



# Hello, I'm **Amelia B Kyazze**

**Author \ Photographer**  
**Editor \ Creative writing mentor**

I have written many short stories and last year I published my debut novel, *Into the Mouth of the Lion*, in May 2021.

I have other novels that are finished and hope to soon be able to announce when they will be published and out with readers.

## **MY JOB DESCRIPTION**

### **How did I get started as a writer?**

I've always loved books and creative writing, ever since I was a young kid growing up in the USA. At the age of ten I was writing short plays and my friends and I would act them out on stage. I was lucky to go to an extremely creative primary school, and in secondary school I really liked English and art, but also trying to figure out people. I thought I was going to be a psychologist, but I later changed my mind.

In university I studied a huge range of things: from photography to art history, biology to African-American literature. I finally settled on anthropology, because I was very interested in people, cultures, and the wider world. And I also worked in a darkroom after my photography classes, and earned a grant to go and take pictures for my study abroad term in Nepal, in Asia.

After university, I had this feeling that I didn't have the life experience yet to write in depth. I also had a keen sense of social justice, and after what I had witnessed in Nepal with the living conditions of Tibetan refugees, I wanted to work for a refugee organisation and help people in some way.

### **Humanitarian work:**

I got a job with a small charity based in Washington DC, called Refugees International. Because it was a small team, they needed the staff to do a little bit of everything; I was busy writing and editing their reports, and helping with their website and publications.

Later, I travelled to the field during the Kosovo conflict (in the Balkans); there I supported the senior staff by taking photos and taking notes during interviews, learning so much as I went.

After a couple of years I took a year out to do a graduate degree in international relations in London. Then I got a job with Oxfam, based in Oxford but travelling to many places of conflict, natural disasters and other humanitarian settings. I was in their policy department, so in a way I was still writing, primarily non-fiction reports, speeches, and strategies.

For about 18 years I worked for different humanitarian organisations: after Oxfam I was with CAFOD, Save the Children and the British Red Cross. I saw many countries and many conflicts, but also efforts to prevent natural disasters, such as flooding or hurricanes, from being so deadly. There was a lot in the work that was inspiring and motivating, particularly all the people I met leading responses and working in very difficult landscapes. But after that length of time, I was approaching a kind of emotional burn-out and I needed a change.

**/LEAN**

## MY JOB DESCRIPTION

### Finding my voice in fiction:

I decided to do creative writing classes at night and weekends, and focus on my fiction. After years of writing dry policy documents for different organisations, I had to find my own fiction voice. It was an uphill battle but I am so glad to have done it. I get a real jolt of energy from writing fiction and talking to readers about my work.

After the publication of my book in 2021, I have done many talks to small audiences in libraries, community centres, and people's homes. It is such a wonderful and humbling feeling to have your work read by a huge range of people, and to hear what they think. Not everyone will love it, but seeing how your work has moved people, taken them to landscapes they've never seen, and introduced them to characters of your own creation, is just the best feeling.

## 4 TIPS TO BE A WRITER

### Find your passion:

If you love reading crime books and mysteries, write that. If you love fashion, find the stories at the margins of shops, designer outlets, or shows.

For me, I was really driven to try to help refugees, so I sought out an organisation doing that and I found my stories that way. It wasn't immediate; in fact it took decades to turn some of my experiences into fictional short stories and novels, but it was the path I needed to go down. My photographs, too, are of the subjects that interest me the most: the people who have lived through incredible things, and the landscapes that have shaped them.

### Find your tribe:

Whether it is a weekend course, a local group on Meet-Up, a spoken word or poetry event, or just some friends in a coffee shop, I do really believe it is important to find other creatives and share your work. It might feel scary at first, but you'll soon see that writing isn't competitive, and we all can contribute and learn something. I participate with a group I found on the Meet-Up app, and we are a huge range of styles and backgrounds: my novels don't easily fit in a genre, but I would say they are international-mystery. Others write sci-fi, horror, Victorian gothic, Afro-futurism, or YA. Having that mix of perspectives is really valuable, and I always gain from feedback sessions.

### Find your voice:

For some people this comes easily, others it takes time. But your writer's voice is what makes you unique. It can be affected by your life experiences, your imagination, and feedback from others, but it is authentically you. It also is allowed to change or shift – you might like to write in different voices, or different genres. But it is important that you find your way of writing that you are proud of, and you will stand by, despite flattery or criticism. Every writer will have to live with some criticism and rejections; but in the end, you need to believe in your writing, and believe in yourself, to keep going.

### Keep writing:

There's no set pattern to follow: some people like to write every morning, others prefer sprints taken with others, like trying to write a full book in a month (see link for NanoWrimo, below) or other patterns. You have to find what works for you, but don't allow procrastination to get in the way.

I myself have to fit writing in with the other sides of my business (editing and photography) as well as other obligations. But I find it is really important to make time to write every week, whether that be new work, journaling, or short stories such as "flash fiction." Too many people say they want to be a writer, but they don't commit to writing. Finishing a novel or a short story good enough for publication is a real challenge, and in order to do it, you must put forward the words, one at a time.

## Some links that might be helpful

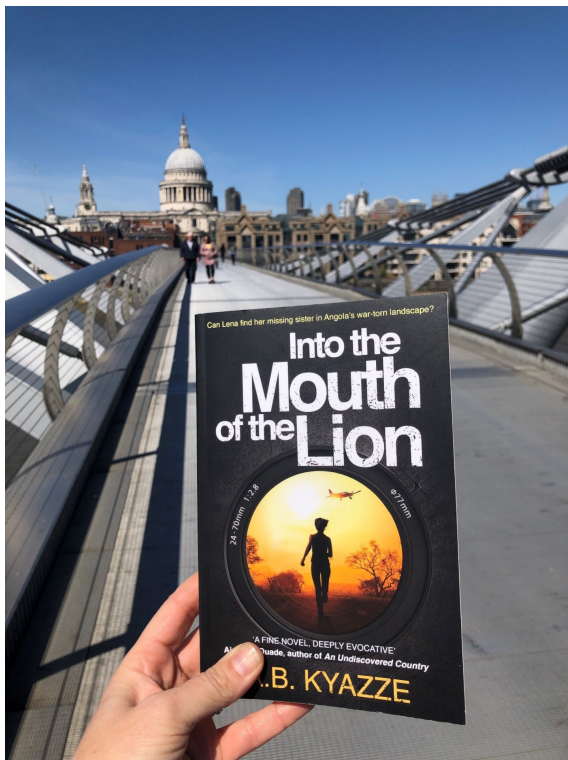
1. **Nanowrimo Young Writer's Programme:** This came out of the "National Novel Writing Month" and it is a sprint to write a novel in a month (a big challenge) but supported by other writers. It is free to sign up, and is a great resource for free workshops and motivation. Their Young Writers programme is aimed at those age under 18.  
<https://ywp.nanowrimo.org/>

2. **Young Writers** is a resource for parents, teachers and children interested in writing, with competitions, tips and prompts.  
<https://www.youngwriters.co.uk/blog>

3. **Meet-up** is a great resource, and often the events are free! A quick search under "Writing" "London" comes up with a very interesting list of events anyone can join!  
<https://www.meetup.com/find/?keywords=writing&distance=twoMiles&source=EVENTS>  
Check with your parents or guardians before agreeing to join a group, however.

4. **Spread the Word**, based in Deptford, is a writing development agency with great events and training. With many events linked with performances at the Albany, there is always something interesting going on. Often youth activities run in half-terms and holidays.  
<https://www.spreadtheword.org.uk/>

5. **Writing the 7 Senses:** In some half-terms and holidays I run creative writing workshops based on music, humour and observing all the senses.  
If you want to learn more or sign up to my mailing list to find out when the next workshops will happen, please go to <https://abkyazze.co.uk/workshops/> and get in touch via my contact page here <https://abkyazze.co.uk/contact/>



This was my novel in my hands last May, when I took it out after a photography event in central London. It is the best feeling in the world to hold your own printed book in your hands for the first time.

*Into the Mouth of the Lion* is a fast-paced mystery about a photographer from London looking for her missing sister in the final days of a war in West Africa (in a country called Angola).

It is available in bookstores, in libraries and in ebook format. If you want to learn more you can read about it here:

<https://amzn.to/3qmTJ2f>