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Editorial

Stuffed in mailboxes across the land are shop catalogues bright with cartoon-licenced stationery, candy-coloured lunchbox snacks and smiling children in generic school uniforms. Heads down, writers, it's back to school time!

In this issue we pay homage to the pedagogical. The faculty of Writers Victoria is on-hand with some crash courses: Danielle Binks has some pointers for getting your YA manuscript ready for publication, Omar Sakr ponders creative failure and George Ivanoff tips us off about the often overlooked area of children's publishing – the education market.

We also look at the various ways writers hone their craft. Laurie Steed states his case for writing courses, Alex Fairhill gives the lowdown on writing groups and I take a closer look at some of the popular graduate writing programs on offer.

Also in this issue: Kat Clarke writes about her experience as a mentee on the Personal Patron program, Elizabeth Quinn lifts the lid on mature-age study, Glenice Whitting takes us beyond academia and there's new writing by members Nerissa Marcon, EM Lipski and Christopher Breach. 📖

Emma Cayley, Editor



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The Writers Victoria office is situated on the traditional lands of the Kulin Nation.



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Features

Ask an ALAA Agent:

How do I get my YA manuscript published? 6

You Can't Teach That

Laurie Steed 8

The Graduate

Emma Cayley 10

How to Fail

Omar Sakr 14

Back to the Classroom

George Ivanoff 16

Find Your Tribe

Alex Fairhill 18

Getting Personal

Kat Clarke 20

From Our Members

Beyond Academia

Glenice Whitting 22

Loosening the Lid

Elizabeth Quinn 24

A Man Walks into...

EM Lipski 25

Rules of a Mind

Nerissa Marcon 26

Dear Future Reader

Christopher Breach 28

Regulars

PEN Report 13

Penny Johnson

Nitpicker Quiz 15

Classifieds 29

Milestones 30

Competitions and Opportunities 31

Workshops and Courses 32

Ask an ALAA Agent

How do I get my YA manuscript published?

ALAA agent Danielle Binks (Jacinta di Mase Management) gives a crash course in YA for publication.

There are certain 'signposts' that, if I see them in a Young Adult (YA) manuscript submission pitch, they can tell me all I need to know about how much an author actually understands YA literature and the readership they purport to be writing for.

1. YA is not a genre

This is a golden rule. Never break it. YA is not a genre, it is a readership. Telling me that your manuscript's genre is 'YA' is about as helpful as telling me that you're eating 'food' for dinner, or travelling to 'a country' for your holiday. YA literature spans the spectrum of fiction and non-fiction genres from mystery to literary fiction, biography, memoir, fairytale, horror and romance. There are even sub-genres, like Amish teen romance and steampunk fantasy. The 'Young Adult' label in no way resembles a genre – it refers to the proposed age-bracket of the intended readership.

2. Boy books and girl books

There's no such thing. Books don't have genitalia – and I firmly reject the notion that books are written 'for girls' or 'for boys'. Gendered reading habits have long been a bane of the industry, and in this day and age pitching a book along gendered lines (instead of writing something that appeals to the widest audience possible) is reductive. You

have to accept (and celebrate!) the fact that young men can love books with pink covers that explore friendship dilemmas and first heartbreak, the same way young women can crave quest-driven fantasy stories with dragons (hint: it's not just young men reading/watching 'Game of Thrones'!)

3. What the kids are reading nowadays

I cringe when somebody pitches me a YA manuscript on the proviso that it's in the same vein as Enid Blyton's classics, 'Harry Potter', 'Twilight' or 'The Hunger Games'. It's a sure-fire clue that somebody hasn't browsed the youth-lit section of their bookstore/library for a while. Their references are outdated (or stuck on what they liked to read when they were a teenager!) which means they don't know how far the goal-posts have moved, or how high the bar is now set.

Get cluey with current youth lit awards for a snapshot of where the industry is at now – and prioritise awards that are voted for by actual teen readers! Check out long- and shortlists for the Inky Awards, Michael L Printz Award, Children's Book Council of Australia, CLIP Carnegie, YALSA Best Fiction, Goodreads Choice Awards... and then, y'know, actually read the books.

“Young Adult literature is not a genre. It is a readership. Telling me that your manuscript’s genre is ‘YA’ is about as helpful as telling me that you’re eating food’ for dinner, or travelling to ‘a country’ for your holiday.”

4. Movements

Young Adult literature is often the harbinger of seismic shifts in the publishing industry. That tends to happen when you’re working with future generations in teen readers.

Emerging YA writers have got to tap into where the biggest conversations are happening around youth literature – be it Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram – because that’s where your readers are. That’s your audience, and they’re all talking to each other, constantly.

Online is where the #LoveOzYA (loveozya.com.au) movement kicked off, celebrating and championing Australian YA, as a reaction to the increasing US dominance of our industry. The ‘We Need Diverse Books’ (weneeddiversebooks.org) movement became a grassroots organisation of children’s book lovers that advocates essential changes in the publishing industry to produce and promote literature that reflects and honours the lives of all young people. There is also the ‘Own Voices’ (www.corinneduyvis.net/ownvoices/) conversation offshoot of ‘Diverse Books’ that promotes authors whose protagonist shares their marginalised identity. It’s also a good idea to be abreast of these conversations, to understand why as an agent, I’m choosing to prioritise ‘Own Voices’ authors, in the hopes of having a positive impact on the Australian youth literature landscape. Understanding these conversations may also help to shine a light on things like appropriation of story/voice, which may be a reason your manuscript isn’t selling in a market that’s increasingly trying to better itself by being more inclusive and diverse, so as to more honestly reflect the real world to teen readers.



For more advice in writing and getting published for a YA readership, check out these forthcoming workshops at Writers Victoria:

Writing Adolescence
With Penni Russon
7, 14, 21 and 28 May

Writing YA
With Lili Wilkinson
30 May

How to Write Your Perfect YA Novel
With Eli Glasman
11 Jul

Vist writersvictoria.org.au for more information. 

Danielle Binks is a writer, editor, book blogger, youth literature advocate and literary agent with Jacinta di Mase Management. Her website is daniellebinks.com

Jacinta di Mase Management
www.jacintadimase.com.au

Australian Literary Agents' Association:
austlitagentsassoc.com

You Can't Teach That

WV tutor Laurie Steed tackles the criticism of writing courses and explains why they are a fundamental 'piece of the puzzle' for writers at any stage.

There is, at present, much debate related to the teaching of creative writing in academic institutions, via correspondence, and by professional organisations across Australia. I'm writing about the subject because to me there seems a distinct correlation between one's immersion in the study of writing (however that study takes place), and one's ability to succeed at the craft.

I have been both a teacher and a student of writing courses, and to me, the correlation is so clear that it's akin to breath and its ability to give life. For how else is one meant to know more on a subject, other than to study it? And yet, various voices of dissent remain, not least esteemed British author Hanif Kureishi, who, in 2014 claimed that, if he were just starting out, it would be 'madness' to join a writing course.

As a writer of note, Kureishi has earned the right to his opinion and experience as a teacher of the craft. And yet, coverage of Kureishi's comments was disproportionate to the many writers who've found success in studying the craft, and the teachers who've seen any number of writers develop as part of an ongoing literary education.

So why is a balance so difficult to find in the coverage of this particular subject? And how do one man's thoughts outweigh the many quieter voices of support relating to the teaching of creative writing?

The imbalance can in some way be traced to the increased topicality of writing about writing. A controversial quote on any topic by a famous writer (be they VS Pritchett, Hanif Kureishi or Lionel Shriver) is both reported and then discussed in a far more detailed manner

than is deserving of the throwaway comments of said writer.

With online media, 'content is king', and so, like so many other literary buzz-topics before it, the 'can you teach writing?' argument gets rolled out alongside the 'death of the book' article at regular intervals. The names have changed, but essentially the message is the same, that is there is no message, only cyclical discussion on why one can or cannot teach creative writing.

“It's vital to make an occasional misstep as a writer. Writing is hard. It's meant to be hard. We're not talking about passing level 343 on Candy Crush Saga here.”

My take is that you can teach many things to help a writer's development, such as reading like a writer, charting different styles and structures, and being able to assess what is or isn't working within a particular piece of writing. That not only can you teach these things, but that they should be taught as part of any writing course to help build a stronger, more structurally literate breed of writer.

Things get more complicated once you get into an author's motivation and inspiration, and for most authors, that's a journey they'll take on their own, or not, depending on their drive, and indeed, what writing means to them.

How did writing courses help me? Well, under the tutelage of Paul Mitchell in 2010, I learned first-hand how to explore a writer's possible intentions in a particular story, and how they had conveyed them. I learned to read and reread stories as one might pore over an old photograph, forever searching for the tell, show, or microscopic detail that opened up its greater culture and context. I learned to write with intent, purpose and a full grasp of the tools at my disposal.

I'm now teaching such courses. My students have gone on to be published in anthologies and literary journals both here and overseas, have had their debut novels or story collections published, and have been awarded and commended in short story competitions across Australia. Their success is worthy of celebration, of course, and yet, there are some things provided by writing clinics that are not so easily measured. The existence of a space where these writers were able to develop their craft outside of the pressures of literary culture was integral in building the necessary foundations for creative success. It meant said writers could not only succeed according to the greater literary culture, but could experiment with form, style and structure in a safe and supportive environment.

This matters because it's vital to make an occasional misstep as a writer. Writing is hard. It's meant to be hard. We're not talking about passing level 343 on Candy Crush Saga, or finding a perfect pair of pants here. Writing takes time, patience, effort and a willingness to remain open to your drives and desires, on the page, as they change from story to story.

This matters because it's a great deal easier to experiment as part of a group than on your own. It's damn near impossible, in fact, to go it alone, quite simply because any writer worth their salt has blind spots. It matters because other writers have surprising, intriguing and occasionally challenging takes on what makes for a great piece of fiction.

Success in writing, then, is not a formula but a decision that we make. It's the openness to and patience in our journey as it unfolds. A writers' group may help or hinder you. As a developing writer, you may find formal lessons too stifling or restrictive. Or, your best book or short story may be stronger from a workshop

taken, or festival attended, while in pursuit of your dream.

What of the naysayers, those writers who choose to denounce certain pathways while praising others? Well, it's impressive, and in some ways necessary for people to pretend the world is black and white. It's easier too, to suggest there's right and wrong in the forging of a literary career. But no one knows what it takes for you to succeed.

The chances are that it may be a variety of things; that the 'parts' of the puzzle include ongoing education and discussion as to how and why we write. At least I hope that's the case, if only for a more enlightening, less lonely journey; for I have often found comfort in the wisdom shared whenever I felt brave enough not to know exactly where I wanted to go, or how I might get there. 📖

Laurie Steed is an author of award-winning literary fiction from Perth. His stories have been broadcast on BBC Radio 4 and published in 'Best Australian Stories', 'The Age', 'Meanjin', 'Westerly', 'Island', 'The Sleepers Almanac' and elsewhere. His next WV workshop, Online: Advanced Short Story Clinic starts on 15 Feb. Visit writersvictoria.org.au for details.

The Graduate

WV Editor and lifelong-learner Emma Cayley looks at some of the most popular graduate coursework writing programs in Victoria.

When I finished High School some time in the 1990s, tertiary writing programs were few and far between. Like so many wannabe writers, I settled on a BA, majoring in English, and to sate the burgeoning scribe within, found a patchouli-scented creative writing community course in Bondi for a bit on the side.

These days, though, most universities offer undergraduate and graduate writing programs. These courses are often maligned (see Laurie Steed's article on page 8) and perceived as easy money-spinners for the institutions. A masters writing program, for instance, ranges from \$30,000 to \$45,000; the sort of money, let's be frank, that could take years to recuperate through writing. But this hasn't deterred students. Graduate writing coursework programs are booming, with more than 70 currently being offered by Australian universities.

A couple of years ago, I was finding it difficult to write consistently. I was 'working' on a manuscript, snatching time here and there, around full-time work and children and so on. This erratic approach was taking its toll. I was tired, frustrated and unfocused, so I decided to enrol in a graduate coursework program to commit to my writing practice once-and-for-all.

But which course? Victoria boasts some excellent graduate writing programs. While there are common elements, the programs on offer are distinct. So, if you're considering this route, be clear about your objectives and do your homework. Do you want a job in publishing? To improve as a writer? Have academic aims? All of the above? Then what about the logistics: are daytime classes okay? Or do you need evening classes or online options? The expense is an important consideration too. Most courses are eligible for government support, but double check. In my case, having worked in the sector for many years, I was not looking for a career

pathway as such, I just wanted to immerse myself in creative writing (and not feel guilt!). So, what's the best course for you (if any)? It all depends on what you're looking for. I spoke to the coordinators of some of the most highly regarded programs in the country to find out what distinguishes their offerings.

*

Penny Johnson is Coordinator of RMIT's Professional Writing and Editing program. Up to 90 students join the two-year Associate Degree program each year, and graduates include Graeme Simsion, Rosalie Ham, Toni Jordan, Sofie Laguna, Alexis Wright, Carrie Tiffany, Sian Prior – a veritable prize short-list – to name just a few.

EC: What is unique about RMIT's program?

PJ: RMIT is unique in offering an associate degree in Professional Writing and Editing. Associate degrees are fantastic qualifications that allow for practice-based learning and teaching infused by theory. It is a very practical degree where students work on publishable writing forms and publishing projects, while also developing strong editing and design skills to further their creative and career ambitions. The strength of our program is that it attracts writers, editors and publishers of diverse ages and backgrounds, and encourages a range of collaborative and publishing activity.

EC: How is the program designed?

PJ: Year 1 is a foundation year where you cover the essentials: grammar, punctuation and style; copyediting and proofreading; writing fiction and non-fiction; professional writing; and design and desktop publishing skills. In Year 2 you work on a substantial fiction or non-fiction work and a digital project, and choose your specialisation via electives.

EC: How do you prepare students for the reality of working in such a competitive industry as publishing?

PJ: At the heart of our program is the development of core skills and knowledge directly relevant to the publishing and communications industries. We have a dedicated industry liaison teacher and an extensive placement program. Through our own Clover Press, students get to work collaboratively in all facets of the publishing process, publishing 'Visible Ink', for instance.

You also have the option to either complete a work placement or do an advanced writing course, and everyone takes the Inside the Industry course to prepare them for life beyond the program.

EC: Why would you recommend doing a writing program?

PJ: We encourage people to study a tertiary program when they are wanting to get serious about their writing. A tertiary course suits those who aim to work as professional writers in journalism or communications, or who are keen to get extended support on substantial writing projects – a novel or memoir, for instance. Sometimes people don't know exactly what they want to do, but they know they love writing. A tertiary program gives writers a chance to learn strong foundation skills and discover where their strengths and interests lie.

*

Radha O'Meara is co-Coordinator of the Master of Creative Writing, Publishing and Editing at the University of Melbourne. Between 20 and 40 new students enrol in this program each year and graduates have gone on to win many prizes and awards including the Vogel and Stella.

EC: What is unique about your program?

RO: Our Master of Creative Writing, Publishing and Editing (MCWPE) is not just a writing program, but there is a significant component that is focused on the knowledge and skills required to work in the industrial context of publishing. Our creative writing teaching spans a number of genres that people might not immediately think of, including writing graphic narratives or comic books, and scripting for television and web series, as well as more common genres such as fiction, non-fiction, poetry.

The teaching and research in the publishing program is notable for its strength in

understanding, addressing and shaping the developments in a rapidly changing industrial and technological context. The MCWPE builds students' knowledge and networks both locally and globally, with a strong focus on the Australian writing and publishing scene, but also international outlook. For example, students can take a publishing subject in which they travel to New York to meet and engage with professionals in the publishing industry there.

We have recently launched a teaching press, to be run by students under the leadership of academics. This is very exciting, because it gives students a very hands-on experience and there are only a few teaching presses in writing programs around the world. Our press will run across the year, and will publish nonfiction and fiction from inside and outside the university.

EC: How is your program designed?

RO: It is designed to unite studies of writing with publishing and editing, so that graduates will have a rounded understanding of the various roles and aspects of writing and publishing processes. We believe this breadth of understanding and skills will be valuable, regardless of what roles in writing and publishing students go on to after graduation.

EC: How do you prepare your students for the reality of working in publishing?

Besides the teaching press, we run the very popular class Advanced Book Publishing. This challenging subject really tests students in terms of commitment, creative ingenuity... and the ability to use a calculator, one of an in-house editor's most indispensable tools. In creative writing, strengthening students' skills in writing across a range of genres and writing regularly are probably the most important ways we prepare students for working lives as writers.

We always have a lot of MCWPE students in one of our other publishing subjects, Editing Masterclass, which offers students near the end of their master's degrees the chance to practise editing in different genres.

EC: Why would you recommend doing a writing program at graduate level?

RO: There are a number of reasons, and students often have a combination of these. To establish a regular writing practice. To get good, ongoing feedback on what you're

writing. To extend your writing beyond your comfort zone and experiment with new topics and methods. To work in a community of writers. To learn more about the publishing industry. To gain experience and create a network of contacts within the publishing industry.

*

Carolyn Beasley is Course Director of Writing at Swinburne, where the graduate writing courses have around 80 students. Graduates include bestselling authors James Phelan, Kim Falconer, historical novelist Wendy Dunn, and Laurent Boulanger.

EC: What is unique about Swinburne's writing programs?

CB: We pride ourselves on the publishing opportunities we offer students. We have three dedicated writing journals that students can publish their work in, plus two other journals that are run in our home department of Media and Communication, plus a new writing-related radio program. These are all run by students so they can get editing, events and publishing experience. Swinburne also has internship and work placement units, with these built into the majors and degrees if students choose. We give students lots of opportunities to come out to industry events with us to network. We also run lots of our own events so that students feel like they are part of a writing community.

Students love our smaller classes, and that there are lots of chances to get feedback on their writing. Swinburne also has other innovative subjects and majors that students can pair up with their writing study to give them and their writing an edge.

EC: How are your writing programs designed?

CB: We start with basic storytelling skill-building and then help students develop more sophisticated and individual writing and tale-telling styles and projects. We refresh our material every year to make sure that we're using recent works as well as classic works as models.

EC: How do you prepare your students for the reality of working in such a competitive industry as publishing?

CB: Our tutors are all published writers who have first-hand knowledge of the industry and we have lots of guest speakers who

share insights into working in fields related to writing. To make sure students are up-to-date about the way the writing and publishing world works, we also take them to many of the terrific Melbourne-based events like the Independent Press Conference, Editors Victoria events, and writers festivals. We run student panels at things like the Digital Writers Festival and the Emerging Writing Festival so students get to immerse themselves in the amazing Melbourne and Australian writing scene.

EC: Why would you recommend doing a writing program at graduate level?

CB: Programs are great because you're producing work constantly under the step-by-step guidance of professionals. They provide the extra motivation you may need to get that short story written or novel underway and immerse you in a community of creative people who understand you like no one else does! These communities and contacts often stay with you through your professional life too. Programs help you find your writing voice, develop skills, and open industry doors for you.

More information:

RMIT

rmit.edu.au/study-with-us/levels-of-study/undergraduate-study/associate-degrees/ad016

The University of Melbourne

graduate.arts.unimelb.edu.au/study/degrees/master-of-creative-writing-publishing-and-editing/overview

Swinburne

[swinburne.edu.au/study/course/Master-of-Arts-\(Writing\)-MA-ARTWRI/local](http://swinburne.edu.au/study/course/Master-of-Arts-(Writing)-MA-ARTWRI/local)

Some other graduate programs:

Deakin

deakin.edu.au/current-students/courses/course.php?course=A748

Monash

artsonline.monash.edu.au/creative-writing/

La Trobe

latrobe.edu.au/courses/creative-writing

Emma Cayley is editor of 'The Victorian Writer', writer of short- and long-form fiction and student of the Master of Creative Writing, Publishing and Editing program at the University of Melbourne.

PEN: Women Writers



The International PEN Women Writers' Committee was set up in 1991 to promote certain issues faced by women writers around the world – challenges at family and national levels such as unequal education, unequal access to resources and actual prohibition from writing.

The committee reaches out to both aspiring and practising women writers through PEN Centres and other organisations and networks and works with the Writers in Prison Committee on behalf of incarcerated or endangered women writers. Representatives from the committee attend meetings of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. The committee has held conferences in Nepal, Kyrgyzstan and Senegal and published special newsletters.

Melbourne PEN Centre has been closely connected with the International PEN Women Writers' Committee, one of PEN's five committees, since 2003. Melbourne PEN Vice-President, Dr Judith Buckrich, was Chair of this committee from 2003 to 2009 and helped organise Women Writers' Conferences in Kyrgyzstan in 2005 and Senegal in 2007. The committee has published four anthologies of poetry and short stories in French, Spanish and English during that time. It meets at every PEN Congress and every PEN executive meeting in Bled, Slovenia each year to discuss the ongoing problems of women writers around the world. The Melbourne Centre holds an annual event on or near International Women's Day.

This year we have a very special event which we hope readers of 'The Victorian Writer' will attend.

PEN Melbourne in partnership with Readings Books presents:


Profiting from the rebellion of our parents: Sara Dowse and Judith Buckrich in conversation

Join us for a conversation with Sara Dowse and Judith Buckrich, two profoundly political activist writers who learned at their communist parents' knees. Sara and Judith will talk activism and the turbulence of the 20th century.

Sara Dowse is a Sydney-based writer, artist and feminist who in the 1970s headed the inaugural Office of Women's Affairs in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. She is still considered to be Australia's pioneer 'femocrat'. Her novel 'As the Lonely Fly' is set for release in the first half of 2017.

Dr Judith Buckrich is an award winning historian. Arnold Zable said of Judith's recent memoir 'The Political is Personal' is an inspiring recollection of a life lived to the full, epic in scope, tempered by an acute political awareness, driven by a hunger for knowledge and experience, and crafted with the skill of a seasoned writer.'

Wed 8 Mar at 6.30pm
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or through our website penmelbourne.org 

How to Fail

Omar Sakr learns how to love a work for what it is, when it is delivered.

I am rooted in failure. As an emerging author, I am often engaged in the business of promoting successes – I was shortlisted here, I have an article in this, an essay, a poem, and so on – but what isn't discussed as much is failing. I'm not talking about rejection on the road to publication, I'm talking about the flaws inherent in these successes. There is no single instance of my work I am perfectly happy with, for example, no poem or article I can point to and say, 'this is, without qualification, great.' Even as I am composing a work, I am contending with failure, both imagined and real, both present and future.

In his essay, 'The Hatred of Poetry', Ben Lerner remarks on this aspect of a poet's life and contends that it relates to perfection. Every artist is haunted by the gap between conceptualisation and realisation; the impulse of dream is grace itself, the act of capturing it a clumsy sin, an arrogance or fool's whim. For every poem, there is a perfect possibility, and so, Lerner argues, it is only with contempt for the object of the poem itself that we can clear a space to access its ideal self. This is not the kind of failure I am talking about either. In fact, I reject the idea wholesale.

It is true I have never written the poem I desired to write when grace made itself known to my body, but it is also true I have long since given up on doing so. Any attempt will only lead to frustration and rage because you cannot replicate the ineffable. Instead of trying to draw what I see, or what I remember seeing, I go as far as possible in the opposite direction: if I catch a glimpse of God, draw the devil. If what I'm hearing is perfect classical music, I'll bust out some diss track of battle rap. I let go of the first suggestion brought up by inspiration and do my best to retain the urge to write, the pure drive to create. In that sense, writing for me isn't the poor translation of a remembered dream but dreaming itself.

I look to the dream then and I am content – sometimes – in the moment because I don't know where it's taking me, and the joy of surprise, of revelation is an addictive thrill. What hovers, what haunts, is the knowledge that flaws bedevil the dream that I cannot perceive in the moment. Months after I've published and promoted a piece, I will return to it and find, aghast, some paltry thing where a dream once lived. It isn't about an illusory perfect ideal, it's about typos I would swear weren't there before or lines I once thought of as smooth, assured, and clever reading now as crude, weak, and mundane. The true tragedy of the written is that it is dead on arrival, where I am always growing.

This is one aspect of failure we don't talk about, and from a practical standpoint, it makes sense. In the first instance, it goes against the promotion of your work to describe it as a bit shit now, and secondly, it can be infuriating to those who haven't achieved this 'success' to hear that you might not love the product as much as they think you should. The last thing anyone wants after saying that your reading was amazing is to hear you reply, 'thanks, but I flubbed a line'. I have learned this lesson the hard way. The dimming of their excited smile, the flicker of confusion, the doubt creeping in, the unspoken question: why don't you love this how I loved it?

I have been thinking about all this recently as my first book of poetry is about to be published, and I've been wrestling with the idea that some of these poems are old and don't excite me as much as what is new. How can I sell this flawed dream? I found if not the whole answer, then at least part of it, in confronting another aspect of failure: performance. To write is to perform, especially for poets today with the increasingly blurred line between 'spoken' and 'literary' poetry.

‘There is no single instance of my work I am perfectly happy with, for example, no poem or article I can point to and say, ‘this is, without qualification, great.’

In performing, I wrestle with the same desire for control, for exactitude, as I do in the work and as in the work, I fail often and fail hard. However, doing it publicly, sweating in front of an audience, has also taught me to relax, taught me how little these flaws matter. The audience does not exist in the future either, they are here now, and as accepting of the dream as I was when it first came to me.

Slowly, the noose of fear is unwinding from my throat and I am learning to live in the moment, to love the work for what it is as it's delivered. It is absurd and insane to expect any art to beautifully showcase not just your past and present, but also bear up to your future. There is no such thing as a perfect poem against which to compare your work, but there may be a window of perfection in which it can be enjoyed without qualification, and it is this window I am trying to look out of now.

Omar Sakr's debut collection of beautiful failures, 'These Wild Houses', is out soon.

Nitpicker

Your monthly editing lesson, brought to you by Penny Johnson, Program Manager of Professional Writing and Editing at RMIT.



CC image courtesy of John Bugg on Flickr.

1. Jules and Simmo dropped past to pick up Gus, the kids and (me/I) for a day at the beach.
2. After a cup of tea, we loaded up with sunscreen, hats, towels (, / and) provisions, as well as boogie boards and an inflatable raft.
3. An old pair of goggles (was/were) by the door, but no sign of a snorkel.
4. We trundled through the baking streets, negotiated the crowds on the foreshore and were (laying /lying) on the sand by noon.
5. Later, supervising the kids in the shallows, (tiredness washed over me/ I felt tiredness wash over me).

Answers on page 33

Back to the Classroom

WV Tutor George Ivanoff looks into the interesting and worthwhile, but often overlooked area of children's publishing – the education market.

Remember what it's like being at primary school? The readers you got to take home to help you practice? The books you read together as a class? The comprehension cards with a short piece of writing on one side and questions on the other? The non-fiction books that helped you with your unit of enquiry?

People often forget about all these books when they've grown up. Everyone focuses on the trade books you buy in bookstores – the big hits, the bestsellers, the ones you go and buy as presents for the young people in your life.

But all those educational materials from primary school are still around. They are vital to young readers, helping them to learn and practice their reading, introducing them to new ideas and concepts, taking what they are learning in the classroom and putting it into a wider context. And they constitute a huge part of the children's book market. But if you're intending to write for this market, there are a few things you'll need to know.

You are not going to get rich and famous writing these types of books. They are sold directly into schools and libraries (rather than through bookshops) and the marketing focus is on a series and its educational benefits rather than on individual books and authors. Having said that, there can be regular work for writers willing to learn.

The education market is brief-driven. Books are written to be part of a set, so authors are given series guidelines to adhere to – reading age, word-count, chapter breakdown, that sort of thing. If you're lucky, you may be offered a choice of topics for a non-fiction book. Or you may simply be asked if you can work on

a specific topic. In either case, it's likely to require a fair bit of research.

I've written non-fiction books on topics ranging from astronomy to unexplained mysteries, from the history of aeroplanes to nutrition, from piracy in the modern age to Olympic Game technology, from dinosaurs to fossil fuels. In each and every case, I had a glorious time learning about those topics and discovering things I never knew.

Even fiction will require a considerable amount of research. Chapter books and novelettes often need to fit in with particular areas of the Australian curriculum. So it's off to the virtual classroom to learn about what the kids are learning.

These types of books are often very specific in their needs. Writing for the award-winning Discovering Geography series (Pearson), I was asked to create a story about the protection of places of environmental and cultural significance. This story needed to encapsulate the 'similarities and differences in individual and group feelings and perceptions about places, and how they influence views about the protection of these places.' A recent holiday to Lake Mungo provided the inspiration, as this location was protected for environmental and cultural reasons. But then the research began – looking into the way the area was managed, its history and the plans for the future. All this research then needed to be incorporated into an exciting story that would engage its young readers.

School readers are very carefully graded into reading levels. This will sometimes involve the use of high-frequency words, which you will be assigned. You'll need to use these words a specific number of times; sometimes several



Just a few titles by George Ivanoff.

times per page. All this can be quite a learning curve for the writer who has never been restricted this way before.

Every now and then, particularly interesting or unusual projects show up. Most recently I was asked to contribute short essays to a high school English language book, to be published in China. This was interesting in that any cultural aspects unfamiliar to Chinese teenagers needed to be explained within the text.

Another interesting project was a five-book series called 'Corey Jansen: Teen Spy' (Pinnacle Press, Curriculum Concepts). This was aimed at early high school boys with reading difficulties. The interest level and topics had to be aimed at the 13-year-old mark, but the reading ability had to be much younger. Additionally there needed to be five slim (and therefore non-threatening) volumes. Each had to tell its own story and be complete, but together they needed to form a greater whole – the idea being to encourage the reluctant readers to continue through all five books.

Now, think back to when you were in school. Think about all those educational materials you had to read. Did you like them? Did you enjoy reading them? Or were you skimming your way through as quickly as possible, so you could get to the next Roald Dahl or Paul Jennings book?

The challenge as an author writing for the education market is to engage the kids, get them interested in and excited about what they are reading, while also meeting the education requirements and technical aspects of the brief you are writing to. Not an easy task – but such a wonderfully rewarding one.

The education market is an extremely interesting and worthwhile area of children's publishing. It gives you the chance to learn as you write, earn money and broaden your horizons (always a good thing for an author). It gives you a chance to engage with what kids are being taught in schools. It gives you the opportunity to contribute to the education of the next generation.

Who could ask for more? 📖

George Ivanoff is a Melbourne children's author with more than 100 titles under his belt. Although best known for his 'You Choose' series and 'RFDS Adventures', he has written intensively for the education market. He's won a few awards, including a YABBA, and has books on the Victorian Premier's Reading Challenge booklists.

George's workshop Writing for the Education Market is held at Writers Victoria on Sat 25 Feb. Visit writersvictoria.org.au for more information.

Find Your Tribe

Finding the right writing group can be trial and error.

Alex Fairhill has done the hard yards and shares some words of wisdom.

Join a writing group. It's one of the most common pieces of advice writers hear. And with justification: writing groups can provide support, advice and feedback. They are a sounding board for ideas, a chance to meet other writers in your geographical or authorial area, or simply an opportunity to write without the distractions of everyday life. Discussions might focus on critiquing, craft or industry gossip. No writing group is the same. The trick is finding the group that's right for you.

The first writing group I joined was a two-hour drive from my rural town – the nearest I could find that focused on writing for children. Members met monthly to discuss and critique their work and were welcoming, warm and supportive, but in the end the travel became too much.

Around this time, I met two other writers at a workshop in Melbourne who were from my regional area. We started meeting, and after placing a classified in 'The Victorian Writer', our small local group expanded.

Our first official meeting was at a pub with a dozen or so attendees. Committee members from a Large Incorporated Writing Group came to offer support. We chatted over drinks and nibbles, and discussed our writing and what we wanted from the group. Some had tried literary fiction, poetry or memoir writing groups. One woman had been told work for children was not 'real writing' and to come back when she was serious. Everyone was enthusiastic, friendly and interested. Then the bloke from the Large Incorporated Writing Group spoke up:

'You'll need public liability insurance,' he said. 'If someone trips and injures themselves on their way back to the car the group's liable.'

The questions kept coming: What about your committee? Who's president? Treasurer? Who'll look after the finances? Who'll send out newsletters? What about copyright regarding our work? Who'll organise the writing exercises? Sub-groups? Venue hire? Events? The positive, eager gathering ended with our heads spinning – and it wasn't from the wine.

Three years on, the group still meets monthly but doesn't advertise for new members. It's now writers only with a core group of five. If we meet someone from our area who writes for children, we invite them along. Some have come once or twice and a few pop in and out. The format has also changed – it's gone through informal, formal, timed, workshop-style and presentation-style incarnations and has settled on a combination of a social meal and critiquing one or two pieces of work, which are emailed out in advance.

Finding a writing group

The first step is deciding what you want. Chatting with a group's contact person before joining will give you an indication of how the group operates. A group that focuses on providing uninterrupted writing time is great if you're looking for motivation and a distraction-free environment in which to get words on paper, but might not suit if you want feedback or social interaction with other writers.

Groups can be general or genre-specific, meet in person or online, be held during business hours, evenings or on weekends. Some meet regularly, some on an ad-hoc basis. Some may require a fee to cover expenses such as venue hire, or require new members to attend several meetings before they can critique or submit their own writing for feedback. Some groups

“The positive, eager gathering ended with our heads spinning – and it wasn’t from the wine.”

are large, others are a handful of people. Some might communicate through social media, others over email.

Joining a writing group can extend your community and support network, but it can take time to find the right fit. Some are more supportive than others, especially when it comes to new writers. Groups might be more or less social than you expected, or the writers could be at a different level of experience to you. If a writing group’s not giving you what you need, try another one.

But where do you find a writing group? Writers Victoria’s website lists groups that can be searched by region or keywords. Ask at your local bookshop or library, or put feelers out over social media. In regional areas, the local Large Incorporated Writing Group is a good starting point. And if all else fails you can do what we did and start your own – chances are if you’re looking for a writing group to target a specific genre or area, others will be too.

Establishing a group

Writing Groups can be formed by workshop participants keeping in touch, or started by one writer looking for like-minded people. Students who connect at uni can continue to critique and beta read one another’s work for years. I chat online almost daily with a couple of friends I met through writing. We critique work, let one another know of competitions and publishing opportunities, celebrate achievements, console after setbacks and encourage one another when needed. We are, in effect, a writing group. A Facebook group for participants of a program I was involved in last year operates in a similar way.

If you want to start your own group, a classified in ‘The Victorian Writer’ or in Writers Victoria’s enews is a great place to start, and WV members are entitled to three free classifieds a year. Visit your local library and bookstore and leave your contact details or put up a flyer. If there’s a Large Incorporated Writing Group in your area, put out feelers through its channels.

Finding a venue was, for my group, the most difficult part of the process. Most libraries have rooms available at little or no cost during business hours, but we met in the evening as we worked or studied full-time. Most other venues we approached wanted us to pay for room hire on top of food. After two years of trial and error, we finally found a pub willing to let us use a spare room for free.

Communication between members can be done via email or even a closed Facebook or Yahoo group. Online storage services such as Dropbox or Cloud are other options for sharing work electronically, but check the terms and conditions carefully. Sharing work via Facebook, for example, means you agree to granting a non-exclusive, transferrable, royalty-free worldwide license to use any intellectual property content posted in connection with Facebook. This expires when you delete the content or your account – unless that content’s been shared with others who’ve not deleted it. If communication over social media isn’t an option, having one person to act as an administrator works well, as long as the other members participate.

Consider putting basics in writing: when, where and how often the group will meet; if there’s a minimum number of meetings before members can give or receive feedback. Is the group for all writers, or restricted to one or two genres? How many people will present work for critique, if any? What’s the maximum word length? Is work submitted in advance or read at the meeting? Will members set goals? Will there be a different topic each month? Writing exercises? This can also change over time as the needs of the group evolve.

And public liability insurance? Our small group didn’t need it. We checked. But if you’re in doubt, seek legal advice. ⑩

Alex Fairhill is an emerging children’s and YA author. She posts writing-related thoughts on her blog (alexfairhill.blogspot.com.au) and Twitter (@AlexFairhill).

Getting Personal

Kat Clarke writes about her experiences as a mentee under the Personal Patrons scheme and her development as a writer.

When I think back through the journey of my Personal Patrons mentorship, I think it's funny how fast the months flew by. I never thought I'd even get the chance to have such an amazing opportunity like this. I had written so many unpolished short articles and stories, not to mention isolated myself from the outside world. I needed this mentorship to help keep me on track of my writing aspirations and it was about time I got a fresh opinion. With my eyes wide open, I went in search of my perfect mentor and discovered Lyndel Caffrey. She was modest, with a welcoming smile and a background in creative writing. Perfect! I knew I would be comfortable working with her. Lyndel and I arranged to meet.

After working out the nuts and bolts of what I wanted to improve (my grammar) and develop (my dream of writing a family history story), we were on our way. Initially, we met every two to three weeks, working on some of my older work while building frameworks to begin researching my family history and how it would be structured. It wasn't long until those unpolished articles and stories began looking brand-spanking new.

During this time, I also penned my personal patron a letter. Dorothy Hutton had taken a shot on me and I wanted to share the news of my development and progress with her. Part of the mentorship is to write to our patrons, but I would have done this regardless. It wasn't long until I had a response and Dorothy had offered to visit me in person. We chose a date and decided on a place in Sunshine. I picked Dorothy up from the station, we found a café and shared stories. I had learnt that she too had only just begun researching her own family history. She said it was funny how she had never thought to do it earlier in

her life and yet family history has been vital for Aboriginal people since forever. It was only in recent decades that she and a lot of other Australians were beginning to understand this importance. Hearing this made me realise how we all are in some way searching for answers in order to better understand ourselves. More to the point, Dorothy was a gentle reminder that we are always learning.

Throughout the mentorship, Lyndel has been my navigator and confidante, sourcing books and information that would improve my writing, and helping me build the courage to get my work published. I had written pieces for the Rag and Bone Man Press, but that was all. Because of Lyndel's reassurance I found the guts to contact a publisher for a few magazines (mainly focused around health) to publish what I wrote about my mum and her life with lupus. Then came the brick wall – I didn't get a response. Setbacks are hard to handle, and can even lead to mental breakdown, but I must say I work better under pressure. It has helped in producing some of my best work. So after many used tissue boxes and self-cussing I decided to try again. Really, that's all you can do. Right? I sent Lyndel an email and she suggested I try a few newspaper organisations, let it go, and then come back to it once I felt I had given it enough time for a response. It was a token that was worth hearing. Sometimes it took weeks, even months for publishing companies and newspaper organisations to respond. So I focused on my next goal, which was my dream of writing the next family chronicle.

I have always dreamt of writing the Australian version of 'Roots'. Besides the frameworks we had built and the structures discussed, I still hadn't harnessed the nerve to begin. Writing



Kat Clarke (right) with her Personal Patron Mentor Lyndel Caffrey.

family history can be a bit of a puzzle and sometimes even when you have all the pieces not everyone is willing to share them. Not all family stories are going to turn out the way you had first imagined. I found this out the long way round and probably backwards too. Patience, I've found is key. One thing that has come out of this was the fact that I actually have now started writing. I have decided on telling my family history through a collation of fictional short stories – a collation of voices. Yet to reach this point, where I now know what my abilities are as a writer and how to just begin, wasn't possible without the help of some great mentors, my family and some life experience.

Where to from here then? Dorothy has invited me to meet with her and her book club, so I will be going walkabout, visiting her very soon. Outside of writing, I also have some great film and art projects that I have begun to sink my teeth into. Finally, as my family and Elders say, 'Home is always here. Go and get the knowledge and make something out of it. Then return home to Country when the time calls to share it.' This is something that has stuck with me throughout the whole of my education and has informed my career choices. So, I hope to eventually return home to Country once I have accomplished all I can in the city. Back home where I can incorporate my writing, business,

artistic (including film) skills, and build a safe place for all to learn, share and create. Each piece, every thread woven, has led back to my own Aboriginal heritage, family and identity. The experiences throughout my life up to this point, and the dynamic personalities that have wandered in and out, have contributed to developing my own creative voice and practice as a writer. Now, I just want to share it. 🎬

Kat Clarke is a creative and consultant from the Wimmera. Being a proud Wotjobaluk woman, Kat takes pride in being active with both her own community and the Aboriginal community in Melbourne. Having graduated from RMIT with a specialty in writing and film, Kat dreams of one day developing her own stories and a business that is focused around the Creative Arts Industry.

For information about the Personal Patrons scheme, visit writersvictoria.org.au/about-us/donate

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Beyond Academia

By Dr Glenice Whitting

Writers often dream of being published and getting their work 'out there'. I am no exception. My second novel has just been published, but it's been a long road to publication. This manuscript has had at least three reincarnations with a change of title each time. Each version has its own merit and has taught me something valuable about the craft of writing. The novel, 'Something Missing' began life as 'Hens Lay, People Lie': my artefact for my PhD at Swinburne University.

I had just completed a Master of Creative Writing at Melbourne Uni when my first novel, 'Pickle to Pie' co-won the Ilura Press International Fiction Quest. This meant a cash advance, plus publication and I was beside myself with excitement.

'Pickle to Pie' was the story of a boy, a great-hearted German Grossmutter and a man caught between two worlds. It was a record of my father's life. In his late eighties he would sit for hours telling me, or whoever would listen, the stories of his early life, the first child born in Australia to his family of German immigrants.

I had promised myself, if 'Pickle to Pie' was ever published that I would give up my day job. Hairdressing had always augmented the family income through good times and bad. After the book launch I stuck to my promise, sold the salon and walked away to a life of poverty. I knew I was not a J K Rowling, but I was happy.

I had often toyed with the idea of studying for my PhD, but never dreamt it could happen. However, to be awarded an APA scholarship meant the opportunity to study at Swinburne University. I grabbed it with both hands. With the help of two supervisors I could learn the craft of writing and understand all the rules. I would then know why I was breaking them. I decided to do what so many writers do. I

chose to write something close to my heart. Something entirely different. This time it would be based on my thirty-five year pen-friendship with an older American poet, a story about two women, a life changing pen-friendship and the lies they tell each other. I wrote in my journal, 'I am writing an epistolary, autoethnographic novel grounded in both feminism and post modernist paradigms with the aim of revealing women's hidden stories in the hope of instigating social change.'

What lofty aims, but here was a chance to use our letters, interspersed with text, to explore the influence this elderly poet had on a young woman who left school at fourteen to become a hairdresser: a woman who unconsciously yearned for the education given to her brother and denied to her. My journey into epistolary fiction using letter, diary and journal extracts, plus snippets of poetry, had begun.

I began work using an older American woman's voice in first-person narration, an elderly Australian woman in second person and the young Australian mum in third person. The story would have embedded dialogue, following author, Debra Adelaide's example, where only the formatting and actions of the characters, rather than dialogue marks, reveal to the reader who is speaking at that time. The elderly Australian woman would reveal the pitfalls and joys of writing a novel in a humorous, tongue-in-cheek vein.

For four years I was caught up in a world where my mind kept bouncing backwards and forwards between my creative writing of this novel and the formal academic exegesis.

Friends warned me that I would have a meltdown post PhD, but I was convinced that would not happen to me. I was too strong, too resilient. That sort of breakdown only happened to other people. The wail of the

ambulance soon bought me back to earth with a thud. I asked my adult son what section of hospital I was in. He replied, 'The resuscitation room, Mum.' Two weeks later, just home from hospital and feeling weak and tired, I had resigned myself to missing my already-paid-for graduation ceremony. My son hired a wheelchair, determined I would make it.

There were only three PhD degrees awarded that night. I waited in the wings for all the BA's, Masters and double degrees to be awarded before my son wheeled me over to join the queue waiting for their turn to climb the stairs to the stage. Determined to walk under my own steam, doubts filled my mind. What if I couldn't manage the stairs? What if I fainted, collapsed, or worse still, threw up when the chancellor, in all his finery handed me my much sought-after certificate. What if...

To leave my wheelchair and walk on stage wearing the hired floppy Tudor bonnet and colourful gown was a highlight in my life. I had an overwhelming feeling of achievement and self-worth that no one could take away from me. Afterwards, I thankfully joined my peers on the stage and proudly marched out with the academic procession only to flop into the wheelchair waiting by the door.

The mature-aged student journey from VCE to PhD had required passion, dogged determination and guts, but it had also been the most exciting, exhilarating time in my life. I knew I would miss it and all the friends I'd made along the way.

Using my recently gained title of Dr Glenice Whitting I sent my edited and, according to me, perfect manuscript out to publishers and waited for the offers to come rolling in. Nothing happened. Slowly, relentlessly, one after the other, a stream of rejections arrived. 'Thank you for sending 'Hen's Lay People Lie'; however...'

I was caught in a catch-22 situation. To get a publisher I needed an agent but to get an agent I needed a publisher. I also took a long hard look at what I'd written, and following the suggestions of American author/editor, Cindy Vallar, I inserted quotation marks to all the dialogue and renamed the manuscript 'What Time is it There?' Still the rejections arrived. It was 'too academic', had too many voices, was too literary, too hard to read and so on. Had I, over the years of study, begun to sound as if I'd

swallowed a dictionary? I knew I had to, once again, rewrite the manuscript. It took a huge leap of faith to take it from literary fiction into popular fiction.

The third incarnation is the one that is being published. It was an invaluable lesson. To be a writer I had to be myself and write the way I really wanted to write, from the heart. I took out the second-person narrating character, made both Maggie and Diane third person narration, threw in a handful of suspense and voilà... 'Something Missing' was born. It had gone beyond academia, beyond epistolarity into what is now called popular fiction. I was over the moon with excitement the day I received the email from Tim Ridgway and Melanie V Taylor of MadeGlobal Publishing. They loved the story and would I sign the contract?

It is every writer's dream to hold their book in their hands. It gives them a chance to thank all the people who have helped along the way. There have been so many people I could list who have patiently and painstakingly worked with me through all three versions. However, there is an indescribable joy in being able to finally thank them formally, via the acknowledgment page, in the soon to be published last reincarnation of the manuscript, 'Something Missing'.

When academic friends say, 'Congratulations on getting 'Hens Lay, People Lie' published', I simply smile and reply with a heartfelt 'Thank you'. 📖

Glenice Whitting left school at fourteen to become an apprentice hairdresser. Her journey as a mature-aged student took her from VCE to PhD in creative writing. Her debut novel 'Pickle to Pie' won awards and was published by Ilura Press. Her latest novel 'Something Missing' was launched at Swinburne University in December and is now available via Madeglobal in London or at Amazon.com.

Loosening the Lid

By Elizabeth Quinn

David Brooks, columnist for 'The New York Times', once said that people who live with passion 'start out with an especially intense desire to complete themselves'. It's as good an explanation as any for my decision to go back to full-time study after an absence of 35 years. I've had a number of fulfilling careers in my life, but my burning ambition for the last decade has been to become a published author.

It wasn't bravery that led me to apply for a course in professional writing and editing at RMIT; it was a compulsion akin to the drive to reproduce. Not everyone has it but those who do are helpless in the face of it. And so I left secure employment for the world of narrative arcs, omniscient first persons, squinting modifiers and penury.

I have always prided myself on my superior spelling and grammar. It turns out that pride is completely misguided. The Introduction to Editing class soon taught me that my knowledge was based on gut feeling alone. I have absolutely no idea of prepositions, conjunctions or transitive verbs (or even intransitive ones). I wouldn't know a passive voice if I fell over it. Our teacher assures us that by the end of the year we will be making gerund jokes. Seriously.

Text and Image is even more of a challenge. In a sea of millennials, I am one of a small cohort of baby boomers with little more than a rudimentary grasp of Photoshop and no knowledge of design software. I am one of only two people who regularly attend the Wednesday afternoon optional 'seminar' in this subject; the other is the teacher.

And then there are the writing classes. As eager new students we could hardly wait to put pen to paper for the five-minute writing exercises. It came as a surprise to most of us that our written work was to be shared with the class. Reading your work out loud for the first time to a group of strangers is one of the most daunting things

a would-be author can do. On the positive side, at least with fiction you can pretend that what you've written is purely the product of your imagination.

Not so the non-fiction component of the course. A 1500 word personal essay is mandatory, as is workshopping it in class. The best you can do for protection is to write it in third person and hope you get through reading it to the group without sobbing. In preparation for this ordeal, we are given writing exercises to complete in class and share with a classmate. One afternoon our task was to start a piece with the words 'The saddest thing I ever saw'. I was paired with someone who wrote a beautiful piece about her mother. Problem was neither she nor I could read it aloud. God knows we tried. My friend had to excuse herself and head for the bathroom to splash her face, followed shortly by me on the pretext of checking on her. We both knew I just needed a place to close the door and have a good howl. This course is like that.

Sharing your experiences and greatest fears with people who were so recently strangers creates a degree of intimacy in a very short space of time: a wonderful thing that rarely happens in the world outside our cloistered building. Gender, age and status are irrelevant when you are ripping your heart out and laying it bare. We are growing together as writers and the support of our peers is essential to the process.

I'm still a long way off 'completing' the course but my passion remains undiminished. What drives me is impossible to keep trapped in a glass jar forever. Whether or not I succeed in my endeavour is yet to be seen, but I reckon I've managed to loosen the lid. ⑩

Elizabeth Quinn is a Melbourne freelance writer and aspiring author. She is currently studying the RMIT Associate Degree in Professional Writing and Editing.

A Man Walks into...

By EM Lipski

A man walks into a parking building. He thinks about climbing to the next level but decides to take the lift. But the lift does not come. He longs for a cigarette. But he has run out. A glance around nets two butts, a metre away. One has at least two long puffs left in it. Rapture runs circles round him. He extends two long fingers, like tweezers, picks each of the butts up and secretes them in his pocket.

A man walks into a parking building. He waits for a lift that doesn't come. He wonders if he should get some exercise and climb the stairs. But then he finds a couple of cigarette butts and all's right with the world. Fuck exercise. He decides he'll wait till he gets to the second floor before lighting up. He does not make it. Halfway up the stairs he pulls his lighter out, sets the tip of one butt aglow and draws back.

A man walks into a parking building, waits for a long-time-coming lift, and yearns for a cigarette. He thinks about the last person he spoke to. She told him she had no money. He only wanted ten dollars. But then she's an artist. A schizophrenic one at that. Like him. She doesn't have any money. He knows that. But he has none. Zilch. Thank God butts are free. He takes one long draw and closes his eyes, while the nicotine floods his brain.

A man walks into a parking building, thinks briefly about taking the lift but changes his mind when he see two butts on the ground. He lights one up halfway to the second floor and wishes he was back in the loony bin where he could get a pack of cigs so easily. But they don't want him back there anymore. He's mixing too much marijuana with too much Modocate. Dynamite combo. He smiles.

A man walks into a parking building, smokes a butt on the way to the second floor, turfs it and continues on up to the second floor. As he trudges up to the third floor, he thinks about where he will go from here. Where is there to go? He wonders. His only mates are still in the loony bin. One sister has no money, and the

other wouldn't give him money anyway, since he stole all her flatmate's CDs.

A man walks into a parking building, finds some butts, smokes one, thinks about being back in the loony bin, wonders where he'll go, curses his sister for not giving him any money, and heads to the fourth floor. He takes out the other butt and considers lighting up. Then he changes his mind, and continues to the fifth floor. He lingers at the top of the stairs, and thinks about how he got into this mess all those years ago. Running down the road naked quoting the Bible will do it.

A man walks into a parking building, yearns for a fag, finds two butts, smokes one and heads to the fifth floor. He is close to pulling the second butt out of his jeans pocket and lighting up. But he doesn't. He could go back to the loony bin, and beg their forgiveness... No, he couldn't. If only he had some money! Even just five bucks. But he owes a mate twenty. And another fifty. The mates will have to wait.

A man walks into a parking building, and after a lick of nicotine, a few curses, and regrets, he steps up onto the sixth floor. Not many cars up here. He peers over the side. Nice view. Nice day. He decides to go to the top. To where it's really hot. Hot concrete. Hard to walk on. He has no shoes. He stinks, he knows. Should have a shower. But who cares really, whether he has a shower or not. Not the loony bin, not one sister, not the other, not his mates. It's hard being so invisible. So destitute. So addicted.

A man walks into a parking building. He goes to the eighth floor and sits on the edge with his legs dangling over the side. He smokes an unusually short cigarette, then jumps off. 🍷

EM Lipski lives in Melbourne and was published in 'Verandah 22' before returning to study to do post grad studies. She has completed her first novel, a YA social drama, and is currently writing the sequel for it.

Rules of a Mind

By Nerissa Marcon

If I make a conscious effort to observe my surrounds – not to look directly, but to concentrate on the periphery of my vision – I can discern the generous design of the person who hovers beside me. If I allow myself to deviate from what occupies me for just a moment longer, I can hear her imploring me with words that are muffled and unintelligible; sounds that are disconcerting and make me wish to escape, back to the tunnel vision that protects me from acknowledging such scenes and affords me time to finish what I have started; and cannot stop until finished.

If I search beyond her, further, the sterile glare of white tiles blinds me, as the sun might do, glaring into its midday brightness. There are shadows too, people passing by, behind us, to and fro, some stalling for a fraction of time, then continuing on with their daily lives, perhaps perplexed. And while I can drag my mind away for a short period, even registering the whoosh of the toilets flushing nearby, it pains me to do so, interrupts my routine, and so results in angst and frustration. It is far better to ignore surrounds and focus on the task at hand.

Thus, the task at hand beckons me in, and the darkness returns, to shade the outskirts of my sight, so that only the shiny silver tap sits before me and the rest is dissolved. I marvel at my mind's ability to blind reality in such a way that I am able to solely target an item of interest, as though staring down the barrel of a magnifying glass with light at the end. And, while I am cognisant in the recesses of my mind that I am in the midst of a public place, with my actions privy to those within the vicinity, none of that matters: all that matters is that these actions are completed to satisfaction, as soon as possible, affording me return to the comfort and confines of home.

In this very private battle, which no one else can understand, the most miniscule – and precise – of actions, must be enacted to satisfaction, according to strict, pre-determined rules that only I govern: rules which force me now to engage in actions that may appear disturbing and meaningless. The water runs, my fingertips are washed underneath, then the tap is turned off, over and over, a cycle of seemingly pointless, and redundant, repetition. Yet, this is not about water, nor hand washing, nor cleanliness: this is about rules; rules that provide parameter and distraction to ease distress.

And presently, the rules of my mind dictate a complex sequence of actions that are both laborious and near impossible to perfect, although I know they can be achieved, given time, careful consideration and optimal circumstances. Interaction with others, whether verbal or physical, stunts my progress, renders action void and unacceptable, causing me to begin again. It is most unfortunate to be interrupted in the middle of a successful sequence, after having spent considerable time attempting to perfect it. Too many interruptions cause distress and diminish the likelihood of completing rituals promptly.

Having considered my mother in a lapse of concentration, and returned my attention to the demands before me, I must now start over. I lift the tap gently, pass my fingers beneath icy water and steady my index fingertips above the tap, so that they might press down simultaneously on the rim to turn it off. The rules demand that my fingertips must touch the tap at exactly the same time; a fraction of difference will not suffice; a fraction of difference means I must commence again.

There is no recourse to negotiate the rules. Once set, they must be followed. My own conviction to attain goals drives my adherence to rules my mind has determined.

But timing is not the only factor. An equal portion of skin from each fingertip must touch the tap in unison; that is, the left must not touch with more skin than can be felt on the right, and vice versa. The pressure, too, must feel even, and while concentrating on the feel, my eyes will confirm or deny the result. Only then can the sequence of actions be considered successful and complete, and ready to merge into the forgotten past, until my next encounter with a tap after the toilet. If only taps were my solitary concern.

However plain this reality is to me, my mother is blind to it. Out of desperation, she reaches out to stop me as I'm nearing the end. But she has ruined it, broken my concentration, and prolonged the discomfort within me. Instinctively, with rapidly rising rage, I shrug her off and swivel to face her. 'Leave me alone,' I hear myself shout, in a voice, foreign in nature. The whites of her eyes are what strike me most, as she steps back to regard me with fright.

Never mind her though, this woman who seeks nought but to offer me protection, for I am tiring after so many rounds and must finish this ritual. I raise the tap and place my fingers beneath the coolness, but heaving sobs in the not too distant vicinity waver my attention and mar my efforts. From my position in the growing dark, there is a cry in the distance; a cry of desperation, and only after it is called over and over, do I recognise my name. My name echoes, reverberates, through the tunnel and into my thoughts.

My fingers touch the tap, on then off, on then off, and I can't seem to gain the right proportions. A warmth whispers near my ear now, begging me to stop, 'stop now,' it says, but I don't listen. I can't afford to listen. The water is running, my arms are aching, my wrists are wavering and I am unlikely to finish the sequence under these conditions. The realisation causes me angst and my chest tightens with unease. Tap, tap, tap, go my fingers in clumsy desperation, as the darkness surrounding my vision begins to intensify.

What emerged as an intentional boundary of blackness at the perimeters of my vision, a layer of darkness to surround my world and tunnel my sight, blocking out all but bare necessity, now swells like a night sea swirling inwards, churning the light, until only a pin prick remains. Squinting blind, facing a growing fear and vertigo that threatens to topple me, I grasp the rim of the basin and cling to its form.

As I brace and clutch at consciousness, my mother's muffled cries slosh about my head from a far-off space, light dissipates entirely and my legs buckle. I fold to the floor. I am failing, falling, fainting... and while no voice escapes me, I call to my mother for help, knowing she is near. The panic does not last long. As the sounds of my surrounds fade, panic is replaced by gratitude for the respite unconsciousness will bring. ⑩

Nerissa Marcon is a Victorian writer and recipient of the 2016 Grace Marion Wilson Glenfern Fellowship from Writers Victoria. In 2014, she was a finalist in the Masters section of the 50 Word Fiction Competition by the Australian Association for the Teaching of English. She has had several works published in academic journals and is nearing completion of her first literary fiction novel titled 'Rituals'.

Dear Future Reader

By Christopher Breach

Dear future reader,

I imagine you are not too dissimilar from me when I was younger, just starting out and eager for knowledge. How did those writers who touched me with their words – changed me, even – weave their magic?

For a long time, I did not feel I could call myself a writer, despite having been writing for more than 20 years. It was not until I won a competition, about four years ago, that I felt bold enough. It was not so much the term ‘writer’, for that was what one did – it was the associations that went along with it: in my mind, you had to be published, critically acclaimed, award-winning. To be spoken of in the same sentence as Hemingway and Rushdie and Carey. That was what it meant to be called a writer.

When I won the Lord Mayor’s Creative Writing Award in 2011, I thought, ‘OK. I’ve made it. I can call myself a real writer now.’ But, as Hemingway once said, ‘The art of writing is the art of applying the seat of the pants to the seat of the chair.’ I have been a writer – a ‘real’ one, if you like – ever since I dedicated myself to the art over 20 years ago.

What I would say to you, future reader, is this: ‘Dedication is the key. Commit yourself to your chosen pursuit. Do it every day. And if you do that, then dare to call yourself a writer.’ When I won the award, the recognition gave me the nudge I needed to legitimise my claim, to allow me to consider myself a ‘real’ writer. But long before that, I was sitting down at my desk every day to try and tell stories in imaginative ways. I already was a ‘real’ writer. A serious one. It is something I feel compelled to do, and privileged to be a part of.

Franz Kafka once said, ‘One reads in order to ask questions.’ I would say, ‘I write in order to answer questions’, or, at least, try to. To explore an idea, to come to some sort of understanding, or acceptance, at least, of one of life’s mysteries. In the case of ‘Haikus for Hiroshima’ I was wondering how our leaders could have been

so desperate to obliterate two entire cities in Japan to end the war. Similarly, in ‘The Bones Nestled Within’, I was wrestling with our history of bloodshed and displacement in Australia, a history that is sadly, unbelievably, largely ignored.

These questions are what drive me back to my desk every day. If you, future reader, can figure out what it is you want to say, and an interesting way to say it, then you will have won half the battle. The hard part is not filling the blank page with words; the hard part is filling the blank page with meaning.

So here I am, putting my hand up, daring to call myself a writer. I encourage you, whatever stage you may be, to do the same. Stand up and declare: ‘I am a writer!’ Because if you don’t do it, nobody else will do it for you.

It may sound easy, but it’s not. Nor is it easy to dedicate yourself in the first place. You have to eat and sleep, have relationships, go and see bands, movies... events about letter writing. Believe me, it takes dedication to give up your life in pursuit of a dream.

All the best,
Christopher Breach.

(First performed at The Lost Art of Letter Writing Shepparton Festival, March 2016)

Christopher Breach won the Lord Mayor’s Creative Writing Awards in 2011. He has been a finalist for the ACU Prize for Literature and the University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor’s International Poetry Prize.

Classifieds

NT Writers' Festival

Alice Springs 18-21 May

In 2017 storytellers, songwomen and writers from central Australia join writers from across the country under the theme Crossings | iwerre-atherre. In Arrernte, iwerre-atherre means two roads meeting; two-way learning or travelling together. We invite you to make the journey to consider all kinds of crossings – linguistic, cultural and geographic.

ntwriters.com.au

Endeavour House Writer in Residence Program

Endeavour House Writer in Residence Program is offered by the Australia Institute and Endeavour House. It offers an Australian writer of non-fiction, fiction, poetry or drama a two-week residency on The Level at Endeavour House. The stipend is AUD\$2500 per week with accommodation also included. Applications are open until 5pm Mon 6 Mar. For further information and how to apply, please visit writeronthelevel.org.au

Paris Memoir with Patti Miller

Decided you just have to have that writing break this year? Why not Paris Memoir in October with Australia's Leading Memoir Writing mentor Patti Miller?

An intensive 16-day literary immersion including a nine-day writing course and a one-hour individual writing consultation. Inquiries: jenny@bookshoptravel.com.au

The Victorian Writer – submissions

Writers Victoria is currently accepting submissions from members for forthcoming issues of The Victorian Writer. We accept non-fiction, articles and extracts up to 2000 words. Submissions of fiction and memoir are open to members only. Please include your name, contact information, as well as the title of your piece.

writersvictoria.org.au/resources/the-victorian-writer

Member benefits

- › Discounts on courses, manuscript assessments, mentorships and writer's studios
- › 'The Victorian Writer' magazine delivered straight to your door
- › Weekly enews filled with writing news, events and opportunities
- › Up to three free listings a year in 'The Victorian Writer' enews
- › Discounts on books for sale on the craft and business of writing
- › Information, advice and guidance from the Writers Victoria team
- › Access to the Writers Victoria library on level 3 of The Wheeler Centre (10am to 5pm weekdays), including a great collection of writing-related reference books, literary magazines, journals, trade weeklies and more
- › Access to a place to write in our library, writer's studios or meeting rooms.
- › Representation and advocacy on issues affecting Victorian writers

writersvictoria.org.au/membership

WRITERS
VICTORIA

All about writers

Milestones

Susan Hawthorne's book, 'Biodiversity: A Manifesto for Independent Publishing' (Spinifex Press, 2014) is now available in multiple languages and territories: English: Canada (Fernwood Publishing); Arabic: Tunisia (Éditions Med Ali), Syria (Atlas Publishing), Egypt (Elain Publishing), Lebanon (Dar-Alfarabi, Arab Diffusion); French: Switzerland (édition d'en bas), Benin (Éditions Ruisseaux d'Afrique), Mali (Éditions Jamana), Cameroun (Presses Universitaires d'Afrique), France (Éditions Charles Leopold Mayer); Spanish: Chile (JC Sáez); German: Germany (Verbrecher Verlag).

Sandi Wallace is excited to have won the 2016 Scarlet Stiletto Awards Romantic Suspense Prize for her short crime story 'Busted' on 19 November 2016. Sandi's debut rural crime novel starring Georgie Harvey and John Franklin 'Tell Me Why' won the 2015 Davitt Award Readers' Choice and was also shortlisted for the 2015 Davitt Award Best Debut. She is thrilled that the sequel 'Dead Again' will be out in April 2017. www.sandiwallace.com

Sue Parritt's novel 'The Sky Lines Alliance', the third in her trilogy of a dystopian future Australia, was published by Odyssey Books in November 2016. Available in Odyssey Books, Amazon and all good book stores, RRP \$23.95.

Julie Constable's history paper, 'Reams and Reams of Paper – The Strzelecki Forest Campaigns' appeared in 'Earth and Industry: Stories from Gippsland' edited by E Eklund and J Fenley. 'Henrik's Schrebergarten' appeared in 'Gargouille' Issue 3 and the poem, 'Crocodile', was recently published in 'Antithesis'.

Rhonda Cotsell won first prize in the Port Phillip Citizens for Reconciliation 2016 Reconciliation writing competition. It was called 'Being Australian' and was 'awarded for writing which promotes Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australia.'

Christine Childs received a Highly Commended for her short story, 'The Death of Owen Owens', in the 2016 Stringybark Times Past Short Story Award. It will be published in the anthology of award winning entries, 'Longing for Solitude'.

Philton had a poem published in 'Quadrant' September issue.

Silvia Brown's flash fiction 'A Christmas Retribution' has been published as part of Australian Horror Writers Association Christmas anthology 'Hell's Bells'. Kindle ebook available on Amazon.

Judith Michael has been awarded first place (Open Section) in the Write Now Competition 2016, Yarra Plenty Regional Library, for her short story 'The Zigzag Path'.

Kristy-Lee Swift's YA verse novel 'It's Your World' will be making its appearance with Guillotine Press. At once sassy and humorous, fifteen-year-old Evie makes her way through a world of love, tragedy and existential philosophy.

Stacey McCoy never wanted to be a writer until now and has only been bashing away at the keys for a little over two years. Stacey has recently self-published her debut novel Intoxicated and is set to release her YA paranormal romance trilogy, 'The Reanimation', later this year. www.staceymccoy.com

Competitions and Opportunities

To see ALL the competitions and opportunities we know about, not just the ones we can fit on the page, log in to our special members only section of writersvictoria.org.au.

Charles Perkins Centre – Writer in Residence Fellowship

The fellowship will support an established Australian writer to create new work within Australia's leading interdisciplinary centre dedicated to easing the global burden of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and related conditions through innovative research and teaching.

The fellowship will be for one year (2017-2018), and will include: a grant of AUD \$100,000 and an Honorary Appointment at the University of Sydney.

For more information or to apply, go to sydney.edu.au/perkins/about/writer-in-residence.shtml

Faber Writing Academy – Scholarship

Writing a Novel: Stage 1 is a comprehensive, three-month course for aspiring novelists that provides the structure and support you need to head towards the first draft of your novel. In 2017, the course directors are Paddy O'Reilly and Toni Jordan. The Writing a Novel Scholarships provide an excellent opportunity for emerging writers to benefit from the structure of regular workshops as well as one-on-one mentoring sessions with highly experienced tutors. The deadline for scholarship applications is midnight on 7 Feb and the winner will be announced on 21 Feb. The course starts in Melbourne on 7 Mar. faberwritingacademy.com.au

2017 Tasmanian Writers Prize

Open to residents of Australia and New Zealand, the prize is for short stories up to 3000 words having an island, or island-resonant, theme. The competition is run by Forty South Publishing, the largest book publisher in Tasmania and publisher of 'Tasmania 40° South' magazine. The winner will receive a cash prize of \$500 and publication in 'Tasmania 40° South'. A selection of the best entries will be published in 'Forty South Short Story Anthology 2017'. Entry forms and terms can be downloaded from fortysouth.com.au.

Closes 13 Feb

Newstead Short Story Tattoo

Newstead Short Story Tattoo wants your writing, performance, monologues, poems, politics et al for the next event May 5,6,7, 2017. Check the website for full details. newsteadtattoo.org

Closes 15 Feb

Mulga Bill Writing Award

Once again we're searching the country for Eaglehawk's next big literary mentions! The 2017 award is now open for entries. You've got until Mar 2 to send us your short stories and poems, on any topic of your choosing. But there is a catch: all entries must contain the word 'Eaglehawk' at least once, in a respectful nod to Banjo Paterson's much-loved poem about Mulga Bill of Eaglehawk. Ready? Set? Start writing... mulgabillwritingaward.wordpress.com

Closes 2 Mar

KYD Unpublished Manuscript Award

This award will assist an early-career author in the development of their unpublished manuscript. The award is open to writers of adult fiction and adult non-fiction. The winner will receive a \$5000 cash prize and a mentorship with KYD's Rebecca Starford (non-fiction) or Hannah Kent (fiction). killyourdarlings.com.au/awards

Closes 31 Mar

Field of Words short story competition

Want to showcase your writing to the world? If so, enter the Field of Words short story competition. Enter as many times as you like! Cash prizes for the winner and runner-up. Enter early for a chance to be named as a monthly finalist and have your work published online. fieldofwords.com.au

Closes 31 Mar

Workshops and Courses

See more courses and book online at writersvictoria.org.au, phone (03) 9094 7840 or email program@writersvictoria.org.au. All events are held at The Wheeler Centre unless stated otherwise.

Online clinics and webinars

Beginners' Short Story Clinic with Demet Divaroren

Every story begins with a messy first draft. This beginners' clinic provides a constructive and supportive environment that will help you identify the strengths and weaknesses of your story, learn the elements of your craft and provide direction for your next draft.

Stories of up to 1500 words due midnight Weds 1 Feb, 1 Mar, 5 Apr, 5 Jul, 2 Aug.

Member price: \$240/\$250
Non-member price: \$310
Level: Emerging

Intermediate Short Story Clinic

with Steven Amsterdam

At any stage of a writing career, the feedback we receive is often either acceptance or rejection, which lacks nuance and usefulness. In this intermediate clinic, regular critiques provide the basis for constructive, independent learning, with the goal of helping you develop up to five stories. Receive feedback from your tutor and fellow course participants with this email correspondence course.

Stories of up to 1500 words due midnight Wed 1 Feb, 1 Mar, 5 Apr, 3 May, 7 Jun.

Member price: \$240/\$250
Non-member price: \$310
Level: Emerging

Advanced Short Story Clinic with Laurie Steed

Whether you're an experienced writer working towards the completion of a manuscript or looking to maintain momentum and sharpen writing skills, this clinic provides sustained mentorship and specific feedback on the refinement of your own voice and style. Participants must have had a short story published or have already participated in a Writers Victoria Advanced Short Story Clinic to enrol in this course.

Stories of up to 1500 words due midnight Weds 15 Feb, 15 Mar, 19 Apr, 17 May, 21 Jun.

Member price: \$240/\$250
Non-member price: \$310
Level: Established

Webinar: Intro to Online Courses

Never tried a webinar? Not sure what's out there to help you to learn writing skills online? The Writers Vic team will introduce you to a range of digital writing courses and resources, and answer your burning questions about writing or publishing online.

When: Mon 13 Feb, 6-7pm
FREE
Level: All

Poetry Clinic

with Terry Jaensch

Receive direct feedback from your tutor and fellow course participants with this email correspondence course for early and emerging poets.

Poems due midnight
Weds 15 Feb, 15 Mar, 19 Apr, 17 May, 21 Jun.

Member price: \$240/\$250
Non-member price: \$310
Level: Early and emerging

Webinar: Copywriting and Your Career

with Luke Ryan

Copywriting is not a dirty word. Get an introduction to the basics of copywriting and learn how it can become a crucial, enjoyable and well-paying part of a sustainable writing career.

When: Wed 8 Mar, 6-7pm
Member price: \$30/\$40
Non-member price: \$50
Level: Emerging

Workshops

Crowdfunding for Writers with Rick Chen

More and more writers are turning to crowdfunding to allow readers to pre-order their books and help make their projects a reality. Get tips on how to plan your project and run a successful crowdfunding campaign. Presented in association with Pozible.

When: Mon 6 Feb,
6.30pm-7.30pm
FREE
Level: All

Writing with Others with Robert Hillman

Every community includes its storytellers – those people with a knack for narrative drama. It often happens that the storyteller will act as a facilitator for those who urgently wish to convey their tale, but need a helping hand. How does the storyteller negotiate the process of collaboration? How do the standard devices of fiction assist in telling a non-fiction story? What are the priorities in creating on the page the journey of a human life?

When: Tues 7, 14, 21, 28
Feb, 5.30–8.30pm
Member price: \$360/\$320
Non-member price: \$480
Level: Emerging and
established

Love and Fk Poetry** with Koraly Dimitriadis

Have you always wanted to write poetry that is raw, emotive and doesn't conform to tradition? Do you want to connect with your honesty to write about two elements that bind us as humans? Learn how to shed cultural and societal expectations on how to write about love and sex in the

lead up to Valentine's Day.

When: Sat 11 Feb, 10am-4pm
Member price: \$135/\$145
Non-member price: \$195
Level: Emerging

Science Fiction and Steam Punk with Michael Pryor

Iain Banks said 'science fiction is trying to find alternative ways of looking at realities'. So why not launch yourself into this literature of the twenty-first century – and beyond? Find out how to write engaging, convincing and wildly inventive science fiction, with bonus excursion into writing splendid steampunk.

Dive into a genre where imagination is essential – and rewarded – while understanding how to avoid the clichés that abound.

When: Sat 18-Sun 19 Feb,
10am-4pm
Member price: \$270/\$290
Non-member price: \$400
Level: Emerging

Writers on Wednesdays: Time Management for Writers with Amanda Apthorpe

We're all time-poor (or so we're told) and there's no real, productive time to write, is there? Strange, though, that we can find time for other things, like work deadlines imposed on us by someone else. Face your excuses, locate the moments that are available, learn strategies for overcoming procrastination, and recognise that you don't need the perfect moment to be able to write.

When: Wed 22 Feb, 6-7.30pm
Member price: \$30/\$40
Non-member price: \$55
Level: All

Writing for the Education Market with George Ivanoff

The education market is an often-ignored area of publishing, but it can be a great way into the children's writing industry. Learn how school readers, primary school non-fiction books, chapter books linked to the Australia curriculum, and other educational resources can be great opportunities for children's writers.

When: Sat 25 Feb, 10am-4pm
Member price: \$135/\$145
Non-member price: \$195
Level: Early and emerging

Refine Your Novel with Toni Jordan

The end of the manuscript is in sight, although there's still much work to be done. Character, plot, structure, pace and theme will need refining. An ending must be devised: one that works both tonally and in terms of story structure. How do you revise and redraft? How do you tighten and also enrich your first draft? This series of hands-on workshops and webinars will encourage a forensic approach to refining the manuscript.

Workshops: Sat 11 Mar, 13 May,
8 Jul, 12 Aug
10am-4pm each day
Webinars: Sat 8 Apr, 10
Jun, 10-11am each day
Member price: \$500/\$560
Non-member price: \$740
Level: Emerging and
established

Comedy Writing

with Dave O'Neil

Join Dave O'Neil for an introductory course on the art of comedy writing. Learn how to write for TV, newspapers, stand-up and new media.

What makes things funny?

How do you get the ideas for comedy? And how do you get it all down on paper?

When: Fri 17 Mar, 10am-4pm

Member price: \$135/\$145

Non-member price: \$195

Level: Emerging

Castlemaine: Crime

with Angela Savage

Crime fiction appeals for its compelling plots, vicarious thrills and flawed characters; and also because, unlike in real life, justice is generally served. Combining input with practical writing exercises, learn the elements of a thrilling crime read. Touch on the history of crime fiction, explore the rules of the genre (and how to break them), and consider the essential ingredients in crime fiction: premise, character, setting, plot and pace. Presented in collaboration with Castlemaine State Festival 2017.

When: Sat 18 Mar, 10am-4pm

Member price: \$135/\$145

Non-member price: \$195

Level: Early and emerging

The Garret Series:

Dialogue and Character

with Toni Jordan

Bad dialogue stands out. It distracts from your story. It's ungainly and ugly. If you write bad dialogue, even if everything else is great, good readers will think you're not a good writer. Good dialogue glistens. It's elegant. It gleams and glows and makes everything better.

Good dialogue also helps you understand your characters because dialogue is character in action. Hearing characters speak can bring them to life. Presented in collaboration with Swinburne University and The Garret Podcast.

When: Sat 18 Mar, 10am-4pm

Venue: Swinburne, John St, Hawthorn

Member and Swinburne

student price: \$135/\$145

Non-member price: \$195

Level: Emerging

The Garret Series: Plot,

People and Language

with John Marsden

Plot, characters, language... what else matters?! Explore these three elements of writing in as much depth as possible. There are a million different ways to think about plot and characterisation: join us to look at half a dozen of them. Using language pithily, powerfully, prettily, purposefully – unlike the four adverbs in this sentence – will be emphasised throughout the day. It'll be an intensive workshop, so bring ample supplies of coffee, or, in John's case, Coke Zero. Preferably nothing stronger.

When: Sun 19 Mar, 10am-4pm

Venue: State Library of Victoria

Member and SLV user price:

\$135/\$145

Non-member price: \$195

Level: Emerging

How to... Ask for Money

with the WV team

Get tips from the WV team on writing pitch emails and proposals in this Member's Only event.

When: Sat 11 Feb, 10am-4pm

Member price: FREE

Level: All

Short Story Bootcamp

with Maxine Beneba Clarke

Brush up on your short fiction skills and explore the elements of good short fiction, including structure, characterisation, plotting, editing and voice. Through teaching, shared readings, writing exercises, discussion and one-on-one consultation, this course is for dedicated short fiction writers who wish to take their short story writing to the next level.

When: Sat 25 and Sun

26 Mar, 10am-4pm

Member price: \$270/\$290

Non-member price: \$400

Level: Emerging and

established

Writers on Wednesdays:

Writing for YouTube

with Michael Shanks

If you're a writer/director, you'll know that it's often tricky to get people to invest in your ideas. In film and TV, where you need an awful lot of resources to create a finished product, sometimes the easiest way is to make something yourself. Learn how to realise your writing and directing aspirations with the aid of practical skills – and cover a host of other topics too.

When: Wed 29 Mar, 6-7.30pm

Member price: \$30/\$40

Non-member price: \$55

Level: All

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WRITERS
VICTORIA

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Age (optional) ☐ Under 18 ☐ 18–25 ☐ 26–34 ☐ 35–44 ☐ 45–54 ☐ 55–64 ☐ 65+

At what stage of writing are you?

☐ Early (just begun) ☐ Emerging (some publication) ☐ Established (published a full-length work)

What do you write, or what would you like to write?

<input type="checkbox"/> Academic	<input type="checkbox"/> Crime	<input type="checkbox"/> Literary fiction	<input type="checkbox"/> Radio	<input type="checkbox"/> Web content
<input type="checkbox"/> Biography/Memoir	<input type="checkbox"/> Essays/Reviews	<input type="checkbox"/> Lyrics	<input type="checkbox"/> Romance	<input type="checkbox"/> Young adult
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<input type="checkbox"/> Copywriting	<input type="checkbox"/> Journalism	<input type="checkbox"/> Popular fiction	<input type="checkbox"/> Travel	

Do you identify as:

☐ Culturally and Linguistically Diverse ☐ Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander ☐ Person with Disability

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35

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2017 / Season 1

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