

The Write Stuff

Monthly Newsletter of the Helensvale Writers Group – April 2024

This month's meeting: Andy McD



Our convenor Grahame Moore has arranged for an exciting speaker for the upcoming meeting on 18th April: he is **Andy McD** (aka Andrew McDermott), a man well-versed in writing and publishing novels.

“Because I am trying to educate our members to sit and write a thousand words, and dangling a proverbial \$500.00 carrot in front of them; I thought someone like Andy might prick their Interest,” Grahame said. “He is a very professional gentleman, and I have asked him to speak about **‘How to create a good storyline,’** and how to build a story around some good solid characters. As I have said to our group before, *“This is not a knitting club; we are all budding writers.”*”

Well, here is a chance for you to learn from an experienced, successful author on how to put together a good story. Pay attention and you might have a good chance of picking up first or second prize of Grahame’s challenge: a story (up to 1000 words), titled ‘Fear’.

Last month's Guest Speaker Michael Rhodes

Michael was “discovered” by Stacey King - he is attending her U3A writing class. Michael has written an extensive biography 'Lion Rampant - Duncan Dunbar and the Age of Sail', the story of one of the greatest shipping fleet owners of the 19th century.

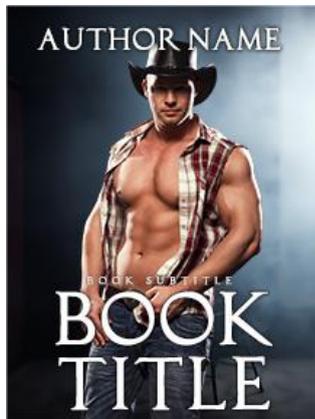
But Michael wasn't talking much about his literary achievements. Talking about a ‘heavy weight’ of his industry! Born in New Zealand, but really a ‘citizen of the world’ (his father was Australian Ombudsman for the American Forces), he studied to become a lawyer. What a business career! In 1983, he and his second wife (he was married four times...) moved to Brisbane where he took on a directorship at Queensland Newspapers. But what really distinguishes Michael is his entrepreneurship in the US film industry. **President/Chairman of a Los Angeles Film company** that specialises in action films. They produced about 12 movies a year, starring big names such as Jean-Claude van Damme and Johnny Depp. “There are an enormous number of people involved when making a movie” Michael elaborated, “from writers, to actors, directors, copyright lawyer... all with their own egos...” How to get a top star on your billboard? We got Bruce Lee to do a cameo. Then we could write ‘with Bruce Lee’”.



Want a good business tip? “Don't think a bad idea won't sell, just because YOU thought it wouldn't!” he said.

There was much more... sorry, you should have been there. But you have a good chance to meet Michael at our future meetings: he signed up to be a member of our group.

What else happened?



Grahame Moore has started another novel 'Island Sound', a ghost story. He also mentioned a US based company, SelfPubBookCovers.com that sells... book covers: In essence, they bought the art work rights for thousands of existing books. Now, you can buy the ready made artwork, just insert your title and your name. See the example on left. [*Sorry, gentlemen: I've had complaints that we never have any pictures of "interesting looking" men in our newsletter... Ed.*]

Grahame has also announced that **he wants to retire from his position as convenor** of our group at the end of June. Looking for an entrepreneurial individual who knows a lot of people in our type of creativity, who can run a meeting! To apply, simply reply to the email listed at the end of this newsletter. Generous compensation (no money, but lots of kudos, prestige, opportunity to meet lots of very interesting people)!

Congratulations to **Jack Kregas**, who accepted the bottle of red wine for his win of last month's 100 words competition (salesman, incongruous, withdraw). The entries were sent to all registered members. Jack is in the process of writing a book about a grandmother, instead of kidnapped girls. "She never killed anybody who didn't deserve it...", he quipped.

Jane Tarbuck received a personal letter of commendation from no other than Di Farmer, the Qld Minister for Education and Minister for Youth Justice, for her latest book '[Paige and Uki's Ocean Adventures](#)'. **Well done, Jane!** You deserve every accolade for your work.

Phil Bradbury, who was 'missing in action' for several months, joined us again. He has published his 22nd book. Together with **Livia York**, he also participated in the Somerset College Storyfest, combining with a student in a poetry competition. See separate story below.

And yes, with the risk of sounding repetitive: there was much more.

Can you improve on that?

How I envied them, these humans who, like bonobos, didn't confine sex to the times when conception could happen. That, I suddenly saw, made all the difference in the world. How happy they looked! How easy and gay the scene was! How much fun – no matter how comically, almost endearingly, protracted. (Not to boast, but I used to pride myself on never taking longer than fifteen seconds over a female's pleasure, managing it on several occasions, with sparkling technique and due consideration for my partner, to get it down to less than two or three.) James Lever – 'Me Cheeta' (the story told from the point of view of a Chimpanzee who was a star in the Hollywood movie industry)

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).

Team Livia York & Erin win Storyfest Poetry 'Gran-Slam'



Congratulations! Here is an explanation by Livia, of what it was all about: you will remember at the last HWC, both Phillip Bradbury and me telling about the Somerset Bookfest Festival at Somerset College held every year in March. This year as part of the festival there has been a poetry "Gran-Slam" between fifteen male and female teenagers students at the college, and fifteen seniors like Phillip and me, willing to pair up in writing a collaboration poem with the teenager assigned to each senior, and performing the poem together live on stage. The finale was last night at the Somerset College, the result was of my protégé, 16 y.o. young lady, Erin, and I were awarded the only trophy and prize. Should you want to know more about the Storyfest, visit the "Somerset College" website.

An excellent night was had by all in the audience of approximately two hundred people, and I am proud to have been part of such a prestigious event. I can send you photos if you like. Regards, Livia.

Upcoming Writers Competitions

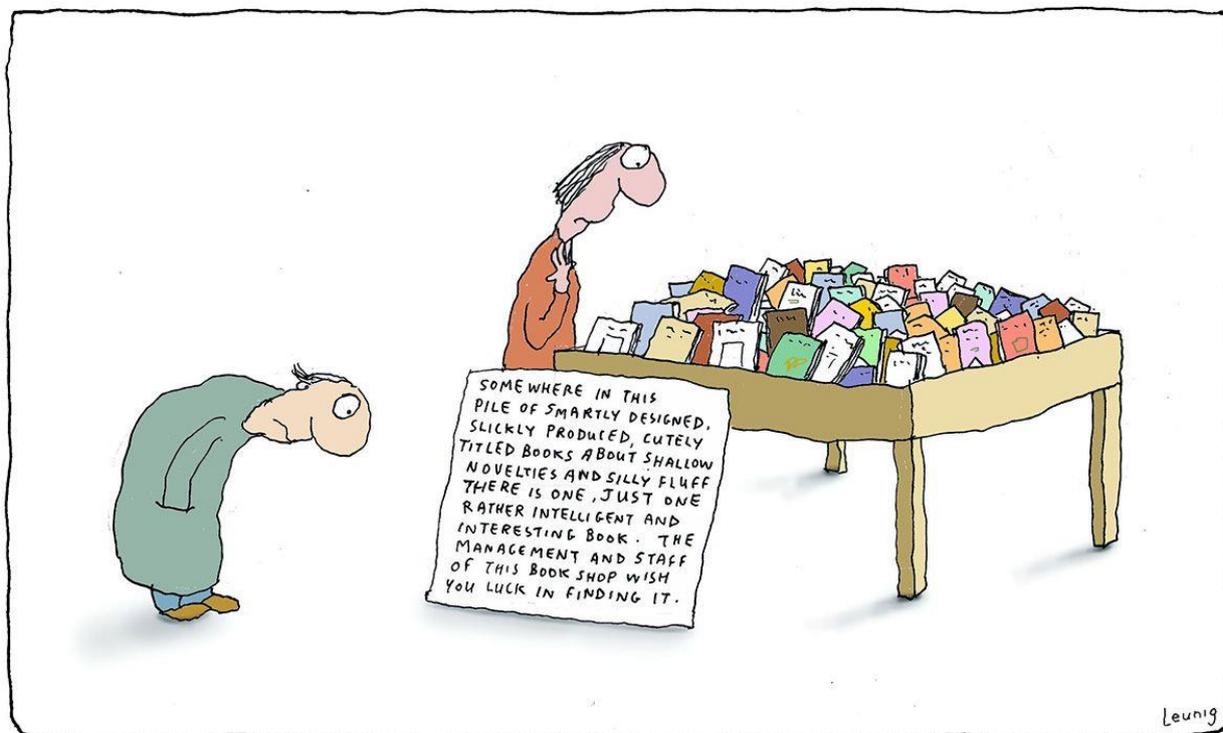
- a) **Helensvale Writers Group - Grahame Moore competition 'Fear'**. He is generously sponsoring a writing contest **for registered HWG members only**: 1st prize \$300, 2nd prize \$200. Fiction, maximum 1000 words. Only one requirement: must have the title (and, one assumes the theme) **'Fear'**. Judging will be done by an independent professional body. The authors will retain copyright.

Where "normal" writing competitions may have thousands of entries, require you to pay an entry fee and may be judged by god knows who, in this contest, the odds are very short indeed! You are just about guaranteed to get onto the shortlist. T&C's apply. Closing date: 30th June 2024. **You have 87 days. So, start writing now!**

- b) **Kellie Cox**, who is also the current President of the **Gold Coast Writers Association**, wants you to compete in their [current short story competition](#) "Make us fall in love with your main character". Max 1000 words. Closes Friday, 31st May 2024.
- c) [The Hope Prize Prize 2024](#) International competition - 2000 - 5000 words on a theme of hope and resilience. **\$10,000** first prize. **Closes 22nd March.**
- d) [The Creative Writing NZ Short Story Prize 2024](#) Here is your chance to show the Kiwis how it's done! Any genre - max 3000 words, first prize \$1,000. (This might be NZ dollars...) Closes 30th April 2024.
- e) There are another 280 (last time I looked) competitions on [reedsy.com](#) – There must be one or two that suit you!

See you at the Helensvale Library on the 19th April! Usual place, downstairs meeting room.
Start at 10:00 am sharp, please try to be on time, thank you!

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Once you have read the dictionary, every other book you read is just...
... a re-mix.