

PostScript

Lit-Fest's Latest



*Newington College
Thursday May 7 2015*

Two nifty paths to finding the perfect idea

Photo and story by Fletcher Howell

Brian Faulkner believes there are two keys to finding the right idea for an engaging story. Mr Faulkner introduced his talk by saying, “Around us there are hundreds of ideas, you just need to know how to find them”.

His first point was memory and emotion and encouraging people to draw on experiences from their youth, especially events which are attached to intense emotions.

From his own childhood he realised that he could find many examples of times when he felt intense anger, fear, guilt or regret. As an author he saw the ability to change events and discover what might have happened if things would have played out differently.

“You take things out of your life, and as long as they have a powerful emotion attached, it will make a good story.” he said.

His second pathway revolved around asking “What if...” questions. Mr Faulkner suggested that even in the most mundane everyday situation, by asking this question we can create wonderful imaginative experiences, often suitable for literate interpretation.

Through research into areas which excite the authors they can ask questions and generate crazy and “unthinkable ideas”.

His most recent story “BrainJack” came from research in an area of his own interest, neurotechnology, and asking questions about what this technology might come to in the future.



Gervay's advice to the next-generation

By Spencer Cornish

"I write only books to change your life" Suzanne Gervay told the class of 10EngD1 as she detailed the refugee tale of her father.

Ms Gervay started her talk by telling the story of her father who was a Hungarian refugee forced into labor camps by the Nazi and Stalinist regimes. She detailed the bravery and courage that her father showed in his attempt to find safety for his family. Ms Gervay said she began writing through detailing her father's experiences in an attempt to assure people know about him.

"He gave me the gift of writing," Ms Gervay said.

'The Cave' is now Ms Gervay's attempt to teach teenage boys about the struggles of life and how to overcome them. Ms Gervay used the experiences of her teenage son as an inspiration to the story as well as several high profile events. These included people's behaviour changing as a result of being exposed to incidents such as the 2004 sexual assault allegations against NRL club Canterbury Bulldogs.

Books have changed her life and she hopes they can continue to guide the lives of this generation.

There is a story behind every story

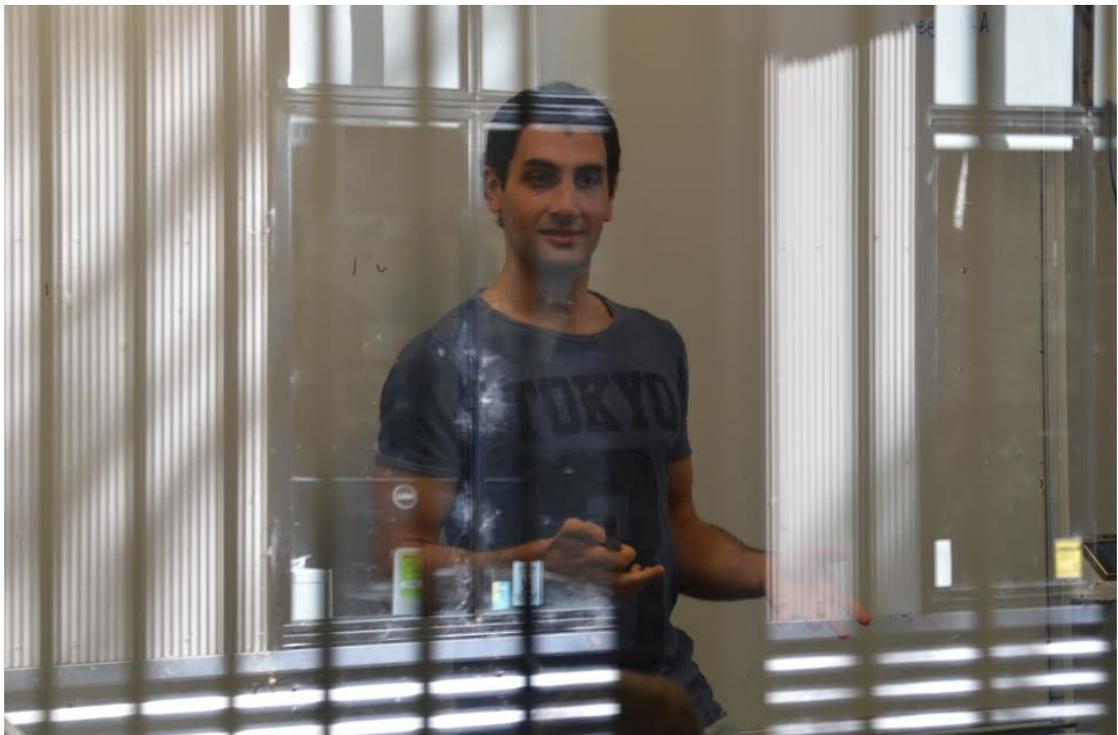
By Peter Ioannou

"He was a young boy living in Italy – when his father died he gave up all of his dreams for education and getting a good job. He took up full time work in the quarry, five days a week. On the weekend he worked as an apprentice blacksmith. Eventually he saved up enough money to move on to Australia with one desire: to become successful... that man was my father. He grew old, and had a stroke. And another. And another. And another. Then he got Parkinson's, couldn't stop shaking... he became a bag of bones in a wheelchair... finally, the greatest storyteller of my life had passed away."

Archimede Fusillo used this extract to emphasise his point that behind every story is another story. Mr Fusillo then read a piece from his fifth novel 'Dead Dog in the Still of the Night', and the boys of 8EngB2 soon came to realise that evidence of Fusillo's own experiences with his father were interwoven throughout the entirety of the book. Mr Fusillo uses writing as a means to preserve memories of friends and loved ones. He believes writing is an avenue through which one can preserve stories that would have otherwise been forgotten.



Author and human rights advocate speaks with students. Pictures: Fletcher Howell



Newington Old Boy William Kostakis returns to teach the art of writing.

Quotes with Deb Westbury

Picture and story by Robbie Tighe

“Storytelling is at the heart of the human experience’. This unattributed quote, written atop R4’s whiteboard, framed Deb Westbury as she stood before Year 12 Extension English. Ms Westbury imparted advice regarding her unique artistic practice - the class proving receptive to her process. The author talked of the value she placed on notebooks, the need for young writers to record and absorb all they can.

“A writer is someone on whom nothing is wasted,” Ms Westbury said.

Ms Westbury talked the class through some guidelines she had assembled for creative writing – much emphasis was placed upon writing intuitively, upon disassociating the creative aspect of the brain with the more controlling, analytical side of things. The storied career of the poet-storyteller led to her ‘going for the jugular’.

“If something scary comes up, go for it, that’s where the energy is,” Ms Westbury said.

Her advice was put to the test as students – who underwent Ms. Westbury’s creative writing - responded in a short feedback session with nothing but praise.

“When I started writing I came up with an image in my head,” a student said. “I didn’t have real control over what I was thinking but I was just describing it as I went...it was different, but it was good’.



Newington Literature Festival 2015 Writing Competition Results

1. Primary (Wyvern) – Poetry



1st prize - Encounter by Gabriel Dickinson: **Judges feedback:** Although a very short poem, the punchy words make you feel the fear of the boy, with the unexpected ending, that it was the 'bully' who felt trapped. Beautifully constructed, and although an unexpected ending, it was one we can believe.

2nd Prize - Terra Nullius by Aiden Carter

3rd prize - The boy with the beautiful wings by Benjamin Walsh.

2. Primary (Wyvern) – Short Stories



1st Prize - In the shadows of the city by Maximus Gallant: **Judges feedback:** The language was outstanding in this world which appeared perfect but had shadows on its borders that hold evil.

2nd Prize - When I Lost the Author in Me by Conor Corcoran

3rd Prize - The Interview by Luke Canter

3. Junior (Year 7-8) Poetry



1st Prize - Anger by Sam Boland: **Judges feedback:** The anger is palpable with 'I'm balling my fists ...' Conflicting emotions are well expressed as aggression alternates with tears and confusion.

2nd Prize - Whenever he was near me ... by Lachlan Walsh

3rd prize - Trust your Instincts by Isaac Carriline

4. Junior (Year 7-8) Short Stories



1st Prize - Last Man on Earth by Sam Burkitt: **Judges feedback:** The isolation and need for human company is the hardest battle faced by the last man on earth. Well written with an ending that makes you think about what is valuable in life.

2nd Prize - Adrift by Angus Waldon

3rd Prize - Beating the Odds by Peter Pontifix

5. Intermediate (Year 9-10) Poetry

1st Prize - Death by Kenny: **Judges feedback:** The philosophical arguments of death as an end or a beginning are thoughtful, creative and intelligent.

2nd Prize - Flawed Darkness by Ari Volovelsky

3rd prize - The Game by Harry Carr

6. Intermediate (Year 9-10) Short Stories



1st Prize - Man in the Mirror by Richard Zhang: **Judges feedback:** The fear engendered by the man looking at himself in the mirror was intense leaving questions of mental instability, personal hell, struggling with guilt.

2nd Prize - Augmentation by Eden Ding

3rd Prize - Waihaha (laughing waters) by Hamish Scott-Stevenson

7. Senior (Open) Division



1st prize - Why Literature is still important in the Modern World – Jonathan Lee: **Judges feedback:** This is an outstanding essay arguing the case of literature as the basis for learning, building on the past to continuing learning and understanding an ever-changing world.

Author took a chance and ‘ran with it’

By Tom Foley

Michael Bauer walked away from his secure job to chase the idea which led to his first award winning book.

The book - ‘the Running Man’ - won the 2005 CBCA book of the year for older readers. Mr Bauer, an English teacher, had an idea, which he could not stop thinking about. He told his principle that if he did not write now, he would never know what he could have been. Since leaving his job, Mr Bauer has not looked back.

Mr Bauer, during his presentation, gave the year nine students an insight into his writing. He described his writing as, ‘a jigsaw puzzle, and to start you just need to find that first piece, the picture grows from there’. Mr Bauer explained how he found this first puzzle piece and how they might find it. He said they may find inspiration in the most obscure of places. Mr Bauer found inspiration for a character when looking at a silk worm.

“Writers are people for whom writing is more difficult than for other people”, Mr Bauer said. He challenged the boys to care about their writing, and to struggle with it and if they did, success would come.

Vietnam war veteran of many talents

By Sarp Saydam

Barry Heard is not an author. Barry Heard is a Vietnam War vet, a mathematician; a man with a life so varied it held a classroom of 15 Newington Schoolboys spellbound. In what was essentially an oral autobiography, Heard talked of war, of the need to record intimate experiences, and of his dog Rover.

His books commemorate the soldiers of Vietnam, those that perished and those that survived.. After a stint in Vietnam, and succeeding the backlash that followed, Mr Heard interviewed and researched accounts of war as a passion project, never intending for it to be turned into a book. Years later Mr Heard has three published works.

The interpersonal power of imagination

By Fletcher Howell

From age eleven, English born Richard Harland developed a love of Steampunk, collecting junk from a dump and building things with his best friends.

Steampunk is a science fiction movement that is based on taking bits and pieces of junk and turning them into functional machines. Mr Harland's junk creations lead to month long stories, all born and nurtured in his brain. Until –trapped one rainy fortnight - he put his ideas to paper.

When school returned he decided to distribute his stories with the aim of making a little bit of money.

Although the stories attracted some attention from his peers, it did not lead to much monetary gain according to Mr Harland.

“I'll be blunt, writing is not the best way to earn money,” Mr Harland said. “But the best feeling in the world is the affirmation of your peers enjoying something you imagined in your head and begging you for more”

This school-boy success would continue with Mr Harland winning a British writing competition, in what he deemed to be the “perfect story”. However he was not content with this.

“Although the story contained many motifs and metaphors it was all false,” Mr Harland said. “It wasn't who I am as a person.”

His enjoyment and the enjoyment of others came from imagination.

Once he let his imagination run wild he rediscovered allowed others an insight into what his mind does.





Picture: Fletcher Howell

Christopher Cyrill discusses writing and art

by Eric Sheng

Christopher Cyrill compared writing to orgasms. The students of year 11 Advanced and Standard English B classes attended a lecture on writing and art by Cyrill. He is an editor of *Southerly*, one of Australia's most prestigious literary magazines and has published several novels and teaches writing at the University of Sydney. He analysed the poems 'Juggler' and 'Travelling through the Dark' by American poets Richard Wilbur and William E. Stafford. Students saw application of skills of literary analysis they have learned in English class to unfamiliar texts. They seemed particularly impressed by the detailed commentary Mr Cyrill gave to 'Juggler', and his interpretation of its message about art.

Like the juggler of the poem, who "bows and says good-bye", any artist suffers a death of some sort in the act of creation. "You will die, one way or another," he told students. He alluded to the term 'little death', an Elizabethan and French euphemism for orgasm, to describe artistic creation. He said writing is like orgasm, and has a price.

"To write something will require discipline", Mr Cyrill said. He talked about how, because of his commitment to writing, his own social life had died. Because he needs to take time to read and write, he forced himself to watch only one quarter of AFL each week, and resents phone conversations. He challenged students to say whether they thought artistic creation was worth this 'death'.

Mr Cyrill told *PostScript* that writers have to make narrative choices, and writing is the translation of experience into an artistic work. "Write the story that only you know," he said.

The contrast of World War One

By Nicholas Jackson

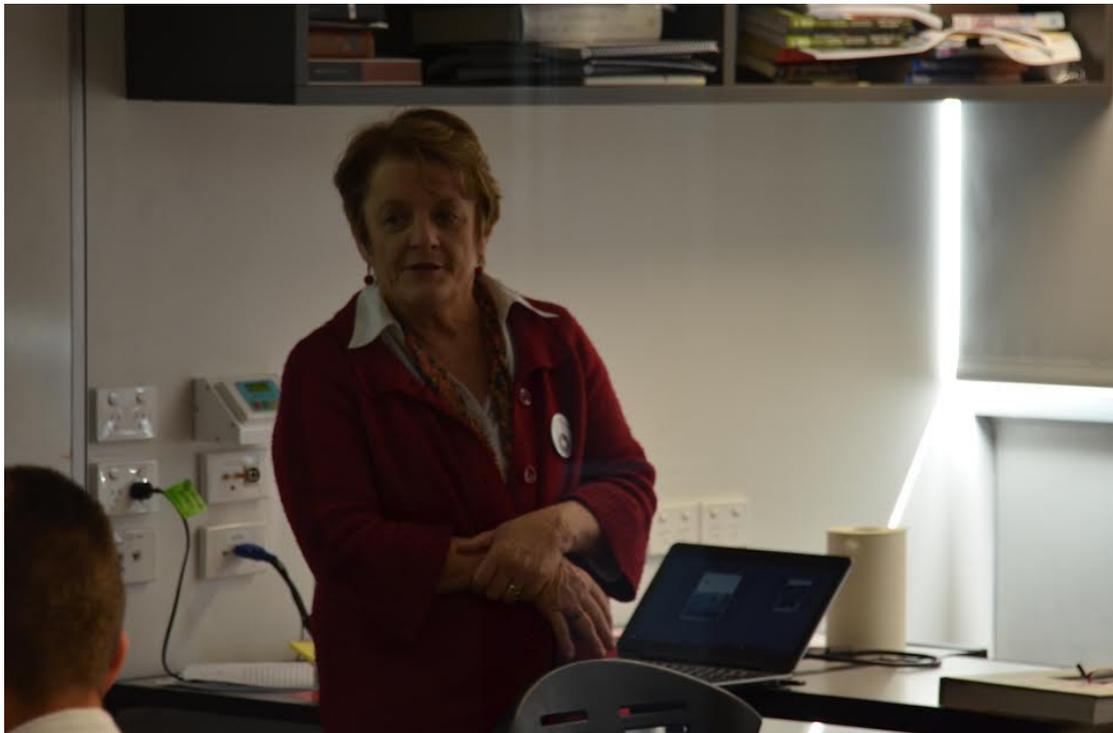
Libby Gleeson displayed the disparity of French towns before and after World War I. World War I was Mrs Gleeson's core subject when she spoke to the year 9C3 English class.. Some of the towns which she showed included, Pozieres, a small French town that, which was destroyed by the end of the war. She used Australian photographers such as Frank Hurley to portray some of the juxtaposing pictures.

Mrs Gleeson is writing the yet to be completed book "1918" when her publishing agency decided to produced five books on the first World War, to coincide with the Anzac centenary. Mrs Gleeson told the audience of the importance of finding a story and character. She said there were millions of nurses and soldiers, and she had to focus on one, which she felt, was the most important to implement a strong storyline. Mrs Gleeson found her storyline from a past experience, which she was able to expand on.

"Your best writing comes from ideas that you have information on and that you have experienced," she said. She was able to prove this statement when she described where she found her main character, Ted. When she was younger, her classmate's grandfather in World War I, was in a massive movement by the Australian army to recruit soldiers from Gilgandra to Sydney, and as she knew him, she decided to write a story partly based on his life before and during the war.

Mrs Gleeson also gave the class some information when writing stories.

"You can read and get as much information as you can, but ultimately you have to use your imagination," she said. She also told the class that "ideas are everywhere, but you've got to find them" and if you are going to write a piece of writing "always do something people won't do to make the story original."



Picture: Fletcher Howell



Picture: Fletcher Howell

P.M Newton tells people to read and read

By Ryan Roberts

“Write, read, read a lot” was P.M. Newton’s key advice to the year 11 extension onw class. Mrs Newton gave advice to the components of writing a creative piece. She focused around the idea that through strong character development, the pieces of the story will fall into place. Mrs Newton stressed the need for the character of the story to be believable to the extent that the reader can relate vividly with the characters and the events that they experience.

Mrs Newton travelled all over the world and incorporated her sensory experiences, developed through travel writing, with her analytical mind derived from her work in the police force. Through these acquired skills she plunged into the intricate genre of crime. She emphasized the importance of research in developing a story, and in particular, molding the character to any situation presented by exam stimulus. “Plot is the skeleton of the story, if that’s all you have then you haven’t got anything”.