

The Write Stuff

Monthly Newsletter of the Helensvale Writers Group – January 2024

... and a haaaapyyy noooooo yeeeeeeear!

Did you survive Christmas alright? Yes, survived, as in not getting crushed by a falling tree or hit by a lightning strike... That storm indeed was something to remember. Hope you did not suffer any serious injury or property damage. At yours truly, on just a small 1 ½ acre block, about a dozen trees were ripped apart and no electricity for 5 days. But, once power was back and we could watch the news, we had little doubt that a lot of people fared far worse.

Now, here is an event from which you can spin some stories! Stories of fright, of heroism, of abject despair, stories of resilience, of regaining the upper hand. Or you might want to consider rewriting [‘The Night Before Christmas’](#), the famous children’s poem (attributed to Clement Clarke-Moore, but disputed)? No need to bowdlerize it to suit modern times - it’s quite ok to refer to “the moon on the breast of newly fallen snow”... 😊

Let me start:

The night after Christmas 2023

*’Twas the night after Christmas, the wife wore that new blouse
And grandpa, he nursed a beer belly grouse
Kids play with new toys, and they won’t go to bed.*

*An almighty loud thunder cracked right over my head,
A split second before: a super bright flash.
Then darkness.
A drip from the ceiling becomes splatter, then splash...*

OK, I’ll see myself out... Hold on! Do I hear someone wants to pick up the baton and continue?

This month’s meeting: Thursday 18th January

The first meeting of 2024, as usual, will be held at the Helensvale Library, downstairs meeting room. We won’t have a guest speaker, but instead designate it to **open discussion** among members. **Ask any question you like**, and there is a good chance that somebody in the group will have an answer. For example: “*How can I earn a Million Dollars a year in Royalties?*” I have little doubt that many of our group will provide a ready answer! **Share any techniques** you deploy that help you in your efforts, any specific ‘How to Write’ books you may have read.

To start it off, our convenor **Grahame Moore** will outline how he **plays music** whilst he writes. *[He didn’t explain what instrument he plays though whilst he taps the keys of his computer. The harmonica, a la Bob Dylan style with one of those contraptions that hangs it in front of his lips? You’ll just have to be there to find out. Ed.]*

Please contribute to the meeting! If you use music to juice up your creativity, please bring along a track (ideally on a USB flash drive - we don’t have a DVD player). Alternatively,

email me a link to YouTube, or tell me the artist/title, so we can play it off the Internet. If you have any specific questions you'd like to pose: ideally send me an email prior to the meeting. I'll send out a reminder a few days before, and list them.

Christmas Luncheon Party



Instead of a regular meeting on the third Thursday, Grahame Moore had booked tables at the [Saltwater Creek Hotel](#), for our Christmas extravaganza.

It was a lovely day - great buffet, free for members and their partners, and the budget even covered a few bottles of wine. Thank you, Grahame, for organising it! And thank you to everyone who brought a present along.

Picture: The most "Christmasy" dressed couple: Author of 'Dirty Laundry' Lily Arthur and her husband Des. Stacey posted a heap of photos on our Facebook page: [click here](#), or login to Facebook and simply search for Helensvale Writers Group.

November competition: Parody, Spoof, Satire:

At the November meeting, we didn't have enough time to even think about it, so we extend the competition for another month. Think of a well known song or poem. Bush ballad, rock, pop, classical. But it must be well known, so people other than you recognise the tune and the words, and can try to sing your (twisted) lyrics. Then write it: a parody (see sample on right), a spoof or a piece of satire that can be sung to that tune. But, **please, keep politics or politically controversial subjects out of it.** We are trying to stay out of politics (or religion for that matter). See an example on the right I found on the internet. (If you were born before 1960, you'd know it. But who doesn't know Elvis Presley's "[Are you lonesome tonight?](#)") Of course, you'll retain copyright (of your spoof, not of the tune!)

(I apologise in advance to anyone who is offended by the sample. It's meant to be humorous, not serious! But if the woke-rati "cancel" me, so be it... (Ed.)

Are you lonesome tonight
Is your brastrap too tight
Are your corsets just drifting apart
Have you got a big chest
Making holes in your vest
Does your spare tyre
Reach into the night
Are your stockings all laddered
Are you wearing them thin
Do you hold up your knickers
With a big safety pin
Are your false teeth all worn
Do they drop when you yawn
Well it's no wonder your lonesome
tonight..

I bet you sang it 😄😄

And Grahame is again offering a nice **bottle of red for the best entry.** [Email it to me](#) and we'll put up a separate document (accessible by members only). At the January meeting, you can read it - better even sing it - to the group! Heartiest laughs wins the bottle of red!

Can you improve on that?

Here is a beautiful example of "what is said, versus "what is meant":

"Do you live in the city?" Enid said. *(You're not cohabiting with our son, are you?)* "And you work in the city, too?" *(You are gainfully employed? You're not from an alien, snobbish, moneyed eastern family?)* "Did you grow up here?" *(Or do you come from a trans-*

Appalachian state where people are warmhearted and down-to-earth and unlikely to be Jewish?) “Oh, and do you still have family in Ohio?” (Have your parents perhaps taken the morally dubious modern step of getting divorced?) “do you have brothers or sisters?” (Are you a spoiled only child or a Catholic with a zillion siblings?) Jonathan Franzen - ‘The Corrections’

I’m not necessarily suggesting that you write a better sentence yourself (if you do have one, please let me have it!) but if you come across a paragraph that you catch yourself re-reading again and again... I’m a sucker for it. Share it! Take a photo with your smartphone and **send your entry as a photo, text, email or doc to helensvalewriters@gmail.com** (or simply reply to the email with which I sent you this newsletter).

Upcoming Writers Competitions

- a) **Local Word Writing Prize**: This is an annual competition run by the Geelong Library and Deaking University - open to all over 16 years old and residents of Australia. 3000 words - fiction. Closes 27 January 2024
- b) **Australian Book Review ‘Calibre Essay Prize’** 2,000 - 5,000 words. Winner takes \$10,000. Closes 22nd January 2024
- c) **Story Unlikely’s Annual Short Story Contest** - No restrictions or genre! Maximum 4,500 words, total \$750 in prizes (\$750 1st, \$500 2nd, \$250 3rd). Open now, closing 31st January 2024. Note: read and follow the submission instructions on the website.
- d) **Stringybark Open Short Story Awards 2024** - total pool \$1,350, the only condition: it must have a link to Australia. Maximum 1500 words. Closing on 25th February
- e) There are another 583 (last time I looked) competitions on [reedsy.com](https://www.reedsy.com) – There must be one or two which suit you!

.This month’s meeting

As always (except December), this month’s meeting will be on the third Thursday of the month, **18th January 2024**. Usual place and time: ground floor meeting room at the Helensvale Library, **10:00 am**. Try to be a little bit early, so we can start on time. See you there!

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If romance novels have taught me anything, it’s that if you are still single, you need to go back to your home town right now because all the single guys back there are hot, stable, reliable, and looking for commitment.

“Do you like Kipling?”
“I don’t know, you naughty boy, I’ve never kippled!”

