

The Write Stuff

Monthly Newsletter of the Helensvale Writers Group – September 2025

This month's main speaker: Stacey King

For those who are new: Stacey is one of our key members. Her subject will be, "How do you build a character in your story that most people will appreciate, and follow?" You will recall that Kellie Cox, in her recent presentation in July, touched on a similar subject. Character development is one of the most important components of good writing. Stacey's dissertation will continue to build on this topic.



'Under the Spotlight': Ralph Mayn

Ralph will speak on the subject of "Why do you write?" And he will start by asking questions at random around the room. So, you'd better have an answer ready! He's bound to ask you. Oh, just to be sure we have communication: replies limited to one minute... 😊

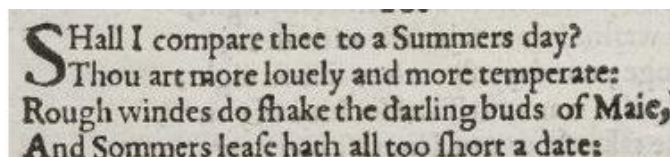
Last month's guest speaker: Ian Mathieson 'How the English language evolves and where it may be going'

"There is nothing definitive about how it evolves" Ian opened his presentation with, "and only a fool would get anywhere near assertive about where it may be going." Very wise words, Ian, especially when spoken to someone like your newsletter Editor for whom English is a second language.

Ian is a professional editor and writer of both fiction and non-fiction. "I fell in love with English a long time ago, in High School" he said, "with rigid rules that would frighten you today". Outlining some of the obvious words that sound the same but are spelled differently (bored/board, or are spelled the same (or partially similar) such as cough, though, enough, although, English can, in Ian's words, be "quite a bastard".

Talking about evolution: at the beginning of broadcasting media (radio, TV), anyone uttering the word 'bloody' would have shut the station down. Today, even the most common vulgar 4-letter word 'f*ck' is not uncommon anymore in both broadcast and print, and the most offensive word (starting with c) is gaining traction as 'cunty', describing something 'something very bad-bitchesque'...

Ian further outlined some of the most cherished grammar klunkers, such as the habit of modern texting where punctuation such as commas is left out. "Let's eat grandma".



Evolution: Try to read the Magna Carta and see whether you can understand even a small part of it. Where is it going from here? The Emoji? Yeah, right. 🤔 🤪 🤖 🤡 🤩 🤔 🤖

As always, there was much more – sorry peeps, you should have been there!

What else happened / will happen?

Hamed Mirfenderesk is well on the way to completing his first book: 30,000 words so far! **Karen Newnham** is writing a 'Domestic Thriller' and is planning another 'Supernatural Thriller'... **Joy Maguire** is writing a biography... **Jim Dickson** read us a part of his newest... **Jack Kregas'** recently published book 'Less than Normal' is based on one of his entries to a 1000 word competition... **Anthony Shelley** is working on the development of his characters...

And we welcomed the return of a long-lost former member: **Phil Bradbury**, an accomplished Gold Coast based writer.

New HWG Challenge: "Out of the darkness"

Well, dig out your old Franz Kafka titles! The Trial, Metamorphosis... On the other hand, if you want to write on a brighter note: in my home country, a popular folk song is about the experience of entering a tunnel (in a train) and coming out at the other end: "*wenn me uusechunnt, wird's hell*" (when you exit, it gets bright). Or anything in-between, stretch it, knead it, knit it into anything that meets the topic, either physically, relating to mental status or metaphorically.

The usual conditions: **Fiction, or "creative non-fiction"** ([click here for definition](#)), **1000 words maximum (including title)**, **deadline is 21st November 2025**, and no late entries accepted. All entries will feature in our Christmas compilation book.

Note: Copyright remains with the author. This is a private, group-internal competition, and thus does not preclude you to submit your story to any open competition, nor, as our end-of-year compilation cannot be purchased on the market, it thus does not constitute as "having been published before".



Upcoming Writers Competitions

- a) [The Hope Prize](#) is an international short story competition. They are seeking powerful, original stories of hope, **fiction or creative non-fiction**, from both emerging and established voices. Up to 5000 words. **Winner's prize \$10,000 AUD**, shortlisted stories will be published in a Simon & Schuster anthology. **Closes 31 October 2025**
- b) **So you think you are funny?** Well, prove it: Chanticleer Book Reviews – [Satire & Humour Book Awards](#). Deadline is 31st October 2025.
- c) Here is a long term project: Deadline is 26th February 2026. [Next Generation Short Story Awards](#). **What? You're not 'Next Generation'?** Look closer. They have categories for 'Seniors 60 – 69 years' and 'Seniors 70 years and above'. Some our group's members qualify for these...
- d) There are another 280 (last time I looked) competitions on [reedsy.com](#) – There must be one or two that suit you!

Association with Gold Coast Writers Association

OK, so I could have cranked up my Thesaurus and used Connexion, Fellowship, Alliance or any of some 20 synonyms. But an association it is. For those of you who were not present at last month's meeting, here are the principal points:

1. The Gold Coast City Council, who rents us the Helensvale meeting room, makes it absolutely clear that we are NOT insured for public liability whilst inside the meeting room.
2. Examples of potential cases:
 - during a somewhat high-spirited (insert your own epithet) discussion, somebody considers him/herself “deeply insulted, abused, slighted, slurred, affronted, attacked...
 - ... or other reasons such as negligence: if somebody was to accidentally spill a cup of hot coffee over somebody resulting in serious burns... leading to...
3. The prospect of getting sued by an “ambulance chaser” lawyer for anything is very real. Even something quite spurious – imagine any other scenario – after all, you ARE writers!
4. For that reason, our group would need to be incorporated and obtain public liability insurance as an incorporated body. This largely prevents a potential private lawsuit against every member of the group. In any case, it would be a hell of a mess.
5. The Gold Coast Writers Association (GWA) has offered us to come under their umbrella in relation to public liability. All we need to do is for our members to also become members of the GWA. This involves **an annual membership fee of \$40.00 (first year \$45.00)**. A 3-year membership is also available at a very substantial discount. If we were to have our own PL insurance, \$40.00 a head would nowhere near cover it. Not to mention: we’d need a President, Secretary and Treasurer, submit formal returns... *(Looking for volunteers. Hold it! Not all at once! ☺)*
6. **The Helensvale Writers Group will continue to function as it always has:**
 - We remain independent, meeting every third Thursday morning at the Helensvale Library (except for the next one or two meetings whilst they have renovations.
 - The attendance fee will remain at \$10.00 per meeting (we still have to pay the rent, buy coffee, speaker’s gifts, pay for the domain registration and website hosting), Attendees who are not (yet) members of GWA will be offered to sign up then, or pay a small surcharge to cover temporary insurance cover.
 - Of course you also get all the benefits membership of GWA brings with it: you can attend any of their monthly meetings (\$5.00 discount), participate in their competitions, promote your works, etc. Check out their website. <https://www.goldcoastwriters.org/>

Can you improve on that?

... these memories of happiness are fleeting things, reflections in a stream, glimpsed all broken for a second and then swept away in the current of grief that is our life now. I can’t say that I ever feel what it felt like then, when I was happy. But sometimes something will touch the place where that feeling was, a touch as slight and swift as the brush of a moth’s wing in the dark. Geraldine Brooks, ‘Year of Wonders’

Got anything to brag about?

Well, let’s hear it! Don’t be shy if you have won an award, or even if your story got published! Your fellow members would like to know about it. Send me an email.

New (temporary) meeting location

This month’s meeting is on the **usual day, third Thursday of the month, 18th September 2025, BUT NOT AT THE LIBRARY:** Due to renovations at the Helensvale Library, we are meeting at the **Helensvale Community Centre**, 31 – 37 Discovery Drive, Helensvale (just a

bit further up on Discovery Drive on the right side, opposite Club Helensvale – same as last month, but two rooms to the right. Look for signs. **The meeting will start at 10:15** – Grahame and I will be there at 10:00 am to set up. **Please be a little bit early** so we can start right on time – we need to be out and the room cleared by 12:45.

Best wishes,
Franz Huber
Helensvale Writers Group

[helensvalewriters@ gmail.com](mailto:helensvalewriters@gmail.com)

**Three things enjoy are eating my cats
and not using commas.**

**This guy was accused of
underusing commas.
The judge warned him to expect a
very long sentence.**



Book Group

The last Thursday of every month was Book Group,
when the books would gather together to discuss Graham.

"It's no fun here any more," remarked *Bleak House*, glumly.
"Why doesn't he read us?" whined the *Grapes of Wrath*. "It makes me so angry!"
"I'm sure he only bought me so he can show me off to his friends,"
complained *Ulysses*, in a stream of self-consciousness.

"I bet he can't even remember my name, *The Idiot*,"
muttered a voice from the Russian literature section.
"That's because he avoids you like *The Plague*," said another.
"C'est vrai!" came a cry. "It is like I do not exist."

"Let's not give up on him yet." It was *Brave New World*.
After some *Persuasion*, they agreed to give him one last chance.
"Be quiet!" cried *Waiting for Godot* with *Great Expectations*.
"Here he comes now!"

Graham entered the room, with his phone.
He sat down and watched some videos of baby pandas falling over.
After an hour or so, he started googling cats dressed as celebrities.

On the shelf, the books waited with uncracked spines,
their silence speaking volumes.

Brian Bilston