



HAMILTON VERSE PRESENTS

Write Like

Camp Folklore

FEBRUARY 13 - 14, 2026

FESTIVAL PROGRAM

CENTRAL LIBRARY, 55 YORK BLVD, HAMILTON ON



ILLUSTRATION BY BERNARD O. ANAWANA

Hamilton Verse presents...WRITE LIKE: CAMP FOLKLORE

Welcome to Write Like: Camp Folklore, a literary festival where participants explore fables of old and stories passed down, and transform them into something different and unexpected. Workshops will introduce participants to tools of storytelling and writer's craft, led by artists - also known as Camp Counsellors - whose work in popular genres draw on folklore, mythology, and fantasy. Halfway between theatre camp and literary convention, Write Like: Camp Folklore is a two-day festival of writing workshops, performances, and panels, all located at the Central Library in downtown Hamilton. Entry is free with registration.

WHAT IS HAMILTON VERSE?

We are Hamilton's literary community for teens and young adults. We believe in meeting young people where they are, with the stories they love, in the communities where they express themselves. We serve the greater Hamilton region and all the young people who live here. We aim to support young writers of diverse African and Black heritage to discover and harness their stories through the arts. We offer distinct artistic programming that uplifts racialized storytellers, their unique literary forms, aesthetics, and storytelling traditions.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

At Write Like: Camp Folklore, the adventure begins with all participants joining a Cabin. A participant's Cabin determines which workshops they will attend. Participants and their fellow cabin members will get to join two workshops, followed by a free lunch, and the grand finale: Tales By Moonlight, a storytelling and open mic show.

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FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

Write Like: Camp Folklore | Location: Central Library (HPL), 55 York Blvd, Hamilton ON

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 13, 2026				
	Minerva Cabin	Anansi Cabin	Dhegdheer Cabin	Manananggal Cabin
9:30am	Doors Open: Welcome to Camp Folklore Hamilton Room			
10:15am - 11:15am	Terese Mason Pierre Magic in the Everyday: A Lesson in Fabulism Room TBD	Ian Keteku Finding the Heart Room TBD	Aisha Yusuf & Lennex Maley Fear Factory: Turning Fears into Folklore Room TBD	Emily Urquhart Folklore Index Room TBD
11:30am - 12:30pm	Emily Urquhart Folklore Index Room TBD	Aisha Yusuf and Lennex Maley Fear Factory: Turning Fears into Folklore Room TBD	Terese Mason Pierre Magic in the Everyday: A Lesson in Fabulism Room TBD	Ash Patwardhan Main Character Energy: Elevating Your Protagonist through Improv & TTRPG Room TBD
12:30pm - 1:00pm	Lunch Break Hamilton Room			
1:00pm - 2:00pm	Tales by Moonlight: Storytelling & Open Mic Hamilton Room			

Amal El-Mohtar presents... Write Like: The River Has Roots

Location: Central Library (HPL), 55 York Blvd, Hamilton ON

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 13, 2026	
5:00pm - 6:00pm	Strange Encounters: A Writing Workshop with Amal El-Mohtar Room TBD
7:00pm - 8:30pm	Amal El-Mohtar presents Write Like: The River Has Roots In conversation with Terese Mason Pierre (MOD) Cohosted by the Queer Halal Time Collective Hamilton Room

Write Like: The Shards of the Mirror Tree Book Launch

Location: Central Library (HPL), 55 York Blvd, Hamilton ON

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2026	
5:30pm - 7:00pm	Book Launch: The Shards of the Mirror Tree With the 2026 Writers Room cohort: Anais Constantine, Adebola Salami, Layla Ahmed, and Lennex Maley Hamilton Room



Meet The Camp Counsellors



Terese Mason Pierre



Ian Keteku



Aisha Yusuf



Lennex Maley



Emily Urquhart



Ash Patwardhan



Amal El-Mohtar

Write Like
Camp Folklore

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 13, 2026

Write Like: Camp Folklore
Workshop | Central Library,
55 York Blvd, Hamilton ON
Ages 12+

Cabin Counsellor:

TERESE MASON PIERRE

Terese Mason Pierre (she/her) is a writer and editor whose work has appeared in *The Walrus*, *ROOM*, *Brick*, *Quill & Quire*, *Uncanny*, and *Fantasy Magazine*, among others. Terese is an editor at *Augur Magazine*, a Canadian speculative literature journal, and co-Director of *AugurCon*, *Augur's* biennial speculative literature conference. She is the author of chapbooks, *Surface Area* (Anstruther Press, 2019) and *Manifest* (Gap Riot Press, 2020), and the editor of *As the Earth Dreams*, an anthology of Black Canadian speculative short fiction. Her debut poetry collection, *Myth*, is out with House of Anansi Press. Terese lives and works in Toronto, Canada, and is an MFA candidate at the University of Guelph.

WORKSHOP:
MAGIC IN THE
EVERYDAY
A LESSON IN FABULISM

The speculative isn't just in epic battles, expansive worlds and airtight magic systems. From sibling squabbles, to math lessons, to weekend quests to the mall, the lives we live provide rich spaces for the mythic and the fabulist to thrive. Together, we'll learn how we can use speculative elements to tell stories that matter most to us, and how to defamiliarize or metaphorize settings and realities that are closest to our everyday life. Participants will learn about fabulism—stories set in the "real world" that contain mythical or fantastical elements—how to apply it to prose and poetry. Through generative writing exercises and discussion, participants will leave with a new understanding of a lesser-known speculative subgenre.



FRIDAY FEBRUARY 13, 2026

Write Like: Camp Folklore
Workshop | Central Library,
55 York Blvd, Hamilton ON
Ages 12+

Cabin Counsellor: IAN KETEKU

Nana Ian Budu Keteku is a poet, filmmaker, and educator based in Toronto. Rooted in African storytelling traditions, Keteku's art blends the ancient with the futuristic, exploring themes of memory, resilience, and imagination. As a filmmaker, he creates visually arresting projects for CBC, TVO, PBS, Hot Docs, and Sesame Street. He also teaches art-activism and creative writing at OCAD University, inspiring others to use art as a tool for reflection and change. Keteku is a royal chief of Abiriw, Ghana, West Africa.



WORKSHOP: FINDING THE HEART



Through guided writing and reflection, students will learn how to transform observations of the natural world into sources of meaning. We will ask how the sky, water, wind, and silence can teach us lessons about ourselves and help us write with more clarity and depth. This workshop invites students to uncover the connections between creativity, emotion, and the living world. By learning to see the extraordinary within the ordinary, writers can shape stories that inspire and stay with their readers. Finding the Heart is about tuning into the magic of the universe and allowing that wisdom to guide our storytelling.



FRIDAY FEBRUARY 13, 2026

Write Like: Camp Folklore
Workshop | Central Library,
55 York Blvd, Hamilton ON
Ages 12+

Cabin Counsellors: AISHA YUSUF & LENNEX MALEY

Aisha Yusuf is an author and story coordinator based in Edmonton, Alberta. She is the author of Race to the Finish Line (2021) and is currently at work on her second novel, a work of science fiction. As story coordinator for HamiltonVerse, Aisha guides groups of writers through collaborative worldbuilding and character development, helping them shape bold, imaginative stories. Her work explores resilience, identity, and the myths we create to make sense of our fractured world.

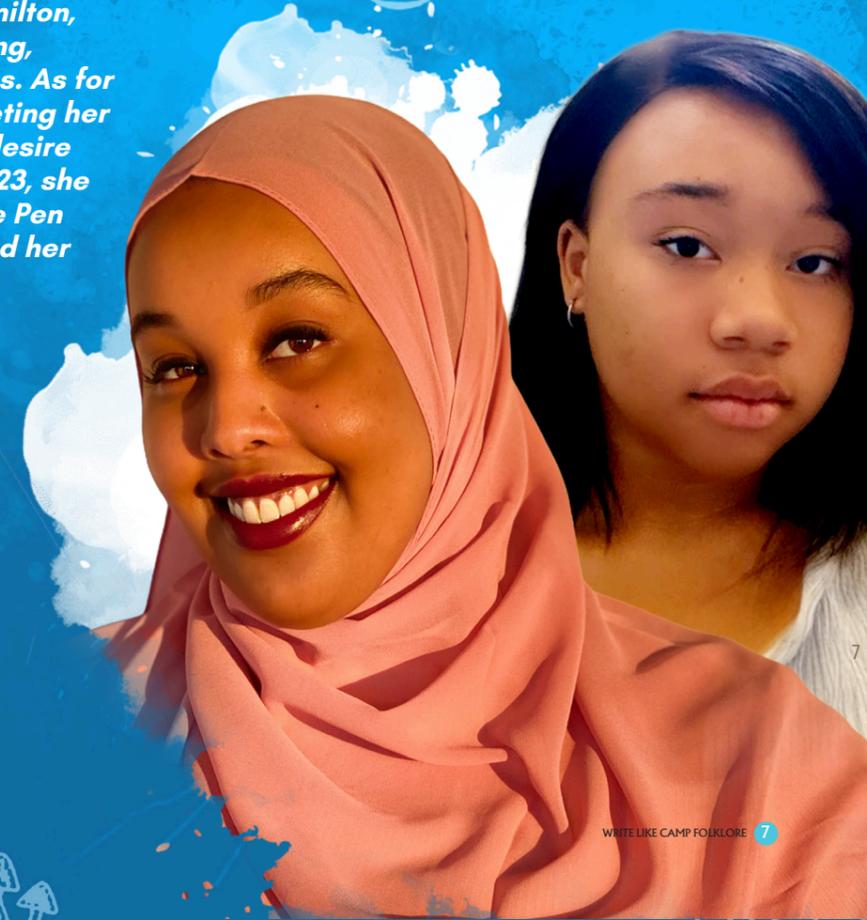
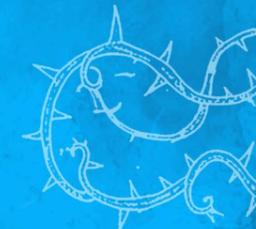
Lennex Maley is an Afro-Canadian French Immersion student residing in Hamilton, Ontario. She enjoys reading, writing, drawing, and watching horror films. As for education, she is currently completing her senior year of high school with a desire to receive a Psychology (Ba). In 2023, she won 1st place in HPL's Power of the Pen competition. In 2024, she published her first short story.



WORKSHOP: FEAR FACTORY TURNING FEARS INTO FOLKLORE



What are you afraid of? Not the world-ending kind, but the quiet kind. Spiders. Elevators. Mirrors in the dark. In this workshop, Aisha Yusuf and Lennex Maley take the things that make our skin crawl and turn them into myth and folklore. Through collaborative storytelling, we will explore fear as more than just a feeling. What if it's a warning? What if every fear was a truth buried in legend? Together, we'll build a living myth around fear and layer details, origins, and consequences until it becomes real.



FRIDAY FEBRUARY 13, 2026

Write Like: Camp Folklore
Workshop | Central Library,
55 York Blvd, Hamilton ON
Ages 12+

Cabin Counsellor:

EMILY URQUHART

Emily Urquhart is an author and folklorist. She has published three books of creative nonfiction including the essay collection, *Ordinary Wonder Tales*, a finalist for the 2023 Hilary Weston Writers' Trust Prize for Nonfiction, and is the editor of *Best Canadian Essays 2025*. She is a five-time National Magazine Award nominee for her journalistic work and has won gold and silver. Emily lives in Kitchener, Ontario with her husband and two children where she is a nonfiction editor for *The New Quarterly* and Assistant Professor in Creative Writing at Wilfrid Laurier University.



WORKSHOP: FOLKLORE INDEX

Every one of us is a bearer of traditional knowledge, also known as folklore. It is part of being human. In this workshop we will work through a guided writing prompt to produce a scene from memory

we will then transform into a folkloric narrative by incorporating motifs (the smallest elements of a tale) from around the world. These motifs turn up in stories across time and geographies. They are universal, and yet, every tale--yours included--is individual. Bring your pen and paper and we will sketch, write, and imagine our way into a new story that we can pass on and share.



FRIDAY FEBRUARY 13, 2026

Write Like: Camp Folklore
Workshop | Central Library,
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Ages 12+

Cabin Counsellors:

ASH PATWARDHAN

Aishwarya "Ash" Patwardhan is a lifelong storyteller who grew up acting in Mumbai's theater scene before moving to North America for academic pursuits. In addition to streaming D&D and helping grow Hamilton's tabletop gaming scene, she's actively developing her debut fantasy/science-fiction novel. When not creating worlds and stories, she works on decidedly real and non-fictitious science as a neuroscience PhD candidate at McMaster University.

WORKSHOP: MAIN CHARACTER ENERGY

ELEVATING YOUR PROTAGONIST THROUGH IMPROV & TTRPG

Heroes, villains, and everything in between! Discover how to create fantasy characters that feel alive, whether they belong in a written story, a performance, or a tabletop role-playing game. This workshop explores what makes a character compelling and how to move beyond familiar tropes. Along the way, you'll be introduced to Dungeons & Dragons character creation, with a chance for a few volunteers to bring their creations to life in a short adventure. We'll also dive into elements of improv and theatre, exploring how performance techniques can make your characters even more dynamic and engaging. All experience levels are welcome--whether you're a seasoned TTRPG player or have never rolled a die before. Perfect for anyone who loves storytelling, imagination, and a little bit of chaos.



FRIDAY FEBRUARY 13, 2026

5:00pm - 6:00pm

Write Like: Masterclass Workshop

Central Library, 55 York Blvd,

Hamilton ON

Wentworth Room

Recommended

- **Ages 16+**
- **Registration required.**
- **Spots are limited.**
- **Masking is highly encouraged and appreciated.**

Amal El-Mohtar writes fiction, poetry, and criticism. She won the Hugo, Nebula, and Locus Awards for her short story "Seasons of Glass and Iron" and again for her novella This Is How You Lose the Time War, written with Max Gladstone, which also won the BSFA and Aurora awards, became a New York Times bestseller, and has been translated into over ten languages. Her reviews and articles have appeared in the NYT and on NPR Books. Her solo debut, The River Has Roots, was published in 2025 by TorDotCom. She lives in Ottawa, Canada. Online at: amalelmohtar.com.

WORKSHOP: STRANGE ENCOUNTERS

Once upon a time, Amal El-Mohtar received a gift of twenty-eight vials of honey. Through a series of poetic encounters, a sunlit book of poetry and prose, The Honey Month, was written in the heart of winter. Inspired by Amal's poetic experiments with honey, this workshop welcomes participants into a folkloric laboratory of encounters. Participants will be invited to interact with a curated set of objects with a focus on the sensory input we receive from them by observing, touching, smelling, and occasionally tasting them. Then we'll use that sensory input to prompt fiction in which our chosen object becomes the focus of a mythic encounter and share the results.

**Workshop Facilitator:
AMAL EL-MOHTAR**



**AMAL EL-MOHTAR
presents**

Write Like

THE RIVER HAS ROOTS

In conversation with **Terese Mason Pierre** (MOD) Cohosted by **Hamilton Verse** and the **Queer Halal Time Collective**

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 13, 2026

7:00pm - 8:30pm

Write Like: Masterclass Event
Hamilton Room, Central Library, 55 York
Blvd, Hamilton ON

Recommended

- **Ages 16+**
- **Registration required.**
- **Seats are limited**
- **Masking is highly encouraged and appreciated.**

**HAMILTON
VERSE**



Join us to celebrate the writing of Amal El-Mohtar, the New York Times bestselling author of *The River Has Roots*, *The Honey Month*, and the co-authored novella *This is How You Lose the Time War*. With live readings and a conversation moderated by Terese Mason Pierre, El-Mohtar will delve into the inspirations behind her 2025 release *The River Has Roots*, and trace the ways in which mythology, folklore, music, and the possibilities of speculative fiction have informed her creative practice and the work that has connected to the hearts of readers around the world.



SATURDAY FEBRUARY 14, 2026

- 5:30pm - 7:00pm
- Book Launch
- Hamilton Room, Central Library, 55 York Blvd, Hamilton ON
- All Ages

BOOK LAUNCH: THE SHARDS OF THE MIRROR TREE

From the program that created the Ocean's Barwaaqo, the Shattered Garden, Echoes of Humanity, and In the Shadow of the Mountain... Join us for an evening of readings, reflections, and signings, as the Writers Room cohort of

2026 launches their book *The Shards of the Mirror Tree*! Featuring Anais Constantine, Adebola Salami, Layla Ahmed, and Lennex Maley.

About the Book:

Once, there was one world. One tree. One truth. Then came the Shattering. A wound in reality so deep that even time forgot how to heal. What had been whole splintered into Shards, each clinging to its own version of history, faith, and memory. In these fragments, a soldier wakes in their own tomb, priests play gods, mages cross deserts of glass, and fire-born kingdoms crumble into ash. As fissures widen and realities begin to overlap, the boundaries between the living and the dead, memory and magic, crumble. What remains are echoes: of fire, of faith, of grief, and of the small defiant hope that what is broken can still remember how to be whole.

The Shards of the Mirror Tree is a story of civilizations trapped in parallel ruins, searching for the truth they all forgot and the courage to rebuild it together before the last Shard falls.



LENNEX MALEY



ANAIS CONSTANTINE



ADEBOLA SALAMI



LAYLA AHMED

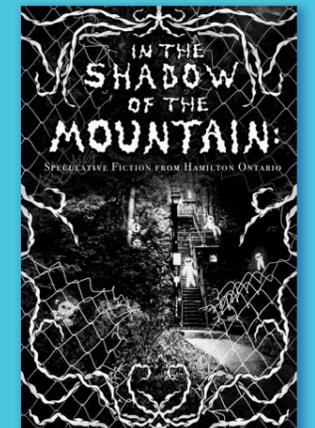
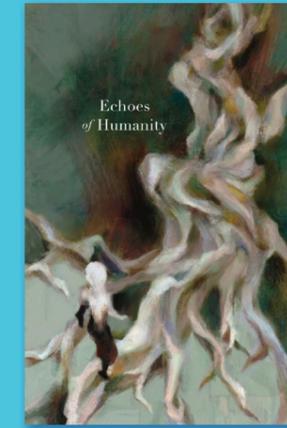
Hamilton Verse presents WRITERS ROOM

What if your writing wasn't just a hobby, but part of something bigger? Writers Room is a creative lab where a small group of young Black writers collaborate to build an entire world from scratch. Each year is different. One year it's a shared fantasy novel. Another, a short story collection. This past year, we've been writing across shattered worlds, each author holding a piece of the truth.

This is a space where we:

- Invent characters, plot arcs, and entire cultures.
- Meet weekly with a story coordinator to build, revise, and bring your vision to life.
- Your work will be brought to life through art, design, and a published final project. You get paid as a professional writer. Most importantly, this is where your imagination gets taken seriously.

If you're ready to write something bold, strange, and a little strange, the Writers Room is waiting for your voice.



Join Writers Room 2026/27
Learn more at hamiltonverse.ca

Stay Connected | hamiltonverse.ca

Join Our Newsletter.

Do you want to bring Hamilton Verse workshops to your classrooms? If you love our annual Write Like festival, Hamilton Verse offers virtual writing workshops throughout the year! To bring more programming into your classrooms and communities, connect with us at info@hamiltonverse.ca
THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS AND SPONSORS.
WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR FRIENDS AT TELLING TALES.





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