

MARCH 2013

THE VICTORIAN WRITER





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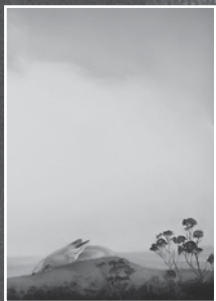


MARCH 2013

THE VICTORIAN WRITER

Children

Cover by Tasmanian artist Amanda Parer, dedicated on behalf of Fox Ellie Upton. Parer has been selected three times for the Blake Prize and she was a finalist for the 2008, 2012 and 2013 Glover Prize. She has an exhibition from 20 April to 7 May at Libby Edwards Galleries, Armadale.



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LONDON BOOK FAIR 2013

The Australian Self Publishing Group will once again have a stand at the *London Book Fair 15th to 17th April*. We are calling for expression of interest to all Australian authors who have a book they would like to promote.

ASPG has been attending and promoting Australian authors and books for over 5 years at international book fairs, with great success for many authors.

Last year 2012 **ASPG** arranged contracts for 28 books with publishers and literary agents by attending book fairs promoting Australian authors.

ASPG simply shares the costs of attending the LBF with authors, making it viable for any author to have their book promoted. (Authors are welcome to attend).

ASPG arranges appointments in advance for every author's book with Publishers, literary agents and distributors across all genres' to discuss the merits of every book.

Without arranging appointments sending a book to LBF is pointless, just sitting on a shelf does not work as no one of importance has the time to walk around looking at thousands of books.



If you would like to send your book contact **Australian Self Publishing Group 02 62912904** or email: publishaspg@gmail.com.au for more information.

Publish and be damned! Or not.

Are you ready to publish your own work but not sure how to go about it?

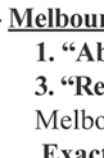
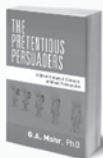
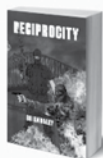
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Supporting authors through the publishing process



Horizon Publishing Group

Your Key to Publishing

Horizon Publishing Group has the pleasure of announcing the following launches by City and State in 2013:

- Sydney - NSW - May 2013:

1. **"But One Heartbeat Away"** by Jette Christensen; 2. **"To Thee Do We Cry, Poor Banished Children"** (3 Plays) by Geraldine Song – (who will be travelling from Singapore to present her book in Sydney); 3. **"Erskine Quint, intrepid adventurer extraordinaire"** by L. R. Johnson (who will be travelling from The Netherlands to present his book); 4. **"A Little Twisted Fate"** by Kelly Cummings.

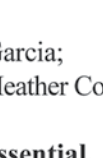
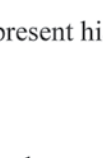
- Brisbane - Queensland - June 2013:

1. **"Reciprocity"** by Brian Daley; 2. **"The Cats Meeting"** by Chontelle Bailey. 3. **"The Yenohan's Legacy"** by Dale Lorna Jacobsen

- Melbourne - Victoria - April 2013:

1. **"About Love"** by Portia-Ann Forrest; 2. **"Nothing North"** by Allison V. Garcia; 3. **"Returning Home"** by Kate Macnamara; and 4. **"Sisters of the Realm"** by Heather Costa. Melbourne's launch will be a **Girls' Night** as the four authors are women.

Exact dates and venues will be announced at a later time - Booking is essential.



Call for Manuscripts Submissions:* Horizon Publishing Group is now accepting high quality literary works in the fiction and non-fiction categories. Submissions can ONLY be sent by email to: Submissions@horizonpg.net - More info on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/HPGPublishing?ref=hl>

For more information, please visit us at: www.horizonpg.net
OR contact admin@horizonpg.net

*Publishing a manuscript by HPG is subject to its discretion, Terms & Conditions and Manuscript submission Guidelines.

A Photo of You When You Were Younger

by JOHANNES JAKOB, Publications Manager, Writers Victoria
editor@writersvictoria.org.au

For some inscrutable reason, real grown-up adults change in the presence of children that aren't their own. They get astonishingly playful. Maybe they'll put on a silly voice or do a dumb face. Serious people are prepared to look totally ridiculous in the interest of indulging a child's view of the world, a world where plush toys come alive and dragons are not just plausible but probable.

There's a wonderful logic to that world. If you're young enough, the revelation that if everyone took off their clothes *they would be naked* is powerful knowledge that must be shared. The worry that a thought has already occurred to someone else, or been thought through further, isn't really a limiting factor on what there is to explore. A child is like the very best first draft: not so constrained by what might come later as to shut down creative and simply *fun* ideas.

Children are encountering thousands of new things all of the time. I think that's why we find something immensely compelling about children's imaginations - they're crafted from constantly new input, from devising new theories about how things work, about what is and isn't the case. Those discoveries are endlessly fascinating and fulfilling, but increasingly rare as we get older.

But if you're anything like me, the proposition of talking to children is also kind of harrowing for the same reason. Amazing and enjoyable, for sure, but also harrowing, because knowing how new the world is to them most of the time, how do you say something that isn't patronising?

Decisions as an editor often feel quite difficult and a little arbitrary - what questions to ask in an interview, who to approach for an article, what sentence to cut or leave in. I have some sort of imagined reader on whose behalf I'm making those decisions, but let's face it, most of the time I pick something that I'm interested in

under the assumption that it probably means someone else might be interested in it too.

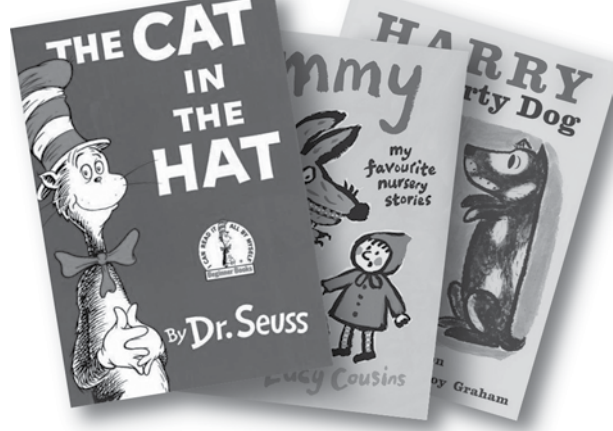
But doing that for kids feels a lot more complicated. I have lots of adult concerns - about paying rent, the coming federal election, the ontological imperatives of postmodern literature. I have a devout belief that children can understand and engage with the essentials of those sorts of ideas, and with great depth, only the language and context are going to be different. That's fine! That's great! But how do you do that without feeling like you're dumbing things down, being horribly patronising, suggesting something is "kool 4 kidz" in a desperate scramble to seem relevant and entertaining? This is why for this issue I asked folks with totally different interactions with kids and writing to talk about those relationships. Their words made an awful lot of sense to me and were all-around a great relief (there's that editorial self-interest again).

The truth is, of course, that we're much closer to children than we think. Sometimes we act like they are alien creatures or just plain dumb, when they absolutely are not. Kids are just people. There's a joke I love by the late Mitch Hedberg about the expression "here's a photo of me when I was younger" - every photo is of you when you were younger! It's probably psychologically sound to isolate our childhood and youth from our present, but they're always much more in reach than we make them out to be. You don't think of yourself as hopelessly naïve a week, a month or even a year ago. It's a wishy-washy gradient from young to old. The memories and realities of being a child don't get erased as you get older - they fade, but their essence stays with you.

We know what it's like to be a child. It's to be a person trying really *really* hard to understand how the world holds together, which is the same thing an adult does and the same thing a writer does.



NEWS



Children's Book Festival

The annual Children's Book Festival will be held this month, featuring a family day, a professional development day and a program for schools.

Sofie Laguna will host a showcase of children's authors, illustrators and industry professionals on 23 March at The Wheeler Centre, where guests will discuss writing for a young audience and the current landscape of Australian children's publishing. Bookings for this Writers Victoria event are available at writersvictoria.org.au.

On Sunday 24 March children's authors and illustrators will take over the lawns of the State Library of Victoria for a free family day, with performances from Jackie French, Justine Clarke and Lynley "Hairy Maclary" Dodd.

Mentorships

Writers Victoria has launched a new mentorship round for fiction and non-fiction writers. As mentors we have secured David Sornig, Myke Bartlett, Lee Kofman and Bethanie Blanchard. These mentors are available for guidance on a broad range of writing craft aspects.

We are also pleased to announce a new mentorship stream specifically for writers in need of publishing business advice. The program is designed to provide access to an industry professional for a one-off 60 minute meeting.

For more information and to apply for a mentorship visit our website at writersvictoria.org.au.

Wheeler Centre launches program for 2013

The Wheeler Centre launched its program for 2013 with a gala event at Melbourne Town Hall last month.

The program sees the return of the popular series Australian Literature, which is styled as an Australian classic book club and includes guest speakers.

Also returning in 2013 are the Text in the City and Debut Mondays series.

The full list of events is available at wheelercentre.com.

Justine Clarke is appearing at the Children's Book Festival.



New general manager announced for the Small Press Network

The Small Press Network has announced the appointment of Mary Masters as general manager.

Masters, who is also the chair of the Emerging Writers' Festival board, has worked in the publishing industry for more than nine years and began her role in February.

ISBN website launched

THORPE-Bowker has launched a new website to give writers information on ISBNs and allow ISBNs to be purchased online.

The website, My Identifiers, also offers barcodes for print books, QR codes and a widget to allow the sharing of excerpts.

THORPE-Bowker is the agent in Australia responsible for issuing ISBNs. The My Identifiers website is at myidentifiers.com.au.

Literary salon launched

Last month we launched a literary salon for writers in the Writers Victoria library. The Salon is a monthly event for writers to celebrate milestones, share details of their projects and meet fellow authors.

Join us for the next event on 12 March as we invoke the grand tradition of nineteenth century literary salons, without the pretence.

The Salon is a free event but bookings are required. To book, visit writersvictoria.org.au.

Australian Festival of Travel Writing

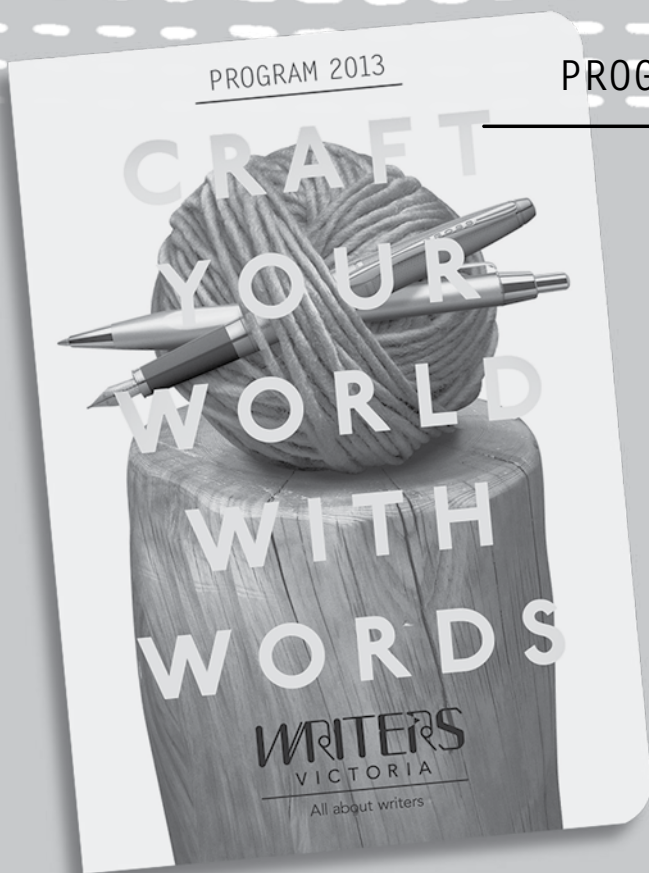
The Australian Festival of Travel Writing will run from 22 March to 24 March in Melbourne.

The festival celebrates the travel genre with some of the world's leading writers and broadcasters including Rolf Potts, founder of "Vagabonding", Brian Thacker, the author of six travel books and Chris Taylor, author of six Lonely Planet guides.

Workshops on travel writing will also be held during the festival. The festival program is available at aftw.com.au.

PROGRAM 2013

PROGRAM 2013



Children's book festivals, picture books, wrestling a novel and plenty more in March and beyond at Writers Victoria.

See the full year's program online at:

writersvictoria.org.au

BOOKING

Book and pay online at
writersvictoria.org.au
or phone Writers Victoria
on 03 9094 7855.

Events at the Wheeler Centre
provide access for writers
with a disability.

All courses are rated for
early and emerging writers.

Regional Program Makeover

Writers Victoria is excited to announce a makeover to their regional support program. The Regional Partnerships Program was a great success in 2011 and 2012, assisting in the presentation of twenty-one workshops, festivals and events throughout regional Victoria. In our work to improve services to writers, there is always room to move forward and expand opportunities to our regional communities and in 2013 we will be offering two streams of regional programs.

On 1 March, applications will open for the Regional Professional Development Program. Similar to the former Partnerships Program template, we offer to partner with groups and festivals to deliver customised workshops designed to meet the needs of regional writers and audiences. Closing date 15 March.

On 1 April, applications will open for the Regional Community Assistance Program. This program is open to community groups, festivals and organisations who seek support towards literary events or activities that target a wider community. Small grants up to \$500 towards artist/author fees will be available per applicant. Closing date 15 April.

For information, guidelines and application forms, please visit our website from 1 March.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Children's Book Writers and Illustrators



Event: Author, actor and playwright Sofie Laguna hosts a showcase of children's book authors, illustrators and industry professionals. This professional development day will be held as part of the Wheeler Centre's Children's Book Festival. Featured guests include Bronwyn Bancroft, Doug MacLeod, Freya Blackwood, Gus Gordon, Jackie French, Jane Godwin, Leigh Hobbs, Lynley Dodd, Mark Wilson, Michael Pryor, Sally Rippin and Terry Denton.

WHEN: Saturday 23 March, 10am - 5pm
FULL PRICE: \$125 MEMBER PRICE: \$95/\$85

The Word, the Writer and the Law



with ARTS LAW

Event: Arts Law Centre of Australia Deputy Director Delwyn Everard joins a panel of legal experts to discuss the wide range of arts law issues affecting writers, including copyright in the current climate.

THE ARTS LAW CENTRE OF AUSTRALIA
(Arts Law) is the national community legal centre for the arts. Arts Law provides legal advice and information on a wide range of arts-related legal and business matters.

WHEN: Monday 18 March, 6.30-7.30pm
FULL PRICE: \$15 MEMBER PRICE: FREE

Power Editing: Seven ways to supercharge your writing

with VALERIE PARV



Workshop: Whether you sell to a major house or indie-publish your own book, your story must grab publishers and readers while delivering on its promise. Valerie shows you seven ways to reach these goals and provides a power-editing checklist you'll use in all your writing.

VALERIE PARV is known as Australia's queen of romance, with over sixty novels to her name and twenty-five million copies of her books sold internationally, including many Waldenbooks bestsellers. Valerie's short fiction is also regularly featured in national magazines.

WHEN: Saturday 2 March, 10am - 4pm
FULL PRICE: \$180 MEMBER PRICE: \$130/\$120

YOUR YEAR

Creative Non-Fiction

with DI WEBSDALE-MORRISSEY

Course: Prepare to immerse yourself in creative non-fiction. Explore its characteristics, the elements that set it apart and how to craft your own short and long projects. You will quickly become confident in the form and begin to write absorbing stories using creative non-fiction tools.

DI WEBSDALE-MORRISSEY is a Melbourne writer with an MA in Creative Writing who has taught creative non-fiction in RMIT's writing programs for more than a decade. She has published two books, has two more to be published in 2013 and has written regularly for The Age's lifestyle magazines.

WHEN: Saturdays, 10am - 4pm
2 March, 6 April, 4 May & 15 June
FULL PRICE: \$720 MEMBER PRICE: \$510/\$460

Starting a Novel

with SONIA ORCHARD

Course: Sitting down to face that blank screen is one of the most exciting and daunting times for a novelist. This course will involve intensive workshoping and exercises to help participants think about and resolve issues regarding plot, structure, narrative drive, characterisation and voice, and most importantly, to help them work out what their novel is really about.

SONIA ORCHARD has had two books published: a memoir, *Something More Wonderful* (Hodder Headline) and a work of literary fiction, *The Virtuoso* (Fourth Estate). She taught creative writing and novel writing at RMIT for seven years and has a PhD in creative writing.

WHEN: Saturdays, 10am - 4pm
16 March, 20 April & 18 May
FULL PRICE: \$520 MEMBER PRICE: \$380/\$340

Children's Picture Books

with DMETRI KAKMI

Course: Do you want to write a children's picture book and present it to a publisher? This is an intensive course in which you will workshop your manuscript from session to session before your peers. You will learn how to develop ideas, hone your story and make it suitable for the age group that suits the tale. It is important you bring two picture book manuscripts to the class.

DMETRI KAKMI worked as a senior editor in the Books for Children and Young Adults department at Penguin Books for fifteen years. He brings his expertise to the table as both an editor and successful author.

WHEN: Sundays, 1-5pm
3 March, 7 April, 28 April & 16 June
FULL PRICE: \$390 MEMBER PRICE: \$325/\$290

Short Story

with DAVID SORNIG

Course: Participants will work through a program of reading and writing designed to help them craft that most elusive of literary objects: the short story. Discussions and exercises will focus on reading a selection of stories, unpicking them to identify aspects of craft at work in them and drawing on these elements to develop participants' own stories.

DAVID SORNIG's short stories have been published in Griffith Review, Harvard Review and Best Australian Stories 2012. His novel *Spiel* (UWAP) was published in 2009.

WHEN: Sundays, 1-5pm
17 March, 21 April, 19 May & 23 June
FULL PRICE: \$390 MEMBER PRICE: \$325/\$290

WEEKDAY WRITERS

The First Draft

with TONY BIRCH

Course: This course will deal with fiction, both the novel and book-length short fiction collections, examining the creative production of the first draft, from conception of an idea to the writing process and initial editing. The course will suit writers who are in the process of considering a book-length work, have begun a suite of stories or are already involved in writing a novel.

TONY BIRCH has written four books including *Shadowboxing* (2006), *Father's Day* (2009) and *Blood* (2011), which was shortlisted for the 2012 Miles Franklin Award.

WHEN: Thursdays, 1-5pm
7 March, 4 April, 2 May & 6 June
FULL PRICE: \$390 MEMBER PRICE: \$325/\$290

Non-Fiction

with KATHERINE KIZILOS

Course: Sessions will explore research, interviews, descriptive writing, narrative techniques and the ethical challenges of non-fiction.

KATHERINE KIZILOS is a Melbourne-based freelance writer and journalist who has worked as a feature writer and an opinion writer. She has also written a travel book, *The Olive Grove*, about her travels in Greece.

WHEN: Thursdays, 1-5pm

14 March, 11 April, 9 May & 13 June

FULL PRICE: \$390 MEMBER PRICE: \$325/\$290

THE WRITER'S WORKOUT

Bootcamp 1: Wrestling with a novel

with SHANE MALONEY

Course: Classes will focus on some of the key elements needed to create a successful work of fiction including research, narrative voice, plot, setting, pace, character development and maintaining engagement.

SHANE MALONEY is the author of the *Murray Whelan* series of satirical crime novels. He has taught writing at RMIT and conducted many workshops in Australia and overseas.

WHEN: Wednesdays 1-5pm, 6-27 March

FULL PRICE: \$390 MEMBER PRICE: \$325/\$290

TUESDAY TUTORIALS

Session: Each month guest authors will impart their expertise and share analysis of the writing craft in an intimate, relaxed and interactive environment. Exploring fiction and non-fiction writing areas, topics will address the step-by-step processes and essentials of successful writing.

Character

with FRAN CUSWORTH

Seminar: Unforgettable characters, who readers believe in and care about, bring a novel to life. In this session, Fran Cusworth explores the techniques of creating great characters, from building complexity to uncovering inner conflicts and letting our "people" behave uncharacteristically.

FRAN CUSWORTH is a Melbourne-based journalist and the author of three novels: *The Love Child*, *Hopetoun Wives*, (Penguin 2006, 2009) and *Sisters of Spicefield* (out with Random House in June 2013). She has taught novel writing at RMIT and is finishing a PhD in creative writing at La Trobe University.

WHEN: Tuesday 26 March, 6.30-8.30pm

FULL PRICE: \$45 MEMBER PRICE: \$30/\$25

COMPACT COURSES

The Road to Redemption: A twelve-step program for procrastinating writers

with SPIRI TSINTZIRAS

Course: Do you want to write but don't know where to start? Are you lost in a mess of notes and half-started pieces? Or are you holding onto your manuscript because it just might not be good enough? Come, join the other procrastinators, and get on the road to redemption. Part bookish boot camp, part self-help group, this twelve-step program will help you get over the most common organisational and personal hurdles to writing.

SPIRI TSINTZIRAS co-wrote the award-winning book *Parlour Games for Modern Families* in four months while working three days a week, running her communications business *Writing Spirit* on the side, and getting food on the table for her family – with only the occasional meltdown. Spiri is currently working on a food memoir. www.tribaltomato.com.

WHEN: Wednesdays, 6.30-8.30pm

3-24 April

FULL PRICE: \$240 MEMBER PRICE: \$170/\$155

MONTHLY MILESTONES

Immersion Writing

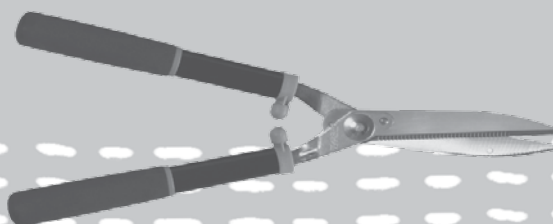
with LEE KOFMAN

Course: Learn about the increasingly popular subgenre of creative non-fiction, immersion writing, which includes memoir, travel writing, food writing, investigative journalism and more. Examples include *The Tall Man* (Chloe Hooper) and *Eat, Pray, Love* (Elizabeth Gilbert) where the writers immerse themselves as participants in existing experiences, such as foreign places and subcultures. Alternatively, they initiate projects, as Julie Powell did in *Julie and Julia: My Year of Cooking Dangerously*. The course will cover major craft aspects including voice, research, structure, ethics and the use of fictional devices, with an emphasis on integration of personal experiences with research materials.

LEE KOFMAN is the author of three books and many short works published in Australia, the UK, Canada and the US. She is the recipient of an Australia Council grant and numerous writing residencies and other awards. Her immersion memoir has been shortlisted for the HarperCollins/Varuna Award in 2012.

WHEN: Saturdays, 1-5pm, 6-27 April

FULL PRICE: \$390 MEMBER PRICE: \$325/\$290



THE MONTH



Month of Travel Imagination

by JOSIANE BEHMOIRAS

So soon my daughter grew up! Now, waiting for the imminent birth of her first child, we have been rummaging through her collection of picture books. Once upon a time, when she was a child, we sat side-by-side on Melbourne nights pawing the glossy pages of *Linnea in Monet's Garden*. Linnea, the water-coloured protagonist, travelled to Paris – my city of birth – to see the rooms of Monet's water-lily paintings at the Orangerie gallery. She got to visit Giverny, where she scampered in Monet's blooming garden and, standing on the Japanese bridge over the lily pond, shedding tears of joy, Linnea spotted the small wooden boat from Monet's paintings. She brought home postcards, metro and museum tickets, a bird's feather, a paper-wrapped sugar cube, a wooden toy – things she affixed onto a pinboard, a visceral travel diary.

One day, I had said to my daughter, we would visit Paris and Giverny.

Reading *Linnea* again, we have been talking about the stories that will inspire and enrich the travel imagination of her own child. Will *Tashi* make him yearn for China? “*Tashi* was my escape into another world, not to China in particular,” she says. “And *Possum Magic* made me want to eat steak and salad in Sydney, by the bridge.” At the age of three, she was so amazed to cross the Harbour Bridge that her dad rushed to buy her a coat-hanger souvenir.

The many fairy tales of kings, queens and castle intrigues acquire a new dimension visiting The Tower of London, just as *The Red Balloon's* spirit floats above the hills of Ménilmontant, and *Madeline* – in two straight lines – leads us to the Tour Eiffel.

Four decades ago, Joan Bodger wrote *How The Heather Looks* – a travelogue of her young family's trail along the “real” haunts of English

classic characters, from Peter Rabbit to Pooh Bear. That travelogue may be a metaphor for the perpetual human quest for ideal places that can never wholly exist outside our minds. Lollygagging in Pangbourne, one can only fancy that this is indeed the “Wild Wood way up on the hill above the river” where Toad, Badger, Ratty and Otter worked out the complexities of friendship. Nevertheless, Bodger's book reinforces the idea that children's literature offers a window onto parallel worlds, fostering the travel imagination and dreams of distant places.

My son-in-law comes from India; a fresh set of books will bring words and images to entice and inform the new child's future travels to his grandparents' house in the Punjab. *The Puffin Book of Classic Indian Tales for Children* is on its way.

To date, *Linnea* is our favourite “travel guide”, enhanced by our pilgrimage to inhabit the book's real setting: when my daughter turned fifteen, we made our overseas journey. My mother was eighty-six, living in Israel, and this was to be my daughter's first and last visit to see her maternal grandmother. We travelled back home via Paris, nursing our wounded hearts. I was grateful for my daughter's wish to visit Giverny. In autumn, the garden wasn't in full bloom, but “It was like stepping back into the book,” and inside the house, “It was travelling to another era,” my daughter says. And like Linnea, she was amazed to stand on the Japanese bridge and find the wooden boat still floating on the lily pond. At dusk, we stood on the Paris-bound, open-air train platform at Vernon, looking across the road to a French provincial two-storey house: an elderly woman was closing the heavy wooden shutters, room by room. My daughter and I were left out huddling against the chill, travellers in time towards other stories.

JOSIANE BEHMOIRAS is an author and creative writing teacher. She will be a speaker at the Australian Festival of Travel Writing, 22–24 March. www.aftw.com.au

PEN Report, March

by ARNOLD ZABLE, *PEN Melbourne President*



The literary culture in Cambodia is yet to be restored. During the years of the Khmer Rouge regime, from April 1975 until January 1979, almost the entire intellectual and professional class was murdered or starved to death in the name of a brutal ideology that saw the cities emptied and the country returned to year zero. Cambodia is still recovering in the wake of that lost and traumatised generation.

In recent years PEN Melbourne has developed a sister relationship with Cambodian PEN. As part of this initiative I was privileged to conduct writing workshops with Cambodian writers in Phnom Penh in January this year. The workshops were conducted over three consecutive days. Over 180 people applied. We provided places for eighty, the maximum that space allowed. The participants ranged from beginners to established writers. It was a challenge to workshop such a large number from such diverse backgrounds and varying skill levels. Sreang Heng, the president of PEN Cambodia and the principle organiser of the workshops, acted as interpreter.

The workshops included daily lectures, exercises, question and answer sessions, discussions and readings from the writers. Khmer is an expressive language, melodic and rhythmic, and the readers were great performers. They included Oum Suphany, sixty-seven years old, a force of nature who has written memoirs about her experiences in the Pol Pot era. Self-taught, a storyteller, classical dancer, raconteur and naive artist, she inundated me with her work, her poems on everyday life, her journals, and her nonstop flow of creativity.

Among the writers were young women who are outspoken about women's rights and who write stories that tackle gender issues in a country where women are expected to tend to family and discouraged from professional life.

Many participants discussed their work and their publishing ventures, such as the Lake Tonle Sap publishing house, which publishes younger and more experimental writers. The print runs range from 500 to 2000 copies, with several titles in English. Writers presented me with their books, some bilingual, but most written in Khmer.

The Khmer Rouge terror continues to haunt many writers. Keo Narom lost all four children, her husband and father. Out of nine siblings, only Keo and her younger sister survived. She said that she'd gone mad with grief. She wandered about for a year – destitute and in rags – but began to pull out of it



Faces of the disappeared, Tuol Sleng, Phnom Penh

when she saw good friends who had gone insane and needed guidance. She found a renewed sense of purpose through her Buddhist faith, and in returning to her work as a teacher of music. She became an ethnomusicologist, a collector of stories and folklore among ethnic groups, and a writer of children's stories. Her book on Cambodian music is regarded as a classic.

The workshops culminated with presentations of certificates to all participants, as a joint enterprise between Melbourne and Cambodian PEN. We are planning future workshops. The initiative is a wonderful example of the work that PEN International does. It lives up to the central tenet that literature knows no boundaries. Please join us. New members are most welcome.

www.melbournepen.com.au

Photograph by Alec Couros



Learning to Read

When SALLY RIPPIN's son struggled with literacy, she embarked on a quest to create books early readers could not only read but also enjoy, giving them the confidence to continue learning.

If you were fortunate, you would have essentially picked up reading by osmosis like I did. I was a voracious reader and, as a result, found writing, spelling and communication easy and accessible. My two eldest sons picked up reading in much the same way and are still great readers at nineteen and sixteen. Up until recently, I hadn't believed adults who despaired of getting their kids to read. "Surely everyone picks up reading eventually," I would scoff, "if only given the right books."

This was until my third child arrived, nine years ago, as bonny and bright a baby as you could possibly imagine. He was slow to speak and even at three years old was still using baby talk, which I put down to being the youngest and most adored child and never really having to articulate his needs. In Prep, his teacher approached me halfway through the year with concerns about his level of literacy. I refused to listen. "He's in *Prep*, for goodness sakes!" I would tell my friends. "He should be playing with sand and water, not sitting at a desk! Everyone learns to read at different ages, he'll pick it up eventually."

But he didn't. Despite both his parents being writers, having read to him every night from the day he was born and growing up in a household of books, my son just couldn't seem to pick up reading. By the middle of grade two his confidence plummeted. He began saying he was stupid and hated school. Every subject required reading and so he found he was good at nothing. Even maths, which he had previously managed easily, now consisted of written problems, not numerical. Eventually I was forced to admit that we were going to have to do something. My hands-off approach, letting him take his own time, was obviously not working.

So, we started looking for help. Kumon, SPELD, computer programs, tutors, therapists, doctors. You name it, we tried it. Our son inched forward, but ever so slowly. But what was most frustrating was that while his classmates were discovering the joys of *Tashi*, Andy Griffiths and *Harry Potter*, my son was stuck with school readers that were so mind-numbingly dull that even I had to sit on my hands to prevent myself from gouging my eyes out!

At around this time, I was approached by a publisher to begin a new series for early readers. The timing couldn't have been more perfect. She mentioned that her research had shown that there was a lack of good material around for young children learning to read. I could have kissed her. We agreed we needed to focus

on strong characters and exciting storylines to give struggling readers the incentive they needed to keep turning the pages. We decided we wanted them to feel real. There were a lot of stories around at the time featuring princesses and fairies, spies and pirates, but little that reflected kids' own lives.

That afternoon, I went home and pulled out all my old Dr Seuss books. My son had declared he had outgrown them because "picture books were for babies". He was desperate to be seen reading novels like his friends were. So, the challenge as I saw it, was to write something that looked like a short novel but was almost as easy to read as *The Cat in the Hat*.

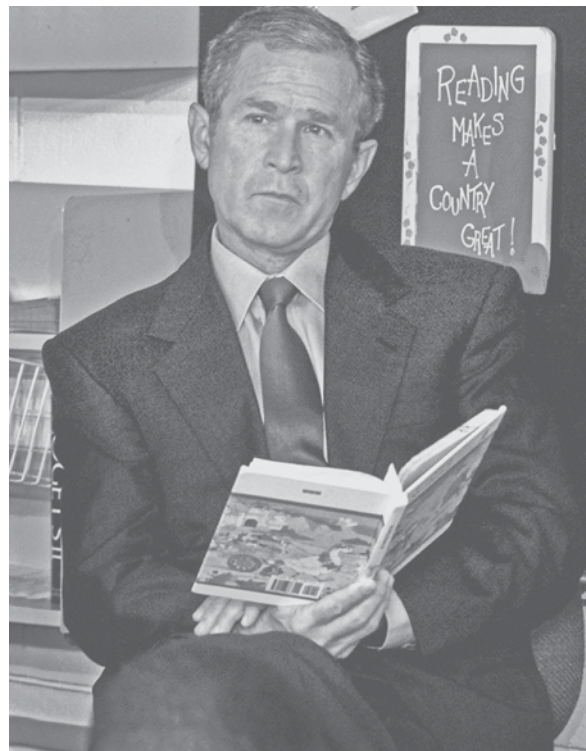
My son was
stuck with
school readers
that were mind-
numbingly
dull.

In case you're unfamiliar with the story behind *The Cat in the Hat*, in 1954, a magazine published an article on illiteracy, which suggested that children were not learning to read because their books were boring. A publisher, William Spaulding, compiled a list of 348 words he felt were important for first-graders to recognize and asked Theodor Seuss Geisel (aka Dr Seuss) to write a book using only those words. Nine months later, using only 236 of these words, Geisel handed him the manuscript for *The Cat in the Hat*. It retained all the imagination of Geisel's earlier books but could be read by early readers.

The next set of books I dusted off were my childhood copies of Richard Scarry. I studied these books carefully to work out what had so appealed to me and decided it was Scarry's unusual use of second person. "Doesn't Lowly Worm look lovely in his hat?" he would write and I remember answering "Yes!" and being quite thrilled that my opinion had been sought. Looking through these books as an adult I realised this was an incredibly simple yet effective way of connecting with young readers.

The last series I drew upon for inspiration was the *Milly Molly Mandy* books begun by Joyce Lankester Brisley in the 1920s. I couldn't find my old copies but remembered them as being very simple stories about the life of a young girl. They contained no wizards or dragons, or even family tragedies to contend with, yet I still remember finding them utterly gripping. So, inspired by Seuss, Scarry and Lankester Brisley, I decided my stories would begin in second person, contain the language of a school reader and stick to the simplest day-to-day occurrences of a 6- to 8-year-old. Simple? Ha!

Over the next few weeks I wrote two stories using these limitations and tested them out on my son. He listened, which was a rarity at that time, and when he fidgeted



or seemed to lose track of the story, I made notes in the columns to trim back or change the wording. I figured if I could keep my son interested I could keep *any* kid interested. After much toing and froing with my publisher, paring back the text and cutting sentences even shorter, we arrived at our prototype: *Billie B Brown: The Soccer Star*. The character was feisty and tom-boyish and her best friend was a boy, which I hoped meant that even though the series was initially aimed at girls, boys might want to read them, too. An illustrator was found who, though living in New Zealand, had been born in Japan, and her slightly Manga-style illustrations gave the books a contemporary feeling I couldn't have achieved had I illustrated them myself. We then worked on the second book, *Billie B Brown: The Bad Butterfly*, and had both ready to launch at the beginning of 2010.

The series grew from six books to twelve, to twenty, with a spin-off series for boys. Three years down the track, my publishers informed me that the *Billie B Brown* series had sold its millionth copy. Obviously, this news is thrilling, but I wanted to tell you about something else that has been even more rewarding for me.

Every book signing I meet these parents. I recognise them straight away. Their faces are full of emotion and they are usually pushing a very shy and awkward young child ahead of them. "Tell her," they whisper. "Tell her!" And they gently prod their beloved offspring to speak to me. The child, now even more uncomfortable, clams up even further, forcing their desperate parent to blurt out on their behalf, "My child hated reading before she found your books. She couldn't read a thing and now she won't put them down! I can't tell you how grateful I am you wrote this series. I can't tell you what it means to see her reading."

I want to tell them, "I know. I really and truly know. I am *you* and I totally understand what you have been through and what you're going through. I couldn't feel more honoured and privileged to have been a small part of something that will offer your child a lifetime of joy and respect and ease." But all I can manage is a simple "Thank you!" because I am trying not to mess up the spelling of their kid's name in the book and there's a queue of a hundred restless kids behind them and almost as many equally emotional parents.

It's so hard to see your kid struggle and miss out on all the things you were able to take for granted. Sometimes I feel so sad that my son will never know Charlotte or Mr Tumnus or Mowgli or the BFG as intimately as I did at his age. It's hard to know that he will always struggle with reading even though every single night we still sit beside him and force him to read about the lifecycle of a slug or the way steam trains work and other things that frankly bore me to tears. He is getting there, slowly, slowly, and I can't tell you how much I have come to appreciate comics over the last few years, being the sole thing he will read for pleasure.

But the best thing, the thing that is the most rewarding of all, is that these days, when I go into his classroom, my son says proudly, "That's my mum, she writes the *Billie B Brown* books and I *help* her!" and his friends look at him with the respect of kids who truly love books. And I feel comforted by the thought that one day he might love them, too. ❷

SALLY RIPPIN is the author of the *Billie B Brown* and *Hey Jack!* series. Her latest novel is *Meet Lina*, the first of four books in the *Our Australian Girl* series, about an Italian-Australian girl living in Carlton in the 1950s.

I am *you*
and I totally
understand
what you have
been through.



Get into the K-Zone

DAN FINDLAY *is the editor of K-Zone, a pop culture magazine for kids, and it's taught him plenty about writing for young readers.*

Making a magazine for kids is without a doubt the most entertaining and rewarding job I've ever had. It's also the most challenging, and over the past eight years working in youth mags I've seen many writers frustrated and even intimidated by the idea of writing for children. Some writers thought writing for kids was a matter of halving their vocab and cutting down on complex ideas. Others panicked at the idea of writing convincingly for an audience twenty or thirty years their junior. Still others thought of kids as a homogenous mass, demanding a standardised style that shed all of the writer's personality. While neither cutting vocab, avoiding personality nor panicking are great techniques, they illustrate the tension of writing for an audience that can be far removed from the world of the writer.

One of the first things I discovered while making mags for kids was that under the umbrella term "kids" is a huge variety of ages, personalities and interests. Writing for an 11-year-old is very different to writing for an 8-year-old. The 11-year-old is far more likely to understand complicated sentences, different types of humour and more mature content. At the same time, an advanced 8-year-old may be a great technical reader but still not be able to conceptually grasp a complex story. It has helped immeasurably over the years to be very specific about the kids we are writing for and to have a detailed picture in mind of the interests and reading age of our ideal audience. At *K-Zone* most of our readers are clustered around eight or nine years old but some are as young as four and others as old as seventeen. In general we shoot for the 8- or 9-year-old and have an editorial policy of encouraging our readers to read to an older level rather than a younger one. We prefer our readers to learn a new word rather than serving them up the same verbs and adjectives month in, month out. As well as the educational rewards, asking our readers to stretch their reading abilities has another benefit: many kids love the idea of growing up and the freedoms it will allow. If a fresh word can be framed in a non-intimidating way, the new vocabulary becomes a step closer to entering a more grown-up world.

Knowing your reader is only a part of writing for kids and some of the best work I've seen in kids' magazines has overlapped with the authentic passions of the writer. Invariably that expertise has made their writing more authoritative and entertaining. At *K-Zone* we set the tone of the magazine as cheeky, humorous and informative, and within that tonal framework we are free to


explore a wide variety of subjects. As a general rule there is enough variety in the interests of our readers that we can explore many concepts that initially seem outlandish as long as we do it in a *K-Zone* style. We're also free to maintain personal differences in voice and this variety contributes to the (hopefully) interesting patchwork of the mag, as well as allowing authenticity in each writer's voice.

After identifying our reader and finding our own voices within the tone of the magazine, we're left with the content curation and interpretation that forms the core of the mag. Competing as we do with a huge amount of digital information, our strength and point of difference (as is the case for most magazines) lies in careful selection of content and the writing and design techniques we use to deliver it. Broadly speaking we have key editorial topics like games, entertainment, jokes and pranks, but each year hundreds of press releases for films, videogames and books cross our desks. Our initial question is always "Is this for our readers?" The first part of that question is actually "Is this appropriate?" followed by "Is this interesting?" and both of these questions are inextricably linked to the picture we have of our reader.

If a topic is both appropriate and interesting it will be discussed at a features meeting and the whole team of writers and designers will debate the best way to present it. If the topic is a film, for example, we'll talk through the key themes, whether those themes have potential to be expanded (a film about giants might inspire a series of features within an issue on other "giant" things) and how the writing might be best served visually.

We also need to identify the point of difference in a story; recounting straight "news" or rewording a press release is never enough. The bulk of our creative process each month is focused on taking fresh angles on familiar subjects and reinterpreting factual announcements into creative writing that couldn't be found outside of *K-Zone*, full of alliteration, slang and endless pop-culture touch points.

No discussion of magazine writing for kids would be complete without mentioning design. Each story in *K-Zone* is built from the beginning with look and feel in mind. Its success completely depends on the collaboration between writer, designer and editor. For kids the visual language of the magazine is hugely important and great design can draw the most reluctant reader into a feature. Our designers must also be writers as they read, interpret and lay out copy, as well as comment on narrative flow and word count. On the other side, writers furnish each story with images and suggestions for the layout and will often amend copy during the subediting process to better serve the design of the page. No story stands on its own and every published piece is the result of close collaboration and many rewrites and edits.

Making magazines for kids is a different process to writing children's novels but some of the key ideas remain similar. It's always helpful to know who we're writing for. It's also much easier for us to write interesting stories about topics that we ourselves are interested in. We always question if something is right for our reader and it's hugely reassuring to know that every single one of our fans is different. No matter how crazy a story seems while we're working on it, there's probably a reader out there who is going to enjoy it. 

DAN FINDLAY is the editor of *K-Zone* magazine and has been playing video games and building LEGO for the past twenty-five years.



The Sword of Rodithal



Children's literacy advocates 100 Story Building put together an anthology called Pigeons Stories in the Post, full of stories written in collaboration between a primary school student and an established writer. Here is one of them, written by ARI BOYD and MICHAEL PRYOR. To learn more about working with young writers, see Michael's article on page 34.

Tom Gilgo did his best to be stringy and awful tasting, because he decided that was the best way to avoid being eaten by a dragon. His father had been eaten by a dragon, and his grandfather had been eaten by a dragon, so Tom was determined not to follow in their footsteps. This was going to be difficult. Tom Gilgo lived in a cave in the valley of Jorwal in the country of Ob – and Ob was known as the land with more dragons than anywhere in the entire world of Allongadar.

The only thing to do was to find the magic sword of Rodithal, the only thing dragons were afraid of. Unfortunately the biggest dragon in Ob was using the sword as a toothpick. No one had tried to get it because they would probably have been squashed. The fire-breathing piranhas in the small stretch of water between the main city and the island that was the dragon's home also helped keep people away.

Tom was determined not to get eaten, so he wanted the magic sword of Rodithal. He dreamed about it every night. He thought about it every day when he was taking his father's sheep out to the meadow. He drew pictures of it in the dirt with a stick, while he was supposed to be watching the sheep.

One day, after bringing the sheep back to their pen a dragon swooped down and snatched up four of them. Tom had had enough. He didn't like the way dragons ate whatever they wanted to. He was going to fetch the sword of Rodithal – but how was he going to do it?

"You want to go there?" said his mum, in their small, damp, mossy cave of a home.

"Yes," said Tom.

"Then take this cursed crossbow and shield. It's the only thing we have."

"Okay," said Tom. "How are they cursed?"

"I don't know. Your Dad said that once you pick them up they stick to your hands, and stay that way until you do something incredibly brave."

"Uh-oh."

"Well off you go," said his mum.

"Okay."

Tom walked out the door into a wide open, grassy plain. He headed for the road beyond the plain. He had never walked past the plain before and with good reason: both his grandad and dad had been eaten when they went off the plain.

Tom was walking for awhile when he came to the crossroads.

"Hup two three four, hup two three four, hmm a crossroad, now which way?"

Suddenly a rock spoke to him.

"Hi there, do you need some help?" asked the rock.

"Huh? Weird..." thought Tom. "Oh no, it's just a guy in a cloak."

"Yes."

"Okay it's the left path."

"How do you know where I want to go ..."

Suddenly the guy in the cloak jumped out and tried to grab the crossbow. "Hey what are you doing?" said Tom.

Hello Michael,

My name is Ari. I've read a few of your books, they are books 1, 2 and 3 of the Chronicles of Krangor and I'm reading *Blaze of Glory* from the Laws of Magic. I don't know what we should call the character though I know that we should probably put a big lizard-like monster in, for example, a dragon. Maybe in a rainforest some 100 million years ago? The character's problem could be getting eaten. Let's not put how they got there in the first place, otherwise it will take on a value of real life.

From Ari

"Nothing."
"Are you trying to steal my crossbow?"
"So what if I am?" said the thief.
"It's cursed."
"That's bad."
"You're stuck to it."
"That's worse."
"FOREVER."
"Noo."
"You know," said Tom, "that's the longest 'No' I've ever heard."
"Thanks. It's one of my many skills."
"You've got lots of skills?" Tom rubbed his chin.
"How would you like to come on a quest with me?"
"A quest? Why should I?"
"Partly because it's a test of bravery, but mostly because we might walk away with a pile of gold."
"Really?" asked the thief.
"Of course, we might both get eaten by a dragon."
"Oh."
"But don't think of that, think of the gold."
"I don't know."
"One more thing. That crossbow will stay stuck to you until you do something incredibly brave."
"Like facing a dragon and stealing his gold?"
"Exactly."
"Then I'm your man. Boris Downhopper's the name, and anything involving gold is my game."
They shook hands. "Glad to have you aboard, Boris. Now, you say we take the left-hand path?"
"That's the one."
"Where does the other one lead to?"
"The Pit of Doom."
"Let's not go there. Not right now."
"Whatever you say, boss."

Tom and the thief walked and walked and walked until they came to a forest. They went into the forest.

"This forest is creepy," said Tom. "Look, a teddy bear."

THWACK! The thief kicked it out of the way.

"Don't kick it," said Tom.

Suddenly the teddy bear stood up and started walking towards the thief.

"Aw, I think it's trying to hug you," said Tom

"Yeah, well—"

CHOMP! The teddy bear bit the thief's leg.

"Ahh! My leg! The teddy bear bit my leg! Get it off! Get it off!"

Suddenly, a low bone-chilling moan echoed through the forest. Dozens of teddy bears crawled out of the trees, their teeth as sharp as blunt rusty razors, their claws as pointy as dull daggers.

"How are we getting out of this forest?" asked Tom.

"Well, we could use the crossbow," said the thief.

"OK."

BANG!

The arrow flew straight and true, into the nearest teddy bear... and shattered into pieces.

Dear Ari,

Thanks for writing. I'm looking forward to working with you on your story. Writers usually work all alone, so working with someone is a real treat.

The start of a story is very important. Whenever I write a story, I spend lot of time on the start because I want to get it right.

The start of a story has to do many things, but most importantly it should interest the reader. If a reader is bored by the way the story begins, then they might just give up and not read the rest of the story. This is a disaster for a writer! We want people to read all of our story, not read the start and then throw our story away!

Okay, so how do we do all this? That's the challenge of writing a good start to a story! Writing a fantasy story needs a lot of thinking about the setting before you start. If you do some planning about the setting before you start writing, then it will pay off later.

It can be really handy to draw a map, like the one in the front of *The Lost Castle*.

Good luck!

Michael Pryor

“What now?” asked Tom.

“Rrrrruuuuuuunnnnnnnnn!” yelled the thief.

SMASH!

They ran into something big and furry. They looked up into the face of a giant brown teddy bear, which was bigger than Tom and the thief combined.

"Aaaaaah, shoot it, shoot it!" yelled the thief.

BANG!

As soon as the arrow hit the teddy bear it and all the other teddy bears vaporised.

"Well, that was close," said Tom.

They walked out of the forest.

“Hey, we made it to the moat,” said the thief.

The piranha-filled river was blue and shiny.

“How do we get across?” asked Tom.

“Easy, we jump.”

With this brave suggestion, the crossbow suddenly fell off.

“Finally! One, two, three jump!” said the thief. And he jumped... straight into one of the piranha’s fireballs. With a loud *BOOF* he was incinerated.

"Or we could use this," said Tom, and he dropped a bug zapper into the water.

BRAZAPP BOOM!

The bug zapper exploded and all the piranhas floated to the top. Tom walked through the river, up the river bank to a cave. The cave was dark and smelled of mouldy cheese. He walked and walked, until he walked straight into a big scaly wall.

“Oof! Stupid wall!” he said.

Lighting his lantern, he found himself staring into the face of the dragon. It was a fiery scarlet and its eyes were a deep emerald green.

Tom was feeling kind of nervous.

"Wait, don't eat me!" he said.

CHOMP.

The dragon ate him.

“Urk,” said the dragon as he choked on Tom.

“Bleaaaaargh,” said the dragon, coughing Tom up and spitting him out. The dragon fell down, knocked out.

Tom pulled out the sword.

“Time to end this,” he said, and stabbed the dragon in the leg.

Nothing happened.

“Why didn’t it work?” asked Tom.

"Check the label," said the dragon sleepily, as it came to.

Tom turned the sword around. The label read BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED.



MICHAEL PRYOR is the best-selling author of more than thirty fantasy books and over forty short stories. He has been shortlisted six times for the Aurealis Awards, has been nominated for a Ditmar award, and six of his books have been CBCA Notable Books. His next book *The Subterranean Stratagem*, will be released in April 2013.

Michael has been a supporting author of 100 Story Building's projects since the very first Pigeon Letters program in 2009.

www.michaelpryor.com.au

100 Story Building is a social enterprise and centre for young writers in Melbourne's inner west. It brings together young writers and members of Melbourne's creative community, and encourages them to share in their skills and understandings.

100 Story Building's mission is to provide opportunities for the most marginalised children and young people in our community

to develop the literacy skills, confidence and sense of belonging that are fundamental to their future success. This is achieved through daily workshops and project-based collaborations, including *early harvest*, a literary journal commissioned by an editorial board of upper primary students, which features stories and illustrations created by both children and some of Australia's best known authors and artists.

To support 100 Story Building's free programs for disadvantaged children and young people, 100 Story Studio offers a monthly series of writing masterclasses for adults interested in writing for children and young adults, and 100 Story Holidays, a comic- and book-making school holiday workshops for creative kids aged 8-12 years.

You can find out more and also buy the *Pigeons Stories in the Post* anthology at www.100storybuilding.org.au.



Young Ereaders

Children learning to read now are digital natives. TYE CATTANACH has seen first-hand the potential of libraries to engage this next generation of readers through new technology.

The advent of mobile technologies has heralded an enormous change for libraries. More than ever before they need to prove they are *worth their weight in books*. The choice to purchase mobile devices (iPads, tablets, ereaders) for use with children and young adults in a public or school library setting can seem a daunting prospect. Decisions are made not only in deference to financial considerations, but often subconsciously sentimental intellectualisations.

To begin with, let's look at some common perceptions of libraries today, and importantly what user perceptions of them are. We must begin by asking the question, what is the contemporary idea of a library and what is it for? In the past communities saw these institutions as *the* source from which to seek information. The common perception of libraries being tied to physical books on shelves, and that this material is now dated and laborious to search, has in many ways led to a social rejection of the traditional library as a valuable place in which to seek information.

The internet can provide us with access to a vast array of resources, delivered in a fraction of the time it takes to retrieve similar information from traditional libraries. So we are left to wonder whether mobile and other technologies relegate libraries to being akin to a museum, where students and the general public might visit once a year to remember that information once came in the medium of a codex, as a physical "book". New technologies provide immediate access to open-source content, portable bookshelves, engaging and educational (not to mention fun) applications, social media, up-to-the-minute news and information, anywhere and anytime.

Perhaps a large part of the problem, the challenge, is unwillingness among librarians to acknowledge that why they exist should define how they do things. Institutions are having a hard time adapting, and at least part of the difficulty is shifting a mindset from function to purpose: shifting the thinking away from defining themselves by how they do things now, letting the reasons *why* they do them define how they'll do them in the future.

There are those who argue that mobile technologies and devices do not affect nor change the need for libraries. I would counter that they are wrong. I do not,

in fact, believe that libraries have become defunct, quite the opposite. But the perception of those who *need* libraries, in this instance our children and young adults, is that libraries are increasingly – if not already – unnecessary, given their access to the internet.

This shift of perception has presented a unique challenge: engaging the *digital learners*. Working as a teacher-librarian, I was increasingly hearing the statement “books are boring”. Offering a picture book to a Prep student on his first visit to the library resulted in a perfunctory flick through the pages, a glance at the illustrations and the question, “Yes, but what does it do?” It left me reconsidering how I might endeavour to make books interesting for this particular child and his peers.

We have all borne witness to the speculation over the ebook in recent times. Everybody has an opinion. There are those who laud them as heralding a new age for reader engagement and diversified education and those who deride them as a flash in the pan fad that will soon fizzle out. Until a few years ago, I had found my position amid all of this talk to be one of “fence-sitter”. In fact, my opinions were largely shaped by my prior occupation as a young adult and children’s specialist bookseller, and I will admit to being a little fearful of what the ebook might mean

for “real” books. The desire to preserve the printed codex, and my natural instinct to instil a love of reading in children in the same way it evolved for me – complete immersion in books of all formats – made it tempting to fight the technology.

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That began to change for me as a direct result of the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development decision in 2010 to elect Manor Lakes P-12 College, where I was working, as a participatory school for a trial to give each student an iPad. With a core team of teachers responsible for the establishment of an effective trial environment, I was able to observe the program begin to yield results. A decision to trial a buddy system between Year 5/6 students

participating in the iPad trial and our Prep cohort was the dawning of my realisation of what the iPad might come to mean to readers.

I am both delighted and more than a little excited to report that, in my opinion, and solely as a result of observing more than one hundred students explore and navigate ebooks using an iPad: it may just be the greatest thing to ever happen to books. In fact, I will venture so far as to say, I wonder if the iPad and the interactive nature of ebooks and book-related apps may be responsible for engaging a whole new generation of readers.

It has been both a privilege and a delight to be an observer for such a trial and I have been fortunate enough to have spent a significant amount of time discussing with our students the implications of the iPad as an ereader. Interactive ebooks and apps allow children and young adults of all ages to experience books in a unique way. Whether introducing books and book-friendly technology to a Prep student or attempting to engage a reluctant or struggling reader, ebooks might just be the most powerful tool at our disposal.

For a start, they allow for unprecedented discovery and exploration of text and illustrations. The implications for visual literacy are extraordinary. An excellent example of this is my frequent, shameless employment of Penguin’s ebook version of Graeme Base’s *Animalia* picture book. This ebook allows for detailed explora-

tion of Graeme's magnificent illustrations as well as fun exposure to the text. There are games and activities to entice children (and adults!) to further explore the illustrations and invariably this experience ends with the question, "Do you have the real book of this?"

We are all aware of the "hook" factor that draws a reader into a book, piquing their curiosity and keeping them reading. I have yet to discover an interactive ebook or book app that does not have this down pat. The wonderful aspect of this built-in hook is similar to the phenomenon of the book trailer: the reader is engaged enough to *want* to keep reading.

I have discovered that ebooks are a wonderful way to *introduce* particular books to my students, for they do always ask me for the "real" book afterwards. I have seen this pattern repeated over and over with reluctant and struggling readers. We understand that reluctant readers and struggling readers are one and the same, they are reluctant because they are having difficulty understanding, enjoying and therefore grasping reading as a pleasurable and worthwhile concept. No longer do they need to sit frustrated with a book, striving to understand the text. The interactivity of most ebooks allows them to choose to listen to audio narration of the text and follow along as the words spoken are highlighted before them. There are interactive illustrations that encourage the reader to explore and comprehend a larger part of the story, and increasingly embedded video assists with comprehension of the story. Children and young adults with vision impairment are able to resize text to suit their own comfort level and screen brightness can be increased or decreased to suit the reader.

For the more accomplished readers, encountering a word they may not fully understand becomes a simple double tap on the screen to activate the dictionary. The word is highlighted and the definition appears, complete with pronunciation. Readers are then able to make notes if they wish, allowing them to track their reading progress, challenges and triumphs. Readers begin to experience the delightful thrill of confidence that comes from knowing they have tools at hand to assist them with their improvement and enjoyment of reading.

I have seen a number of reluctant and/or struggling students begin to develop a true love of reading and venture towards "real" books as a direct result of the newfound confidence they gained from experimenting with ebooks. Love them or hate them, there is no denying that the ebook is here to stay. I do not think this is a bad thing. My own experiences with children and ebooks have shown me that they are an invaluable tool for literacy that we would do well to embrace. ❷

TYE CATTANACH *has long been a passionate supporter of books, reading, authors and illustrators. A former children's and YA specialist bookseller and school librarian, Tye is currently the Educational Marketing Manager for Children at Penguin Books Australia.*



It may
just be the
greatest thing
to ever happen
to books.



Mother/Writer

PENNI RUSSON *became a published novelist at the same time as she became a mother. Writing and motherhood have been intertwined for her ever since.*

Ten years ago I signed the contract for my first novel. At about the same time, I gave birth to my first child. My writer identity and my mother identity are so intermeshed that I can't really separate the two things. Now I have several novels out in the world and three children. The novels travel far from me and, in truth, once they are released I have little more to do with them, though I feel a fierce protective love when I happen across one in a bookshop or reviewed on the internet. The children stay somewhat closer but they constantly renew themselves, so stumbling across something I've written about their past selves can be as alien as reading a random paragraph from one of my earlier novels.

When I remember what it was to be eleven years old, I think of who my friends were – Zoe, Silja, Melody, Lisa, Sonja – and my teacher Mrs Abey, who smoked during netball practice. I remember moving from my forever home in Mount Nelson, near the subdivision where I learned to ride my bike, to the sprawling concrete and brick house in South Hobart built into the hillside on several levels. I remember going to a hairdresser while on holiday in Surfer's Paradise and asking them to dye my hair strawberry blonde, because I read three *Sweet Valley High* books a night and every hope I had for the future was gleaned from those books. Neither I nor the hairdresser was quite sure what strawberry blonde was, this is what happens when you half-dwell in a textual world. I remember Melody Paul coming over and she'd dyed her hair too. We walked to the park and a woman commented on our unusual hair colour, actually using the words "strawberry blonde", and something I know now is that when Melody grew up she became a hairdresser, and so this story is foreshadowing.

As my oldest daughter nears that same age, I find myself driven to write about it, hunching over my child-self, rather like the girls in my class used to hunch protectively over their test papers. Because something I have found is that my near-perfect memory of childhood can be corrupted by my own children.

Two things happen. You think you know exactly what it felt like to be a certain age and then you see them living it, in a raw and immediate way, and you know the memories you have are merely the reflection flickering

on the surface of the pond – they *are* the pond, deep and murky and surprising. The other thing is, you turn into your own mother, and you say the mother things that were said to you, and you have little sympathy for the depth or authenticity of your children's feeling because you *can't*. You just can't. Because dinner has to be cooked and bedtimes have to occur and you've been up all night with the baby and Thursday night is swimming lessons and you simply can't sit around feeling for them all the time. Besides, as much as you remember that childhood anxiety of having forgotten to bring a signed notice to school on the last possible day for bringing that notice without some sort of vague repercussion (usually in the form of Missing Out), as a parent you can't help being pissed off that you are going to spend the next forty minutes retrieving that notice and handing it into the office, looking like a total doormat who has raised children as hopelessly disorganised as yourself.

You find
yourself having to
flesh out your own
mother, because
suddenly the word
“mother” is like
a Russian doll.

To be a mother is to be a narrator. You are constantly telling your children the story of their lives. There is also an endless need to write yourself into existence. You are in danger of being a mechanism, the factory machine that deposits them from one conveyer belt (school) to another (swimming lessons) to another (dinner). So you tell them things. About men you loved once, or the games you played when you were a child. You want to show them you are fully fleshed, a round character, a *main* character. That you aren't just... well, The Mother. Your own mother is The Mother. In fact you find yourself having to flesh out your own mother, because suddenly

the word “mother” is like a Russian doll – all these women inside women. Goodness, you really need to start the novel of you again from scratch. Chuck out the whole first draft. Begin again.

In the title of this piece I've used the forward slash, the virgule. Mother/writer. They are oppositional and they are connected, an electrical circuit exchanging their energies. I will never again be one without the other. The ghosts of my children live inside the ghosts of books – past and future. I will eavesdrop with envy on mothers who are not writers, who get their creative stimulation from parenting. And I will eavesdrop on writers who are not mothers, who get to go on writing retreats even though they don't have to because they have Spare Rooms and uncluttered lounges and can eat toast for every meal. I will stand on my hill looking at the green grass on all those other hills.

And yet I know I could not be one without the other. My daughter was born and a writer was born, the two muddled up together in time. In a practical sense, becoming a mother gave me an excellent excuse to stop looking for a day job. Becoming a mother gave me something that looked like a routine, which fostered a productivity in me that I had never before been able to achieve.

Becoming a mother gave me access to voices I had never heard before. I was unmade by motherhood, and made anew. As my children learn to talk and to write I have come to see how deep the creative urge is, deeper than language, deeper than story. Creativity is a wild force in us: dark and chaotic, light and sparkling, frightening, delightful, sad, funny. I see we are made of nature, of organic matter, that the colours of all children can be found in nature – my son's hair matches our dirt path, my daughter's skin is the same as a paperbark tree. I see we are resilient and vulnerable. I see how frightened living makes us, and how brave we are.

I found a book that my daughter has made, wonky pages that don't line up, stapled together. It is called *THE BIG BOOK OF SICRIS*, and the first page is entirely filled with a lone, oversized, floating question mark. The first entry is "Do you know parents can die before children?" She began this book four years ago and this remains the only secret – huge and silencing.

They give me things. Stones and butterfly wings and bunches of dandelions, secrets, drawings, scraps of their own writing with their odd sentence structure and felicitous misspellings and earnest emotional outpourings. I set each one aside to put in a novel. Or I throw them out when they are not looking. Being a writer can make me kinder as a mother, they enjoy my endless curiosity about their imaginative worlds. But I can be crueller too. We live in a small house. We don't have much spare money. I am greedy for time alone. I steal their souls and put them in my writing. ⑩

PENNI RUSSON *is an author and sessional teacher in creative writing. Her most recent novel is Only Ever Always which won the NSW Premiers, WA Premiers and the Aurealis Award for best Young Adult novel. For more insight into her successes and failures at combining motherhood and writing, see www.eglantinescake.blogspot.com.*

The first entry is
"Do you know
parents can die
before children?"



MONDAY

EVERY MONDAY

Words and Music poetry and readings. 98.1FM. 10.30–11am.

Phoenix Park Writers.

Meet weekly on Monday 12.30pm and Saturday 10.30am. 22 Rob Roy Rd, East Malvern. (9530 4397)

Scribes Writing Group.

9.30am–12pm, (school terms). South Barwon Community Centre, 33 Mount Pleasant Rd, Belmont. (Jan, 5243 8388)

FORTNIGHTLY

Reservoir wRiters and Reciters.

1–3.30pm, Reservoir Library. (ruthvenstorygarden@yahoo.com.au / 0403 708 759)

1ST & 3RD MONDAYS

Passionate Tongues Poetry.

8.30pm, Brunswick Hotel, Brunswick. (Michael, poetrymg@hotmail.com)

TUESDAY

EVERY TUESDAY

Melbourne Writers Meet-up

Group. 6pm, CBD. Social, not critique group. (@MelbCityWriters or melbournewriters@gmail.com)

Geelon Working Writers.

3–5pm, South Barwon Community Centre. \$2, bring notebook or laptop. (0412 015 470)

Sydenham Writers Group.

3.30–5.30pm. During terms. Delahey Community Centre: 80 Copperfield Drive, Delahey. (9390 3977)

FORTNIGHTLY

Mordialloc Writers' Group.

8pm, Mordialloc Neighbourhood House. (9587 8757 / mairi@ozemail.com.au)

Wordweavers Writers' Group.

9.45am – 12pm, Waverley Community Learning Centre, 5 Fleet St, Mt Waverley. (9807 6011)

1ST TUESDAY

Williamstown Writers.

8pm, Williamstown. \$2. (williwriters@hotmail.com)

2ND TUESDAY

Poets@Watsonia.

7pm, Watsonia Library Community Room. \$5. (0404 517 881)

4TH TUESDAY

Rowville Writers.

1–3pm, Rowville Library. (rowvillewriters.wordpress.com)

LAST TUESDAY

Docklands Writers.

5.30–7.30pm, The Hub, 80 Harbour Esplanade, Docklands. (jane.x.hutchinson@gmail.com)

Melb Children's & YA Writers.

6.30pm, Melbourne CBD. (writersgroup@y7mail.com)

WEDNESDAY

EVERY WEDNESDAY

Aural Text on RRR

(102.7FM), 12–2pm.

ONE WED PER MONTH

Roarhouse music & poetry.

7–10pm, Esplanade Basement Bar, St Kilda. Free. (To perform: fi.roarhouse@gmail.com)

1ST WEDNESDAY

Coast Lines Poetry Group.

10.30am, Brighton Library, Wilson St. (Cecilia Morris, 0412 021 154)

2ND WEDNESDAY

Southern Pens.

1–3pm, Rosebud Library. (Kaye, 5985 6773 or southernpens@live.com.au)

LAST WEDNESDAY

Wednesday's Child Writers' Group.

6.30pm, Bartiste Lounge, Ross Smith Lane, Frankston. (francashman@msn.com)

THURSDAY

EVERY THURSDAY

Published ... or not.

3CR (855AM), 11.30am – 12pm.

Spoken Word poetry.

3CR (855AM), 9–9.30am.

Write Now. (88.3FM), 7–8pm.

Discussion and talkback.

ONE THURS PER MONTH

Roarhouse music & poetry.

7–10pm, 303 Bar, Northcote. (fi.roarhouse@gmail.com)

FORTNIGHTLY

Caulfield Writers Group.

7.30pm, Godfrey St. Community House, 9 Godfrey St, Bentleigh. (caulfieldwriters@gmail.com)

1ST THURSDAY

Australian Society of Technical Communicators (VIC) meeting.

6.30–8.30pm, VTR Consulting, Roseneath Place, South Melbourne.

Brunswick Poets' & Writers' Workshop @.

Feb–Nov, 7pm, Community Room, Campbell Turnbull Library, rear 220 Melville Rd, Brunswick West. (9384 1277)

Darebin Writers' Group.

7.30pm, SPAN Community House, 298 Victoria Rd, Thornbury. (9480 1364, manager@spanhouse.org)

Upper Yarra Writers Group.

7–9pm, Wild Thyme, Main Street, Warburton. (Valissa Enever, askvalissa@valissaenever.com.au)

3RD THURSDAY

Baw Baw Writers' Network.

6.30pm, Drouin Public Library. (writermansfield@gmail.com, 5623 2453)

The Courthouse Readings.

8pm, 728 Main Rd, Eltham. \$5. (9439 9732)

To update or add your group's information, email editor@writersvictoria.org.au.

FRIDAY

EVERY FRIDAY

Andrew Thompson on 3WBC (94.1FM), 12.30–1pm. Short stories, poems, music.

Mornington Community Writers Group. 10am and 7.30pm, Mornington Community House, Albert Street, Mornington. (www.morningtoncci.com.au /5975 4772)

LAST FRIDAY

Melbourne Poets Union meeting. 7pm, various locations, usually Wheeler Centre. \$30/\$25. (mpuinc@yahoo.com, 0404 517 881)

Society of Women Writers VIC meeting. 10.30am, meeting room, 4th floor, Wheeler Centre, City. \$5. (www.swwvic.net.au)

SATURDAY

EVERY SATURDAY

Poetica. 3.05pm, ABC Radio National.

Poetry Sessions. 2pm, Dan O'Connell Hotel, 225 Canning Street, Carlton. (9387 2086 / 0412 224 655)

poetry@fedsquare. 2–4pm, Feb–Nov. In the Atrium. (www.fedsquare.com)

Phoenix Park Writers. Meet weekly on Monday 12.30pm and Saturday 10.30am. 22 Rob Roy Rd, East Malvern. (9530 4397)

1ST SATURDAY

Word Tree. 3pm, Burrinja Cafe, 351 Glenfern Rd, Upwey. (9754 1789)

2ND SATURDAY

Wordsmiths of Melbourne Poetry Group. 2–5pm, 8 Woodhouse Rd, East Doncaster. \$30 yr/\$5 session, \$3 concession. (9890 5885 / poeticachristi@netspace.net.au)

3RD SATURDAY

Henry Lawson Society. 1.30–4.00pm, Monastery Hall, St. Francis Church, Lonsdale St, City. (9785 7079)

SUNDAY

2ND SUNDAY

FAW Mornington Peninsula Branch.

1.45 for 2pm, Community Contact House, 9 Albert St, Mornington. (*Contact Philton, 5974 4561 or Margaret, 9781 1231*)

2ND & 4TH SUNDAY

West Word. 2pm, Dancing Dog Café, 42A Albert St, Footscray. (west_word@yahoo.com)

LAST SUNDAY

Readings by the Bay. 2–5pm, Mordialloc Neighbourhood House. (mairi@ozemail.com.au / 9587 8757)

HIGHLIGHTS

3 MARCH

Creating an App

A special MPRG workshop about creating, marketing and publishing an app, incl. potential for children's writers and illustrators. olimpia.rosenblum@mornpen.vic.gov.au

22 – 24 MARCH

Australian Festival of Travel Writing

The festival celebrates the excitement of travel, interpreted by some of the world's leading specialists in the travel genre. aftw.com.au

24 MARCH

Children's Book Festival

Your favourite authors and illustrators take over the lawns of the State Library for a big book party. wheelercentre.com

14 APRIL, 10.30am

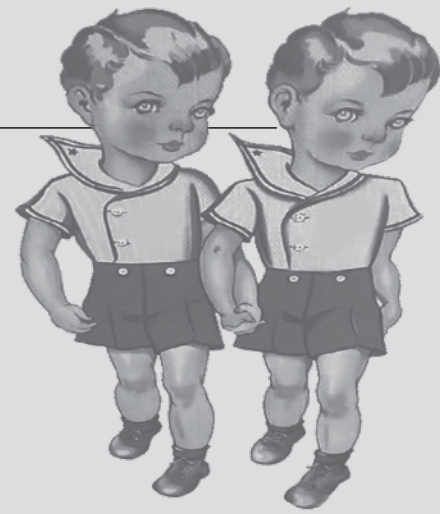
Writing for Children & Teens: Publishers' Tips

Speakers include publishers from Hardie Grant Egmont and HarperCollins. East Melbourne Library, \$10. ncavalieri@yahoo.com.au



March 2013

OPPORTUNITIES



Voiceworks #93: "Cell" (Winter 2013)

Closes 24 March

Voiceworks invites submissions from writers under 25 years of age in the genres of fiction, non-fiction, poetry and visual art. The theme for their next issue will be "Cell". All unsuccessful submissions receive personalised feedback.

expressmedia.org.au/voiceworks

Mascara Literary Review, Issue 13

Closes 30 March

Mascara Literary Review is currently open to submissions of fiction, poetry, review or translation. *Mascara* is particularly interested in the work of contemporary Asian, Australian and Indigenous writers.

mascarareview.com

Kill Your Darlings

Closes 31 March

Kill Your Darlings publishes fiction, feature articles and investigative journalism, essays and other creative non-fiction. Reviews of contemporary books, theatre, music and film are also welcomed.

killyourdarlingsjournal.com

Ballarat Writers seeks new committee members

Ballarat Writers is seeking volunteers for its committee. The vacant committee roles are treasurer, newsletter editor and reading coordinator. To express your interest, email publicity@ballaratwriters.com.

Personal stories sought

Jenny England is writing a series of articles on the business of freelance writing and seeks personal stories from freelancers. Topics England plans to cover in her articles include pay rates, royalties and the cost of self publishing. To share your experience as a freelancer, email englandjennys2@yahoo.com.au.

Meanjin

Meanjin is committed to publishing the best new writing from Australia and the world, publishing fiction, essays, memoir, travel writing, interviews, photography and much else besides. *Meanjin* is not open to poetry submissions at present.

meanjin.submittable.com

Cordite Poetry Review

Cordite Poetry Review is an online journal of Australian poetry and poetics dedicated to showing off new and established Australian poets to the world. *Cordite Poetry Review* is open to poetry, scholarly research, features, audio, video and multimedia submissions.

cordite.org.au

Overland

Overland accepts unsolicited essays, fiction and poetry submissions from Australian and overseas writers. *Overland* relies on its subscribers for survival. For that reason, the editors prioritise submissions by subscribers.

overland.org.au

Southerly

Southerly accepts unsolicited creative submissions of poetry, essays, fiction and reviews from both established and newer writers.

southerlyjournal.com.au

Merlyn Myer Biography Stipend

Closes 30 June

The Merlyn Myer Biography Stipend has been established to assist Australian non-fiction literary writing through the art of biography. The stipend honours the thirtieth anniversary of Merlyn Myer's death and celebrates the importance of acts of memory both public and private. In 2013, two stipends valued at \$50,000 each will be awarded to Australian authors undertaking a major biography under commission from an Australian publisher.

myerfoundation.org.au

Ian Potter Foundation Fellowship

Closes 15 April

Australian Book Review (ABR) seeks applications for the ABR Ian Potter Foundation Fellowship. *ABR* welcomes proposals for a new article of 7000–8000 words on the performing arts (music, theatre, dance) – either a profile of a major performer or a discursive essay. The article will appear in *ABR*'s Performing Arts issue to be published in November 2013.

australianbookreview.com.au



COMPETITIONS

Mslexia 2013 women's short story competition

Closes 18 March

This competition is for unpublished stories of up to 2200 words by women writers. First prize is £2,000. Entry £10.

mslexia.co.uk

The 2013 RE Ross Trust Playwrights' Script Development Awards

Closes 22 March

These prestigious awards provide Victorian writers with grants of between \$3000 and \$10,000 to enhance their scripts through workshops with a Victorian-based theatre company or group, director or dramaturg. Free entry.

sl.v.vic.gov.au/our-community/literary-awards-competitions/r-e-ross-trust-awards

The Bragg UNSW Press Prize for Science Writing

Closes 31 March

An annual prize for the best short non-fiction piece on science written for a general audience. First prize is \$7000. Two runners up will each receive a prize of \$1500. Winning entries will be included in NewSouth's anthology *The Best Australian Science Writing* 2013. Free entry.

newsouthpublishing.com/scienceprize

Positive Words Mini-Competition

Closes 31 March

The *Positive Words* mini-competition invites short stories (100 words) or poems (10 lines) containing the word "milk". Prize is a six month subscription to *Positive Words*. Send entries to The Editor, Sandra James, PO Box 798, Heathcote, Victoria, 3523. Entry is \$1.20 in unused stamps.

Fish Poetry Prize

Closes 31 March

The ten best poems (up to 300 words) will be published in the 2013 *Fish* Anthology. First prize €1000. Entry €16.

fishpublishing.com

The Stringybark Erotic Short Fiction Award 2013

Closes 31 March

Entries are open for the second Stringybark Erotic Short Fiction Award. Submit an 1800-word short story that will delight the judges for a chance to win a share of \$770 in prizes. Entry \$9.95.

stringybarkstories.net

A New Sonnet Competition

Closes 1 April

The Melbourne Shakespeare Society seeks entries for its A New Sonnet Competition. First prize is \$250 and the best entries will be published in a chapbook later this year. Free entry.

home.vicnet.net.au/~bard

The Text Prize

Closes 3 April

Text is searching for talented writers of young adult and children's books. Every year The Text Prize attracts hundreds of great manuscripts from across Australia and New Zealand. One lucky winner receives a Text Publishing contract worth \$10,000.

textpublishing.com.au

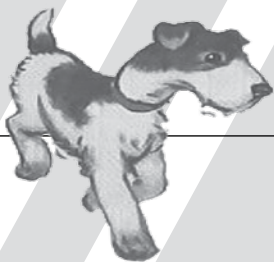
Adelaide Plains Chapter and Verse Competition

Closes 30 June

Take a fairytale and give it new life for this competition themed "Fairy Tales Twisted Sideways". Move the story forward to the present day, write the story from another point of view or choose a new ending. Entry \$8.

apchapterandverse.blogspot.com.au





CLASSIFIEDS

Williamstown Literary Festival Writing Prizes

The Ada Cambridge Biographical Prose Prize and Poetry Prize are open to writers who live, work or study in the Western suburbs. The competition closes on Wednesday 3 April and winners will be announced at the Williamstown Literary Festival on 31 May 2013. More information: www.willylitfest.org.au

Introduction to Screenwriting

This seminar will introduce you to the basics of writing a feature film screenplay, including formatting and layout, structure and genre, as well as the fundamentals of telling a visual story. Seminar will also include some fun writing exercises and idea “generators” to help you get started. Cost: \$30. Phoenix Park Neighbourhood House, Wednesday 20 March, 6.30 to 9.00pm.

Workshops with Ballarat Writers

Ballarat Writers have launched their workshops for 2013. Writers of all levels and genres are invited to participate. To see the full range visit www.ballaratwriters.com.

Workshops for children

Write Away With Me presents writing workshops for children at two great venues in Melbourne: Oakleigh (Wednesday) and Parkdale (Monday). Programs run by a team of passionate and experienced teachers. Encourage the writer in your child! Visit our website: www.writeawaywithme.com or phone Beth 0407 770 154.

City Writers' Group

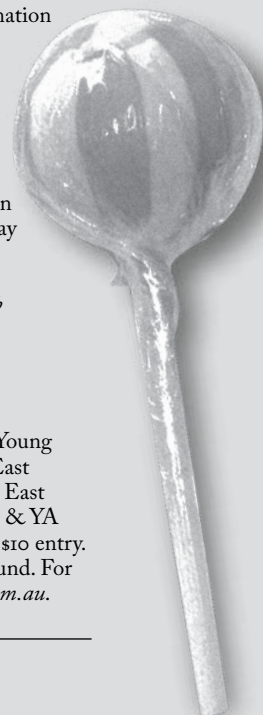
Five people with disparate styles of writing and levels of experience meet on the 3rd Monday of the month from 6–9pm. We are looking for a couple of new members to join our lively discussions. Our only requirement is that you must submit a piece of writing for discussion at each meeting. If you're interested in joining please email a short sample of your work and some information about yourself to Julie at julesinstkilda@gmail.com.

Erotic writing workshop

A three-hour workshop featuring practical tips and workshopping to improve your erotic writing. Ravening is facilitated by Little Raven's director Van Roberts and features writer Aimee Nichols. Saturday 13th of April, 12 to 3pm, The Workshop Space at The Wheeler Centre. Cost: \$50/\$25 (concession). Bookings are essential: <https://bookwhen.com/4cp4b>

Writing for Children & Teens: Publishers' tips for Writers

Hear from leading publishers in the Children and Young Adult arena. Sunday 14 April, 10.30am to 12pm at East Melbourne Library Meeting Room, 122 George St, East Melbourne. Organised by the Melbourne Children & YA Writers' Group and supported by Writers Victoria. \$10 entry. All proceeds donated to the Indigenous Literacy Fund. For more information please email ncavalieri@yahoo.com.au.



MILESTONES

AVRIL BRADLEY won first prize in Poetica Christi's competition Exploring the Depths for her poem “Black Dog”.

KORALY DIMITRIADIS has been awarded a \$10,000 Art Start Grant from the Australia Council. Her self-published zine *Love and F**k Poems* was launched as a “deluxe edition” book by Outside The Box press in January and will be published as an ebook by Pan Macmillan's digital imprint, Momentum Books, in the first half of 2013. In 2012 she became a café poet with Australian Poetry at Brunswick Street Bookstore.

FIKRET PAJALIC's short story “Red Dirt” was published in Mascara Literary Review (Issue 12) and his short story “Oreo” was published in *Regime Literary Magazine* (Issue 2).

LEE KOFMAN had an edited excerpt from her unpublished memoir *The Dangerous Bride* published in *Kill Your Darlings* (Issue 12).

DYAN DE WEKKER had four poems published in the DLS 2012 anthology *Light Falls*: “Loss”, “Off Limits”, “On Holidays” and “This Girl”. She was also awarded a Highly Commended for her short story “Third of the Way” in the Society of Women Writers Qld. Inc's 2012 Short Story Competition.

PETER APPLETON's fourth book *A Teaspoon of Giggles*, a collection of humorous short stories, was published by Trafford Publishing.

SUSAN GODENZI's short story “Danger, Stranger” was published in *That's Life! Magazine*.

MEG MUNDELL's new ebook, *Things I Did for Money*, was published by Scribe.

KATE BELLE launched her blog The Ecstasy Files www.ecstasyfiles.com in support of the release of her two erotic e-novellas – *Breaking the Rules* and *Bloom* – through Random House's new digital imprint, Random Romance.

ROSIE ABBOTT was a regional winner in the State Library of Victoria 2012 “Writes of Spring” short story competition. She also had a Melbourne book launch for her first novel, *The Scent of Belonging*, at Readings Hawthorn.

SAMANTHA-ELLEN BOUND's debut children's novel *What the Raven Saw* was published by Random House.

*Do you have a success to celebrate?
We'd love to hear about it. Email
listings@writersvictoria.org.au.*



Behave as Educated Persons

From the perpetually delightful *lettersofnote.com*, an excerpt from Kurt Vonnegut's letter to a school board that ordered his books burnt in the 1970s.



If you were to bother to read my books, to behave as educated persons would, you would learn that they are not sexy, and do not argue in favor of wildness of any kind. They beg that people be kinder and more responsible than they often are. It is true that some of the characters speak coarsely. That is because people speak coarsely in real life. Especially soldiers and hardworking men speak coarsely, and even our most sheltered children know that. And we all know, too, that those words really don't damage children much. They didn't damage us when we were young. It was evil deeds and lying that hurt us.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Renew your membership at writersvictoria.org.au, in person or over the phone: 9094 7855 (credit card only).

ONE YEAR _____

<i>Individual</i>	Standard \$65 Concession \$48 / Regional \$42
<i>Household</i>	Standard \$88 Concession \$65 / Regional \$60
<i>Organisation</i>	Non-profit \$120 Institution or Corporation \$195

TWO YEAR _____

<i>Individual</i>	Standard \$115
<i>Household</i>	Standard \$165
<i>Organisation</i>	Non-profit \$205 Institution or Corporation \$365

MEMBERS' DISCOUNTS

5% DISCOUNT

Deans Art

188 Gertrude St, Fitzroy; 369 Lonsdale St, Melbourne; 341 Clarendon St, South Melbourne; 475A Sydney Road, Brunswick; 316 St Georges Road, Thornbury. www.deansart.com.au

Punthill Apartment Hotels

Eleven hotel locations in Melbourne and surrounds. Contact reservations on 1300 731 299 or info@punthill.com.au and quote the discount code "Writers Victoria". www.punthill.com.au

10% DISCOUNT

Ballarat Books

15 Armstrong Street North, Ballarat.
5333 3222 www.ballaratbooks.com.au

Benn's Books

437 Centre Rd, Bentleigh. 9557 3969

Brunswick Street Bookstore

305 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy. 9416 1030
www.brunswickstreetbookstore.com

Collected Works Bookshop

Lvl 1, 37 Swanston St, Melbourne. 9654 8873

Continental Bookshop Soundbooks

439 Burke Road, Glen Iris. 9015 4440
www.continentalbookshop.com
www.soundbooks.com.au

Create a Kid's Book

Discount on manuscript assessments and workshops. 9578 5689 www.createakidsbook.com.au

Hares & Hyenas Bookshop

63 Johnston St, Fitzroy. 9495 6589
www.hares-hyenas.com.au

New International Bookshop

54 Victoria St, Carlton South. 03 9662 3744

Paperback Bookshop

60 Bourke St, Melbourne. 9662 1396
www.paperbackbooks.com.au

Readings State Library

Palmer Hall, State Library of Victoria. 8664 7540
www.readings.com.au

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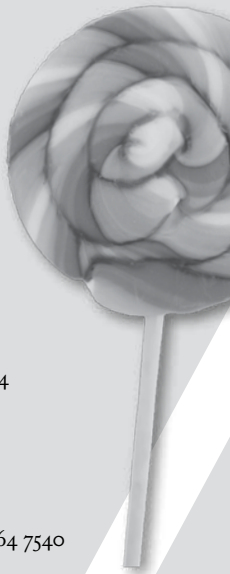
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VOICES

Working with Young Writers

by MICHAEL PRYOR

Part of the best job in the world – being a writer – is working with talented, interested, intelligent young people who are aflame with the desire to write. I run many, many workshops for these young writers, in schools, libraries and other venues, and I always walk away feeling inspired.

Early on, one of the great lessons I learned as a writer was about the ineffable connection between writer and reader. We need each other. The better I know my readers – or potential readers – the better I can shape a story that I think will work for them. It also helps me understand that I have a responsibility to them. They've picked up my book and so I should do my utmost to write the best possible story with the best possible characters to engage, entertain, enrage, stimulate, shock or provoke them.

That's the deal.

Working with young writers is an excellent way to make sure I stay in touch with these readers, since reading and writing tend to go hand in hand, particularly with these dedicated souls. Being part of the 100 Story Building Project (and its predecessor, the Pigeons Project) is a superb way to put this into action.

When I talk to these young writers about writing, I see the fire in their eyes. I sense the hunger. They want to be part of this extraordinary world of writing and storytelling. When we work together on writing activities, they keep me on my toes. More often than not they ask unexpected questions – even though I've run these activities hundreds of times and I assume I've covered all eventualities.

They think outside the box, outside the circle, beyond any concept of boundaries at all. They throw themselves at their stories like battering rams. They slice through writing as if they're scalpels. They slip sideways through narrative as if they're half-starved shadows. They open them-

selves to stories as if they have the biggest hearts in the world.

They find that writing is the hardest thing in the world and it's the easiest thing in the world. They hammer out words that sing, sentences that make their colleagues look around in surprise, paragraphs that are like a punch in the ear.

I run to keep up with them. I help them when they stumble and get up lame. I hold up a light when they can't see the way ahead. I coach when everything they've tried just isn't working. I listen, and I learn.

Gradually, as the workshops continue, we learn to trust the others around us – we're all in this together – and we learn to dare, and we learn to care. We stumble and we soar. We hesitate and dash ahead. We help and we are helped. We ask two key questions: "Why?" and "Why not?" We come to understand that near enough isn't good enough. We find voices, characters, settings and situations. We create conflicts and relationships. We conjure dialogue from thin air and forge resolutions from what has come before.

We learn by doing.

When the workshops end, we're united. We've shared our creations, taking that great step and holding ourselves up to judgment by those around us. We've measured ourselves against others and found the old truth is right – everyone approaches things differently. We're tired and exhilarated. We're fizzing with ideas, approaches, new strategies to try and old ones to abandon. We want to talk more, to share more, to read more – but most of all, to write more.

I'm privileged to work with young writers and I always walk away reassured – the future is in good hands with these young people at the helm.

I'm privileged to work with young writers and I'm reassured – the future is in good hands with these young people at the helm.

Read the product of Michael's work with a young writer on page 18.



In April: Worlds

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Children

with

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