



Covering Newington College's 2023 LitFest

Day 2, May 4

Post Script

26 Letters Infinite Possibilities.



Photo By Ruben Merani

The second day of LitFest heightened the already captivating air that the first day held. The boys at Wyvern had an amazing time engaging with all different types of workshops, as they brought to life their artistic and creative persona while our team tracked down some authors and asked them some hard hitting questions.

John Larkin, from footballer to wordsmith

By **Tristan Holmes**

Starting his adulthood as a professional football player, John Larkin never thought he could be a writer. Mr Larkin is a well-known Australian writer, best recognised for *The Pause* and *The Shadow Girl*. He works as a writer and part-time teacher at Knox Grammar School and in the meantime he enjoys going to school workshops such as Litfest.

Mr Larkin starts his writing process with an idea that he will form in his head before even writing anything. He will think of the character, the setting and a sentence to sum up the whole narrative. When Mr Larkin does write, he starts with the last sentence first.



Photo By Henry Ryan

“You need to know where you’re going,” Mr Larkin said. “Otherwise, you just meander without clearly knowing the ending.”

Mr Larkin said the key to writing is to keep it simple.

“Keeping it simple and flowing,” he said. Mr Larkin’s process for writing is; brainstorming, writing, cutting and always keeping it simple.

Before he started writing, Mr Larkin was a professional footballer playing in the National League for Blacktown City. He trialled for Leeds United team in the UK before injuring his leg, which meant he ended his football career. That's when he discovered writing.

"I never even considered writing in high school and wasn't ever interested in English or school in general," Mr Larkin said. It was only after his injury in football, that he decided to be a writer.

He told stories about mummifying cows, shoe discounts for people with only one leg, and hilarious commentary of "poetic waffling".

He not only generated plenty of laughter but he also touched on serious notes about an author who wrote his novel only by blinking because of a chronic illness as well as his personal stories. One of his novels, *The Shadow Girl*, is based on his interaction with a homeless girl at one school workshop that really connected with him.

"She would head home with her friends on trains but never get off," Mr Larkin said. "She would set up home once the trains stopped running and would sleep the night inside a train."



"She changed me as an author"

Photo By Henry Ryan

His main message was to keep it simple. He dissected texts and sentences that are overly complicated with large words and difficult similes that ultimately make a bad story.

When asked what his one piece of advice is for students who want to write he said; "beautiful simplicity, not dumbing it down, but simple and tight".

Old Boy Will Kostakis relives his youthful days

By **Patrick Jones and Angus Thompson**

Newington Old Boy Will Kostakis was just 17 when his first book was accepted. An always avid writer he was, “that kid who always wrote for fun and then also wrote everyone’s stories for English.”

He has eight books published including ‘*We Could Be Something*’ which was released just this week. When asked about why he writes for young adults, he described how important it is in this day and age to encourage teenagers to read. He feels a duty to promote books for young adults considering all the “competing pressures on your time and interests”.

Phones, social media and computers all seem to be driving reading into the ground. Mr Kostakis claimed he was, “holding on for dear life.” As many other authors were fleeing the young adult’s scene for greener pastures - kids and adult novels.

In high school, Mr Kostakis felt isolated and alone. At the time, he was not openly gay and the burden of not expressing himself weighed heavy upon his shoulders. His only escape was reading and writing which took him to another world. It was one full of fantastical experiences and endless possibilities. Although painful, these experiences in his formative years fuelled his novels, inspiring him to write books for young adults about teenage struggles to provide the escapes for these young adults that Mr Kostakis needed very much.

However, Mr Kostakis wasn’t without his youthful shenanigans, when working on the Newington school newspaper he and his friends would write cheeky coded messages, poking fun at society, authors and himself. Now a zealous Nintendo Switch gamer by hobby and a successful author by trade, Mr Kostakis looks back at his high school days with fondness.



Photo By Henry Ryan

Q/A with Mark Smith

By **Cormac Mooney and Theo Fendekian**

Mark Smith is an Australian author who has written four books in the young adult section including the award-winning Road to Winter series which appeared in the best Australian stories review.



1. Where do you get your inspiration for writing?

It comes from virtually everything that I do. I'm a surfer. I love being out in the bush. I'm about to head off and do a 300km walk in the UK in a week. Just getting out in nature and that whole idea of writing about the stuff you're passionate about. For example, my most recent book is a young adult book and it's essentially about climate change, a subject I'm passionate about. So basically, it comes from things I like doing, things I'm passionate about. I couldn't write about something I've just got no interest in. So for every student, write what you're passionate about.

Photo by Marko Nikolic

2. When you were 15, you had quite a severe accident, how do you think that shaped and impacted your life?

It changed it completely. I was a very bad student until the accident. I was constantly in trouble at school because I didn't want to be there. I used to head off down to the shops instead of going to school so having the accident, it really changed everything because I had to be stationary for six months because I broke my neck. I had to wait for that to heal, and that turned me into a reader. It was way before the internet even existed. So, I just started reading and that was my means of dealing with that terrible situation that I was in.

3. How would you convince young people who wouldn't necessarily consider themselves big readers to just start reading more?

I'm convinced that if they're not a reader, they just haven't found that one book yet. That one book that will set 'em off on that reading journey. And it doesn't mean that you must find it when you're 10 or 15, or you might not find it till you're 25? We've just talked to Mr Serhon up there who was in year 11 before he read that one book. If you find that one book that'll get you going. But I don't think there's anything wrong with being a non-reader. You can still live your life, but you guys have so many other distractions now that we didn't

have. Our distractions were a skateboard and a surfboard, that was about it. You've got screens, but I reckon they can coexist with books.



4. So how did you create the world for your books? Are they based on personal experience?

Partly personal experience, even though my first three books are dystopian, the world that I created was pretty much the world as I know. I just took people out of it because it was dystopian. I used my hometown and the surf breaks that I was familiar with, the reefs and things that I was familiar with my own experience of diving, of trapping rabbits, of all those things that I grew up doing. I brought my own experience into it to make the writing authentic. And that's another tip is to use your own experience. Even though you might only be 16, 17 and you haven't been on the planet that long, there are still stories in your life, in your family, the history of your family, things that you are good at and things that you know that you can bring into your own writing.



Capturing the Essence of a Serial Killer

By Angus Thompson and Ashan Retna

Matthew Spencer's "great love was literature" but he believed authors had their whole books planned out which is why he did not follow his passion immediately. Instead with his degree in literature at The University of Sydney, he settled for journalism, believing it would fulfil his passion for writing. Although excelled at journalism for 20 years he wasn't satisfied with the media industry. With the rapid decline of print journalism - as people consumed their news differently - he quit. He began sitting down with his thoughts for a while and took the initiative to start formulating a story, but only came up with one idea. From that he wrote for four years with no clear path but still persisted. From this one idea blossomed a story that fell into place and the world built around him. This idea was the catalyst for his new novel and the idea was something he knew very well: the Parramatta river and the mysterious air that surrounded it.

"You don't need to know everything that is going to be in your story, you just need a good, strong idea," Mr Spencer said.

His book follows the policeman who was assigned to the murder of the daughter of the chaplain, at the St Albert's school. Was it the result of the serial killer who has murdered two other people in the area. Or the teachers who lived on campus? Or did the headmaster know more than he was letting on? Once Mr Spencer began to complete his book, it wasn't all smooth sailing. The intricacies of a serial killer needed to be explored. As the protagonist of his hit book "Black River" was a journalist Mr Spencer felt he could relate. He understood the process of investigating a crime- he understood the power dynamic and relationship



Photo By Henry Ryan

between journalists and the police.

However after his first draft his editor dropped a bombshell- she believed the story should be told from the perspective of the police rather than the journalist. The book had lost its relatability. Mr Spencer wasn't a police officer and thus couldn't provide the realistic elements of a good book.

"My job as an author is to make it sound as realistic as possible," Mr Spencer said. In the coming years he relentlessly researched his book. He interviewed police officers- and asked them what they would do in the exact situation of the book. He researched serial killers and tried to understand how they would act. The golden state killer heavily influenced his book. The killer in Black River broke into houses and stole insignificant objects. The killer liked the thrill. Just like the Golden State killer - who tormented people across California in the 1970 and 80s - he escalated rapidly. The police released information to the media to goad the killer just like the officers did in the US four decades ago. Finally after eight drafts and half a decade Spencer's work was released.

Ord-inary Stories made Extraordinary

By William Hardy and Patrick Jones

Mandy Ord, an established and proficient graphic novelist, sat down to discuss her intriguing life and famous short stories. This is what she had to say:

Q: “Ms Ord, would you mind telling us a bit about yourself?”

A: I am a cartoonist and illustrator and I work in the disability sector. I’m from Melbourne, and I publish books of comics, graphic novels and occasionally if I’m lucky enough, get to teach as well.”

Q: “As a young kid, what drove your passion for writing and illustrating?”

A: “I was a prolific letter writer, way back before we could send emails or start texting, so I would communicate with my friends by writing letters and with pen pals overseas. I got into the habit of taking things from my everyday life and turning it into a story. Also, when I was younger I just gravitated towards comics and my dad saw this interest, so he’d give me the comic section of newspapers to read and would also buy me the newest comics.”



Photo By Henry Ryan

Q: “Have you always been talented at drawing or did it take practice to get better and better?”

A: “Well it’s funny because people say ‘you’re just good at it’ and it’s really lovely and complementary, but some are born with the talent. However, I feel like when I look back at my childhood drawings they’re pretty raw.

Q: “For us as kids, how important do you think it is to pursue our dreams and chase our interests?”

A: “Well it depends on the individual, I mean you may know what you’re interested in when you’re five, 16 or 20, but for some people you may want to try different things to figure out it is what you want to do. But definitely do what makes you feel happy, and what you’re interested in.”

Q: “So you mentioned earlier that you work in the disability sector, what type of role does that play in your life?”

A: “I see myself as a cartoonist and also a disability sector worker. The disability work really contributes to my writing process because when I’m supporting human beings in the world I have to be really focused and realise people’s needs and also notice the smaller details as it’s part of my job. I’ll remember small minute details and it may be part of a future story. When we step out of the house each morning, we sort of have a plan of how our day is going to unfold, but then it doesn’t always turn out that way and I’m interested in how individually we respond to situations we haven’t quite planned and what it tells us about who we are.

Q: “Do you have any work lined up for the future?”

A: “I have just completed work for a book that will be published in a couple months. It’s called Bulk Nuts and it’s full of short stories. I haven’t planned for anything after that though, as I’ve worked really hard on this one. I might do another short story book.



Photo By Henry Ryan

Beyond Borders: The Unbelievable Story of Dr Christopher Richardson's Journey into North Korea's Enigmatic Realm

By **Rob Wydell & Michael Caredes**

After two visits to North Korea Christopher Richardson describes the inner-workings of a dictatorship regime.

Richardson is a renowned author, has travelled to remote parts of the world and has a PHD in North Korean studies. He has been to North Korea twice. Upon his arrival to North Korea he had to surrender his passport and phone - told he would get it back once he leaves if he was able to. Throughout his journey he had to remain with two tour guides that would check what he was doing and make sure everything was appropriate. Following them was another person that made sure his tour guides were doing the right thing.



“You have people with you always,” Mr Richardson said.

On his second visit he went with a friend who was well experienced in North Korean studies much like Mr Richardson. This person had been to many war torn places such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Somlai and other African countries that are in a state of anarchy.

She told him North Korea “is the scariest place I’ve been too.” Mr Richardson went on to explain why they both felt like this and it was because of the complete automation of the people and how nothing felt normal.

Photo By Ruben Merani

Year 9 Q&A with Christopher Richardson

Q: Did you ever do anything wrong?

A: Yes I probably did something wrong but I was never punished. There was this one time while I was on a tour bus and the bus driver took the wrong turn and we went somewhere we weren't meant to be and I was able to take a photo of what people were doing that haven't been confined to a script.

Q: Is North Korea a stable state?

A: Many people believed that it can't last forever, but that has been proven wrong because it is very resilient, because of the surveillance, propaganda and the natural borders that surround North Korea. The only way out of North Korea is through China, however if China catch you they will torture you and then send you back where you will be tortured more. This means that you have to go through China to either Thailand and Mongolia.

Q: What is the process to visit and can you still visit?

A: People can no longer visit anymore because of Covid but it was very hard and strict to even go.

Examples of North Korea propaganda



Matthew Lin's larger-than-life drawings

By **Tristan Holmes**

Starting his adult life as a graphic designer, Matthew Lin always found illustrations interesting but couldn't find the confidence to pursue it as a career. Slowly, Mr Lin's skill in graphic design bled into his talent as an illustrator and now, he is an incredible artist creating everything from book covers to beautiful street murals. In Mr Lin's spare time, he will just draw and sketch for fun, or go to school workshops to teach young artists about his knowledge of illustrations.

Mr Lin said he starts almost all of his drawings with a basic sketch and a rough outline. Whether it's a commission, a book cover or an illustration just for fun, Mr Lin will begin his drawing process with a general idea without the details.

"I don't want to spend 6-12 hours just for it to be rejected by the people I'm working for," Mr Lin told the boys, as he stressed the importance of planning your drawings.

This message of planning is exactly what Mr Lin's interactive drawing sessions were focussing on.

Mr Lin challenged the boys with a drawing workshop, giving them the base structure as well as ideas for drawing a monster. The boys made their own creations.

"It's nice to see the student's work and what it turns into. Personalities come out in their work," Mr Lin said.

Mr Lin only gives them advice and ideas on how to create a good piece of art, the creativity and characters are made by the boys which ultimately leads to classes worth collage of unique and interesting characters.

"I thought that being able to draw what I want was really engaging," said one student after Mr Lin's workshop. Mr Lin's main advice to the boys, as well as young, inspiring creators/illustrators, was to follow your heart.



Photo By Henry Ryan

"Draw your passion, and what you're passionate about." Mr Lin said, "Draw what you want but keep an open mind to inspiration. You never know where your influence will come from".

Meet the Dynamic Duo: Joel and Kate Temple, the Husband and Wife Team Writing Playful Animal Stories for Kids

By [Michael Caredes](#) and [Rob Wydell](#)



Photo by Finn McGuire

Kate and Joel Temple are two very different souls but with the same passion for entertaining and writing for kids. This was on show at Wyvern House on Thursday morning where Mr and Mrs Temple told a story about the book they co-wrote “Are You My Bottom” which goes into detail about a panda who cannot find his bottom. The picture book touches on all the key components of human life with having problems and using your friends and problem solving skills to fix them.



Photos by Finn McGuire

Mr and Mrs Temple spoke about how animals are a great starting point for any picture book or narrative. Animals are seen all over the world doing different jobs whether it is Guide Dog, Truffle sniffing dog or just being a pet. They have utilised this to make their animal characters a little bit more relatable which results in a very funny and entertaining novel. Mr and Mrs Temple jokingly said they write 'serious' books and this has come from their love of the Twits, Tin Tin and Roald Dahl.



Deb Abela's sentencing 101 for Wyvern

Words **Michael Caredes and Rob Wydell**, Picture **Finn McGuire**

Renowned journalist and bestselling author Deb Abela shared her invaluable insights on sentencing tips and writing techniques to help Year Five pupils at Wyvern navigate the complexities of making a good sentence.

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help the
The first
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driving
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After a
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words
sentence
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was

One boy
time and
went on to become; **On the night of June 25th, a hooded figure** was driving a sleek black **Tesla** down the street. Adding this sense of timing and more of a setting allowed the sentence, "it was dark" to not be needed.

After a long time thinking about where to go next they decided to begin adding more of a place and location for this story. On the night of June 25th a hooded figure **drove** a sleek black Tesla down the **Alleys of New York**.

The next and final suggestion for the sentence was to add some adverbs into the sentence. It then read, On the night of June 25th a hooded figure drove a sleek black Tesla **erratically** down the **shadowy** alleys of New York.



first draft is ordinary and needs it to make it better and polished," Abela said.

Abela has written more than 30. She claimed whenever she writes self doubt enters her mind where wonders if she is good enough or book is boring.

went on to begin a workshop to pupils write better sentences. phase of a sentence she put to group was; There was a car quickly down the street. It was

discussion with the class the Mrs Abela added in describing and adjectives to make the more captivating, it went on to like this: There was a sleek **black** driving quickly down the street. It dark.

made the decision to add more setting into the sentence and it

Gary's Guide to Story Writing

By **Jack Harris & Cormac Mooney**

Gary Lonesborough set the students a task. Mr Lonesborough led the year 8 pupils through a writing method and task to help them strengthen their ability to craft stories.

Mr Lonesborough asked the students to craft their characters by telling them to give them a name, three things they are good at, three things they like and three things they don't like.

"I tend to get the character first then the setting follows," Mr Lonesborough said. "Usually because depending on the characters struggles, I can then make a story using events that would cause complications for the character."

Mr Lonesborough also spoke about writing tips for stories like his own called "The Boy From the Mish." It follows a young Indigenous boy and his experiences – which relates directly to Mr Lonesborough.

Speaking with Post Script after the session Mr Lonesborough revealed his top tips for writers;

"Create some flaws in your characters and put some of your real experiences in them, like in "The boy from the Mish" the main character also struggles with his sexuality like I did," he said. "Also make sure that you add some authenticity to the stories. The more authentic the story is the more relatable it becomes to the reader.

"Finally having a good character journey is very important. Having the character change throughout the story and having them become okay with who they are and overcoming the struggles they may have begun with at the stories beginning.

"Getting to know your character is important as well. Making sure you know what is necessary to characters allows the story to become better and can relate easier to people who read the stories."



Photo By Henry Ryan

Meet the Post Script Team!

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