Medal, shortlisted for the WeRead Award and longlisted for the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize, Waterstone's Children's Book Prize and the UKLA Book Award.

Events:

A World Between Us - illustrated, interactive talk

An introduction to the Spanish Civil War, 1936-9 and why it was so important in Britain. This covers the rise of fascism in Europe in the 1930s, the role of nurses and journalists in the war, the use of propaganda and the bombing of Guernica.

Supports Spanish Civil War units in Highers and AS level history

Follow-up creative writing workshop: *Inspiration from history*. This workshop uses Picasso's *Guernica*, newspaper coverage of the event, and poems written during the Spanish Civil War to inspire students to write a poem or prose piece about the bombing of the Basque town in 1937, which horrified the world.

That Burning Summer – illustrated, interactive talk

An introduction to life on the Home Front in 1940, the point at which Britain believed it was about to be invaded, and the role of Polish pilots in the Battle of Britain. Discovering history through landscape and propaganda. Supports GCSE History courses covering Britain at War (1939-45)

Follow-up creative writing workshop: *Spyfever!* This workshop uses the Ministry of Information leaflet, *If the invader comes*, (whose seven rules provide the structure for *That Burning Summer*) to develop writing about place inspired by a combination of familiar locations and historical sources.

Liberty's Fire – illustrated, interactive talk.

The challenges of writing a novel about a significant event few people have heard of, over which historians still argue.

Follow-up creative writing workshop: *Characters from history*. This workshop uses historical, visual sources, particularly photography but also paintings, to develop characterisation skills. How to imagine the past through the individuals who inhabited it.