

## TLC Free Read FAQs

### **What is the Free Reads Scheme?**

The Free Reads Scheme is a bursary scheme, funded by Arts Council England, and delivered by The Literary Consultancy. It offers low-income, talented writers free access to TLC's commercial services for writers, primarily its manuscript assessment offer, as well as events tickets, travel and access bursaries, and mentorships.\*

### **What is The Literary Consultancy?**

The Literary Consultancy is the UK's longest-running editorial consultancy, working with writers at all levels and across all formats and genres to help them develop their creative work. Based in London, TLC is also a National Portfolio Organisation, championing writers, writing, and the value of professional feedback across England through its 17 regional partners, and supporting writers through its events programme and online resources as well as its core editing services. TLC alumni include writers like Prue Leith, Winnie M Li, Liam Brown, Fiona Mountain, Kerry Young, and Neamat Iman.

### **What is a Manuscript Assessment?**

Manuscript assessment is a term referring to the style of report typically produced by TLC and other organisations with a similar remit, and the service offered to writers selected for a Free Read. Manuscript assessment offers writers the opportunity to get direct, bespoke feedback on their writing projects, by a reader hand-selected for you, in the form of a written report. The focus of a manuscript assessment is objective critical feedback that identifies key areas for development, whatever your goal is. TLC has produced over 8,000 manuscript assessment reports over the years it has been working with writers, and the Free Reads scheme has offered over 500 writers the opportunity to get this feedback at no cost, thanks to our funding from Arts Council England.

You can read more about manuscript assessment on the TLC website [here](#).

### **Am I eligible for a Free Read?**

Originally begun as a pilot scheme in 2001, Free Reads has grown into an offer for writers that aims to facilitate access to professional and creative development opportunities to writers who might be unable to afford to pay for the service. The core demographic is therefore low-income, talented writers who are resident in England. As part of its commitment to supporting the widest range of literary voices possible, TLC is particularly interested in submissions from writers who feel under-represented in the publishing world, or those who feel they face barriers which make access to these opportunities difficult such as cultural background, mental health, or disability. As the scheme is funded, we are required to collect anonymised data to ensure eligibility criteria are met, but if you have any questions about your eligibility that you would like to discuss with us in confidence, please feel free to get in touch directly on [info@literaryconsultancy.co.uk](mailto:info@literaryconsultancy.co.uk). If you have a question about the application process, please get in touch with the organisation delivering Free Reads in your area in the first instance.\*\*

## What constitutes 'low-income'?

Current UK government guidelines suggest that low-income (household) equals 60% of the median household income. This is only a rule of thumb, but is a helpful guideline when assessing applications. According to the latest figures this would put the national low-income threshold at roughly £18,000 per annum income, with the London low-income threshold £23,000 per annum and below. For the purposes of the Free Reads scheme we are referring to your earnings in the last full financial year.

There are some helpful calculations [here](#) to show how these margins are measured by the Government across the country. If you are a full-time student or pensioner, or in receipt of any kind of Universal Credit, you are eligible to apply for a TLC Free Read. You may also submit HMRC self-assessment paperwork to show you are low-earning if you are self-employed and not in receipt of income support.

We understand that in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, loss of income has affected many communities and individuals particularly hard, and we want to be able to provide the scheme to those who are looking to develop their writing in the wake of the pandemic and whose financial circumstances might have been affected by the pandemic. If you are eligible on this basis, please simply submit a one-paragraph statement outlining your circumstances. This information is completely confidential, but is a necessary requirement of our funding relationship with ACE, to show that the scheme is genuinely serving those most in need. You can find out how we store personal information in our privacy policy [here](#).

If you have any questions about your eligibility that you would like to discuss with us in confidence, please get in touch directly by sending us an email: [info@literaryconsultancy.co.uk](mailto:info@literaryconsultancy.co.uk). If you have a question about the application process, please get in touch with the organisation delivering Free Reads in your area in the first instance, as application processes may vary.

## What kind of writing can I submit?

TLC accepts submissions of: prose (fiction and non-fiction), short stories, children's fiction including picture books, poetry, scripts, and screenplays. We are unfortunately unable to accept academic works for manuscript assessment. Please note that TLC co-ordinates the Free Reads scheme, but each of its delivery partners will have its own application process. If there are any restrictions on what can and cannot be submitted to individual delivery partners, this will be clearly outlined in the application process, so please read this carefully. Please do not submit your work directly to TLC for a Free Read.

## Will I get my whole manuscript read?

TLC receives a grant for Free Reads which is awarded on an annual basis and distributed to partners at the beginning of each financial year. This funding is currently secure until April 2022. The grant is split between 17 Free Reads delivery partners, trusted organisations who work with writers across England. Budget is allocated according to need, geographic spread,

numbers of applications per region etc. Each partner will have their own way of allocating their budget and we ask that writers please respect this; their decisions in these matters are final. We cannot guarantee that each writer awarded a Free Read will receive a full manuscript assessment, but every writer selected is guaranteed at least an extract read, by a professional TLC reader. Please do not be disheartened if you do not get selected; the process is highly selective, and we encourage you to apply to as many opportunities as you can.

For further resources and links that might be helpful for low-income writers, please see this page on the TLC website.

### **Who will read my work?**

If your work is selected by your regional delivery partner for a Free Read, the work will be handed to TLC and you will from that point on be in the care of TLC and its in-house team. The team will assign you a reader from its list of 90 professional readers. All TLC readers are given training and guidelines to support them in their delivery of the feedback, which aims to be personalised, market-aware, and suited to your level of work and aims and aspirations. We encourage you therefore to fill in the details on your Application Form carefully, to ensure we can send the most up-to-date information along to your reader. You can have a look at TLC's list of readers here, and read feedback from previous clients here.

### **Will I get to talk to my Reader?**

Objectivity is the cornerstone of TLC's manuscript assessment offer. We firmly believe that for this kind of intervention to work at its best, the reader needs to be free to make an independent assessment of the work in hand. We also believe that honest feedback is the best kind of feedback for a writer's creative development in the longer term. For this reason, all feedback is monitored by TLC, quality-checked and proofed in-house, and reports are sent on to you by TLC. You are welcome to send a covering note with any specific questions at the point of being awarded a Free Read, should you wish to. If you have questions following your report, please be in touch with the TLC office in the first instance.

### **How long does the whole process take?**

TLC aims to match Free Reads submissions to a reader within one week maximum. Once the work has been assigned, the process of receiving feedback takes around 4-6 weeks. Please refer to your delivery partner's application process for a sense of their submission wait times, which you will need to incorporate into your timeframe for receiving feedback. If you have requirements which are time sensitive, we strongly recommend you speak to your delivery partner before submitting.

*\*TLC Free Reads currently provides around 100 Free Read manuscript assessments per year. Around 15% of all TLC events tickets are offered on a complimentary basis. A total of five mentorships per year are awarded on a bursary basis. These are allocated via specific partners to BAME and disabled writers. At present these partners are: Creative Future, Wasafiri Magazine,*



*SABLE Lit Mag and Shape Arts. TLC mentoring is also offered as a prize for winners of the SI Leeds Prize and the Bridport First Novel Award.*

*\*\*TLC is committed to treating all client data confidentially, within the bounds of the latest GDPR requirements. You can read our Privacy Policy [here](#).*