

The Write Stuff

Monthly Newsletter of the Helensvale Writers Group – August 2024

This month's meeting: special mystery guest

Our convenor Grahame Moore, recently was in the audience where he heard “a talented, professional speaker who will hold the audience in her hand”. Don't ask me how he did it (probably the Old Silva Fox charm), but she (yes, that's the only clue you'll get) comes all the way from Brisbane and will arrive at our meeting about 11:00 am to speak immediately after our coffee break.



Before that, **the winners of the 'Fear' story competition will be announced** and the two winning stories read. Following the (somewhat shortened) “boast and brag” session, Grahame, under the ‘Under the Spotlight’ session will elaborate on **‘How to overcome the dreaded Writers Block’**. And haven't we all experienced this! So, see you all there on the 15th August, usual time 10 am, but PLEASE be on time, there's a lot of ground to cover.

Snippets of last month's speakers: Christine Betts and Anna Crichton



Last month, “Under the Spotlight” speaker was **Anna Crichton** (photo left). In 1981 she qualified as a clinical psychologist in South Africa and upon emigrating, has worked in Australia in her profession, including in the correctional services system. Anna elaborated on her experience of asking Chat GPT about GSA. **GSA? Genetic Sexual Attraction** (not incest). You guessed it: this started a rather vigorous discussion. It relates to intense physical and emotional feelings that some people experience following

restored contact between an adopted person and a close member of his/her birth family. But, as always with complex subjects, there is MUCH more to it. Would there be room for a story, or even a book? You bet.

Then, after morning tea, our principal speaker **Christine Betts** (photo right) took the stage. She is a member of the Gold Coast Writers Association, a teacher, artist, published author and is a former judge of GCWA competitions. She runs workshops at the GCWA to “inspire people to write. Talk about getting inspiration... take the following scenario: A man found a parachute with a bomb attached to it. “Every story has a mythological aspect to it” she said. What makes us love what we love? “I like vampires...” Christine emphasised the importance of developing expertise in a particular area, yes, the area about what you love. She also emphasised the importance of finding other authors of the same genre. One of the sources you can use is Amazon: search for a book you really enjoyed, and find what they list



as “People who bought this also bought this...”. Genre IS important: you don’t want to put your hard won work in front of people who wouldn’t appreciate it”, she said.

Christine presented us with the schematic of a **Word Cloud**: Write everything that comes to mind about a particular subject into different sections, then connect how the different sections relate to each other. Or use a white board, and have sticky notes all over it. A note on playing background music whilst you are writing: don’t play music with words. So you are a non-fiction writer and can’t write fiction? Simply take out the incriminating evidence, such as names, locations, dates & time and substitute it. And as always: there was much more!

The Grahame Moore ‘Ghost’ Challenge:

As foreshadowed, Grahame is again putting up two very **generous prizes of \$300 and \$200** respectively for first and second rank: Conditions apply:

1. The competition is **only open to registered members** of our group (if you received this newsletter via email, you are)
2. Maximum two (2) stories per member
3. **No Artificial Intelligence** software (e.g. Chat GPT etc. Yes, we have ways to detect 😊)
4. The story **must be about ghosts**. Any ghosts
5. It **must not exceed 1,000 words**, including its title
6. Stories must be submitted in **MS Word or Google Docs format** (not PDF). Please name the file **[name]-[title]** - e.g. John Smith - Skeletons in the cupboard
7. **Deadline is 5 pm, 31st August 2024 - no exceptions**
8. **Stories to be submitted to this email address: helensvalewriters@gmail.com**

We have already received several submissions, but, of course, we expect a lot more. If you have already submitted: it’s ok to resubmit.

Winners of the Grahame Moore ‘Fear’ Challenge

The winners will be announced at the upcoming August meeting: We received a total of 24 stories, from 17 authors. Yes, competition was hot! Grahame has submitted the stories to independent judges, and two prize winning stories will be read out.

The third challenge: the keyword is ‘Serenity’

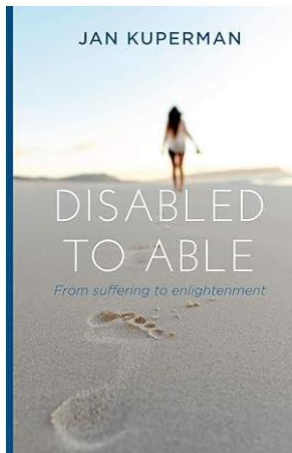
Google says that the word "serenity", is the state of being calm, peaceful, and untroubled. Well, we await YOUR interpretation! Again, 1,000 words maximum, the same conditions as above, but **deadline is 24th November 2024**. You can submit from now onwards.

Compilation of all stories submitted into a book

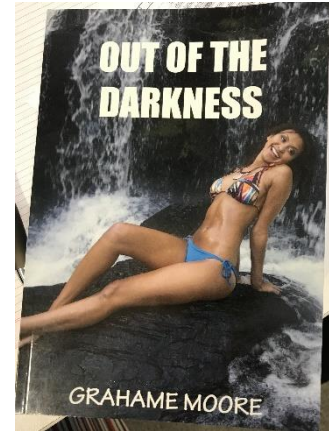
All the stories (Fear, Ghost and Serenity) will be compiled into an A5 book. Grahame has arranged with [Clark & Mackay Publishers](#) and **all authors will be presented with a free copy** at our Christmas party (exact date to be determined). Talking about ‘limited edition’! Note: authors of submitted stories will retain their copyright.

What else happened?

Lots. Here are some of the juiciest bits from last month’s meeting: **Deidre von Guilleaume** is writing a fiction novel... **Kelly Cox** has two new books ready to publish... **Ralph Mayn**, whilst on a cruise with his wife (who picked up COVID whilst there), is doing research on Spam (the edible version, not junk mail). Talking about “this could never get published:: He picked up a book entirely without punctuation. Almost impossible to read, but it still sold 10,000 copies! **Jim Dickson** has finished his second book. We are advised that his “wife disagreed with the phrasing”, but we don’t know about the ultimate outcome... **Lily Arthur**



had good reviews of her organisation's course on writing memoirs: The next one is already fully booked. Might take it interstate as well. **Megan Norris** was nominated for Westfield Woman of the Year. And she won an award, recognising her work in the media. **Jan Kuperman's** book ['Disabled to Able'](#) is available on Amazon (click on picture left)... **Peter Loveday** is researching for his book on mastering ADHD (his son suffers from this condition), **Sue Jones** has one manuscript ready to go, and some 10 stories in process... Our convenor, **Grahame Moore** has published his latest novel 'Out of the Darkness'. See picture



- if you are male, you would want to pick it up, wouldn't you? And, in view of the recent spate of major hacks, yours truly (**Franz Huber** for those who don't know me) emphasised on the importance of protecting your electronic systems with good, complex passwords and to encrypt critical, private documents. There are numerous methods, just google it.

"But I cannot remember complex passwords!" I hear you lament. Well, there is an easy way. Feel free to contact me if you'd like to get a few hints. Important: **MS Office** (Word, Excel etc) **has a very powerful encryption facility** built-in. But make sure you know the encryption password. There is NO recovery.

There was much more... sorry, you should have been there!

Can you improve on that?

You don't have to look for classic literature: Here is an extract from a wine review:

It's wonderful! I've never tasted a Shiraz like it! '... the drink was perfectly balanced, the delicate sweetness of the fruit rounded out by the gentlest hint of bitterness. A warm southern breeze seemed to rise from the glass in my hand.

No, I won't tell you which one. It sold for a bargain, and I bought another dozen... 😊

Upcoming Writers Competitions

- a) **Helensvale Writers Group (that's us) - Grahame Moore competition 'Ghost'**. In celebration of his birthday (towards the end of August). Submissions **close on 15th August 2024**. I have already received several entries. Entry is limited to registered members of the Helensvale Writers Group (if you receive this newsletter via email from helensvalewritersgroup@gmail.com), you are.)
- b) **The Best Australian Yarn** - this is "the big one": **some \$80,000 of prizes** in total; \$50,000 for first prize. Short story, fiction only, max 2,500 words **But you better get mooooooving!** Closes next Monday 12th August 2024.. [Click here](#) for all the details.
- c) **Anthology Personal Memoirs competition:** If you are a memoir writer, this international competition is for you. [Click here for details](#). Closes 31st August 2024.
- d) **2024 Thunderbolt Prize for Crime Writing**. Various sizeable prizes, including for non-fiction.'Emerging Authors', Poetry. [Click here for details](#). Closes **27th September 2024**.
- e) There are another 280 (last time I looked) competitions on [reedsy.com](https://www.reedsy.com) – There must be one or two that suit you!

See you at the Helensvale Library on the **20th of June!** Usual place, downstairs meeting room. Start at 10:00 am sharp, please try to be on time, thank you!

Have you recently visited our Facebook page?

Log in to Facebook, then search for **Helensvale Writers Group**.

See you at this month's meeting on **15th August 2024**. Usual time, 10 am - 12:30 pm, location: ground floor meeting room at Helensvale Library.

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OK, admit it, you just looked up to be sure what 'Onomatopoeian' means!

Many people hear voices when no one is there.

Some of them are called 'mad' and are shut up in rooms where they stare at walls all day.

Others are called "writers" and they do pretty much the same thing.

Ray Bradbury

