

The Write Stuff

<https://www.helensvalewritersgroup.org>

Monthly Newsletter of the Helensvale Writers Group – May 2026

Wooo-hooo! Back at the Helensvale Library this month!

This month's speakers: Ralph Mayn, then Lily Arthur & Megan Norris

We have yet another meeting with 'local talent', and this is going to be big:

'Under the Spotlight' speaker **Ralph Mayn** will discuss how he used the 1000-word competitions to improve his writing. He will have two handouts he wrote himself, and will ask attendees for their personal opinions on his work.

Over the past years, Ralph has been "on the podium" numerous times for his 1000-word competitions. No doubt, his tips might just get you over the line in the next one, I won't lie to you! *[OK, I'll say it myself: boom boom.]*



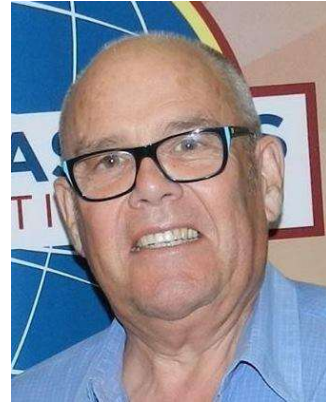
After the break, our main speakers for the morning will be our members **Lily Arthur**, with **Megan Norris**, herself a multi-award winning True Crime author and journalist, backing her up. They will discuss **how to put together a podcast to support your sales**. Lily Arthur's work **['Prisoner of the State'](#)** (before its re-launch, titled 'Dirty Laundry') reached a 4 ½ star rating on Amazon. The podcast, featured in the **'Australian True Crime'** series (the link is also on her website), certainly would have greatly

expedited the production of these results. My friends: you won't get any closer to learn how to do it, directly from the original source!.

Last month's speakers: Peter Loveday and James Crichton.

Last month's speakers also were "home-grown":

I should mention that, even though he probably knows more about Chat GPT than most of us, **Peter Loveday** is averse to 'spin'. Thus, he doesn't want to be described as a Chat GPT guru ☺. Noted! Peter outlined his views on Chat GPT specifically and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in general. "AI goes all the way to "middle age" technology, i.e. to the days when, as a young man, he studied Radio Engineering in the era of Cathode Ray Tubes. And, of course, the studying never stops. Today's microprocessors are tomorrow's equivalent of vacuum tubes.



Yesterday's Central Processing Units (CPU), such as the 1990's Intel Pentium, initially with one, then as many as four cores, wouldn't hold a candle to today's modern processors such as those manufactured by Nvidia, CPUs that primarily are deployed for AI processing. They have 1000's of cores on one chip. One wonders where it will lead to...

"Chat GPT is NOT a word inventor, it is a **word predictor**", he emphasised. "You need to be very specific about what prompts you give it." And, if related to writing, make sure you ask for results in English, otherwise you'll get them in 'American'. But relax: if you are concerned that it will "take over": in his view, it won't. "It's just a tool", Peter claimed.

[Elon Musk disagrees - see his quote on the last page. Ed.]

Another interesting point was brought up: Chat GPT will remember your searches, [Claude](#) (one of its major competitors) doesn't. So, if you are concerned that "big data" will reveal all your searches to some Secret Service agent, Claude might be what you want to use. And just as you should do if you research it the old-fashioned way, you should always cross-reference. But then, how do you, these days, research the old-fashioned way? Going to the local library and ask the librarian, or use Google, Siri, Yahoo or any of the other web search engines?



Next, after our coffee break, **James Crichton** spoke on the subject of **punctuation**. Raised in a small South African community, James trained as a school teacher, but didn't enjoy it, so he switched to journalism. Now... one can be quite easily distracted when discussing whatever subject in a group as switched on and as diverse as ours. The originally planned subject of 'punctuation' did not receive as much attention as 'readability', and ultimately whether it can easily be understood by the reader. Of course, the two are closely related. James provided a handout for everyone (copy enclosed with this newsletter's email). "Writing is two-dimensional", James said. "You don't need to get it right the first time. Re-read it, read it aloud with other people. Does it make

sense?" One of his major tips: The most underused punctuation is the Full Stop. The longer the sentence, the harder it is to understand. Avoid multiple verbs in one sentence. Another enemy of clarity is words ending in 'ing'. James concluded with one of the most misunderstood forms of punctuation: the semicolon (;). "A semicolon is used to fuse two statements that have equal weight in one sentence. Use it if you don't want to break the sentence."

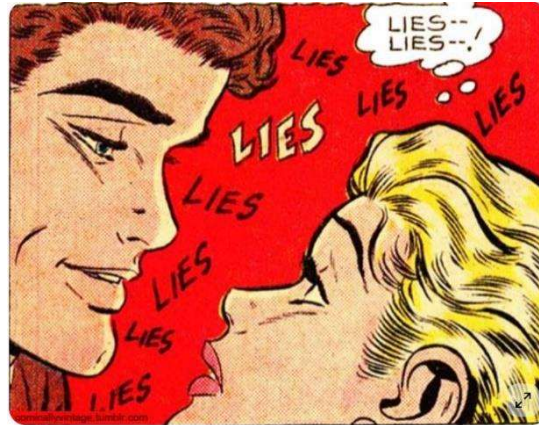
[Note: if you use MS Word, and you put a closing bracket behind a semicolon, you get a 'wink' emoticon: ☺.]

New 1000 Words Competition – Q2, 2026:

Don't lie to me (a family confrontation)

Just one month to deadline!

Our convenor, Grahame Moore, has set the theme for the second competition of 2026. It is on the theme of confrontation (and yes, you may include dispute resolution). This time, please, we want to see all the **correct punctuation marks** to magically appear. You have plenty of time to write your entry, so show us that you can get your punctuation correct as it may add points to your competition entry.



The usual conditions: Fiction, or “creative non-fiction”, 1000 words maximum (including title), no pictures, no Artificial Intelligence (we’ll test). Have you written at least the first draft? Now... don't lie to me! **Deadline is Thursday, 11th June 2026 (one week before our June meeting)**, and no late entries will be accepted.

Note: Copyright remains with the author. This is a private, group-internal competition, and thus does not preclude you from submitting your story to any open competition, nor, as our end-of-year compilation cannot be purchased on the market, can it be considered as “previously published”.

Upcoming Writers Competitions

- Here is a chance to earn **\$10,000**: the [Richell Prize for Emerging Writers](#). Closing on 13th July 2026. They have this every year, so if you are not quite ready yet... Start now!
- [Rhiza Edge Short Story Competition](#): 1000 - 5000 words, about “cryptids of all types” [*Go on, look it up! I had to as well... Ed.*]. Closes 30/09/2026
- There are another 280 (last time I looked) competitions on [reedsy.com](#) – There must be one or two that suit you!

Can you improve on that?

I looked up at her with the idea of making one last plea, but when I saw the expression on her face, I thought better of it. I can't say what she was thinking, but she seemed to be peering into nothingness with her perfect oval face creased in the corners of her eyes and mouth from strain. And then she let out a heavy breath and gazed down into her teacup with what I took as a look of bitterness. Arthur Golden - 'Memoirs of a Geisha'

Gold Coast Writers Association Membership

From 1st January 2026, **all our members also need to be members of GCWA**, which assures us of proper insurance cover. Just in case you don't know: when we hold a meeting inside a Gold Coast City Council meeting room, **the Council's insurance does NOT cover us**. With this arrangement, we continue to remain independent, but we are now covered. **But, just as important:** you are entitled to all the goodies that are available to you as a full member of GCWA!

So, if you are not already a member, click on this link to register:

<https://www.goldcoastwriters.org/membership>.

See you on **Thursday, 21st May. Usual time 10:00 am. Back at the old location: Helensvale Library, downstairs meeting room.** Please be a little bit early, so we can start on time.



Best wishes,
Franz Huber
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Everyone:

He is angry.

A Novelist:

Sitting at his desk, his jaw tightened. His eyes flashed heat waves at me. The words erupted from his mouth. "I want to talk to you after class." The final hiss in his voice warned me about his feelings.



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The pace of progress in artificial intelligence (I'm not referring to narrow AI) is incredibly fast. Unless you have direct exposure to groups like Deepmind, you have no idea how fast—it is growing at a pace close to exponential. The risk of something seriously dangerous happening is in the five-year time frame. 10 years at most." Elon Musk