

PostScript

Lit-Fest's Latest



*Newington College
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Experience as a gateway to narrative

By Fletcher Howell

From a young age, Claire Dunn wanted to be writer. However she had a theory that she couldn't actually write something until she found something she wanted to write about.

After studying journalism and literature and university Miss Dunn worked as a campaigner on environmental issues. Her time however was spent behind the computer and not directly in what she was talking about.

After some time, Miss Dunn came to the realisation that the thing she was so passionate about, she crucially had no direct contact with.

Miss Dunn embarked on a year long project with five complete strangers to live in the bush. Living in natural shelters, scavenging for food and dealing with lonely nights surrounded by wildlife. It was through this experience that she could finally end up doing something with literature, a passion which has yet become undiscovered. National Geographic approached her to write an article on the experience, and this attracted much praise.

Her experience in the new environment gave her a point of entry into writing a fictional interpretation of her experiences. Yet, this opportunity came with its own difficulties.

Her greatest challenge, sometimes even more difficult than living in the bush, was in creating a narrative out of a raw experience.

“(Creating narrative was) huge jigsaw puzzle where all pieces are the sky, and there is an endless struggle to put things from real life into an intriguing narrative,” Miss Dunn said.

The experience in the field she loved allowed Miss Dunn to endeavour on a project in literature she had longed to begin. Her memoir, “My Year without Matches” is the result of this work.

Phommavanh's perfect writing strategy

By Spencer Cornish

The self-proclaimed nerd, Oliver Phommavanh, presented his thoughts on the perfect creative writing strategy to the class of 7JLA, teaching them they need to create characters who share their own passions.

Mr Phommanyanh first defined what he believes a nerd truly is, stating; “nerds are just passionate people... You can be a nerd on any subject”.

Proving his point, he discovered the kids' passions by asking what kind of nerd each student was. What he received was a wide range answers such as “rugby-nerd, sailing-nerd, computer games-nerd and the Shire-Nerd”.

He then revealed the students need to incorporate these passions into their story.

“Write about things you love,” Mr Phommanyanh said. “If your characters are interested in what you're interested in, you'll enjoy writing and it'll make a greater story”.

The students were then challenged with a writing exercise in which they were asked to draw a hand with each finger representing a topic of interest. The kids were then challenged to create a story revolving around a character of their choosing who in some way was involved in the five interests.

Then, lastly, to add complication to their stories they were asked to chop off a finger (not literally!) and sew it back on for their resolution.

The students all gleefully finished their stories and were glad to have learnt this new writing method.

Old Boy William Kostakis Trades the Desk for the Whiteboard

By Robbie Tighe

William Kostakis published *Loathing Lola* at age 19, still at Newington College. Now a prominent young-adult author based in Australia, Mr Kostakis' experience proved invaluable in his first lecture at the old college.

His year 12 audience greeted a witty speech with a warm affection for Mr Kostakis' history, as well as an attentiveness that could only ever be found first period on a Wednesday. The class individually wrote reworked versions of an idea pitched by Mr Kostakis and later observed how best to trim the fat from their descriptions in an insightful and clinical creative writing workshop.

John Larkin gives tips for exams and life

By Eric Sheng

"Each sentence is a brick," John Larkin says of Ernest Hemingway's writing, "but eventually you build a cathedral with them." While the main messages of keeping it simple and writing about what you know is not new ("told them all of this already", Mr Layton said), the boys in the 12 English Extension class agreed that Mr Larkin's examples from his own writing and life experience were refreshing and helpful.

The students were asked to read a passage he had written. They included phrases such as "kaleidoscope of mystique" and "transcendent loquaciousness". Students were asked to judge what they thought of the paragraphs. Mr Larkin was impressed when most of the students chose the latter.

He called this sort of writing "wanking" which drew a few sniggers.

Mr Larkin, a teacher, answered some of the students' queries about creative writing in exams advising them to have four or five stories prepared and insert the stimulus. He also said creative writing in the HSC does not much resemble the actual writing process as he would usually plan a piece of writing for weeks rather than minutes. He had gone through his latest novel two hundred times before it was printed.

Students were entertained by jokes from Mr Larkin's own life, such as how he and the French novelist Albert Camus were the "only ones to go from pro football to writing".

He concluded the session on a serious note with a reading from the end of his latest novel, *The Pause*, which describes, drawing on actual events. A teenager pauses as he is about to take his own life while he think about the possibilities. "Suicide," Mr Larkin. "Is a permanent solution to a temporary problem." He went on to say and that we will get where we want to be so when we think we can't keep going, pause, and (to paraphrase with a Newington term) imagine what's possible.

Mr Riddle Stories

By Nicholas Jackson

Ideas becoming pictures, not just words was Tohby Riddle's underlying message to the year 7's.

This message was a theme that he portrayed throughout his books such as 'My Uncles Donkey' and "The Greatest Gatsby". Mr Riddle illustrated these aspects of his literacy elements in his writings.

Mr Riddle described to the class, his journey to becoming a writer. Many of the students presumed that Mr Riddle was a born writer and that it was his dream to endeavour into this profession. However, Mr Riddle's passion as a young child was focused in architecture and painting. Mr Riddle also construed how important his early life was as a cartoonist for the Sydney Morning Herald, which helped him become such a successful writer today, because of the constant ideas that he created and explored into new stories. An example of this is in his book "Nobody Owns the Moon", where he discussed how he drew a cartoon fox that lives in the city. This caused him to be curious about why the fox was in the city, why the fox was personified into a human being and how he could make this into a story.

Mr Riddle, who describes himself as an inquisitive and curious writer who uses the power of pictures to capture all of his ideas, has so far had an illustrious career in writing children's books. A movie contract eventuated for one of his favourites "The Great Escape from City Zoo", however it didn't eventuate. This book came from an idea when he was walking around Central Park in New York where he wondered, what would occur if the animals were outside the walls of their zoo.

These ideas that Mr Riddle encapsulates are founded, he says, by walking through cities and that ideas can come from the most random situations. Another lesson he gave the students, was that ideas are what makes the writer whether they come through words or pictures, and that they can come from the most random scenarios.

Opportunity is magic

By Ryan Roberts

Mr Scot Gardner gave an insightful presentation on the intricacies of writing to Mr Fowell's year 8 English class. He highlighted the importance of understanding your environment as an adolescent and seizing every opportunity that is available as there are no limits to achieving your goals. "Opportunity is magic" was Mr Gardner's inviting phrase before he launched into his own experiences travelling around Australia to broaden his knowledge, which he says, was integral to his understanding of the perspectives he developed in his books, particularly within *'The dead I know'*.

Mr Gardner went on to express the imperative skill of developing “semi-permeable shields” as an adolescent to face taboo issues such as mortality, which is crucial to the maturity of an individual. He integrated this life experience with his perspective on the crux of professional writing being the ability to provide detail from first-hand experiences, adding the authenticity needed to bridge the chasm between the author and the reader. The class was enthusiastic as Mr Gardner entertained them with his comedic stories, which emphasized the core idea that experiences make us who we are and that we shouldn’t, as developing adults, succumb to ignoring uncomfortable occurrences. “Some cracks can never be patched” was the catch phrase of his book *Kevin the plumber*, depicting these values.

Ord's Unique Approach to Drawing

By Sarp Saydam

Mandy Ord doesn’t see her cartoons as satire. An eclectic life experience formed the basis of her lecture to Year 12 English ESL, her drawings a product of a job she calls an ‘autobiographical graphic artist’. Students were exposed to the many advantages of cartooning, as well as an inside look at the author’s processes. The author cites an influence in the work of Julie Doucet and the graphic novels MAUS and recommends any and every student to ‘have a crack’ at drawing comics. Miss Ords work is something of a passion project for her – one of her many proclamations to the class was that she enjoyed drawing comics, and that it was therapeutic for her to capture and twist moments from her life.

Heath a trend setter

By Sarp Saydam

Jack Heath is in the business of setting trends. It isn’t that he thinks of himself as an innovator, it’s just that Mr. Heath is seeking to vary the mainstream approach to writing stories. In a lecture that elicited many laughs from his audience, the renowned author sought to provide ‘a little more bang for your book’, instilling thrilling action set pieces and explosions with absolutely no budget necessary. Heath was a man of pragmatism, and the students appreciated a relatable and interactive creative writing lecture in the infancy of Heath’s LitFest tour.



Picture: Sarp Saydam

Accomplished writer put life ahead of work

By Tom Foley

Despite publishing 7 major works and supporting his family, Arnold Zable manages to enjoy his family as well as his writing in a well-balanced life. Arnold Zable offered a master class in creative writing to year 12 advanced English students. The renowned storyteller challenged the students to 'back themselves' with regards to their life experience in their writing. He said that the things which readers empathize with most often are those things, which are considered 'weird' or 'taboo'. Zable writes about many of these things in his number of published works, where he earned the right to be called an acclaimed storyteller.

Arnold is the child of Polish-Jewish refugees and grew up in Carlton, Victoria. He said that he drew upon his personal experience to fuel his stories and urged the boys to do the same. In this way, he said that they could develop their own voice and this is what makes writers great. Perhaps the most insightful piece of knowledge, which the boys held on to was to "be like a movie camera", Arnold explained that this method of describing would bring life to their writing and ultimately earn them marks in their upcoming HSC.

Tips from Arnold Zable for creative writing.

1. Back yourself
2. Life comes first, writing second.
3. Consider the best way to tell a story.
4. Use specific detail!
5. If you see it the reader will see it, Back yourself!
6. The process of writing is an interaction between planning and
spontaneity