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***Writing, the self and the social in the 1970s***

From the late 1960s, the writing of working class people gained prominence, particularly with the various groups which formed the Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers, in 1976. Through workshops and publication, new voices came forward and connected with local and radical audiences. The starting point for this writing was often personal experience, across the age range: teachers, writing workshops, community publishers and adult literacy groups all engaged with emerging writers. While motivations were often highly politicised, writers came from a variety of perspectives.

I will assess the key forms and styles of writing that were adopted and debated in the 1970s and 1980s. Writing was an essential means of understanding the self as well as wider social contexts. There was an initial interest in breaking down the distinctions between forms of writing but, over time, people found forms (poetry, short story, history) which suited their needs and preferences. In doing so, they debated the meanings of working class writing, whether it had any distinctive features and how these related to wider changes. By developing and adapting cultural models, writers re-worked the relations between personal experience, history and literature.