

LITFEST 2021

POSTSCRIPT

DAY ONE | 28 APRIL

LITFEST IS BACK!!

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Literature Festival. We welcome back

returning authors as well as new additions. *Postscript* is your daily wrap of all things Litfest. Read on!!



Author-Illustrator Martin Chatterton drew a stunning portrait of Aydan Satici on Wednesday. Picture: Will Turner

Twisting Reality to Create a Story

By Rupert Gillies and Christian Ishak

Highly regarded author Tristan Bancks explained how he used real world experiences to create a story.

Mr Bancks, who has been a near permanent fixture at the Literature Festival, has written 14 books including Tom Weekly series, Two Wolves, and Detention.

Another one of his novels, The Fall - released in 2017 - follows a young boy in his quest for detective success, busting criminal activity after finding critical evidence at a crime scene.

The Year 7 class were told how Mr Bancks developed the idea for The Fall after gaining work experience at Channel 10, due to his increasing interest in journalism. Shortly after arriving at the scene, he realises how the crime unfolded. Using his imagination he develops the story in a way which concluded in the production of The Fall.

The priceless advice engaged the audience in understanding how you can

adjust the truth to develop fictional stories.

He made it clear from the start to the end, that writing is a matter of trial and error and that in most cases he will take at least five to seven drafts before it is, “acceptable to the human mind”.

He continued to talk about the production process of his novels and how the relationship between the author and the illustrator was key. He also described that the way they were presented had to reflect the character and what they meant in relation to the story.

Primarily, however, he pushed the fact that to be successful in writing, you must read a lot, write every day, find yourself and your personal experiences within the story and rewrite until you’ve struck gold.

Mr Bancks gave the class stunning insights into the creation of his greatest works, along with a set of advice that will assist creative ventures far into the future.

5-Year LitFest Veteran Still Entertaining

By James Fulton

Oliver Phommavanh, esteemed children's writer and stand-up comedian, began his fifth Litfest in front of an entertained and engaged Year 8 class.

Mr Phommanvnh started his presentation with the age-old Litfest question: "Raise your hand if you would like to be a writer?". Greeted with a whopping zero hands, the author stepped back, composed himself and then continued. To try and generate some enthusiasm for writing, Phommanvanh made the claim that writers make "tens and tens of dollars" and that 24 chicken nuggets at KFC is the best value meal for an author.

Phommavanh gave the Year 8 class his number one tip for writing - to write about what you love. Writing about something you know a lot about will allow you to explore your topic in greater depth and detail.

With both *Thairiffic* and *Con Nerd*, he wrote about things he loved: plushies, Thai food and conventions. He also mentioned the key to a good story is trouble. The more trouble there is, the more fun and interesting your story will be to read and write.

Reflecting on his life as a comedian, Mr Phommavanh explained that he translated the knowledge he gained as a comedian into his writing. He said the secret to comedy is to make the opposite of normal. Take a generic stereotype, like a teacher, and turn it into something so unreal that it's real. The blend of the well-known stereotype and the wacky attributes not commonly associated with that stereotype creates a form of comedy that works with almost everyone.

The presentation started to shift from the writing, into the personal. An

entertaining game of 'Two Truths and a Lie' with the Year 8 class revealed Mr Phommavanh has eaten McDonalds in 26 countries and has been part of a world record but does not have a pet turtle named Donatello. He also gave details on his 3806 follower Instagram account (@oliverwinfree) and 283 subscriber YouTube Channel (Virtual Oliver P) and a multitude of reasons why you should follow or subscribe to them.

Mr Phommanvanh gave the class a multitude of advice on both writing and life in general. His presentation caused laughs all round; with his bold predictions (a Newington Esports scholarship in 2030), food tips (the best burgers in the world are at Fergburger in Queenstown, New Zealand) and all around humour made for an invigorating and entertaining first Litfest presentation.

LitFest Writing Competition

By James Fulton

The winners of the LitFest Writing Competition were announced by Susanne Gervay at lunchtime on Wednesday. The winners of each competition attended a one-on-one writing workshop with one of the LitFest authors on Wednesday afternoon.

Congratulations to the winners:

Junior Fiction - Flynn Roche

Junior Poetry - Matthew Hinves

Intermediate - Stylianos Vasili

Opens - Tyler King

Preparatory (Wyvern) - Aleksander Petrovski

Preparatory (Lindfield) - Edward Cousens

Prison Prank Gone Wrong:

Chatterton's story

By Toby Eastway

Martin Chatterton was making the summer transition from primary to high school.

Every day he passed Liverpool's high security prison on the way to the football field. One time, he decided to play the highest stakes game of tag ever: a game with the police.

For 17 days, he threw notes over the wall of the prison, hoping a prison guard would find the note and chase after him.

The note said: 'Big Jim' was about to be broken out of prison by the gang riding in a helicopter

To his absolute horror, on the 18th day of this real-life crusade a note was thrown back, threatening that 'Big Jim' the prisoner would come to his house. Terrified, he ran away screaming and hid under a bush for four hours.

Several decades on, he found out that the reply was written by a prison guard on clean up duty, sick of all the notes being thrown over the wall.

A Writer for All Generations

By Toby Eastway and Ben Firth

George Ivanoff, the best selling author of the *You Choose* series, has been writing for more than two decades. In his career, he has written around 100 books for children and teenagers.

He kick-started his career with his first publication *Life, Death and Detention*, a series of short stories inspired by his time at school.

“I was a nerdy-geeky kid in high school,” Mr Ivanoff joked. “So I took my interesting experiences and turned them into stories.”

After experiencing some difficulties in finding a publisher, Mr Ivanoff moved into the children's education genre for 10 years, before writing his first major publication - the *Gamer* series. The stories follow the adventures of two video game characters who believed their world is the ‘real world’. His inspiration came from “playing games in dark

corners of the bowling alley” as a teenager.

From this success, Random House Publication published his bestselling *You Choose* series - interactive books where the reader must make key decisions to progress the story.

“Adventure books were so much fun to read, I figured they would be fun to write too,” Mr Ivanoff said.

He is writing the educational *Survival Guide* series, non-fiction books that take a humorous approach to their subject matter.

“It always annoys me how so many books present you with the ‘what ifs’,” he said. “So I took it upon myself to write something better.” There are two books in the series (*The Australian Survival Guide* and *The Human Body Survival Guide*) with a third *The Supernatural Survival*

Guide coming out in September.

Mr Ivanoff also writes adult stories for anthologies (collections of short stories from different authors) focusing on fantasy, sci-fi and horror. “I always try to take a non-standard approach,” he said. “That way I have more of a chance of having my story make the cut. There can be 60 authors trying to be included but only 10 stories in the anthology.”

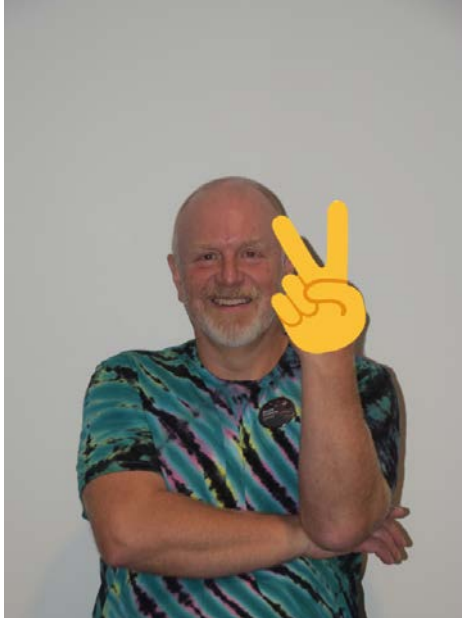
He also enjoys tie-in writing, stories which include any piece that is officially licensed for a particular media franchise.

“I’ve been watching *Dr Who* for 40 years, so to write a book about it was pretty awesome,” Mr Ivanoff said. “I have a couple more books in the works.

“I can’t wait to see where they take me.”

Walk, Rest, Write, Repeat...

By Richard Bai



Scot Gardner poses for a photo after his presentation. Picture: Will Turner

Scot Gardner, who claims his name means “The Wandering flower-lover”, kicked off this year’s LitFest by announcing that he would cage fight Scomo if given the chance. A fight between the Australian award-winning author and Scomo... Now that would be a fight worth seeing.

Mr Gardner doesn’t have the typical writing style of sitting down and writing at a desk. Instead he walks around in a forest as it allows him to be free of the constraints at a keyboard. Mr Gardner walks until he is bored, before finding a log to write on. That’s right, a log. He writes until he is bored, before proceeding

his four-kilometre hike. After a few hundred metres, he generally gets bored of walking and goes back to writing and so the cycle continues until he finishes a novel.

One of Mr Gardner’s novels, *Gravity*, took four years to write, with three rewrites and a lot of editing. Now compare that to your average essay, where you sit and write for an hour before submitting it into CANVAS. Not a very long time is it?

Interestingly, he does not type his work, he uses the “voice recognition” feature to have his work transferred to his laptop. Mr Gardner also gave the Year 7’s tips for writing. This advice should be taken into account whenever one writes – ‘read your work aloud to edit and clean it up.’

Mr Gardner also spoke about how he earns an income from writing. He mentioned publishers pay him \$10,000 whenever he has a good idea, which can lead to the publication of a novel.

Writers of Newington College, if you are considering writing as a profession, keep in mind, the hours are up to you, the creativity is only limited to your mind and the money is consistent as long as you have consumers.

What Really Goes into Writing That Works

By Peter Koumoulas and William Fuller

Susanne Gervay delivered a simple message to a group of keen year 11 students - “never write about what you don’t care about”.

Ms Gervay, best known for her book ‘Butterflies’, emphasised the importance of passion and investment when writing a story. She uses the example of pollution expressing the importance of using emotional engagement to portray the message.

Ms Gervay provided a list of home tools to improve story writing such as listening to conversations, copying down ideas, experiencing life and interviewing people.

One of her favourite sayings is ‘show don’t tell’. Ms Gervay said to trust that the reader will pick up the situation from a description. She noted an example from her book the ‘Butterflies’.

“She flicked back her wispy brown hair, raising her head to the nurse,” she read to the class. Ms Gervay said the description enabled the reader to pick up the situation, making them expect a question from the women.

Writing settings that engaged the reader to participate in a story was Ms

Gervay’s final message. When writing she encouraged authors to find pictures online to assist with describing settings.



Matthew Li Shapes Up

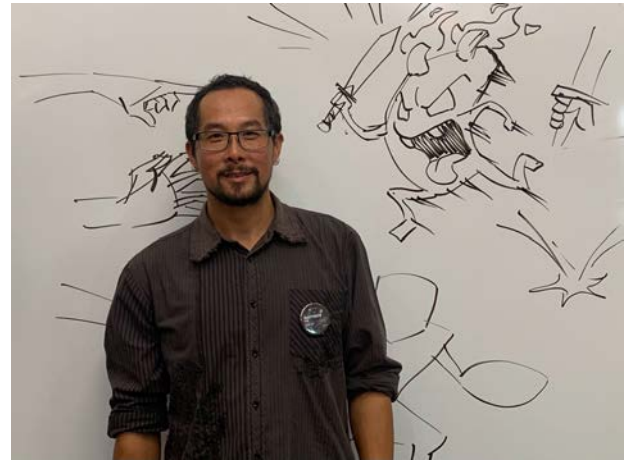
By Minh Nguyen

Matthew Lin is an illustrator and graphic designer who works in a wide variety of styles. Today he talked to Year 8 on how to manipulate drawings so they have just the right feel using only the most basic shapes of squares, triangles, and circles, along with some well-placed lines.

He first started by illustrating (get it?) the process of illustration. He starts with a rough sketch of an idea and once he finds a concept that he likes, he adds more detail. When he's ready to colour it in, he traces it with a fine line pen, a process called inking, and scans it to be imported into Photoshop to be coloured, once to get a rough idea of the colour scheme, and once to add the shading and little details. The process takes quite a bit of time, with it taking more than 10 hours to complete a single page of a comic book.

He then shows how he draws to convey a character's personality, emotion or movement by getting the class to draw three characters the exact same way, but changing up the shape each time. The square and blocky character looked strong and brave but a bit thick, whilst the triangle was evil, fast and mischievous. The class did the same, this time changing and distorting the main shape of the character. It can run and jump, go fast and certain elements can be emphasised

to draw the reader's eyes, all by adding carefully placed lines. He shows the aspiring artists of Newington how to get the most out of minimal detail.



Mathew Lin posing in front of his sketches.



Pictures: Richard Bai

Mark Smith's building to success

By Peter Koumoulas and William Fuller

Mark Smith was a teenager who had planned his future as a high school dropout to become a builder. He dreaded English, loved outdoor activities until a catastrophic injury changed his life at 15. He broke his neck in a horse riding accident forcing him to spend six months largely lying on his back. With no other option to entertain himself, his mother forced him to take up reading. This was where his English journey began.

Famous for his Road To Winter trilogy, Mr Smith, explained how he developed the story. "Keep the story within what you know, and confined", Mr Smith said.

He exemplified this, using character and settings in his book based on his life experiences.

He said it is about making decisions when creating your story so the reader believes in the story and understands where you're coming from.

Mr Smith explained to the Year 8 class the difficulty of getting a writing piece published. He shared how he had his short stories rejected. He delivered a message to the class that when time is spent on a writing piece it is significantly improved.

Through his talk, Mr. Smith took on lot's of questions and opinions, keeping the year 8 class engaged.

Overall Mr Smith's story road to success is inspirational and encourages young students to consider English more as an opportunity rather than just a subject.



Turns out History can be funny

By James Fulton

Prior to the presentation, Year 12 student Sam Reucassel approached me and said “Sam Reucassel is really awesome. History cannot be fun.” For better or for worse, he was proven wrong by David Hunt, author of *Girt: The Unauthorized History of Australia* and its sequel, *True Girt*.

In front of a rapt Year 11 and 12 crowd. Mr Hunt proceeded to tell them that about 28 per cent of convicts on the First Fleet had committed some form of handkerchief theft, the crime ‘Felony of Sock’ is an appropriate charge for a transportation sentence, bushrangers were really just highwaymen in search of a highway and that Mark Twain travelled the world, charged exuberant fees to talk to people and then write mean things about them.

According to Mr Hunt, a popular belief is that Australian historians are all “part of a shadowy left wing conspiracy dedicated to destroying the ANZAC Legend, Phar Lap, Victa mowers, Shane Warne, Shane Warne riding a Victa mower and everything else that is great and good about Australia”.

Despite the unfair moniker, Hunt discussed the various ways in which history can be written. He explained the orthodox view, the revisionist view and everything in between and how perspective can change how history is understood by the public. Politicians are the main offenders when it comes to lying about history to please the public, but they lie about everything to please the public, so it’s really no different than their normal behaviour.

He finished his lecture with some lessons. Don’t trust everything you learn about Australian history and don’t trust the purity of historians.



It's difficult to tell whether or not David Hunt is speaking about his books or encouraging people to join the Galactic Empire. Picture: Hamish Ingham

No problems for this Old Boy

By Rupert Gillies and Christian Ishak

Rising author Will Kostakis explained 'problem solving' as the key to any successful creative writing piece.

Mr Kostakis is familiar with the school, having graduated from the College in 2006. He has published a wide range of novels, including *Loathing Lola*, *Monuments*, *The First Third* and *Sidekicks*.

When it comes to problem solving, Mr Kostakis said it was important to entice people to continue reading in order to solve the plot.

In his early days of writing, Mr Kostakis was a quiet yet subtly humorous kid. He described himself as conservative, however, he would burst to life through writing.

At the end of Year 7, Mr Kostakis had compiled a novel from writing two pages after school every day. He compared the size to be "twice as long as *Harry Potter's Order of the Phoenix*".

After being rejected by a publishing company, Penguin, in front of the whole family, he yet again went through the same process with Random House until the end of Year 8. He got rejected again.

However, they gave him advice and points to improve on. He saw this as an opportunity.

From there, he went on with his writing with an optimistic and expansive approach.

He explained the importance of sharing your work and ideas with others, as not doing so can hinder your ability.

He told us how in Year 6, he shared a story he had written and those that read it encouraged him to continue.

He used this as a way of showing how a group of people can accelerate and push forward your skill and drive for creative writing, as long as you are willing to share.

Mr Kostakis brought marvelous ideas to the table, in relation to how people can help yourselves and each other with creative writing.



Will Kostakis engages with his audience. Picture: Hamish Ingham

“My name’s Martin, I’m a bit of an egomaniac”

By Toby Eastway and Benjamin Firth

Martin Chatterton walked into the Old Boys Lecture Theatre and immediately commanded an astounding round of applause from his audience before drawing a flustered Aydan Satıcı in front of the entire Year 10 cohort.

Mr Chatterton is a British writer and illustrator who has contributed to more than 100 books. He began his career as an illustrator in 1983, specialising in children's fiction. One day, he said to his publisher: “How about I write one?” Since then, he has written and illustrated his own picture books, even branching into adult fiction over the past three decades.

Mr Chatterton talked about what it means to be an illustrator. “Illustrators were there at the beginning,” he said. “Our brains started working and we immediately started drawing everything around us. Illustrators find out about the subject before they draw people. It’s not all about the drawing.”

He discussed his writing career, from his early children's works, *The Brain finds a Leg*, to his recent thriller, *The Tell*, explaining how writing is like Masterchef.

“You are given ingredients that you must assemble in any order you wish to get a finished product,” he said. “You can use any tools to help improve your writing. The better you are at writing, the better you are at school.”

He reflected on his earliest revelations. “I saw a skit with my dad when I was young,” he laughed. “And it made me realise that people plan these things.”

These days, Mr Chatterton writes and illustrates for a wide audience and enjoys writing screenplays. “Every day there’s a different thing that I’m doing, and I enjoy it immensely.”



Straight off the bat, Chatterton asks for applause to feed his ego. Picture: Will Turner



Chatterton prepares to draw Aydan's caricature by staring into his sole. Picture: Will Turner