

# Zoë Mertz

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## Relevant Experience

### SAL Youth Poet Laureate Finalist Cohort

May 2017 – May 2018

- Received tutelage from SAL mentors Matt Gano and Aaron Counts, inspiring both my own writing and my passion for acting as an advocate within the Seattle literary community
- Assisted Youth Poet Laureates Lily Baumgart and Maven Gardner in leading a WITS workshop in recognition of Martin Luther King Jr. Day; successfully taught and managed a classroom of fifth grade students for the workshop's duration

### Yearlong in Young Adult Fiction Class – Hugo House

September 2017 – May 2018

- Wrote a draft of a young adult novel and spent the duration of the course revising and refining this content
- Received instruction and mentorship from local Seattle author Karen Finneyfrock
- Participated in peer revision with older and more experienced students, to the benefit of both my own writing and my knowledge of literary revision and craft

### Martial Arts Instructor – Alpha Martial Arts

September 2015-present

- Instructed classes approx. 10 hours a week for students ranging from ages 3-12, both in a group environment and one-on-one
- Attended four years of “Instructor’s Colleges” through Kovar Systems, designed to improve and refine teaching and customer service skills
- Assisted with various self-defense workshops aiming to empower women, teen girls, the LGBT+ community, and children; in charge of the children’s self-defense program
- Directed the 2019 summer camps program, including lesson planning, organizing and taking inventory of supplies, facilitating 20+ staff and volunteers, interacting with parents and families, and supervising, instructing, and entertaining students.
- Gathered and catered content for social media to promote various events and programs
- Awarded “Black Belt of the Year” in 2018 for dedication and service to the dojo and its community

## Education

### Ingraham High School

2014-2018

Graduated in 2018 with an International Baccalaureate Diploma. GPA: 4.0

### University of Washington

2018-present

Studying English with a prospective Creative Writing focus. University Interdisciplinary Honors student. GPA: 3.97

## Skills

Experience and proficiency reading, reviewing, and editing student writing from elementary to college levels. Organization. Self-motivation. Optimism. Enthusiasm. Empathy. Public Speaking. Google Drive. Microsoft Word.

Dear Seattle Arts and Lectures WITS Internship team,

I grew up a child of the Seattle literary world. I had my own library card the moment I could write my name on the back, and my college application essays all hinged around my love of books and words and stories. I've attended countless bookish events over the years, from author readings in bookstore back rooms and Benaroya Hall alike to the exhausting, exhilarating quest that is Independent Bookstore Day. I'm interested in becoming a WITS intern because I want to foster this same passion for creating and exploring imaginary worlds in the upcoming generation of Seattle children.

I'm excited about this opportunity to immerse myself in the SAL community. Through the Youth Poet Laureate cohort, I got a taste of all the fantastic work SAL does for Seattle's population of literature lovers. I remember talking for weeks about how much I loved helping to lead a WITS workshop. I absolutely love teaching and working with children; I have several years' experience in teaching kids' martial arts classes at Alpha Martial Arts. I pride myself on my consistent enthusiasm and energy while teaching. I also thrive at facilitating conversations among kids, such as in our 'mat chats' about our Word of the Day. I have experience in leadership positions as well; I directed AMA's summer camp program this past summer, which involved configuring lesson plans, managing staff, and of course, laughter-filled, chaos-ridden hours of working with children. Several parents told me that the camps I ran were 'works of creative genius' and 'the best they've attended.' I would love the opportunity that the WITS internship provides to combine my passion for all things literary with my delight in helping inspire young minds.

The WITS internship application page states that applicants for this position should be positive, flexible, friendly, and courteous, and possess excellent communication skills. I believe that this description fits me exactly. My prior experience has given me the customer service and interpersonal skills to interact with any and all people, young and old. The positivity I provide myself - I believe it's far lovelier to live a happy, kind life in every way that I can. I've spent years cultivating my communication skills, from speaking clearly and concisely at the front of a classroom to refining just the right smattering of words to pin down images on a page. I know I still have plenty I could learn, and I'm open and excited for any chance to do just that.

Thank you for your careful time and consideration, and I wish you all the best in your process of selecting an applicant.

Sincerely,  
Zoë Mertz

Creative Writing Sample:

A Story of Home

*“I know a thousand tales, to fill a thousand nights.”*

They’re going to separate us come morning. It’s hard enough to place individual children in the system, harder still when they’re older and brown-skinned and weepy, like Dinah. Or quarrelsome, like me. But tonight, I don’t scorn my sister’s tears. Instead, I pull her close on the mattress beside me; breathe her achingly familiar scent, spice and roses, and press my forehead to hers.

“Zadie,” she murmurs, her small voice piercing this purgatory of a shelter. “Will you tell a story?”

The only thing that can lull my little sister to sleep is the worlds we visit between dreams and waking. Though Dinah loves our tales, I’m the creator, the queen of who lives and dies, who gets a happily-ever-after. I know I’m not a benevolent ruler. On nights I’m cross with Dinah, we share no adventure. I feel a pang in my gut when I picture my sister sniffing her way to sleep, alone.

Before I can answer, the echo of footsteps infiltrates our secluded bubble. It’s Shahryar, our caseworker. I don’t know what powers-that-be thought he should work with the screw-ups that are foster kids, but whenever some foster mom shouts herself hoarse over my fights at school, or Dinah holes herself up, unspeaking, in the corner of her classroom for days, it’s Shahryar’s slash of a scowl that greets us on the doorstep. Somehow, this godforsaken shelter assigned him the night shift. I see his shadow in the doorway, listening. But even Shahryar won’t spoil my final night with my sister. Gently, I twine one of Dinah’s curls round my finger, and begin our whispered tale.

I’m never certain what will happen in our story, but the one thing I ensure is that it never finishes. No tidy conclusion, never over and done. What else do Dinah and I have to build together? But tonight is an ending of so many sorts. Before I can approach a stopping point, I feel the pinpricks of tears well in my eyes. No. Dinah’s the one who cries. I can’t – I mustn’t.

I’m so focused on banishing the lump in my throat that I don’t realize I’ve stopped speaking until I hear Shahryar’s footsteps approaching our bed. My tears vanish, replaced by the cold fury I know so well. “What?” I challenge, a shout in the darkness.

“Have the two of you always told stories together?” His voice is softer than I’ve ever heard, his accented words a balm instead of a knife.

I don’t answer. Dinah buries her face in my shoulder.

“When I was young and just arrived in this country, my brother would whisper to me just as you do. Stories of home,” says Shahryar. “He was my protector. You remind me of him.”

His weight vanishes from the foot of our bed, and my tears return, floodwaters rushing, and there’s not enough workers building my dam. A small sob escapes. I taste salt on my tongue. Dinah’s chapped fingers squeeze my hand.

There’s a long silence, and I think Shahryar’s gone, but the deep hum of his voice resonates once more. “I’m watching out for you two. Like he did for me. Family belongs together.” The door shuts behind him.

That was the night Dinah and I realized we’d found a home after all.

Inspired by the framing story of Scheherazade from *One Thousand and One Nights*, a collection of Middle Eastern folktales.