

POSTSCRIPT

LITFEST 2017

Day One, 2 May

The first day of LitFest 2017 presents a wide range of exciting talks from a diverse spectrum of presenters.

PostScript explores each day and brings you along for the ride through the eyes of Newington journalists: students from Year 7 to Year 11.

The PostScript team will, over the course of LitFest, cover every author so that you can have the opportunity to experience LitFest alongside us. With guidance from Dr Billy Stevenson and Jack Lynch, a sports journalist, this team of New Boys will work tirelessly to present a publication covering LitFest everyday.



Will Koskakis

Photo: Tom Marchese

Kirsty Eagar – success in procrastination

By Tom Barker

Kirsty Eagar started life on a remote cattle property in Central Queensland before studying economics and working for the Reserve Bank of Australia. Not exactly what you'd imagine as the origin of a young adult author.

It was only once she and her boyfriend (now husband) converted an old Land Cruiser into a livable space when she began to write for magazines and discovered her love for writing.

Kirsty talked about her most recent novel *Summer Skin* which drew inspiration from her time in a residential college, and her experience of the 'Us vs Them' mindset between colleges.

In Kirsty's mind, the most important part about writing what would become a romance novel was to make it real, to include social media and the ever-pressing need to meet a stereotype. Most importantly she explored (in her words) how "it's much easier to hook-up with someone than to tell someone you like them."

Kirsty explores some central aspects of dating and romance in today's connected society, where the first time you meet a person, you're more likely to check their Facebook status than talk to them.

"You're not seeing them, you're buying their brand"

The writing process for Kirsty is a revolving door of procrastination and motivation, for the first draft, she'll brainstorm for up to a month, and then

write about 1,000 words a day until completion.

It's after she sends it off to the publisher that finding motivation becomes an issue.

After the editor's eight-page long letter of improvements comes back, Kirsty finds it difficult to begin the re-writing process. Generally, she'll procrastinate until the publisher sends the concept art options, and after picking her favorite, she'll put it over someone else's book to act as a physical source of motivation.

After demonstrating to the class her version of the writing process, Kirsty then had them partake in some activities to demonstrate how easy it can be to overcome the fear of a blank page. Firstly, they were presented with a "stream of consciousness exercise" – effectively writing as much as you can on a simple stimuli in a very short amount of time. After completing this, Kirsty wrote "Night", "Crash" and "Pool" on the board and had the class use that as the basis for the start of a story, which everybody found surprisingly easy.

With this simple activity, the class was shown how easy it can be to write, as long as you have a starting point for yourself



Jack Heath gets nonlinear

By Luke Canter

"There are 30 different endings, 20 of which result in the protagonist's gruesome and horrible death."

Jack Heath brings his flexible and unique writing style to an engaged cohort of Year 3-4 boys, the primary demographic of his latest title, *Countdown to Danger*. Heath recounts his deep exploration of the 'gamebook' genre, presenting his take on a medium that has traditionally followed a cause-and-effect plot structure. He strongly emphasises the manipulable nature of writing; a concept he has explored throughout his career.

A substantial segment of Heath's seminar relied on the lateral thinking he alluded to - a preliminary reading of *Countdown to Danger*, which boasted almost complete audience participation. It was intended to demonstrate just how innovative his unconventional new plot structure is. Additionally, he offered a cursory glance at higher-order (by his audience's standards) literary techniques and prose, creating a clear dichotomy between simile and cliché.

The third and final component of writing Heath spoke about was the power of fiction to analyse real-world problems

in a fictitious context. Citing *The Cut Out*, a novel about a perpetual conflict between two second world countries in a worst-case scenario alternate universe, he admitted that it was a reflection on the Ukrainian Crisis.

Towards the end of his presentation, Mr Heath offered prospective writers an important piece of advice:

"Writing works for me because I'm good at it, I enjoy it and other people like my writing. If you fulfil those three criteria, then you can do anything."

Overall, the presentation was comprehensive and brimming with content. It was beneficial for all involved and surely inspired many young writers to come.



Jack Heath

Photo: Clancy Barrett

John Larkin on discovering writing

By Luke Mesterovic

Today, 9 English C2 were lucky to have veteran author John Larkin come in and discuss his life and what introduced him to the vivid world of literature. The way Larkin composes himself is engaging, and his non-stop energy instantly filled the room as he entered. He told a variety of stories, which brought both tears of sadness and laughter. From wading neck-deep in the grisly Parramatta River to fetch a shopping trolley, to meeting homeless girl with a love for reading, Larkin captured the interest and the hearts of everybody in the room.

You'd think a renowned author would have been good at English during their schooling years... decent, at least. But that couldn't be said for Larkin in high school, who was in the second lowest class for English. He gave a hilarious description of what it was like, portraying the students as being Neanderthals who dragged their arms across the ground and communicating through a series of grunts.

After leaving in Year 10 to get away from the "crazy, psycho teachers", Larkin informed us about his job

collecting abandoned supermarket trolleys. He was committed to his job, once retrieving a trolley from the shark-infested, contaminated Parramatta River and climbing up the side of house to get one that was stuck in a chimney. Yep... he doesn't know how it got there either.

Leaving his trolley-chasing career behind, Larkin attempted to play football at a professional level, and succeeded. He loved the game, playing it nearly every waking hour of the day. But after severely injuring his leg, he was hospitalised for a while, with nothing to keep him interested, that is until his sister came by with some books. Larkin explained how he was immediately captured by the line in Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy: "The ships hung in the sky in much the same way that bricks don't." From then on, he discovered the magic of reading, and the benefits it provides. He soon found himself writing books, and is now a loved figure in literature.

Larkin's books include *Ghost Byte*, *The Shadow Girl* and *The Pause*.



John Larkin
Photo: Isaac Carriline

Will Kostakis returns to Newington

By Luke Mesterovic

Today, 8 English A2 had the pleasure of having old New Boy Will Kostakis come in to give them tips on creative writing. He spent the majority of the time telling hilarious stories of his grandmother, who he described as resembling a ‘four-foot sack of potatoes’. He explained how it’s great to find inspirations in the real world to make your writing more engaging. We hear about the various mischief that she got into, from trying to buy his book from Dick Smith instead of Dymocks, to shouting at a clerk at spotlight, mispronouncing the word ‘sheet’ for something a bit more vulgar.

When drafting story ideas, he discussed the importance of saying “what if?” Taking a character, and

asking what it would be like if they had a phobia, or if they were a famous person. Originally, his grandmother was going to be an undercover detective in an NCIS-style story about taking down crime lords, until he realised just how absurd the idea was.

This lead to his next point: make your story relatable. Everybody has been a kid, but not everybody has been a foreign, senile pensioner. Kostakis picked up on this, and made a story about his grandmother making him help out with her bucket-list in the middle of the HSC.

Kostakis is an engaging and charismatic author who is a great inspiration to all budding authors. His books include *The Sidekicks*, *The First Third*, and *Loathing Lola*.



Will Kostakis
Photo: Tom Marchese

A million ways to risk your life, with John Larkin

By Jono Kerr

The Year 9 boys patiently wait for John Larkin. The anticipation grows and you see boys looking at the ceiling like they are wondering if he's hiding there. The class look to each other ready to talk when he stepped in.

He broke the rising anticipation with his story about the notorious teacher named 'The Thrower'. The Thrower built a reputation over the years and everyone was on edge whenever they dared to sit in one of her science classes. Mrs Thrower's nickname was because she would throw big clumps of chalk into children's eyes for talking whilst her back was turned. She did this for the first three quarters of the year until she got bored – the lightweight chalk which wasn't doing enough damage to the children's eyes. So she began to throw chalk dusters. She had incredible aim and would hit all talking children in the side of the head. The crowd were shocked into silence but John simply shrugged it off. He allowed us to see why teachers at his school were getting so violent by giving us an insight into the kids the Thrower was dealing with by sharing this story with us.

He and his friends used to go down to watch when the river flooded. One day the flood started to make massive waves that crashed down on top of people and there were some people stuck in the flood. John's friend ran and got their boogie boards to ride the waves and nearly died themselves because the boards slid out underneath the boys!

Although that story didn't make what the Thrower did acceptable, it showed that it was a difficult place to grow up. He saw his mate trying to impress his friends by climbing up a power line and peeing on

the line itself which was a silly thing to do as when you spray water onto electricity it can shoot back up through the water and spray were the water ends, luckily though no one was hurt. You can see all the Year 9's wince at the very thought, desperate for John to go on but John was happy to let the boys see what could have happened as wanted the boys to realise how lucky his friend was to get away with it.

John's friend pushed this heavy rusty tricycle for half the morning and his friend hopped on said his prayers and set off. The bike quickly sped to 100km/h and his friend slammed on the brakes but they were ineffective and when he put his shoe down to stop the bike, it was worn down to the sole. He was rushing down 'Death Hill' screaming so loudly that it sounded like just loud white noise. Then his neighbour backed out his semi-trailer slowly and carefully and the bike ran into it, sending the bike rider flying over the handlebars and landing just five metres before the busy intersection.

The angry owner of the semi-trailer got out and called the police on the tricycle rider (and John) but when the police got there, they realised the bike had right of way and so they charged the angry semi-trailer owner with a \$200 fine.

Most of the audience members personally John Larkin, asking him about his new book about mental illness – an ailment he has suffered. He didn't go into much detail but has learnt to deal with his demons and uses his experience to help others, through his book.

A vital lesson he taught us during his six weeks in hospital, he had a sudden epiphany: "You can't be pressured into doing something when it's your life, your journey". A message we will all remember.

Short story tips with Chris McDonald

By Thomas Osborne and William Sun

The lecture given by author and designer, Chris McDonald, was both authentic and thought-provoking. He wasted no time in informing students on the power of structure in creative short story telling.

The presentation's focus was selecting a character, creating a complication and then resolving the complication.

He proceeded to give a basis of a short story.

It began: *A cleaner finds a dead body and has to dispose of it.* He leaves the solution to this problem up to the students.

The students were enthusiastic and shared creative discussion. This allowed for creative and interesting solutions.

One solution was that acid from the science department could be utilised to dissolve the body.

It was ideas like these that allowed the students to expand their ideas into complex stories that originated from a basic template.

Then, Mr McDonald expanded on his basic template by continuing the story: *After the cleaner finds the dead body, he finds the true reason for the man's death. It was a disagreement between the man and the mafia. And were*

creeping up behind the cleaner! A high-speed chase ensues, but the cleaner makes it safely home.

Mr McDonald then went on to emphasise that "the trick to short story telling is comprehending your whole idea in one scene." He showed students how to compress this whole story into just the chase scene.

Through the technique of demonstration, Mr McDonald exhibited just how effective compressing a complex story into a simple scene was.

He illustrated how much more emotion, tension and detail you can pack into one scene by compressing it.

Thanks to Chris McDonald, students learnt that a story may simply concentrate on this simple scene but can still relay a complex narrative.



Chris McDonald

Photo: Tom Marchese

Bernard Caleo draws the line

By Joel Goh

"What is it exactly that you've drawn?"
"I don't know... Ooh, a **Snot-dog!**"
In the wise words of comic artist
Bernard Caleo: "If you don't know what
you've drawn, that's excellent."

He believes that anything can exist in the comic world from a snot-dog to *The Adventures of Floating Head Man*. Bernard Caleo's talk was engaging and educational with many ways to incorporate the audience including fun creative drawing activities. We were taught how to make a comic and we made our own character with a pet.

Overall, this talk was engaging and beneficial to the Year 5 students spectating.



Arnold Zable: Imagination, expression and being 100% present

By Anton Lising & Adi Apana

"Late at night, weaving in and out of his dreams, comes a neighing of a horse, the metallic clip clop of hooves, the rattling and tinkling of bottles, the quick rhythmic steps of a man on the run." These are the opening words of *Scraps of Heaven*, a novel by Arnold Zable, based on his family's experience migrating to Carlton, from war-torn Poland during the Second World War.

Mr Zable shared his emotional and inspirational memories with 9EngB3 on Tuesday. The traumatic experiences of his life left the class tense and silent. Mr Zable mainly focused on his award-winning book *Scraps of Heaven* because the class has studied this novel. He did, however, always relate this book with his other books, most of which focus on "migrant experiences".

This book is based on true experiences but also encompasses some fiction. Mr Zable discussed how many of the prominent characters have qualities found in the person the character is based on, but he also changed qualities and altered certain experiences. Mr Zable said the character Zofia "is based on [his] mother, but she is not my mother."

He talked about how he discovered the art of expression. One day his mother and father were having an argument, he walked up to his room and began to write. Suddenly the pen started to race across the page. He stood up from his

work and felt light, as if nothing could get to him. He walked down the stairs, past his distraught parents and out into the winter streets. "Expression means to unload, to let it out," he said. "But then you begin to work it out."

Mr Zable also spoke enthusiastically of imagination. At one point he asked the class: "What is imagination?" Most students responded: "to make something up." Mr Zable put a different slant on it and discussed how imagination comes from an image. "You have to be there, smell the air, feel the ground beneath your feet, be 100 per cent present."

The class noted this advice and are keen to implement this idea within their writing.



Arnold Zable

Photo: Isaac Carriline