

The Write Stuff

Monthly Newsletter of the Helensvale Writers Group – May 2024

This month's meeting: two speakers

Instead of the traditional “what’ve you been up to?” bragging session, we are re-starting a new major segment ‘**Under the Spotlight**’, when one of our members briefly introduces himself and presents on a subject of his choice. (Remember, some time ago, Peter Loveday presented on Chat GPT, and Livia York on poetry?). Our convenor Grahame intends to make this a permanent feature. This month, **Ralph Mayn** has been put on the spot.

‘**Styling and Manuscript Layout**’ workshop: So you have spent months, nay, years, writing, rewriting, editing, revising... And then your publication looks... well, ordinary at best?

Following the coffee break, it’s back to work: **Stacey King** will run a training session on this important aspect. Although she has a longer version of what you should do, there isn’t sufficient time. Self-publishing enthusiasts, particularly, should attend, learn and follow. We all would like our publications to look professional, and Stacey wants to help. **Everyone who uses a computer to write, bring it along.** You then can **load her template** straight onto your computer. (Note: the library has the free WiFi ‘Surfnet’ available).



Last month's Guest Speaker: Andy McD



His full name is Andy McDermott. But there is another, well published English writer with the same name. “It even came about one day that I was speaking at a library, and they displayed material of the other one...” Andy quipped. What can one do? Change the official name to Andy McD! Andy is not just a successful author, he also runs his own self-publishing company - [click on this link](#) to access his website.

Andy explained his method to develop the story and plot: “When I write the first draft, all I do is getting the story out. I don’t worry about grammar or spelling. Then I put it away, perhaps for as much as a year. When re-reading it, it feels like somebody else had written it” he said. Then the hard work starts. “In my first book, the editor cut it from 150,000 words to just 75,000...” Only in the second draft do I worry about research and exactitude”, he stipulated, “I might do as many as 5 to 6 drafts before it even goes to an editor.”

It’s always about the character(s). Want a tip? “You cannot create the perfect protagonist. They always need to have a flaw.” *[I have many. I offer myself as a guinea pig! 😊 Ed.]*

Want another tip? Check out [KDP Select](#) (Kindle Direct Publishing). Too big a topic to discuss in this space - but navigate to the website and study it!.

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

What else happened?

As I wrote in the brief summary I sent out last month, one of our new members, **Jim Dickson**, declared that “writing my memoir had taken over my life!”. Well, yes, that’s the whole idea, Jim! **Ronaldo Rizzo** has not just one, but two stories on the go. **Ralph Mayn** (he’ll present this month) enthused about two books his son gifted him: George Saunders’ ‘Short Stories’ and [Michael Ondaatje’s ‘A Year of Last Things’](#), a book of superb poetry. **Sue Jones** is in full flight of writing her memoir ‘Boy and Girl on a Boat’... **Jack Kregas**, now that he has stopped playing poker, has written “20,000 words of violence”... **Lily Arthur** left her book in a cruise ship’s library. Result: Feedback, and her podcast has been nominated for a radio award in New York... **John Griffiths** experienced something not uncommon: “I wrote an entire chapter of my book, then decided it was all rubbish...” he said. **Stacey King** briefly presented a mini lesson on “how NOT to publish an e-book”... **Peter Loveday** lamented that, back in 1969, instructions on how to operate a TV could be written on the back of an envelope. And today... 😞 **Grahame Moore** has yet written another book... about ghosts. Watch this space: another competition is coming up after the ‘Fear’ contest. Guess what theme? See below.

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

The big Grahame Moore Challenge: “Fear”

\$300 1st prize, \$200 2nd prize. Only open to registered HWG members.

“Because I am trying to educate our members to sit and write a thousand words of fiction, and dangling a proverbial \$500.00 carrot in front of them “Grahame said. **“As I have told our group, ‘This is NOT a knitting club; we are all budding writers.’”**

Most competitions may have several thousands of submissions. This is only open to members of our group, you might have a good chance of picking up first or second prize. Submit up to **two stories** titled ‘Fear’. You may have a sub-title. Up to 1000 words each, including title). **Deadline: 30th June 2024.**

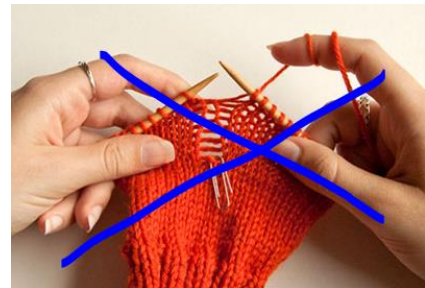
Send your submission to helensvalewriters@gmail.com, in Word, Google Doc or PDF format

Another competition is coming up, to coincide with Grahame’s birthday in August. Hint: the theme will be ‘**Was it a Ghost?**’ More details at the upcoming meeting and in next month’s newsletter, but start thinking about it now!

Can you improve on that?

Her scrutiny was disconcerting and faintly exciting, exposing me to something against which I had no defence and arousing in me the rare and rather delightful delusion of erotic expectation - I might have found myself suddenly naked and alone with her on the street. Alex Miller - ‘Landscape of Farewell’

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) **Helensvale Writers Group (that's us) - Grahame Moore competition 'Fear'** (see article above). He generously sponsors 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 60 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) **[Writers Digest Annual Writing Competition](#)**- **deadline is 5th June 2024**, so it's a bit late notice. Still: First prize is \$5,000, plus... plus. Click on the link for more details. Perhaps you might want to start working on next year's?

- d) 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 **16th of May!** Usual place, downstairs meeting room. Start at 10:00 am sharp, please try to be on time, thank you!

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"So, where do you come from?"

"I come from a place where we do not end our sentences with prepositions!"

"OK then, so where do you come from, smart arse?"

