

From the Cauldron: Women's Voices in the 21st Century Competition 2025/26

Last Updated: 31.10.2025

Prize: Inclusion in a published anthology

The Competition closes at 12pm on Friday 30 January 2026.

Together Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook are delighted to launch a new short story competition, celebrating our diverse community of women writers and those writers who identify as female.

We invite you to take up space on the page and share the stories – whether fiction or memoir – that make us who we are. You don't need to be a professional writer – just someone with a story to tell. We're looking for voices that challenge silence and celebrate the many ways women navigate and own our power. Twenty writers will have their work professionally edited and published in an anthology and will receive two complimentary copies of the book each.

The winners will be announced on International Women's Day **Sunday 8 March 2026**. The resulting book will be published and launched in **October 2026** at an event hosted by The Boathouse Studios.

How to Enter

Please read all the Rules and T&Cs below carefully.

Write a piece that challenges silence and celebrates the many ways women navigate and own their power. Your writing can be fiction or memoir of no more than **4,000 words long**. Your piece should be a bold authentic narrative that explores how women rise, resist, and reclaim their space in the world.

(We reserve the right to reject entries on grounds of taste, decency and where the legality or morality of content is in question).

Email your entries with a completed entry form (You can find this at the end of this document) to pentoprint@lbld.gov.uk with the Subject Line: **From The Cauldron Competition**

Only one entry per person will be allowed.

Entries must be received before **12pm on Friday 30 January 2026**.

From the Cauldron: Women's Voices in the 21st Century Competition Rules, Terms and Conditions

- The competition is open to all women and those who identify as female and are residents of the United Kingdom, i.e., England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. There is no minimum age. However, entrants under the age of 18 must provide contact details of a parent or guardian when entering.
- Employees, Officers or Council Members, their immediate families (including any live-in partner or household member) of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, The

Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook may not enter. This also includes:

- Any company/organisation involved in the organisation, management, promotion, or administration of the competition or its entry routes or donation of prizes or their agents or subsidiaries.
 - Any company/organisation involved in any capacity in the sponsorship of a competition or competition prize.
- Where an entrant requires the details of their parent/guardian, LBBD Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook reserve the right to seek proof of age.
 - LBBD Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook may ask for evidence to verify the identity of an entrant at any time and may use any channels and methods available to carry out checks of any details provided. **Entrants may only enter the competition in their own name.**
 - By entering the competition, you agree that the LBBD Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios, ByTheBook and London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (LBBD) have permission to publish and/or reproduce in full or part any of your work submitted in any format using any media it chooses.
 - By entering the competition entrants confirm that all information submitted by them is true, current, and complete.
 - Entrants confirm that they are the copyright owners of any copyright works submitted, e.g., scripts, photographs and drawings, and LBBD Pen to Print's, The Boathouse Studio's and ByTheBook's use of such works (which you permit) will not infringe the rights of any third party.
 - Entries must be the exclusive work of the author.
 - Entries must not have been produced wholly or in part using Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies. Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook reserve the right to investigate if AI technology has been used, by any means at its disposal.
 - Entries must be typed in **English**, **not** have been published before and **not** be entered in any other competition.
 - Scripts must be typed using **double-spaced text** in a Microsoft Word document format (.doc or .docx) in **Arial** font, **12pt. size**.
 - Printed entries must be on **A4** size paper.
 - All entries will be judged anonymously: **do not** include your name on the manuscript or in the file name.
 - All entries must have entrants, Name, Address, contact telephone number and email address and the title of their submission **on the competition entry form**.
 - The title of the short story and a page number **must appear on every page**.

- Entries which exceed the stated length will be disqualified.
- **Pieces** must not be more than **4,000** words in length.
- The judges' decisions are final.
- No correspondence can be entered into.
- Amendments cannot be made to entries after they have been submitted, nor substitutions made.
- Please note that scripts cannot be returned, so you are advised to keep a copy of your work.
- Neither Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook nor its servants, agents, nor any other party or organisation involved in the management, promotion, or administration of the competition or its entry routes or donation of prizes or their agents or subsidiaries involved in the competition will accept responsibility or liability for any error, omission, interruption, deletion, defect, delay in operation or transmission, communications line failure, theft, destruction, alteration of, or unauthorised access to entries, or entries lost or delayed whether or not arising during operation or transmission as a result of server functions (including but not limited to security functions by software used or any third party), virus, bugs, or other causes outside its control.
- Entries submitted through agents or third parties or in bulk (i.e., more entries than a human being could submit in the time available without the use of software or other devices designed to make automated entries or, in the case of postal entries, more than three entries submitted under the same postage stamp) will not be accepted. Entrants may enter as many times as they like unless otherwise indicated in the competition information but no more than one prize per person per competition will be awarded.
- Any entries which are incomplete, incorrect, inaudible, incomprehensible, or not received by LBBD Pen to Print will be void.
- In the event of any fault, mistake, misunderstanding or dispute concerning the correctness or acceptability of the entry or any answers given by entrants (if applicable), or the operation of any part of the competition (in the case of postal entries, a postal strike for example), network or phone system, the decision of LBBD Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook shall be final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- LBBD Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook will not be liable to reimburse expenses incurred in making an entry in any competition. Where LBBD Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook decides in its sole discretion that an entrant is eligible for a refund of entry fees (if applicable), eligibility for refunds will be notified to relevant entrants. LBBD Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook reserves the right to refuse to refund any fee or costs incurred where it suspects dishonest or fraudulent conduct on the sender's part or where the entrant has not complied with the rules of the competition.

Prizes

- The prize is as specified in the competition information.
- LBBB Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook will attempt to notify the winner within 21 days after the closing date, or as otherwise indicated in the competition information, and where time is of the essence for such a period as LBBB Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook shall in its absolute discretion deem reasonable. They will be contacted on the phone number, email address provided when entering the competition. The winner will have a specified fixed time period in which to claim their prize. If LBBB Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook are unable to notify the winner, or if the winner fails to respond within the fixed time period as specified and/or provide an address for delivery of the prize, this may result in forfeiture of the prize and LBBB Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook reserves the right to select an alternative winner in accordance with these terms and conditions and the competition information.
- LBBB Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook may in its sole discretion refuse to provide a prize, or seek its recovery, in the event of non-entitlement under these terms or an entrant's breach of these terms.
- Any entrant who enters or attempts to enter the Competition in a manner, which in LBBB Pen to Print's, The Boathouse Studio's and ByTheBook's determination is contrary to these terms and conditions or by its nature is unfair to other entrants may be removed from the Competition at LBBB Pen to Print's, The Boathouse Studio's and ByTheBook's sole discretion.
- LBBB Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook reserves the right to modify, cancel, terminate or suspend the Competition in whole or in part, at its sole discretion, if it believes the Competition is not capable of being conducted as specified in these terms and conditions or in the event of a virus, computer bug or unauthorised human intervention or any other cause that is beyond the reasonable control of LBBB Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook that could corrupt or affect the administration, security, impartiality, or normal course of the Competition.
- LBBB Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook reserves the right in its sole discretion to withhold delivery of the prize until such proof of eligibility and identity has been confirmed or if such proof is not produced on request to disqualify the entrant from the competition.
- LBBB Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook shall try to deliver the prize to the winner within 28 days from the date of the announcement unless otherwise specified to the winner. Delivery restrictions may apply. No cash equivalent (where applicable) or alternative prize will be given and the prize is non-transferable and non-exchangeable. However, LBBB Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook reserves the right to change the prize due to circumstances beyond its control or to offer an alternative of similar value.
- In relation to all competitions, the first name and surname of the winner may be published by LBBB Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook and entrants grant to LBBB Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook a non-exclusive licence to use and publish their entry in any media for the purpose of announcing the winner.

Data Protection and Publicity

- LBBB Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook (or any third party nominated by LBBB Pen to Print) may exercise its sole discretion to use the winner's (and if applicable their companion's) name, address, and image and their comments relating to the prize and competition experience for future promotional, marketing and publicity purposes in any media worldwide without notice or without any fee being paid.
- Information, data ("personal data") which is provided by entrants when they enter will be held and used by LBBB Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook and their suppliers and contractors in order to administer the competition, for the purposes of evaluation and to report to funders.
- We will also use Information, data ("personal data") to contact you about future opportunities to work with us in the future. You can opt out of this contact by emailing us at pentoprint@lbbd.gov.uk
- By submitting their personal details, the entrant agrees to LBBB Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook processing those details in accordance with the purposes made known the entrant at the time of collection and in accordance with LBBB privacy policy which can be viewed at www.lbbd.gov.uk.
- LBBB Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook shall comply with all applicable requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation, any successor legislation or other applicable law.

Liability

- Nothing in these terms and conditions shall exclude or limit LBBB Pen to Print's, The Boathouse Studio's and ByTheBook's liability for death or personal injury caused by their staff or supplier's negligence or for fraud. Subject to this, LBBB Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook cannot accept any responsibility for any damage, loss, injury or disappointment suffered by any entrant entering the competition or as a result of accepting any prize. LBBB Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook is not responsible for any problems or technical malfunction of any telephone network or lines, computer on-line systems, servers, or providers, computer equipment, software failure of any email or entry to be received on account of technical problems or traffic congestion on the Internet, telephone lines or at any web site, or any combination thereof, including any injury or damage to entrant's or any other person's computer or mobile telephone related to or resulting from participation or downloading any materials in the competition.
- LBBB Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook cannot promise that the services relating to the competition will be free from errors or omissions nor that they will be available uninterrupted and in a fully operating condition. These services may be suspended temporarily and without notice in the case of system failure, maintenance or repair or for reasons reasonably beyond the control of LBBB Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook. LBBB Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook will not be liable in the event that all or any part of the service relating to the competition is discontinued, modified or changed in any way.

Standard terms

- By entering a competition entrants accept these terms and conditions together with any specific instructions and terms for such competition which may be mentioned in any electronic messages, or on the website, or communicated to entrants in any other way ("competition information"). Such competition information shall prevail in the event of there being any inconsistency between these competition terms and conditions and any competition information.
- London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (LBBD) Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook may cancel or amend any competition, competition information, or these terms and conditions without prior notice. Any changes will be posted either within the competition information or these terms and conditions.
- In the event that any entrant does not, or is unable to, comply with and meet these terms and conditions and the competition information, LBBD Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook shall be entitled at its sole discretion to disqualify such entrant, without any further liability to such entrant. In these circumstances, any prize(s) won by the entrant may be forfeited and LBBD Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook reserves the right to reclaim any prize(s) already distributed to the entrant. Any entrant must comply with any directions given to them by LBBD Pen to Print, The Boathouse Studios and ByTheBook including but not limited to any and all relevant laws, rules and applicable regulatory codes.
- The promoter of the competition is LBBD Pen to Print, Dagenham Library 1 Church Elm Lane Dagenham, Essex RM10 9QS.

Any questions about the competition should be emailed to: pentoprint@lbbd.gov.uk

These terms and conditions were last updated on **31 October 2025**.

Competition Entry Form 2025/26

(If you are under 18 years old this must be completed by a parent, carer, teacher or other responsible adult over 18.) Once completed please email this form with your entry to: pentoprint@lbbd.gov.uk

Full Name:

Pen Name (optional):

Contact Number:

Contact Email:

Address:

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Post Code:

I have entered (Name of competition): **From the Cauldron: Women's Voices in the 21st Century**

The title of my entry is:

Genre (If applicable):

I confirm I have read and agree to the Terms & Conditions applicable to this competition. (please tick/click the box): ☐

Please read the Pen to Print Terms and Conditions of Submission: <https://pentoprint.org/tandcs/>

I confirm I have read and agree to the Pen to Print Terms & Conditions of Submission

(please tick/click the box): ☐

Name of signatory:

Signature:

Date:

If signing for an under 18-year-old (You must be over 18): Parent ☐ / Carer ☐ / Teacher ☐ / Other ☐ (Please tick/click whichever applies.) If 'Other' please tell us in what capacity you are signing:

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(For the purposes of meeting current GDPR legislation please note, you may be required to complete further media permission forms.)

How did you hear about this competition?

Which social media do you use to follow Pen to Print?

Equality & Diversity (Completion is optional)

What is your age?

Under 16 / 16-19 / 20-24 / 25-29 / 30-34 / 35-39 / 40-44 / 45-49 / 50-54 / 55-59 / 60-64 / 65-69 / 70-74 / 75+ / Prefer not to say (circle as applicable)

What best describes your current or most recent occupation?

Unemployed, employed, part-time employed, self-employed, apprentice, full-time student, retired, prefer not to say (circle as applicable). Other - please specify:

(Please only complete the section below if you are over the age of 18.)

What is your gender?

Female / Male / Intersex / Prefer not to say (circle as applicable)

Is your gender identity the same as the sex you were assigned at birth?

Yes / No / Prefer not to say (circle as applicable)

How would you describe your gender identity?

Man / Non-Binary / Woman / Prefer not to say (circle as applicable).

Prefer to self-describe:

How would you describe your sexual orientation?

Bisexual / Gay Man / Gay Woman or Lesbian / Heterosexual / Queer / Prefer not to say (circle as applicable). Prefer to self-describe:

Which ethnicity do you identify as?

Do you identify as a D/deaf and/or D/disabled person or have a long-term health condition?

Yes / No / Prefer not to say (circle as applicable).

Do you identify as neurodivergent? (Being Neurodivergent could include Dyslexia, ADHD etc.).

Yes / No / Prefer not to say (circle as applicable).