



Writing the Earth: what happens when you bring creative writers and geoscientists together to explore climate and sustainability issues?

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“Writing The Earth” was an interdisciplinary and collaborative programme between the Irish Writers Centre and the SFI Research Centre in Applied Geosciences, which brought six creative writers and ten geoscientists together to research and write about climate and geoscience in various genres or narrative forms to reach new public audiences.

In a collaborative process of talks, facilitated workshops and mentoring across six months, the programme brought the worlds of geoscience and creative writing together. New writings to have been created and performed for the public through the programme included: scenes from two new plays that explore the health of the planet and mass extinction through razor-sharp satire and earnest pathos. Other writings explored the intimate human connection between worker and object, consumer and extracted raw materials, and our relationship with groundwater through the lens of family history, mythology and science.

Writing the Earth sought to explore the commonality between geoscientists and writers as both narrators and observers of our world, and to create a safe space for deliberation, dialogue and creative expression on what can sometimes be complex, and contentious, geoscience topics. Central to the success of the programme, and in the creation of the new narrative writings, was the geoscientist-writer relationship. What a geoscientist does is to research and investigate a topic methodically, and to reach conclusions based on a series of observations which are often complex to explain to a general audience. What a writer often does is to make sense of our world, often the indecipherable parts of our existence, through language, imagery and emotion. Whether scientist, or writer, both ultimately use the written word to describe the world to the reader.

We will share our experiences of running a creative, interdisciplinary programme, short extracts from the new writings, the results of the pre-, mid- and post-evaluation, and key takeaways on how to run a similar programme.