Get

#unmuted

Your Story Your Future

Storytelling Challenge Toolkit

for young people

GIRLRISING | UNMUTED | hp Foundation



Welcome to UNMUTED

GOT SOMETHING TO SAY? YOU'RE IN THE RIGHT PLACE



Welcome to the Unmuted Campaign Toolkit, created for young people aged 14-25, everywhere in the world, with something to say about who you are, the world you live in and the future you want to create.

The world is changing fast, and young people are living through it, questioning it and imagining what comes next. What kind of future are we heading towards? Who gets to shape it? What needs to change? What does it mean to truly thrive?

Maybe you have a dream. An idea. A question you can't stop asking. Something you've experienced that changed you. Something you're already changing. Something you wish more people understood. Whatever it is, we want to hear it. And we want to share it with others.

Unmuted is Girl Rising's global storytelling challenge, giving YOU a platform to share your life, your ideas, your experiences, your community and your vision for the future, in any language, in any format, and in your own way

You don't need the perfect words. You just need to start.

What's in it for YOU



Your story becomes part of a global collection of young people's voices, experiences, questions and ideas about the future.

Selected storytellers:

Make it to The Unmuted Annual:

The top 50 stories will be published in our annual story collection, with select stories featured on our social platforms.

Opportunity to be featured in a film:

Up to 15 storytellers will be invited to develop their stories for potential inclusion in a short film by Hollywood producer and director David Oyelowo.

A place in Girl Rising's 2027 Story Lab:

Up to 15 young people will be invited to join our three-month virtual program to hone their storytelling skills and connect with mentors in media and technology.



What this TOOLKIT Offers

READY TO FIND YOUR STORY, TELL IT YOUR WAY AND PUT IT OUT THERE?

This is your UNMUTED starter kit ...
here to take you from "I have something to say..."
to "I just submitted my story."

01 FIND YOUR STORY

What do you want the world to know?

We'll give you prompts and story sparks to help you notice the people, places, moments, ideas and possibilities that could become your story.

You don't need to have your story figured out. Start with something that means something to you: a person, place, object, sound, memory, moment, question or idea.

Your story could help someone feel seen, spark a new idea, challenge how someone thinks or inspire change. You never know how far your words, experiences or imagination could travel.

Then tell us about it.

WHAT ARE YOU DREAMING?

What future do you want? What are you becoming, building, creating or hoping for?

WHAT ARE YOU QUESTIONING?

What doesn't make sense to you? What do you want to understand? What rule, expectation or assumption would you challenge?

WHAT ARE YOU CHANGING?

What would you do differently? What are you already doing differently? What would you fix, build or reimagine?

WHAT SHAPED YOU?

Think about a person, place, experience, friendship, challenge or opportunity that changed how you see yourself or the world.

WHAT DO PEOPLE GET WRONG?

What do you wish people understood about you, your generation, your community or your world?

WHAT DO YOU WANT THE WORLD TO KNOW?

If everyone stopped scrolling and listened to you for one minute, what would you say?

NEED A STORY SPARK?

WHAT DO YOU SEE THAT OTHERS MISS?

Show us something ordinary that feels beautiful, surprising or meaningful to you. What does it make you believe is possible?

THE ROAD I TAKE / THE ROAD I WANT

Take us along a path you know well. Where does it lead today, and where do you hope your life will lead?

WHAT I CARRY FORWARD

Choose an object, memory, lesson or tradition you want to take into your future. Who or what gave it meaning?

A RULE I WOULD REWRITE

Tell us about a rule, expectation or tradition that has shaped you. What would you keep? What would you change?

WHAT I KNOW HOW TO MAKE

Show us something you know how to make, fix, teach, grow, protect or solve. How could that ability help build the future you want?

A MOMENT I SURPRISED MYSELF

Take us back to a moment when you did, said, created or understood something you didn't know you were capable of. What changed after that?

THREE SOUNDS FROM MY WORLD

One that feels like home. One that represents a challenge. One that sounds like possibility. What does each tell us about your world?

SOMEONE THE WORLD SHOULD KNOW

Introduce us to someone whose work, courage, imagination or care deserves to be seen. What have they taught you?

A TOOL AND ITS LIMITS

Show us something that helps you learn, create, connect or solve a problem. What does it make possible, and what can it never do for you?

ONE IMAGE FROM MY FUTURE

Describe, draw, photograph, stage or film one image from the future you hope to build. What is already happening today that could help make it real?

02

FIND YOUR WAY TO TELL IT

What's the best way for your story to come to life?

THERE'S NO ONE RIGHT WAY TO TELL A STORY.

There's no one right format. Speak it. Write it. Film it. Photograph it. Draw it. Illustrate it. Perform it. Create it. Mix formats or make your own. We'll give you ideas to help you choose the form that feels most natural to you, and the one that can bring your story to life.

The best format is the one that helps your story come to life.

SAY IT



Record a voice note. Perform spoken word. Tell your story to camera. Sing it. Talk about it while you walk.

> Try starting with:
> "I want the world to know..."
> "Something people don't understand about..."
> "I used to think... but now..."

WRITE IT



Write a letter, poem, reflection, short story or list of things you wish people knew.

> Try:
> "Dear world..."
> "If I could change one thing..."
> "Five things I wish people understood..."

FILM IT



Make a Reel, mini-vlog, short film or day-in-the-life. Interview someone who shaped you. Show us a place that matters.

> Try:
> "Come with me to..."
> "This is what my day looks like..."
> "This is the moment I realised..."

DRAW IT



Draw a comic. Sketch an idea. Illustrate a moment. Draw a dream.
Create a character. Paint the world you want to live in.

MAKE IT



Create a photo series. Make a collage. Animate it. Design a poster. Make a zine.
Build a mood board of your future. Turn everyday objects into a story.

MIX IT UP



Combine formats. Add sound to images. Turn writing into a film.
Make a photo essay. Create something completely new.

Your camera roll. Your playlist. Your screenshots. Your neighbourhood.
Your favourite object. If it helps tell your story, it counts.

03 MAKE IT YOURS

How do you turn an idea into a story people remember? You'll find simple prompts and practical tips to help you make your story personal, authentic and unmistakably yours, without worrying about making it perfect.

DON'T MAKE IT PERFECT. MAKE IT PERSONAL.

The stories that stay with us aren't always the most polished. They're the ones that feel real.

> Use your own words.
> Speak your own language.
> Keep the laugh. Keep the pause. Keep the messy bits.

GET SPECIFIC.

Instead of telling us "young people face challenges," show us the moment you experienced one.

Instead of saying "I want change," tell us what you would actually change.

Instead of trying to speak for everyone, tell us what you know because you lived it.

GIVE US A DETAIL.

- A sound you remember.
- A message on your phone.
- A place you keep returning to.
- Something someone once said.
- An object you still have.
- A moment you can't forget.

Small details can make a big story feel real.

MAKE US FEEL SOMETHING.

Before you finish, ask:

- What do I want people to feel?
- What do I want them to think about?
- What do I want them to understand?

And remember:

- You never have to share something deeply personal to tell a meaningful story.
- Your story can be about an idea, a dream, a question, an observation, a community or the future you want to create.

YOUR QUICK STORY CHECK

- ✓ This matters to me.
- ✓ I've included something specific and personal.
- ✓ I know what I want people to take away.
- ✓ It sounds like me.
- ✓ I'm comfortable sharing it.

Your story doesn't need to be perfect.
It needs to be yours.

04

PUT IT OUT THERE

READY? LET'S GET IT OUT THERE.

We'll take you through the submission process, step by step, so you know exactly how to register, upload and submit your story.

1. CREATE



Choose your format, tell your story in any language.

2. UPLOAD



Upload your story and complete the required information.
Log on to girlrising.org/unmuted or directly onto the submission platform unmuted.girlrising.org/

3. SUBMIT



- It's my own work
- I've uploaded the right file
- My file works
- I've completed the required fields
- I'm happy with what I've created
- I'm comfortable sharing my story

Create → Upload → Submit → Go Global

And just like that, your story is out there.

You can submit your story anytime between 26th October, 2026 and 15th January, 2027.

05

HOW YOU'LL BE JUDGED

We strongly encourage entries without using AI. You are not being judged for how polished the entry is, but for your true and authentic voice. If you use AI, you must disclose it and those entries will be judged separately.

Our judging panel will judge 4 categories:

- 14-19 years old not using AI
- 14-19 years old using AI
- 20-25 years old not using AI
- 20-25 years old using AI



They will look for four things:

- It's yours, it's original. It comes from your life, told with details only you would know.
- How you tell it. It's clear, it holds our attention, and it makes the most of the format.
- Your voice. It sounds like you and nobody else.
- What it leaves us with. It makes us see, feel or think something new.

What doesn't count against you:

- Spelling and grammar mistakes
- Writing in a second language
- Filming on a phone or taking simple photos

If you're shortlisted, we'll set up a short call to talk about your story before we make our final choices. Preference will be given to entries that do not use AI.

Using AI

You can use AI tools to help, but your story must be yours. AI can fix your spelling, translate your own words or suggest edits. It can't write your story for you.

Tell us on the form which tools you used and what they did. Using AI won't cost you points. Hiding it can get your entry removed.

Never use AI to make pictures, videos or voices of real people without their permission.

Key Dates

Entries open: 26 October, 2026

Entries close: 15 January, 2027

Finalists contacted by: 31 March, 2027

Winners featured: April - October, 2027



YOUR STORY >> YOUR VOICE >> SOMEONE HEARS IT >> A CONVERSATION >> A POSSIBILITY

Ready?

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Need HELP?

- Want more storytelling ideas?
- Not sure what to submit?
- Need help understanding the process?
- Want to know what happens once your story is submitted?

Stay updated on

girlrising.org/unmuted

for more details or write to:

unmuted@girlrising.org