



Covering Newington College's 2023 LitFest

Day 1, May 3

# Post Script

26 Letters Infinite Possibilities.



Photo By Henry Ryan

Today marked the beginning of the 2023 Newington literature festival. We saw 27 authors and illustrators come in to talk to the boys about a range of topics from why they're passionate about literature to things such as workshops about how to create a good character.



## Martin Chatterton; Writing and Illustrating Extraordinaire

By **Michael Caredes & Rob Wydell**

Martin Chatterton writes like he is making a meal and uses ingredients to make his books. One of his books uses the following ingredients;

- Born in Liverpool, England
- Attended the last Beatles performance
- His life as a child about to begin year seven
- A fairytale that he was told at a young age,
- A problem

Mr Chatterton said 'writers usually have problems most commonly from their childhood'. However, he said his childhood was perfect so he made up a problem.

He started with a story from his childhood and how this story actually started him off on his literature journey.

He came to the conclusion that people with a Liverpudlian accent can still make it somewhere in the world.

For his latest book drew inspiration from *The Shining* and other films and books that he had been influenced by such as *Papillon* and the old fable called *Pied Piper*. He used the setting of *The Shining* with the hotel and the maze. He set the book in a small coal mining town which he was influenced by on his trip to Moranbah, a mining town in Queensland, and took influence from the famous Shakespeare play *Romeo and Juliet* and the doomed romance. He also used themes from the fable the *Pied Piper*. These ingredients combined together have made the captivating book he called *Scorpion Falls*.

Mr Chatteron's illustrative skills were also on display to the Year 8 English class as he began his workshop with creating an art work for a student. When he asked the class who wanted to be drawn, hands rose as fast as light. The students began begging and bursting out why they would be the best fit for the subject of his drawing.

Mr Chatteron ended up drawing Finlay. Finlay eagerly sat down at the chair not being able to see what Mr Chatteron was doing despite his numerous attempts to look. The classroom was filled with smiles and laughs as Mr Chatteron began his drawing. He started with his nose, then the class decided on what his mouth shape would represent, they ultimately decided on a happy smile.

After doing the lower facial features he moved on to his chin, then to his ears.



Photo By Ruben Merani

Once again the class decided on what Finlay's eyes were to represent - this time it was an evil figure. After finishing the more distinctive facial features he moved on to the eye brows and hair. Mr Chatteron went to his colour pallet and got out a bright orange to emphasise Finlay's bright orange hair.

Towards the end he chose another student to draw. After getting a recommendation from Mr Ng - he chose Felix. For this drawing he chose to do it as one of Felix's 27 dreams he had last night. Felix then did the same as Finlay and waited for Mr Chatteron to be finished and what a vivid dream he had. Felix's dream was about him being a hybrid chicken legged boy that was farting out the smell of roses and love.

# A Guide to an Effective Story: Connecting with your characters

By **Ashan Retna & Angus Thompson**

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of the author? You might think they lock themselves in a shed. With the blue hue of their laptop screen the only light in sight as they work away for multiple hours with dark outlines forming under their eyes. This fantasy is expelled by Ms J.C Burke who gives us an insight into the life of an author which consists of lots of re-reading and editing in pyjamas.

“Every word that does not earn its place has to go,” Ms Burke said. She added that you need to understand your character before you are able to use hard-working verbs.

Ms Burke does this by placing herself in the scenario her characters are in. She has shot and gutted a pig to understand how one of her characters (Damion in her book *Pig Boy*) reacted.

Daimon was in her every thought.

Ms Burke, who won the prestigious crime fiction Ned Kelly Award, described hard working verbs as “simple and powerful”. They are not drawling sentences full of flowery language. Instead, they are words that make you emotionally connect to the character through empathy by showing the inner workings of their brain. Ms Burke said every verb has a connotation associated with it. For example if you said “yelled” that verb has an aggressive connotation while if you said “stomped” that has a childish association.

These singular words have so many connotations associated with them that it creates mood and gets the reader to empathise with what how a character is feeling. There is some much implied about a character's goals and worldviews through these well chosen verbs.

“Write from the inside out,” Ms Burke said. She also said to write with “intention”.



Photo By Henry Ryan



## Q&A WITH J.C Burke

Some insightful questions, asked by the class she was workshopping

### **Q: When did you start writing?**

A: At 35. Before that I was an oncology sister, my specialty was bone marrow transplants. When my kids were little, I started to write a bit. I entered a competition, (only because my sister pushed really hard) yet I had no expectation to win. I then managed to win the competition and the book got published. Now I have 12 books published!

### **Q: Is it difficult to leave characters after writing your book?**

A: No, often I'm sick of them by the end however I was a bit sad of Dameon.

### **Q: Have you ever had a really bad writer's block, if so, how do you combat it?**

A: The best thing to do about writer's block is to keep writing. Even if it's rubbish.



Photo By Ruben Merani

# Kirsty Eagar's Journey to Publication

By **Theo Fendekian & Corman Mooney**

Kirsty Eagar grew up on a cattle farm with little prospect of becoming an author. Life on the cattle farm was hard with high interest rates, stress and minimal profit. This in part of her childhood is what fuelled her into the financial sector passing through university and getting a job at the reserve bank of Australia, later moving to England and getting a similar job.

She moved back to Australia where after more time in the financial sector she decided - despite finding success - it was not where her passion lied. To clear her mind, she went on a long road trip around Australia, where she began writing for a small surf magazine to bring in a little cash. Upon arrival home Mrs Eagar had the idea of writing a full novel. She drew a lot of inspiration from Stephen King's book on novel writing. Mrs Eagar leaped headfirst into the world of novel writing. She fell into a daily routine of writing 500-1000 words a night.

After a couple of months of this, she finished her first draft which she described as 'terrible'. However, after further editing she sent it to dozens of agents, in the hope of getting a bite. Although she sent it to many Australian agents, she was looking to get hired by an English agent as this is where the book was set. A successful agent from London displayed interest in her book offering to take it to an auction to be published. However, there were no bids for her book and Mrs Eagar was left particularly humiliated because she had told most of the people in her life about the impending deal.

After this failure an old friend from her time in the financial sector reached out with a job offer back in a big financial firm. However, Mrs Eagar turned this down as although she was not succeeding in writing, she still believed she would be unable to live a happy life in the financial sector.

She changed her style with her second book *Raw Blue* which was more focused on her love of surfing and set in Australia and not the UK. This caused problems with her agent at the time who was concerned for the movement to more Australian-focused books. This led to Mrs Eagar being let go. This book was a lot more successful than its predecessor which earned her a two-book contract with Penguin Publishing and setting her career off.

Mrs Eagar continued to produce many successful novels such as 'Saltwater Vampires', 'night beach' and 'summer skin'. Her first success '*Raw Blue*' is currently having a film adaptation made with Mrs Eagar writing the screenplay

# Scott Gardner's Method to Writing Engaging and Realistic Stories

By **Hugo Kilborn**

Scot Gardner has been writing stories for more than twenty years and has mastered the three elements of storytelling; the characters, the plot and the setting. Many of the books Mr Gardner has written including 'The Dead I Know' and his nearly released book 'Changing Gears' are realist fiction, meaning the stories and - more importantly to him - the characters are believable.

Mr Gardner strongly believes that writing inside at a desk is bad for creativity, so he writes his stories in the bush.



Photo By Ruben Merani

"I write until I get bored and then walk until I get bored," Mr Gardner said.

He draws inspiration from the bush, which is clear in his most recent book, 'Off the Map', which is a collection of short stories about being lost both literally and metaphorically. His characters are often based on real people in his life, often children he met when he worked at a children's outdoor camp before he became an author.

Mr Gardner's stories are often based on realistic events.

"There is as much drama in a story about a battery going flat as on the fields of poppies in France," he said. This is the reason why his favourite genre to write is realist fiction. Another reason for this is that when he was a teenager he liked to read stories he could relate to. so wants to write stories that a younger version of himself would have enjoyed reading.

Finally, Mr Gardner talked about the importance of reading your work aloud, no matter how pointless it may seem. Mr Gardner handwrites his novels, then uses voice recognition to get them on his laptop.

While this may seem like a lengthy process, he said it showed him the importance of reading your writing aloud, as it can show you when a sentence is too long and needs punctuation.

Without doing this, he said, his books would not be the same quality that they are today.



Photo By Ruben Merani



# Bancks on Cops and Robbers

by **Jack Harris**

A champion boxer who turned to a life of crime and a Police Sergeant. Two opposite lifestyles linked together by their son Nash, all in Tristan Banks's new book called 'Cop and Robber'. Mr Banks's newest release 'Cop and Robber' is available to borrow in the library now.

The Year 9 pupils listened to Mr Banks, author of books such as Detention, The Fall, Two Wolves and more. Mr Banks gave a quick insight on how he gained inspiration for his new book and read out a couple pages.



Photo By Henry Ryan

Following his introduction about his book, Mr Banks detailed how he workshops his books. He listens to music when writing, while he finds making playlists helps give the stories feeling while writing. His new book 'Cop and Robber' had a fun upbeat vibe while also having the sense of crime and a thriller which was replicated through the songs on the playlist. A-Punk was one of the songs he listed to and played to the class.

“When writing characters, some of them tend to have a piece of me in them,” Mr Banks said.

An example is Mr Banks's character Ben Silver in 'Two wolves'

who creates stop motion animations. Mr Banks said he is

similar as he makes trailers to promote his novels which he directs and films.

Mr Banks played the class and asked them to write down the first thoughts that crossed their mind.

He also gave five exclusive tips to the students on the best way to write exciting stories.

1. Read a lot of books and build up inspiration.
2. Write every day to improve your skills and abilities.
3. Be kind to yourself and don't criticise yourself too much.
4. Find yourself in the story and get into the mind of the character you're creating.
5. Rewrite and Rewrite, putting more time into writing a story over again will significantly improve it.

# Arja Ignites Fire, as Writing Becomes a Desire

By Patrick Jones & William Hardy

The students sitting in front of Rawah Arja began raucous, inattentive and rowdy. By the end they were captivated, enthralled and enchanted. Ms Arja began the workshop with a simple question: “Who here finds reading boring?”. Nearly the whole class raised their hand. “Who here hates writing?” she persisted. Once again, nearly the whole rose their hand. Yet, by the end of her presentation the boys were engrossed in the stories they were writing and fascinated by their partner’s work. They were absorbed in the fantastical allurements presented to them. They sought a new purpose for writing and sure enough they found it. They found how to write for fun.



Photos By Finn McGuire

Around the room smiles shone as the students raced to share their story to the class and when Ms Arja talked there was silence. She provided the boys with crucial tips and fostered a passion in them for creative writing. Her focus, she said, when writing was to hook the readers in, as she found the first page was the most important in keeping the reader’s attention. After sharing her philosophy, she explained how to hook the reader in with five key methods. Firstly, begin with action and dialogue. Engross the reader immediately in a moment of high tension.

Next, you can ask a question, this has the effect of immediately getting the reader thinking and appealing to natural human curiosity. Thirdly, you could begin more slowly, describing the setting, and inserting the reader into the world of the story, writing to their imagination. You could also begin with background information on the characters, giving the audience someone to root for, which can “work wonders” Ms Arja said. Lastly, the writer can have the central character introduce the situation, giving the character a voice and the audience an idea of who they are.

Ms Arja hadn’t picked up a book until she was 16. Yet she has become a prominent young adult author who tries to relate to her audience’s experiences with a smile on her face.

## Q & A with Wai Chim



Photos By Henry Ryan

By **Cormac Mooney & Theo Fendekian**

Wai Chim is a Chinese-American author living in Australia. She writes kids and young adult books. She was born and raised in New York and lived in a traditionally Chinese household which heavily influenced her work.

1. How is the writing scene different in Australia to how it is in the United States?

New York is a really artistic place, so there are a lot of writers who congregate in New York, there's a lot of writing groups that help nurture a lot of people. Australia has that too, New York is very much like that. People travel to New York to become writers; although it's more authentic to be Australian. Ultimately, as a writer, you can just be, you can write anywhere you want and it's just writing about your own experiences and being from different places is just part of that experience.

2. So being born into a Chinese family, you have had multiple different cultures living in New York and then here. How have the different cultures impacted your writing throughout your life?

I write from a diasporic identity. A lot of the stories that I tell are about my experiences growing up in not quite Chinese and not quite American. That is kind my own personal experience and what I wrestled with as a young person. So I put those kind of experiences down onto the page. So for me, it really affected how I saw myself in the world and it felt like something that I really wanted to share with other people in case that they have those similar experiences and can connect with that upbringing. It's different when you have a background that's different to, what you see every day in media and stuff like that. You watch movies and you read stories and it's not quite, what you see happening at home. So that's the kind of stuff that I definitely am motivated to write about.

3. Would you say all these different cultures is what got you into writing to begin with?

I've always been a writer because it was a way for me to process my own experiences and emotions. So, yes, it's tied to the fact that I am diasporic. Because I didn't have ready language to it, I had to write my way into it and write from those experiences to understand who I was as a human being. So it impacted, why I started to write because it was the only way I could process those ideas.

- 4 In your presentation you talked about writing for yourself. What advice would you give to someone to be able to write for themselves?

Yeah, definitely. It's really brave to write for yourself, to not think about where is this going to go, who's going to see it? To get into that as a regular practice. Journaling is something that, I still do often. Like if I have like this kind of big experience where I just had a day, I write it down, I write about that experience, and nobody ever has to read it. You know, that's the whole thing is that it's for yourself. It's just for you to understand it. And just not being afraid. Not thinking about, is my sister or brother going to like go through my stuff?

- 5 How have you been able to turn writing that you've done for yourself into writing that's getting published and put out?

One of the great things about being a writer is of course you want to write these dual personal emotional stories, but nobody's going to read those things right. You have to create plots and settings and ideas and you dress them up. It feels like something that it could happen to anyone. And that is the whole thing is that you take your personal writing and use that to inspire or drive the characters that are playing. then no one ever knows what's real and what's not real and you feel really safe because it's all fiction.



## Meet the Post Script Team!

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