**Abstract**

This paper will analyse the e-literacy factors which came into play when primary and secondary students participated in a 5 week English learning experience which combined online mentoring and classroom sessions. Gifted students from Years 5-8 in country and urban NSW participated in *Fiction with a twist*. This School Libraries and Information Literacy book rap targeted inferential reading and expressive writing skills, using fiction extracts as stimulus material. Inferential reading and expressive writing were seen as linked in a fundamental way, so that students who can make the connection may have a greater chance of writing in a vivid way.

John Larkin, Deborah Abela and James Roy were the online authors who mentored the students, offering suggestions to improve their writing. The paper will include a number of perspectives - the perspectives of the resource writer and blog facilitator [Lizzie Chase], the online author mentors [Deborah Abela and John Larkin], a participating teacher’s perspective [Dr Carl Leonard discussing student writing samples from Wirreanda PS] and a participating teacher librarian [Victor Davidson discussing comments from students at Birrong Girls HS].

A qualitative analysis of the experience will hypothesise about the relative importance of the following factors in an e-literacy context:

1. Background support for e-literacy: Teaching resources, models of writing, training workshops, blogging protocols
2. Face to face classroom teaching: The role of the classroom teachers and teacher librarians who participated
3. Peer-to-peer writing impacts: Patterns of content and style within the blog entries; real audiences and purposes for writing; discussion of selected students’ writing on the blog compared with other pieces they have written earlier
4. Online author mentoring strategies: Patterns of mentoring and author reflections
5. The authors’ workshops: Patterns of content and style in writing produced at the face to face workshops for selected students, following the blog.

Please consider the environment before printing this paper in its entirety since it has very extensive Appendices, from page 15 onwards.
E-literacy in action: book raps
Book raps are collaborative online projects which are highly engaging for students. They are ideally suited for e-literacy projects for reasons which will be outlined in this paper. During a rap, students discuss, plan and blog individual, group or class responses to higher order questions related to a particular book they have just read. Examples of Australian book raps for 2010 can be found at Education Queensland’s Online Literature Festival site. The School Libraries and Information Literacy Unit within the NSW Department of Education hosts current and archived book raps. The Unit invites schools to use and adapt its resource materials for their own context when creating learning sequences and blog posts. The Unit is responsive to user needs and feedback. In a rapidly evolving context, it seeks to harness emerging technologies and digital tools to support 21st century pedagogies.

Rap practicalities
School Libraries and Information Literacy Unit book raps are usually co-written with teachers/teacher librarians and often feature online authors as guests or mentors. Curriculum experts at the Curriculum K-12 Directorate review materials in each rap for curriculum alignment and relevance before they are published. Each rap has a facilitator who moderates all student comments for suitability before they go live. Raps have cyber safety guidelines to assist teachers and students in making posts in a safe learning context. They have a teacher page on the blog, so that ideas and questions can be shared. In schools, raps are often taught by teacher librarians in partnership with classroom teachers so that reading and writing can occur across a number of sessions a week. As a minimum, a rap can be done in one hour a week. Many schools use the rap materials in class without posting to the blog because they value the teaching and learning suggestions and resources. The NSW DET raps site had over 16 million hits in 2009 which included exploration and not just a one click look at the home page. By August 2010, the site had received over 11 million exploratory hits.

Fiction with a twist
Fiction with a twist was a School Libraries and Information Literacy book rap held over 5 weeks in Term 1, 2010. It was written for gifted students and enthusiastic readers and writers from Years 5-8 across NSW. The rap targeted inferential reading and expressive writing skills, using selected fiction extracts from high quality literature as stimulus material.

Mainstream classes also participated in the rap, not just students in Opportunity Classes in primary school, or advanced classes in high school. Giftedness is domain specific, so a number of students with advanced skills in Mathematics or Science, rather than English, participated in the rap.

The rap involved students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and there were many boys involved, which is not always the case with fiction writing projects. The comment statistics ranged from 284 posts in Week 1 to 110 posts in Week 5.

Fiction with a twist – participating schools
Primary schools: Students in Years 5 and 6 from these primary schools participated in the rap: Biraban Public School, Caddies Creek Public School, Glenhaven Public School, Penrith Public School, Wirreanda Public School, and St Ives North Public School in the pilot phase.
Secondary schools: Students in Years 7, 8 or 9 came from Birrong Girls High School, Bonnyrigg High School, Camden Haven High School, Elizabeth Macarthur High School, Kooringal High School, Merrylands High School, Moorebank High School and Westport High School.

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Partner schools: Having a partner school which is committed to writing on a blog early each week is an important ingredient for success because bloggers respond more eagerly if someone has already gone before them. Chase approached the teacher librarians at Birrong Girls High School, Caddies Creek Public School and Penrith Public School before the rap to see if their teacher librarians would like to bring collaborating classroom teachers on board. This is because the focus for this rap was going to be individual student writing and these teacher librarians had only participated in raps before which had used a whole class approach.

Promotion: Other schools joined the rap because they became aware of the training workshops, resources or rap topic through publicity such as the Curriculum K–12 home page notification, the raps home page notification, the Curriculum K–12 secondary English teachers e-newsletter or the NSWTL listserv for teacher librarians.

Rationale for writing the Fiction with a twist resource materials
The rap was created in response to NAPLAN results in many schools which show that inferential reading and descriptive writing pose problems for a significant number of students, including gifted students. The teaching ideas for the rap include lesson plans, an optional unit of work, fiction extracts, student writing samples and student worksheets and can be accessed online. As an English teacher, Chase had previously noticed an important link between reading/annotating high quality fiction and writing short pieces immediately afterwards. When students could discuss and restate the techniques used by writers to communicate implied meanings, they were primed to convey implied meanings in their own writing. Most important of all, lessons which built an immediate bridge between reading and writing also encouraged students to see themselves as writers of fiction with something unique to communicate.

Successful readers read between the lines and successful writers of fiction create a world of implied meanings
Reading between the lines is a foundational skill for confident readers and writers. We have seen that students who can track the implied meanings in a text they have just read may have a greater chance of writing in a vivid way, if a short writing task using the same writing techniques follows immediately afterwards. As an important corollary, the next time that students encounter these techniques as they read, they may recognise them because they have used them in their own expressive writing.

Fiction with a twist: teaching and learning sequence overview
Chase wrote the teaching resources for Fiction with a twist and wishes to acknowledge two people. Kate Grenville gave permission for quotations from The writing book: A workbook for fiction writers to be used in Fiction with a twist. Jennifer Starink from Mitchell High School co-wrote the teaching unit and its worksheets with Chase.

The five week sequence explored 5 common ways that implied meanings are communicated within fictional texts: character descriptions [through which students can show their own voices], actions, symbolic objects/places, dialogue [showing power dynamics] and visual/cultural references. In the final week of the blog, students

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contributed wrap up stories. This sequence is expressed as **Voice, Action, Symbols, Power** and **Stories** on the blog for *Fiction with a twist*. 5

**VOICE - Week 1 tasks:** Introduce yourself on the blog. Read **character sketches** [paragraphs introducing a character], then write a character sketch in which every detail carries a message about the essence of the person – every physical, outward detail must express something on the inside of the character. Optional: Create an online poster expressing who you are, using Glogster EDU.

**ACTION - Week 2 tasks:** Read paragraphs showing a character’s motivations through **action**, then write a paragraph showing a character through his/her actions – revealing feelings, reactions, personality, goals, strengths, weaknesses obliquely rather than through direct statement. Show don’t tell and use the five senses to back up the action. Write about the big issues affecting you and the world. Optional: Use Wordle to mindmap the issues.

**SYMBOLS - Week 3 tasks:** Read paragraphs featuring **symbolic places or objects**, then write using a symbolic place/object which links to a main theme, important memory, point of change, key character. Describe your 3 favourite novels. Optional: Use Storybird to express a theme symbolically.

**POWER - Week 4 tasks:** Read paragraphs showing **power dynamics through dialogue**, then write a dialogue which shows a power play between two characters where someone is more powerful. Create a blurb for a book you would like to see in print. Optional: Use Timetoast to show the timeline of events in your planned novel.

**VISUALS - Week 5 tasks:** Write a **short story** of your own OR use one of the 3 story starters provided. Think about TV shows with **popular culture references**, then explain one of your favourite references OR analyse a page from a picture book, explaining the **visual codes** you see. Optional: Use Kerpoo, Glogster EDU, Pixton or Benettonplay to create a visual popular culture reference of your own.

* For examples of student writing on the blog, please see the **Student Writing Appendix** at the conclusion of this paper.

**Session structure: Part 1 - Annotating high quality fiction extracts - word trails**

Each session started with the teacher and students reading selected fiction extracts aloud together. These extracts featured the writing focus of the week. Students were asked to use a coloured highlighter to highlight any words about a particular character, and to change colour when tracking words relating to a different character. Chase named these strings of words “word trails”. Each week, students were taught to ‘read between the lines’ by looking at the way in which character descriptions, actions, symbolic objects, dialogue, stock characters or genre codes point towards motivations, relationships and themes. Highlighting and discussing word trails was absolutely central to this process. For example, in Week 1, students discussed and annotated the character sketches below, before writing their own character sketch.

> Even though he’d worn his **best suit**, Argus always had an edge of **scruffiness** about him he couldn’t shake – a **gangliness** with permanently wind-rumpled hair. He leaned down and kissed her on both cheeks. ‘But your party has only just begun.’

> Amarella had wisps of long, flowing hair that she would try to sweep into a bun behind her, but small restless curls would always sneak out around her face. She had a soft smile and eyes so alive that Argus would swear he’d be kept awake at night by the light tucked inside them... 6

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Session structure: Part 2 - Focus questions and discussion
Focus questions asked by teachers after reading and annotating made sure that students discussed the **big picture impression** that the “word trail” had created and also provided **evidence** for their opinions.

**Big picture question:** What sort of character is Argus?
**Evidence question:** Give me the word trail which backs up your opinion.

It was important to move students beyond literal interpretations in both their reading and their writing. Teachers wanted answers that moved beyond Argus’ appearance to his **ESSENCE** as conveyed by his appearance [Argus is a kind, free spirit who is not worried about rules, how he looks or tidiness].

Session structure: Part 3 - From inferential reading to descriptive writing
Finally, each session ended with students writing a paragraph using the writing focus they had just learned about. Here is Year 5 Andrea’s character sketch, in which she shows her character Alfie’s essence through a word trail of details:

> Alfie was waiting, his hair uncombed, shirt untucked, and shoelaces untied. That was how he was. If you thought of any word meaning “neat” you could put an “un” in front of it and you could safely have found a way to describe him. The fringe he had unsuccessfully been trying to grow was sticking up in the air as though invisible hands were pulling it up. Alfie always wanted to have something to hide behind, to mask himself from the rest of the world. He was so unnoticed and silent he could have entered and left a room without anybody realising at all. Alfie was gifted, no doubt, but hardly anyone realised his potential. He knew that he had that, but whenever an opportunity rose, he would back away from it like a mouse shuffling away from a piece of cheese, but hallucinating it into a huge cat.7

Optional writing homework – writing using digital tools
A small number of students took up the homework option of writing with online digital tools such as **Storybird**, **Wordle** or **Glogster EDU**. Those that did so, enjoyed the introduction to a new way of writing:

> It was an exciting experience to become a better and more experienced writer, having to post a different style of writing each week was a fun task. It even introduced some new sites to me such as Wordle and Storybird. I learned a lot more writing skills and now am very happy with my writing. **Olivia, Wirreanda PS.**

Please see the **Digital Tools Appendix** at the conclusion of this paper.

Factors for success with e-literacy: Background support
**Resource allocation:** The *Fiction with a twist* rap was supported by significant budget, resource and time allocations provided by the School Libraries and Information Literacy Unit because this particular rap targeted specific curriculum priorities. These background support mechanisms contributed significantly to the success of the rap.

**Quality assurance:** As is customary for School Libraries and Information Literacy Unit raps, the relevant Unit from Curriculum K–12 [in this case the English Unit] critiqued and approved the teaching resources before publication. E-literacy projects benefit from a quality assurance process. Chase collected evaluations from students attending the two writing workshops and these provided suggestions for change and ideas for future raps.

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Pilot program: *Fiction with a twist* was piloted with a small group of Year 5 students at the end of 2009 at St Ives North Public School and Chase made changes to the teaching resources and simplified the blog layout as a result of feedback from students.

**Fiction extracts:** Participating teachers commented to Chase that the fiction extract and student writing sample booklets were extremely useful as they provided inspiration for student writing. The fiction extracts also provided opportunities for inferential reading using high quality literature [as opposed to reading comprehension paragraphs and answering multiple choice questions to boost inferential reading scores].

**Online teaching resources:** *Fiction with a twist* teaching resources included the 5 week lesson plan sequence, an additional unit of work and student worksheets to support planning and writing activities.

**Training workshops:** Two training workshops were held to ‘walk teachers through’ the *Fiction with a twist* resources [same program, two different venues]. These workshops were attended by teacher teams – the teacher librarian plus extra staff members. At the workshop, teachers were also trained in blogging protocols [no surnames for any student, no identifying details, students on a media ban are not to participate]. Not every school team attending the workshops participated in the blog – they wanted to teach the content but not to blog.

**Factors for success in e-literacy projects: A blended approach to delivery**

**Blended model:** The rap was successful because it blended face to face delivery and online delivery modes. Reflections by participating teachers, authors and students which follow show how important the face to face aspect of the rap was.

**Face to face sessions:** Teachers participating in the blog had varying amounts of time to work with students. Some schools used the materials for a whole term’s work in English lessons, other schools blogged during a one hour session each week.

**Moderation and online blogging protocols:** The conditions for safe and respectful blogging were listed on the blog, so that explicit support was provided. Chase was the rap facilitator who moderated the blog, making sure all posts were suitable before they went live. Please see the *Blogging Protocols Appendix*.

**Student writing models:** Each weekly student task began with a set of posts from the pilot school, so that students knew the requirements for the week and could be inspired by the writing.

**Online author mentoring:** On the blog, authors provided general writing tips for students and encouragement or specific suggestions for some students.

**Writing workshops:** Selected students attended a primary or secondary writing workshop as a follow up. Every participating school was invited and the schools selected their own students. Student evaluations show that this day was an inspiration for their writing.

**Face to face classroom teaching: The role of the classroom teachers and teacher librarians who participated**

In the following two sections of this paper, Carl Leonard reflects as a classroom teacher who was able to allocate substantial classroom time to the rap at Wirreanda Public School and Victor Davidson reflects as a teacher librarian participating in the rap in a small group context at Birrong Girls High School.

**Carl Leonard’s reflections – Wirreanda Public School - Discussion of selected students’ writing on the blog compared with other pieces they have written earlier**

**Context**

Wirreanda Public School has an enrolment of 526 students and 21 classes of parallel, multi-grade and selective compositions. Wirreanda has a diverse learning community and enjoys the support of a hard working parents and citizens committee. Wirreanda has many programs to support the needs of the children in its care - reading recovery, learning assistance mentoring project, gifted and talented student extension programs, band, choir, Tournament of the Minds, debating, NRMA Kids Design Challenge and
anti-bullying initiatives. The school has a dedicated teaching staff, providing quality welfare and learning programs.

Class 5/6L (class teacher Dr. Carl Leonard) is an extension class, with a current enrolment of 31 students, for Year 5 and 6 students who have demonstrated academic ability. This cohort pursues an academically focused curriculum with particular emphasis on extension and curriculum differentiation in literacy and numeracy linked through all key learning areas.

Program Implementation
The Fiction with a twist rap was implemented in a whole-class model by the classroom teacher during literacy sessions in Term 1, 2010. Supplementation was provided in fortnightly, one hour library sessions to allow students to complete blogging tasks via access to Library ICT resources.

Program Outcomes
Whilst implementation of the rap was both time consuming and demanding with a class of 31 students, enhancement in student writing skills quickly emerged and reinforced that this time was being well spent. Even reluctant writers began to gain a sense of ‘control’ of their ideas for writing generated from the rap tasks and demonstrated the ability to shape these ideas into coherent and refined writing using the rap scaffolds.

The improvement in writing quality produced by student participation in the rap was dramatic, as the first writing sample of the year, Holiday recount and post writing (responses to rap tasks) samples indicate. Please see the Wirreanda Public School Appendix at the conclusion of this paper for examples. Some positive features of the post samples include:

- Heightened ability to structure and include features of imaginative texts, such as characterisation, setting, tension, climax, chronology and time, narrative voice.
- The use of verbal, aural and visual techniques to create imaginative texts, such as generating a point of view, expressing emotion and feelings – ‘show not tell’, the ability to develop detailed and effective complications and drive these with dialogue.
- Heightened awareness of audience and efforts to engage the reader.
- Refined sentence usage and variation, paragraphing and organising of information / story content, and the use of effective beginnings and endings.
- Refined use of figurative language, evocative and emotive imagery, symbolic language and personification.
- An understanding of advanced / higher order writing techniques such as power and persuasion, visual codes, genres and intertextuality.

Comment
The Fiction with a twist rap is without doubt the most effective writing activity I have undertaken with a cohort of this nature. The improvement in student writing capacity was very much reflected in the 2010 NAPLAN results for the Year 5 students, with almost all students scoring in or beyond Band 8 for writing. Personal reward and enjoyment has also come from having the opportunity to read, mark and assess writing of this quality.

Victor Davidson - Reflections on Fiction with a twist at Birrong Girls High School

Context for team selection
Information literacy and narrative structure has been taught to Year 7 using story telling as integral to lesson delivery since 1998. The content went online in a blog format in 2007. When we were approached to participate in Fiction with a twist it was a perfect opportunity to refine aspects of the program with a small group. The identification of “gifted readers and writers” was a delicate procedure as students can respond in a variety of ways to being
named. The English teachers of the advanced Stage 4 students were asked to provide 9 names and thus the politics of selection were neutralised to a great degree. There was concern about when students would have time to participate but the daily Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) period of 35 minutes proved perfect as it can be a time of tedium and to escape it is a reward.

**The team discovers itself**
The students are of Vietnamese, Chinese, Urdu and Arabic heritage and while they may appear to be high achievers they are in fact socially conservative in the school yard. Their ICT skills are refined and all have online media presence. What they did need was a secure environment within which they could discover the rigours of self expression while also exploring the “twist”.

In order to engage the students in the project successfully a number of learning elements had to coalesce and while initially there was suspicion that the blog could be merely an affirmation exercise. The gathering of the team for the first few sessions involved awkwardness. The structure of the program and the variety of learning experiences challenged the students who soon became enthusiastic and cohesive.

In **Voice**, Zhi opened up on her favourite mid 20th century literature, and produced a tight character sketch. Betty was forthcoming on her love of fantasy and computer games. Similarly Kristine covered computer games and hinted at her love of horror. H@r33m and Haneen hinted at their cultural orientation but preferred their writing to tell their stories. Julie gave a simple thumbnail of a “typical” girl of her ilk, protective parents, MSN, YouTube, Facebook, fantasy and romance loving reader but also very engaged by Manga and Anime. In **Action, Symbols, Power** and **Visual Codes** the students continued to post carefully constructed pieces that were remarkably authentic and powerful. Please see the Birrong Girls High School Appendix at the conclusion of this paper for examples.

**The writing workshop excursion**
The journey from Birrong to Bonnyrigg on the map is not far but was quite an adventure. One student confessed she had helicopter parents and had never been on a train before. John Larkin and James Roy are superb storytellers and the students were treated to close-up performances which then reinforced some of the elements of narrative structure to which they had been exposed. The palpable awkwardness of the individual students dropped away when narratives from masters were played out in front of them. Later, the nervousness of the moment was swallowed up in the memory of the day.

**Peppercorns feat. Nugget Society**
One demonstration of commitment to the writing workshop was that students missed the school photograph day. This was compensated for by a follow up photo day where the team got to name themselves, a long and drawn out process but both significant and a good augury. “Nugget” for Nguyen, “feat.” to reference musical partnership, “Peppercorns” to indicate non-Vietnamese but also non-Anglo participants. With a sophisticated name the future was assured and these students have continued to blog with great enthusiasm.

**Beyond Fiction with a twist: Fantasy Fan Fiction using BlogED**
A new blog on Fantasy Fan Fiction arose as a natural follow-up to *Fiction with a twist* and lifted the team to a new level. Students have created short stories and have commented extensively on each other’s work. The critiques have developed into cryptic abbreviations

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using all the punctuation potentials that are currently morphing from SMS and FB speak. Most amusing of all have been in-depth and edgy studies of popular fantasy series such as Harry Potter and Twilight.

At this stage all the stories have been turned into MP3s as part of a multimodal approach to authoring and sharing texts. Students are considering Manga and Anime as a natural means of taking the next step and short videos are also likely. In Term 4 2010 the team will have an excursion to the city to visit the State Library, the Opera House and some specialist bookstores. Without needing to articulate it too precisely it is obvious that a dynamic pluralist community has taken on a life of its own and the members have a sense of belonging and purpose.

**Fiction with a twist: authors as mentors**

The blended mode of delivery was a definite plus for students with a number of students attending writing workshops at Bonnyrigg High School after the rap ended and all students being taught by classroom teachers and/or teacher librarians during the rap. The two writing workshops catered for primary and secondary students separately and approximately 20 students attended each day, selected by their teachers as students who were passionate about writing.

**Online author mentoring strategies: Patterns of mentoring**

The huge number of posts on the blog made it unwieldy at times for the online authors to interact with the student writers. *Fiction with a twist* was fortunate to have 3 authors with complementary mentoring styles. They had the same messages to communicate about LESS IS MORE, SHOWING and not telling, re-writing to sharpen focus and the power of individual voices. Each author commented on various students’ work, reacting to it, praising ideas or making suggestions. John Larkin gave his top 10 tips for writing and shared a short story as a model. Deb Abela gave a lot of specific feedback to a large number of students, as well as providing general comments about the craft of writing. James Roy was humorous and shared his personal take on writing and books. Deb and James provided optional story starters for the Week 5 task. Please see the *Online Authors Appendix* at the conclusion of this paper for examples.

**Deb Abela and John Larkin reflect below on their experiences as online authors for Fiction with a twist.**

**Deb Abela’s reflections**

I find it fascinating being involved in new ways of communicating with students when talking about books and writing and in the ten years that I have been writing, the ways of reaching students has become so much more exciting. I enjoy demystifying the persona of the author and making it a real, tangible career choice for kids as long as they are also prepared to practise, work hard and be completely passionate about what they are doing. Blogging with the students with regards to their work went to achieving that. The kids not only get to write and publish their work, but they also get to have their audience read and comment on what they have created. It was a brilliant way to ‘meet’ with the students in a non-confrontational way. Some students find reading their stories aloud quite frightening, but online, they can sit before their computer and not have to feel so exposed.

The downside about blogging with the students is that it isn’t immediate. Unless we all happen to be online at the same time, the lag in comments being read creates a feeling of disconnection. It was hard writing a comment to a student’s writing and not knowing if they would read it or if they would ‘read’ the tone in the way in which it was written. I tried to be careful not to write in a way that may be construed as a negative comment rather than as constructive criticism.
Following up the online blogging with face-to-face workshops, however, is brilliant! And creates a wonderful opportunity to really connect with the students in a more complete way of communicating. The students already have formed a kind of relationship with the authors online and so can feel confident that the learning environment is safe, supportive and full of learning potential. But this can be taken much further in person. The author can have the chance to look at the strengths and weaknesses of the writing and create activities that are streamlined for that group of students. Meeting face-to-face is also a great way to reinforce what the author commented on online and, of course, the kids get to meet someone who makes a living out of writing: something they hopefully aspire to and feel very passionate about.

I found the combined activities of online blogging and face-to-face workshops extremely rewarding and beneficial and have had contact with students since who really enjoyed the chance to engage in both.

**John Larkin’s reflections**

One of the greatest advances of the internet age is that anyone who has an opinion, idea or thought can get it out there. This is also one of its greatest drawbacks. People are tweeting, blogging, texting and MSNing what they had for breakfast. It’s surely only a matter of time before someone takes their laptop or mobile into the toilet and shares their morning bowel movement with the world. And what’s more there will doubtless be a post-post-modern-deconstructionist theory with associated papers, grants and conference junkets as to why this is valid.

Print media have always operated and will continue to operate as a filter. It’s the function of editors and publishers to separate the wheat from the chaff and produce books, newspapers, journals and so forth of the highest quality. The internet has removed this filtration process. Recently in America (where else?) a writer who had failed to attract the interest of either agents or publishers with his novel, possibly because it wasn’t very good, decided to release the work on Twitter, one tweet (i.e. 140 characters) at a time. Just because you can, doesn’t mean you should.

To write well - to write something that someone might want to read - takes years of dedication, of starving in the proverbial garret, of staring at a blank piece of paper (or screen) “until your forehead bleeds an idea” (as the late Douglas Adams put it), all of which takes time. Thomas Edison's hackneyed cliché about genius being “One percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration” exists for a very good reason. It’s right. This concept is discussed at length in Malcolm Gladwell’s book *Outliers*, so I won’t press the point here other than to opine that 10,000 hours seems about right.

Although I can’t be certain, I’m fairly positive that Jane Austen didn’t write the immortal opening to *Pride and Prejudice* while sitting on the toilet (sorry, lavatory) while tweeting about the yummy scones and cakes she’d had for high tea, before signing off with a cheery if dyslexic CUL8R. No. She would have wandered around her drawing room for days, made several false starts, she may have even knocked her head ever so gently against the wall and then when she sat down to write she would have agonised over every syllable, worked and reworked the cadence until it was perfect, all while reciting the writer’s mantra: “Good writing isn’t written, it’s rewritten.”

I approached the blogging aspect of this program with a similar attitude and more than a little trepidation. I didn’t relish the idea of reading work that was submitted interactively, with no reworking, editing, polishing, or pause for thought. And while there was some very good writing in the blog, it did feel as though I had to wade through rather a lot of thoughts, ideas and rough first drafts before I got to it. In the spirit of walking the walk my responses and teaching points were not blogged but written in Word (edited, polished and reworked, with
pause for thought) and then pasted into the blog before being edited, polished and reworked again prior to submission. I also rather got the feeling that because blogging is more a writer’s than a reader’s forum, any teaching points that I was making were disappearing into a sort of cyber abyss. I know that the organiser, Elizabeth Chase, was reading the writers’ responses and teaching points, but I saw no evidence that any of the students were.

And so to the workshops. I am passionate to the point of hyperventilation about writing and its teaching, which is another reason why I didn’t really enjoy the blogging aspect of this program. The students and teachers were able to tap into the enthusiasm that the writers (Deb Abela, James Roy and myself) brought to the workshops. That same enthusiasm doesn’t come across in a blog, even if you write the entire response in *ITALICS* with your caps lock on.

The beauty of face to face teaching (and teaching writing is still very much chalk and talk) is that you can see the students’ eyes light up when they suddenly get a point that you’re making. As a teacher, I live for those light bulb moments and there were plenty of them in the workshops.

Having done the requisite 10,000 hours, writers have, almost by osmosis, accumulated a vast amount of knowledge on our craft and what’s more we are keen to share it with students and teachers. The only downside is that, in our outcome driven syllabus, any workshops that we give we are generally at gentle loggerheads with the teachers who, by curriculum necessity, want the students produce written work while we’re with them. I always feel terribly guilty when I run a workshop and the students spend about half the time writing. As James Roy says, “Schools shouldn’t be paying us to watch the students write.”

Writing workshops are a wonderful opportunity for students and teachers to learn the craft from professional authors. Surely our time would be better served by spending the entire time teaching and discussing the technical aspects of writing and the indefinable aspects of creativity, than it would observing students engaged in their own.

Call me a luddite if you will, call me archaic, but I was pleased when the blogging component of this program was over and we could get down to some real teaching in the classroom because that’s when I felt the real work began.

**The writing workshops: Patterns of content and style in writing produced at the face to face workshops for selected students, following the blog.**

At the secondary students’ writing workshop, John Larkin and James Roy spoke about writing. James and John asked the students to do speed writing using real life experiences: *When I was younger/Outside my window/What makes me angry.*

At the primary students writing workshop, John Larkin and Deb Abela spoke about writing. John led students through a writing process using a sequence of 10 prompts to support evocative writing. Deb showed students how to ask *What if?* to find ideas for stories. They wrote about *X opened his/her eyes and saw...* She explained how to show a character through dialogue, description and action. Students wrote about *S/he walked into the room and...* Please see the Writing Workshops Appendix at the conclusion of this paper for student writing samples and their comments about the workshops.

The writing tasks by their nature tended to produce very different patterns of content and style. These are described below.

**Speed writing:** The speed writing pieces feature events from everyday life, conflicts with family and friends, memories and familiar landscapes. Their style is generally direct with
individual, authentic voices speaking from the heart. Please see the Speed Writing Appendix at the conclusion of this paper for examples.

10 sentences writing: The content was established by John as being an impending reunion of a young adult with an absent parent after many years of separation. These pieces of writing are more literary in style and have a focus on building a mood through the five senses as an event unfolds for a protagonist.

What if? writing: The content was very varied in these pieces, with Deb encouraging speculative planning and imaginative writing. Characterisation was a major focus of the second task, with students creating a character through dialogue, action and description.

Student reflections about participating in Fiction with a twist
Individual written student evaluations were collected from participants at the primary and secondary writing workshops which followed the rap. In addition, students from Glenhaven Public School completed written evaluations which were sent to Chase.

An opportunity to learn and real audiences and purposes for writing: Contrary to John’s fears, students did very much appreciate the opportunity to read feedback by authors and to read each others’ work. They relished having gained new skills in writing and their confidence was generally raised. For some students, the blog provided an opportunity to air their feelings and express themselves in a way that they had not experienced before. A process which can be solitary was a communal one and a number of students commented on the cyber safe environment that the blog provided for communication. Please see the Evaluation Appendix and Audience Awareness Appendix at the conclusion of this paper for examples.

Peer-to-peer writing impacts: Patterns of content and style within the blog entries

Big picture patterns in the writing
• Homage fiction: The scenarios are often shown using “genre stereotypical” characters, events and physical reactions: genres include horror, melodrama, gothic, crime, sports, science fiction, action, romance, school yard, fantasy, vampire, werewolf, spy, war, rock star, comedy, gritty realism, ballet school fiction. Genre inspired writing is a great starting place to build student confidence, pleasure and fluency.
• Visual: The writing shows the huge impact of movies – often scenes are very visual
• U.S. culture: The writing shows the cultural impact of books, TV shows and movies from the U.S. [vocabulary such as “mall”]
• Gender: Story topics are often those “traditionally” favoured by each gender, although some girl authors do feature male protagonists and heroics and some boys do write about relationships, occasionally featuring a female protagonist [eg boys – war scenes, action; girls – relationships, ballet]
• Experiencing challenges and rites of passage: A number of stories feature protagonists who are older than the authors are, facing their fears, facing enemies or dying. The issues-based writing [I believe…] shows that adolescent students care about the environment, poverty and war, as well as issues of belonging, exclusion, family, friendship, personal identity and tribal affiliation with their own age group.
• Genre voice: Many students are writing confidently using a genre voice – a few students have written with a distinctive voice of their own.
• Audience awareness: The writing may be clichéd at times but students have understood the need as writers to hook the reader, create suspense, and show what the character sees and feels.
• Writing purposes: Some students have understood that writing is about creating other worlds and enchanting, energising, persuading or goading readers. Others have written for the purpose of self-expression. A third group has “done” the blog for school.
Writing expression patterns in the writing

- **In the moment:** Students have been able to “slow” down their writing to feature the inner sensations/reactions of the main character and not just to list plot events.
- **Five senses:** To achieve this, students have often used the 5 senses and expressive verbs. However, “tell” not show is still prevalent as an issue.
- **Shared language of physicality** in the blog frequently builds a feeling of suspense, adrenalin or fear – thumping heart, sweaty skin, tears of anguish, taste of death. Students created a sense of shared intensity, fear or grief, with a minority of students exploring comic potential through slapstick or a wise guy protagonist.
- **Process of expression:** A number of students have concentrated on expressing their ideas in a first draft as they wrote to the blog, rather than polishing them to prune, rework ideas, or correct grammatical/punctuation errors. The blog facilitator copy edited the punctuation and grammar mistakes.
- **Overwriting:** Students sometimes overuse adverbs or adjectives when the message is already clear. This may be linked to a “parts of speech” focus for NAPLAN.
- **Vivid similes or metaphors:** While metaphors used are largely standard, the occasional vivid simile or metaphor lights up a paragraph. Please see the Vivid Writing Appendix for examples selected by Chase which are naturally very subjective.

Rap facilitator reflections on participating in *Fiction with a twist*

Moderating the blog was an enjoyable and exciting experience because so many students were clearly feeling confident and expressive. It required a significant amount of time, up to 2 hours a day, to read all the posts, copy edit any errors and remove identifying family details for cyber safety reasons. Please see the Facilitator Comments Appendix. Please also see the Copy Editing Appendix for common errors.

**Opinion tasks:** The 10 things I believe task was a simple and effective structure for students to express their opinions about big ideas. The book recommendations were interesting to read and gave a window into student reading habits. Please see the 10 Things Appendix.

**Symbols writing:** The symbol writing was generally highly stylised. Many students did not grasp the metaphorical nature of the task and wrote about exciting events which did not have a symbolic dimension. Teaching resources about symbols would need to be updated and made more explicit in a future blog.

**Blurb task:** The structure of a blurb was unclear for some students, which was surprising because this task is a common one at school. Some wrote extracts, not book blurbs. Please see the Blurs Appendix.

**Digital tool tasks:** Time did not permit most students to undertake the homework writing, using digital tools. Students who did use them did not always polish their work before publishing it. This is a point which needs to be stressed to students – polish before publishing.

**Interaction requests:** For a future blog, it would create a far more interactive blogging environment if students are asked to find one sentence each week which they have enjoyed reading and acknowledge it in their post. For example: Sadie, I really liked your words: “…….”

**Streamline the blog:** The blog’s Week 5 task should only be a wrap up story. Time worked against students analysing illustrations or analysing TV shows for popular culture references and intertextuality. In any case, students generally did not understand how to analyse these elements. This indicates that the associated teaching resources were not explicit enough.

**Time constraints:** The rap ideally required more than one hour per week, which was the minimum suggested time. If there is only hour a week to blog, teaching, thinking and discussion time can be compromised. Please see the Penrith Public School Appendix.

**Adaptability for school teaching priorities:** *Fiction with a twist* teaching resources have been used as the basis for whole school professional development at Springwood Public...
School and this contributed to improved NAPLAN results in the 2010 narrative writing task. Please see the Springwood Public School Appendix.

In conclusion
Fiction with a twist was a successful e-literacy project hosted by the School Libraries and Information Literacy Unit which owed its success to thorough resourcing, high quality literature extracts, explicit teaching resources, a blend of face to face and online interactions, committed teachers and teacher librarians, enthusiastic student writers and authors who mentored participants during the rap and at writing workshops. Rap moderation created a cyber safe environment for students. Suggestions for change would include streamlining the rap to include less content in the latter stages, and updating some teaching materials to make them more explicit.

Bibliography
Appendices: Fiction with a twist: E-literacy in action

Extracts

Download the complete Appendix booklet at


Visit the student blog at http://rapblog8.edublogs.org
Contents Page

Student Writing Appendix
Character sketches - p. 17
Actions – p. 20
Symbols – p. 24
Dialogue – p. 29
Stories – p. 32

Digital Tools Appendix
Glogster EDU – p. 46
Wordle – p. 47
Storybird – p. 47
Timetoast – p. 48

Blogging Protocols Appendix – p. 51
Wirreanda Public School Appendix - p. 53
Birrong Girls High School Appendix- p. 57

Online Authors Appendix - p. 61
John Larkin – p. 62
James Roy – p. 64
Deb Abela – p. 65

Writing Workshops Appendix – p. 68
10 sentences writing – p. 69
What John Larkin said about writing – p. 70
‘Opened eyes and saw’ writing – p. 71
‘Walked into room’ writing – p. 72
What Deb Abela said about writing – p. 72
Speed writing – p. 73

Evaluation Appendix
Primary students – p. 75
Secondary students – p. 75

Audience Awareness Appendix
Primary students – p. 76
Secondary students – p. 77
Vivid Writing Appendix- p. 78
Facilitator Comments Appendix – p. 79

Copy Editing Appendix – p. 80
10 Things I Believe Appendix – p. 80
Blurbs Appendix - p. 82

Penrith Public School Appendix- p. 83
Springwood Public School Appendix – p. 84

Student Writing Appendix – Week 1 – Character sketches
Week 1: Voice - Students introduce themselves and write character sketches

There were 284 posts in Week 1.

Chase intended that the personal introductions in Week 1 would fulfil these functions:

1. Allow students the option to choose and upload their own avatar if they wished [only two students did, Squiby and Silver dragon, the rest accepted the blog generated avatars]
2. Allow students the option to choose a nickname or nom de plume reflecting who they are
3. Allow students to begin where they feel confident – with their own life
4. Encourage individual student voices to appear
5. Build a sense of belonging and community among blog members
6. Provide an authentic audience for student writing
7. Give students another opportunity to write a character sketch (which was the writing task for the week)

Student writing models each week

Chase piloted Fiction with a twist in Term 4, 2009, and used student responses from the pilot blog as the first blog comments in Fiction with a twist 2010 blog. This was intended:

1. To demonstrate how the multi-task comments should be tackled
2. To provide inspiration and challenge by featuring writing of a high standard
3. To provide practical examples for hesitant students to use as models

Here is the first entry on the blog which came from the pilot program:

Andrea Says:

Hi, my name is Andrea. My favourite colour is green. I like animals, especially hamsters, and DS games. I enjoy collecting those tiny notebooks with the button clasp and smiggle aliens. My hobbies include reading, writing, handball, and spending time with friends (but not at the same time). I love pulling things apart and fixing things, but not the things I take apart. When I grow up, I want to be an architect (maybe). I hate wearing pigtails and one thing I definitely am NOT organised. I love to laugh and play games on my DSi (esp. Mario Party). My name means brave, which I probably am not. I’m not very good at athletics, but once there was a spider on my leg and I ran really fast ten thousand times around the front yard. Oh yes, I forgot to say, I really like exaggerating things.

My character sketch:

Alfie was waiting, his hair uncombed, shirt untucked, and shoelaces untied. That was how he was. If you thought of any word meaning “neat” you could put an “un” in front of it and you could safely have found a way to describe him. The fringe he had unsuccessfully been Trying to grow was sticking up in the air as though invisible hands were pulling it up. Alfie always wanted to have something to hide behind, to mask himself from the rest of the world. He was so unnoticed and silent he could have entered and left a room without anybody realising at all. Alfie was gifted, no doubt, but hardly anyone realised his potential. He knew that he had that, but whenever an opportunity rose, he would back away from it like a mouse shuffling away from a piece of cheese, but hallucinating it into a huge cat.
SUP? My name is Ingrid but you can call me NRD… it’s a nickname my friends gave me coz iNgRiD – yeah – so anyway I am 11 years old. Obviously, I’m in Year 6! I love to write stuff and I’ve looked at some other people’s things and I really like them!

Ok, anyway, I’ll start now…
He stood in the door way. Quite short. He had grey hair that was slowly falling out. He was the type of person that you feared, the type of person that made you shudder if someone even said his name. He wore a sharply pressed black suit and a red tie hidden under his jacket. In his thin bony left hand he clutched a black notebook that was filled with pages and pages of his messy sharp handwriting that no one but him could read. In his right hand he held tightly a black ink pen that had a striking gold clicker, which he clicked up and down as he strode over to me. Upon his nose was a pair of thick glasses with brown frames that he took off and rubbed with a royal blue handkerchief then carefully placed them precisely back on his pointed nose, hiding his muddy brown eyes once again.

My name is Daniel, I’m fourteen and currently in Year 9. I live in a one storey house and I have one sister who is 18. I have two pets – 1 dog named Pixie and one cat called Millie. I’m extremely skinny and fairly tall for my age. Most people mistake me for a 15-16 year old. I’m also working on growing a beard to suit my nickname that my mate Jamie gave me – which is the Bearded ogre. Did I mention I love red jelly? You’re probably thinking that was random and that’s how most people see me – as a random guy – but I just think of myself as an open minded guy.

I live for my sports – they have always been a huge part of my life, especially soccer. This is currently my 9th year playing football. I am now starting my second year in a representative team. My dream is to be a professional player. I have this dream because I love the game of football. When I step onto the pitch it’s as though all my problems and troubling thoughts vanish and I’m in my own world for 70 minutes. It’s a breath taking experience.

Hi! My name is Nathan, I’m 13 and I like playing electronic games like X-box etc. I also enjoy playing sport and my favourite subjects are Music, History, PE, Maths and DT. My favourite colours are purple and green. At school I am currently playing keyboard. I’m not sure what I am going to do when I grow up.

My favourite movies are the Harry Potter series and The Pink Panther series. One of my favourite book series is The Scott Henderson Series. I enjoy drawing (I am not very good at it though). I also enjoy to write every now and then. The one thing I hate about school is photo day. My favourite sports are basketball and soccer. I love going to the movies and talking to my friends on the weekend. My favourite board games are: Checkers, chess and monopoly. I am fascinated with Greek mythology. My favourite genres are Comedy, Adventure and Action.

Bill tightened the final screw on the car. He rose up from the ground and felt satisfied with himself. Bill was in his mid 40s with a large build. His hands were all black from the grease on the car, his blue overalls no longer looked blue, they were covered in grease just like his
Boots, hat and face. It was obvious he was a mechanic. His eyes were a pale blue colour and he hardly had any hair on his head. He was a kind man who was respected by everyone in the town. Bill enjoyed his job, he always had a smile on his face and always tried his best to fix everyone’s vehicles. Bill was a single man who lived with a few out of control room mates. He wasn’t rich but he wasn’t poor.

Arvan [nom de plume] Says:
Sometimes I feel that life isn’t fair, it’s not, that’s the truth. But you have to adapt and that’s what I’ve been doing for most of my life. My name is Arvan and I’ve lived in Australia for 5 years. I wouldn’t say I’m a sports jock and I’m not fit as a fiddle. I live on the bulky side of life but I’m a black tip at Tae Kwon Do and I play tennis. I could not possibly fathom my skill level as I get better each week.

I value friendship as it is one of the most important aspects of life. My family are great, in one sense, yet painful in another because we argue a lot. My life’s calling is to be a lawyer and if that is God’s will, it shall be done. Life isn’t fair, that’s the truth, but you have to adapt and that’s what I have done for most of my life. My name is Arvan and this is my life.

Allaha Says:
Silence. That is how Sarah’s life is. Sarah is a quiet student who doesn’t talk much. She has dark circles around her eyes. It seems as if she hasn’t slept for days. Her dry, cracked lips are always twisted into either a smirk or mysterious smile. Everyone at school thinks that she is weird as she is constantly talking to herself and is anti-social. Some people feel sorry for her, yet they do nothing about the situation. Sarah just wishes that everyone would stop staring at her and would consider her as a normal human, though she doesn’t say a word.
Sarah’s silence is powerful.

Pattern of responses in the introductions
Students often included this information:
• Their name, nickname, age and year at school [school name was removed]
• Their friends’ names and nicknames
• Their family members’ names [removed]
• Funny [or stressed out] stories about annoying siblings [removed]
• The names of their pets
• Their favourite colour or number
• The meaning of their name
• Their birth month [and sometimes their star sign]
• Favourite books
• Favourite TV shows
• Their favourite hobbies – often sport or playing computer games
• What they would like to do when they grow up
• Fears – such as a fear of spiders

Less commonly, they mentioned more private fears and concerns. There was a real joy in being part of a group of people who love books and who like to write.
Students Writing Appendix – Week 2 - Action

Week 2 involved students describing a character through actions. They also wrote about the big issues facing them and facing the world. There were 226 posts in Week 2 of the blog.

Vanessa and Eeeshaa’s posts were models for students – they came from the pilot blog.

Vanessa Says:

The BIG issues for me are things to do with humanity, like poverty, war, abuse and health. Lots of people are worried about global warming and how it’s going to affect us in 50 years time, but what about what’s happening to people now? Shouldn’t we be thinking about now instead of next?

Domestic violence and cruelty are affecting children and adults in homes everywhere. For a lot of people, home isn’t where you can go at the end of the day and rest and feel safe, but home is where they are least comfortable, safe and happy. What are we doing to fight this? It seems the government care more about what WILL happen, instead of what IS.

Another problem is our health system. It is worsening and this is affecting the general population. Some patients have died waiting in emergency and for surgery. In the U.S., the public have to wait up to 3 hours just to see a general practitioner about a simple cold. Is it really good enough to have to risk people’s lives?

We should be prioritising what we think is most important, and we’re not doing that well. It’s NOW or NEVER.

My character in action:

Mika travelled with surreal ability, her body was as flexible as a rubber band, but if it was stretched too far it would snap back. Her feet were like her hands as she grappled with the trapeze rope and hung upside down, metres in the air above the old stage. Mika’s swift movements transported her from the ground to the sky, hanging by one delicate hand on a rope. The Ringmaster yelled applause and encouragement as he stood enthusiastically on top of an audience seat.

She swung back and forth like a grandfather clock, the wood creaking fearfully under her weight. The wind rushed past her face as she flung her petite body into the air and landed like a graceful cat on her feet and delicately bowed to the invisible audience. The Ringmaster shouted, ‘Hurrah! Mika, you’re getting better!’, as she beamed happily.

Eeeshaa Says:

If I were to list all the big issues in the world today I would be here for hours, even if I listed only things which only really affected me, I would still be here for hours. So I will just list two: abuse and war. I have listed these two issues, because they represent the two main types of child-affected problems: short-term, and long-term. Abuse first. Abuse is becoming really common nowadays, and it is becoming scarcely common for children to be abused. Hearing all these stories, I’ll admit, I am getting very scared about everything that is going on around me, it is like my generation is the generation of Subtle Danger.
War is my second problem that I named. One may wonder why would someone name this problem, especially a child, who is born into a country where there is no war? The reason I worry is this: What if it spreads? What if, it spreads to Australian shores, or Indian ones? This is the reason I worry, I worry for everyone else who gets affected by war. In school, we are told, on Remembrance Day, to remember those who have lost their lives fighting for Australia. But the mothers, sons, fathers, brothers, daughters and sisters whose lives have been snatched by war, are not necessarily from Australia. When I remember people who have gone, I think about every unnecessary life that is lost, and in my mind I weep, for these people were people like you and me, who were just placed in circumstances, where most of the world has never had to go, including myself. If all the people who had died in wars in the last two decades were counted, they would probably equal at least three fifths of the world’s population, and I do not want my loved ones to join that tally.

I went on to Wordle to express my ideas about abuse. Here is the link:  
http://www.wordle.net/show/wrdl/1325169/Big_Problems%3A_Abuse

Characters in action:

Mallicent Abhorra shouted mercilessly at her husband, who in her defence, was screaming just as loudly, & as unceasingly as she did. Both were engaged in a 3 day old verbal conflict, one of many which had ensued (since) their daughter Melina’s birth.

This same daughter crouched silently, waiting & watching, delaying the moment when she would reveal herself, for as long as possible, as she did not want the torrent of unkind words currently being aimed at her father to find a new target: her.

Suddenly Melina’s father, Hamish Abhorra, noticed his daughter hiding behind the couch, & called out in a tired voice: “Melina. Come here, child. What is it?” “I, I, I am sorry, Da. I just need this note signed?” “Ah, child, can’t you see your mother & I are busy? Come here, I’ll sign it!” “Thank you, Da,” replied Melina in her meekest voice. “Harumph!” came a voice. “Stupid chit, get out of her!!!” Melina ran, away from her parents, as behind her, the temporarily abandoned argument resumed. “Oh I hate this world, I really, truly hate it!”

Paige Says:

Ten things I know are true
  o I believe: The world could be a better place
  o I know that: People are destroying the world by polluting the environment and driving certain animals almost to extinction
  o I value: The places where I feel safe
  o I care about: The world and my family and the way they see things
  o I treasure: The things and people I care about/ my beliefs and thoughts
  o I feel strongly about: The way people are destroying the world and most don’t even know it – they should be made to realise.
  o I declare that: The Indigenous people treat the world in a much better way
  o I hope that: People can fix their problems and make peace with each other
  o I work hard in my own life to: Make myself proud and happier
  o The world would be a better place if we all: Think positive
My Character in action:

Stella was a sporty girl who enjoyed having fun, she was best at Gymnastics and Dancing. Her strength and flexibility enabled her to do well in most sporting events at school. Stella was next in line to jump, the nerves and adrenalin gushed through her body as she stood there ready to run and jump through the air and over the pole, she would land on the mat and win victory over all the other girls once again. At least she hoped she would. Her breath steamed through her clenched shut teeth and turned into mist as it collided with the cold morning air. Her strong limbs were shaking as she took her place at the front of the high jump line. “When you’re ready”, said the old but fit gym instructor. As Stella readied herself for the jump she took one last breath and ran in a diagonal line straight towards the jump. The adrenalin rushed through her nervous body as she ran, her right leg lifted to scissor over the 1.5m high jump. She twisted and turned, she jumped for her life….. Stella Yarrowman had made the jump once again.

lilmizchatterbox515 Says:

The Big Issues:
Ten things I know are true:
• I believe that we should all be able to speak our minds.
• I know that the world is becoming a better place.
• I value my friends and family.
• I care about people around me.
• I treasure my memories.
• I feel strongly about helping people who need help.
• I declare that women should be equal to men.
• I hope that one day we can all cooperate and live peacefully.
• I work hard in my own life to achieve the best possible results.
• The world would be a better place if we all learnt to value each others’ differences.

Character in action:
Adrenaline pulsed through me as I pushed my legs further. Pushing my limitations as I ran past the life I once knew. The scenery blurred as I ran and ran. My face was covered with sweat and tears were spilling out of my eyes. I needed to escape.

So here I was, running away from my home, from my parents, and from my life. My attention was so focused on the events which had occurred just 2 hours ago that I didn't notice the car that came whirling past me.

There I stood in the middle of the road. Cars rushed past with drivers yelling out their windows. I didn’t care – it was just what I wanted - to be yelled at. I couldn’t face my parents for what I had done. Once again my thoughts got the better of me.

I was yanked out of my thoughts by a sudden bright light just before the impact. The car dived right at me and the sudden impact crushed my limp body. The pain was numbing as I lay motionless on the floor. Slowly the blackness began to take over my line of sight. I welcomed it and fell into a deep sleep...
Georgia Says:

Character in Action.
Snap! I was never good at jetes…

As I opened my eyes, a bright light seared my eyes. My dream of ever becoming a famous ballet dancer was now over. But it got worse…Now I had a big ugly blob of plaster on my leg that smelt of dead fish and rotten egg. Yuck! Suddenly I had a strange urge to touch it just to make sure it didn’t feel as bad as it smelt and looked.

As I slid my shaking pointer finger down in the wet cement looking plaster, I found it hadn’t set yet. Suddenly I heard someone coming. What if they were to see a dented line in the plaster and me wide awake with plaster all over my finger?

They were walking so fast I had no choice but to pretend I was sleeping while sucking on my finger. I’m sure you don’t want to know what plaster tastes like…

Big picture patterns in the action writing – replicated across the blog

- Homage fiction: The scenarios are often shown using “genre stereotypical” characters, events and physical reactions: genres include horror, melodrama, gothic, crime, sports, science fiction, action, romance, school yard, fantasy, vampire, werewolf, spy, war, rock star, comedy, gritty realism, ballet school fiction. Genre inspired writing is a great starting place to build student confidence, pleasure and fluency.

- Visual: The writing shows the huge impact of movies – often scenes are very visual

- U.S. culture: The writing shows the cultural impact of books, TV shows and movies from the U.S. [vocabulary such as “mall”]

- Gender: Story topics are often those “traditionally” favoured by each gender, although some girl authors do feature male protagonists and heroics and some boys do write about relationships, occasionally featuring a female protagonist [eg boys – war scenes, action; girls – relationships, ballet]

- Experiencing challenges and rites of passage: A number of stories feature protagonists who are older than the authors are, facing their fears, facing enemies or dying. The issues-based writing [I believe...] shows that adolescent students care about the environment, poverty and war, as well as issues of belonging, exclusion, family, friendship, personal identity and tribal affiliation with their own age group.

- Genre voice: Many students are writing confidently using a genre voice – a few students have written with a distinctive voice of their own.

- Audience awareness: The writing may be clichéd at times but students have understood the need as writers to hook the reader, create suspense, and show what the character sees and feels.

- Writing purposes: Some students have understood that writing is about creating other worlds and enchanting, energising, persuading or goading readers. Others have written for the purpose of self-expression. A third group has “done” the blog for school.
Writing expression patterns in the action writing – replicated across the blog

- **In the moment:** Students have been able to “slow” down their writing to feature the inner sensations/reactions of the main character and not just to list plot events.
- **Five senses:** To achieve this, students have often used the 5 senses and expressive verbs. However, “tell” not show is still prevalent as an issue.
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- **Process of expression:** A number of students have concentrated on expressing their ideas in a first draft as they wrote to the blog, rather than polishing them to prune, rework ideas, or correct grammatical/punctuation errors. The blog facilitator copy edited the punctuation and grammar mistakes.
- **Overwriting:** Students sometimes overuse adverbs or adjectives when the message is already clear. This may be linked to a “parts of speech” focus for NAPLAN.
- **Vivid similes or metaphors:** While metaphors used are largely standard, the occasional vivid simile or metaphor lights up a paragraph.

**Student Writing Appendix - Week 3 – Symbolic places, weather or objects**

**Symbols** - Students wrote a paragraph which included a description of a place, object or situation that is functioning symbolically to express a THEME or MOOD. There were 174 posts. Students explained which books they like best.

Andrea Says:

My favourite books/series are (in no particular order):
1. The *Dragonkeeper* trilogy by Carole Wilkinson
2. *Jatta* by Jenny Hale
3. *The BFG* by Roald Dahl

I liked the *Dragonkeeper* Trilogy because I love fantasy and adventure stories. It is about a girl, and as these dragons come into her life she discovers who she truly is and embarks on different adventures looking after dragons. This story also, at times, seems really predictable, but when that happens there’s always a twist lying in wait…

Although I have not finished *Jatta*, I have spent almost all of the time reading it on the edge of my seat. Jatta, princess of Alteeda, is not a normal princess. In fact, she is a princess living with a big secret as she goes on a journey with her brother Arthmael, to save Alteeda from the evil Brackensith, the kingdom of Dartith, and the Undead. A book about trust and determination, but definitely not for the faint-hearted.

I have a great sense of humour, I like writing humour and I certainly relish the thought of reading humour. *The BFG* is about an orphan called Sophie, who becomes very brave throughout the course of the book as she embarks on a special mission with her newfound friend, the Big Friendly Giant, who has a most remarkable character. A fantasy story with a very straightforward plot.
Symbolic setting

Alfie dropped his saddlebag on the ground, examining the building which towered over him.
"Is this where we’re gonna stay?"
"I for one," declared Elaine, “Am exhausted. We’ve walked miles today, and Alfie’s tired. You are, too, Melanie."
“Yes. This is going to be home for tonight, Alfie. We’ll have to ask the landlord to let us stay,” I said.
But I had to admit, that was no home. It was a large, stone manor, at least three stories high. Its windowpanes were grey, its curtains grey, grey ground, grey walls, grey roof, grey door. I was by no means sure that this was going to be a good home for three children aged fifteen, ten, and eight.
Elaine retied her plait and picked up her case. “I’m sick of this waiting. Alfie, you coming? Melanie?”

Hi, this is the URL for my Storybird:
http://storybird.com/books/why-2/
This storybird outlines some questions the protagonists in my story want to answer. I’m sure lots of people could relate to them too.

Neila Says:

My favourite books are: (they aren’t prioritized and they are my favourite SERIES )
1. The *Inkheart* trilogy by Cornelia Funke
2. The *Book of lies* trilogy by James Moloney
3. The *Sun sword* trilogy by Belinda Murray
These are my favourite books because they all take me to a world of fantasy and unpredictability. I like the changes and developments of characters within these books. The *Inkheart* trilogy is about a girl called Meggie who faces many difficulties because of a book called Inkheart. The *Book of lies* trilogy is a book of sudden changes in characters and is quite enjoyable. One minute you think you’ve figured it all out but you haven’t. Finally, the *Sun sword* trilogy is a book of determination and in a sense something people who have been through heart-wrenching experiences can relate to. With some many problems to solve and a lot of descriptive language that really paints a picture in your mind.

Symbolic gates: Obstacle

Lianna rushed down the path to her next class. She had plenty of time to spare but she did not want to be late. From the moment she was born her parents knew there was something unusual, special about her, different to her peers. This is because in the town of Arletta everyone is orderly, bold, confident, tidy and, well I guess what one would call the same. Yet they weren’t the same in a sense. Lianna’s uniqueness was how she had the opposite characteristics to the average child in Arletta. As Lianna reached the end of the dirty track she heard footsteps behind her. Moments later Madeline and Emily were in front of her blocking her path. To Lianna they were big gates, tall and powerful.

“Oh look, it’s goody-goody Lianna. Best in the class, show-off Lianna.” Madeline exclaimed loudly to Emily. But in fact Madeline was completely wrong. Lianna was certainly the opposite. She was a very outgoing and didn’t disobey friends. Staying as loyal as a dog. Lianna fought back tears but they were already streaming out.
“Oh look, she crying. What a cry baby!” Emily announced.
Lianna hid her face in the shadows. She couldn’t take it and she wouldn’t, she ran off into the jungle of trees. She ran through the forest to her favourite tree. She lay on it. Her tears stopped streaming down her plump cheeks. The tree comforted her like a second mother.

My url is http://www.storybird.com/books/the-lone-boy/
The first frame is about a boy who doesn’t annoy anyone or disturb any of his peers. The second frame is about the fact that everyone in his class looks at him as a nerd. The story is about a boy who is bullied and in the end he stands up for himself. The symbolic things include the colour frames that only come up with happy events and the monster that towers above the lone boy,

Matthew Says:

My favourite books are (not in order from 1st to 3rd favourite)...
1: Eragon by Christopher Paolini
2: The Revenge of the substitute teacher (I can’t remember the author!)
3: Artemis Fowl and the time paradox by Eion Colfer

Eragon is a fantasy story about a young boy named Eragon. I liked the story because of all of the interesting adjectives and verbs, and also a very good storyline. From the moment you open the book there is a lot of action which drew me into the story very quickly.
The revenge of the substitute teacher is an absolutely hilarious novel with lots of action and a very good climax. Just when you think everything is all right, there is always another twist! Artemis Fowl and the time paradox is packed with action drama and constant twists to keep you hooked! Things are very technical and the verbs, adjectives, similes and metaphors are just absolutely spot on!

Symbolic prank
Poppy ran through the playground, her mischievous smile spread across her face. Fun was what she was not, and she was desperate not to get a taste of it. Her smile crossed her face as she oiled the slide to make the little toddlers go really fast and then slip off the slide in a great gusto. She sneaked away from her prank and hid behind a tree to see what it would do to the toddlers. One little toddler already had started going down the slide. Faster and faster he went and he flew off the slide and landed with a hard THUD on the asphalt. Poppy felt a little bit ashamed because the toddler started crying like crazy, but inside she felt delighted with her successful prank. She had felt that feeling many times before and it made her feel powerful. She crept away with a wicked smile on her face.

Eeshaa Says:

Symbolic playground with swings:
Walking to school that day would be no different, or so Melina thought. Today, schools everywhere were starting late, so all the playgrounds were full. Full of things Melina didn’t have.

As she walked past a park, she saw a mother swinging her child on the swings, & no matter how hard she tried to remember, Melina never had been swung by her mother. Quickly averting her gaze, she spied a group of children, playing merrily, Melina fought back tears. Moving on speedily, she came across a girl, arguing with her mother in a fierce but loving
way – Melina couldn’t help it, a sob broke from her lips.

By the time Melina arrived at school, she was sobbing.

My character Melina, very often feels alienated from the rest of her world. I used Story bird to describe this feeling of alienation. This is the address: [http://storybird.com/books/what-i-dont-have/](http://storybird.com/books/what-i-dont-have/)

In the first frame, there is a mother hugging her child, which I feel is a symbol of love. The next frame shows friends having fun, wearing bright, happy clothes, which is something Melina doesn’t have, as she is bullied at school. In the third frame are butterflies, who despite their short lifetime can be free with what they want, something else Melina does not enjoy. A gift is a symbol of love, usually given by parents, but Melina doesn’t have loving parents, as depicted in the fourth frame. The fifth frame has an image of a small teacup, containing some very lost squirrels, floating in a big sea, a lot like what Melina goes through. Imagine riding on the back of a crow, imagine that was your life, it would be haphazard, right? That is what is shown symbolically by the image in the sixth frame, as Melina’s life is just so haphazard. The last frame is Melina paying homage to her grandmother, who she feels is there for her always.

**squiby Says:**

**Symbolic flowers: Life and Death**
The sun had managed to peek out from the clouds and a sliver of light had burst through the grey trenches. Akira leaned on her knees and examined the few roses that had made it through the autumn. The survivors were hardly surviving; they were more like corpses, deteriorating to the touch.

Akira wiped her hands of her jeans to rid of the dirt. She plucked out a large rose. Little etchings of brown were on the edges of the petals, and they fell to the ground as she brushed her hands against them. Winter was always a sad time for her. It reminded Akira of her lost cousin. Although he was strong, he was cursed with cancer. Sometimes even the strongest couldn’t make it through the worn winter.

**Sophie Says:**

**My metaphorical paragraph**
I love my mountain, I love the way it changes throughout the year. When it is cold it miserably sleeps, when it is warm, different colours spread the surface, like paintballs being thrown at a white canvas. In autumn, it sleeps with a thin white sheet, pure and fragile, like a cloud. In winter, it pulls on a thick white quilt, devouring everything in its way. In summer, my mountain slowly kicks of its quilt which slides slowly down the mountain, never to be seen again. In spring, my mountain, is gorgeous, blossoming with life everywhere. Flowers spring from every nook and cranny, and perfect green grass grows like trees reaching for the sky.
ben Says:

I looked up and I saw – I saw the moon, the massive full moon just above the horizon. It seemed to be big that night and I didn’t know why it was topping the charts in length. I went to bed, pulled up the teddy bear blanket; hid under it and tried to go to sleep (mind you I was only 4).

A few hours later, I woke up and I heard, ‘A – a – ahhhhhhhhhhhhhh!’

Something was there. Whatever it was, it was scaring me to the point where I needed to go, but there was no way I was getting out of my bed to go to the toilet when something was there. I took a glimpse at the creature. It was covered in little spiders. It had big claws, big teeth with red blood on them.

I hid back under the blanket so I wasn’t looking at it. I decided to get out and run so at least it didn’t know where I was. I ran and hid under the spare room bed – even though there were spiders and creepy crawlies in there – it was better than seeing that creature again. I was sure it had something to do with that moon…

sunny... Says:

Symbols by Sunny

The storm raged on as Sean ran up the old, creaking bridge, made from rotting wood. It was as if the sky was reflecting his thoughts. Lately he felt like he was the one thing that didn’t fit in the world. The sky was turning darker as his thoughts turned blacker. He ran up to the jagged cliff edge. He couldn’t take it anymore. The waves crashed against the rocks waiting to devour him. The thunder roared and Sean screamed back in response. He sank down in to a crouching position on the ground as his first tears started to fall. He tasted the tears before he felt them on his face. That stick, salty taste filling his mouth. He slowly reached down and gathered a handful of sand. It trickled through his fingers slowly until his hand was empty. As it slipped away from him, he realised how he had let everything else in his life slip away…

Patterns in the symbols writing

- Students who did write about symbolic settings, weather or objects typically wrote in a highly stylised way.
- Many students did not grasp the metaphorical nature of the task and wrote about exciting events which did not have a symbolic dimension.
- Chase concluded that the teaching materials would need to be made clearer in any updated release of teaching materials.
Student Writing Appendix – Week 4 – Dialogues revealing power dynamics
In Week 4, students wrote a dialogue featuring a power dynamic and created a blurb for a book they would like to see published. Optional: A timeline of events in the book, using Timetoast. See the Timetoast appendix for more blurbs. There were 163 posts in Week 4.

Dialogue patterns: Homage fiction featuring genre stereotypes was a feature, with fantasy fiction as a major player. In addition, family sibling rivalry and rebellion against parental authority also played out in the dialogues. School bullying situations were also prominent in the students’ writing. Irritation with overbearing principals or teachers can be seen in a number of dialogues.

Vanessa’s post was a model for this week’s comments.

Vanessa Says:

Dialogue showing power:
‘And you know, that girl is so anti-social. She just sits in the corner all the time and reads!’ Annody exclaimed loudly. She began to ramble louder still.

‘It’s almost like she expects someone to come over and invite her to play. Gosh, she must be obnoxious.’

Juliet glanced worriedly over Annody’s shoulder. She was sitting right behind them, and of course, reading a book.

‘I mean, seriously, think about it. She’s really selfish. It’s not like everyone’s her personal servant!’

‘Yeah, look, I’m sorry, but I gotta go.’

‘Oh, yeah, that’s fine. Well, I’ll see you later!’

Juliet was so glad she could get away from Annody. She didn’t want any gossip being traced back to her.

ANNI ROXS [nom de plume] Says:

My Blurb:
Ella is a newby at Hartley High School and finally says this is the worst school ever. She is always teased by this one boy called Tim and his gang. Tim makes her embarrassed and hungry. Will she ever stick up for herself or will she always be scared?

Dialogue:
As shadows moved towards her, Ella stood with no expression, even though her heart was melting at the sight of Tim. “Where is it!” demanded Tim.

‘W-w-what?’ sobbed Ella, at the sight of his eyes flashing blue to red.

“Come on, spit it out, I want your lunch money!” yelled Tim as frustration ran though his body and made his knuckles itch.
“Here,” she whispered, as he snatched it out of her hands. Pain swept through her like a tidal wave. “You better make sure you’ve got more tomorrow,” he snarled as he skipped to the front of the canteen line.

My URL:
http://www.timetoast.com/timelines/45313

Blurb:
“I’m sorry, I really am.” Damen whispers, grabbing Ceren’s hand and entwining his fingers with hers. She turns around, and looks into his deep chocolate eyes. “I have to go…” and lets go of his hand, heading towards the terminal. One day, Ceren is forced to move to America with her evil sister. Damen who is her best friend is forced to the decision of telling her the truth that he was sorry – but is it too late? Is it too late say sorry and take back the girl who he has always loved? A story of love and compassion with a thrilling twist…

Task:
I slowly walk into my room, shoulders drooping. I slump on my bed and just curl up into a ball. “Young lady! You’re not going to go out of your room until you have apologised to me at once! Your grades are too low. You shall not leave this house or go out with your friends until your grades have gone up!” I heard Dad yell in anger from the living room.
I replied softly, “But dad, seriously! It’s not like the end of the world. Ok, I screwed up one maths test. But do you have to overreact like that?” “YES! It’s not just a maths test, your education is in the balance! Now stop arguing with me and study! If you don’t study, you’re not going to visit friends, EVER!” he screamed with frustration and anger. His face was bright red with rage as he jabbed the numbers on the remote.
I just sobbed, tears flowing from my eyes and I started to copy out the textbook he left on my desk. I just wanted to be a normal kid but yet, I felt so powerless against my dad. He never understood. He just wanted everything to be perfect. In reality though, nothing was perfect, not even his own daughter.

Blurb
When Corinne James moves into her new house in a sleepy neighbourhood, she decides to explore her new surroundings. When her parents are asleep, she ventures off into the night by herself. When Corinne enters a jazz bar, she meets Marc the waiter, Cecil the bartender and Miranda the singer in the band. Together they roam the city throughout the hours of darkness, meet peculiar yet nice people and run into a Russian mafia…

Paragraph
Corinne’s brother William found her looking out a window in one of the new bedrooms. ‘What do you think you’re doing?’ he asked suspiciously.
‘I’m looking out the window,’ she answered, unperturbed.
‘Get out of my room!’ he said indignantly, pointing at the door. Corinne didn’t move.
‘This isn’t your room,’ said Corinne. ‘I want this one so it’s mine,’ said William. ‘So get out.’
‘Mum said I could get the bigger room,’ said Corinne. ‘I have more things to put into my room.’
‘No you don’t, I like my stuff spaced out so I should have it,’ said William.
‘What? In our last house you got the room that was slightly bigger than me,’ said Corinne, ‘you hardly put anything in it except your bed, your wardrobe and your desk.’
William glared at her with eyes, waiting to erupt with anger like a volcanic eruption. He then screamed, ‘MUM!’

caitlin Says:

Dialogue

The fire cackled madly – bickering between each flame – as I waited for my death. It made me feel kinda stupid thinking about it now. I knew this was a VAMP ambush before I came here, and I definitely knew the risks… oh well, that wouldn’t matter after I die. I DID NOT want to think about my slow and painful death. It was weird thinking that death could mean life. Death meaning life – not something you would expect.

“Please!!! I’ll never come back here again! JUST LET ME GO!!!!” Now I was desperate. The green trees seemed to be laughing as they watched my death come near. Something burned my cheek without being hot and soon enough more poured from my eyes. A blocked river was suddenly unblocked and running freely. Whether they made me into a Vamp or not, I was going to die. I didn’t want to be a Vampire but I also didn’t want to die.

The group’s council was deciding whether to make me a vampire or not.
“We have decided you will be made a vampire. Don’t worry, your death will mean a new life.”

“How!!” I screamed hoping my voice sounded confident although I knew it didn’t. “We shall kill you, and then revive you!” He sounded happy that he was about to kill me.

It was a painful death but after being made a Vamp I felt revived. I felt strong. I was a fire being relighted! It was wonderful. But there was also a craving – a craving for blood… We started walking and ran into werewolves! It was so thrilling when we started fighting viciously, until I was bitten by one of them. I lay on the ground, shaking violently…

‘Your death will mean a new life,’ the thought echoed through my mind. It was a dog following an imaginary owner.

Horselover Rania Says:

Task 4 – Power

Izzy crept slowly towards the back of the old shack. The door slammed open.
‘Come out, come out, wherever you are,’ chanted the cold voice.
I breathed heavily and whispered to myself, ‘I have to get out before he finds me.’ But I hesitated to move a inch. I knew it was him.
‘There’s no use hiding. I’ll find you.’
I wanted to say something so I did in my softest voice, ‘L-l-leave me alone.’ But I don’t think it was soft enough because he heard me.
I could see his shadow coming towards me and something pointy was in his hand. I noticed it was a dagger.
'You're doomed, little girl,' he said frostily.

**Student Writing Appendix – Week 5 - Visual codes or wrap up stories**
In Week 5, students wrote a piece using story starters provided by Deb Abela and James Roy or analysed visual/popular culture references. There were 110 posts in Week 5.

**The model text for this week was written by John Larkin.**

John Larkin (author) Says:

This story below is about 'less is more writing' and making every moment count. It shows how everything must contribute to ‘the story’. Irrelevant details (or details that you might include in a longer story or a novel) are omitted so that it’s just bare bones writing….

Miracle Child by John Larkin (Based on a True Story)
No one expected the baby to live. Least of all his mother. Her three other babies had all died in quick succession. First Gustav, then little Otto and then her daughter Ida. And now this frail, sickly little guy didn’t seem to have a snowball’s chance in hell. For as sure as night follows day he would soon be joining his brothers and sisters.

The couple, though new to town, were held in high regard given the husband’s esteemed position at the Custom’s House; though the talk amongst the town folk was that he spent too much time at the inn and rarely left there before midnight and even then he generally had to be helped home. The wife, though, seemed pleasant and pretty and much too young for the bearded ogre that fate had lumbered her with.

The couple stared into the crib that contained their tiny bundle. The woman held her soaked handkerchief to her face. Alois detested public displays of emotion. If she lost it now, she would pay for it later when Alois returned from the inn.

'Is there any hope for my child?' begged Klara of the nurse.
‘Pull yourself together, woman!' snapped Alois.
‘We’re doing all we can,’ offered the nurse. 'It’s in God’s hands now.'
‘God!' snapped Alois as if he was referring to an equal entity. ‘What does God care for our troubles?’

The nurse, unused to such blasphemy, excused herself and went about her duties.
'It's all your fault, Klara,' snarled Alois, staring at his fragile little son. ‘You only make runts. Otto was even smaller than this one and Ida smaller still.’
‘Not Gustav,' corrected Klara, risking Alois’s wrath once again. ‘Gustav was twice the size of Otto.’
‘He still died!' spat Alois. ‘They all died!’

When Alois had left for the inn, Klara curled up on a chair beside her baby. If this one died then she would go too. What else was there left for her in this life?

That night Klara prayed. Although she wasn’t a particularly religious person, she was prepared to ask help from any and all quarters. God, Allah, Krishna, Buddha, if they had an ounce of decency about them then surely they would let this one live. Just this one.
The next morning, after the most fitful sleep, Klara woke to find a doctor standing over her baby with concern etched across his features.

‘Is he…? Klara trailed off. ‘Is he, dead?’
‘No,’ replied the doctor. ‘He’s still with us; but only just. Please don’t hold out too much hope though. I have never seen one this small last more than a week. Prepare yourself for the worst.’

And so the weeks passed with Klara holding vigil by her son’s little crib, and her husband holding a vigil of his own at the inn. Fully aware of Klara’s circumstances, the doctors and nurses did everything they could to give her baby every chance. Although they held little hope for him, they gave the boy the greatest of care, often working in their own time to keep watch over him.

Two weeks following his premature birth Klara again woke to find the same doctor examining her precious bundle.

‘Is he…’ began Klara.

The doctor removed his stethoscope from the baby’s chest and smiled at Klara. ‘His lungs are clear. The infection gone. It appears, madam, as though you have your miracle.’

Droplets of utter joy cascaded down Klara’s cheeks. She made no move to wipe them away and so they fell, like pennies from heaven, onto her little miracle.

The nurses and doctors gathered around and shared their heartfelt joy with Klara and her beautiful bundle whom she gathered up and cradled in her arms never wanting to let him go.

‘He’s such a fighter,’ said the doctor, ‘I wager that he would make a fine soldier one day.’
‘What will you call him?’ asked one of the nurses. ‘Have you picked out a name?’

Klara was so overwhelmed with love for her darling boy that she failed to hear the question.

‘I said,’ continued the nurse. ‘What will you call him, Mrs Hitler?’
‘I think,’ replied Klara, ‘I will call him Adolf.’

And everyone present agreed that Adolf Hitler was indeed a fine name for the little soldier from Austria.

Matthew Says:

The book “Into the Forest” by Anthony Browne, page 8, there is a picture of a boy walking into a forest of seemingly neglected trees. What really catches my eye is a pair of exceptionally dark trees on the left half of the picture. I feel like I am up in the air over the boy and I am invisible. People say that they notice the boy as a salient but the background almost creates an illusion that the boy is black and white, like the background. My eyes get drawn to the dark areas of the page, almost willing me to ‘come to the dark side’. The big message that this picture has given me is that the forest is a place where nothing lives, nothing goes into and nothing comes out.
John slowly started to peel his eyes open to see the blur that stood in the distance before
him.

As the figures got closer, the blur seemed to disappear, revealing a pack of three savage
werewolves coming his way. John just lay there motionless on the muddy ground – staring
at the wild wolves with his small, blue, frightened eyes.

The wolves stared back, overpowering him with huge, red, hypnotising eyes that stood out
from the shadows of their faces. When they were only one hundred metres away, John
reacted like a bat out of hell and quickly jumped into the leafy shrub and peered through a
small gap between two leaves to watch the vicious wolves.

John took a big gulp of air, holding it in his throat, trying hard not to let go or the wolves
might hear him. John slowly took another big gulp of air before he lunged out of the small
shrub into the open and started to flee to the tall tree that stood behind the wicked
werewolves.

Leaping from bush to bush, he passed the werewolves and then the werewolves were hot
on his trail rapidly picking up speed. John saw the snarled branches dangling above his
head as he ran down a cluster of different paths, dodging trees that stood in his way.

John swore he was going around in circles but he couldn’t stop. He found a path that he
thought would take him to the tree. He saw the tree but then realised he was at that same
shrub he was at before.

John was panting profusely and his feet were sore as if they had been put in a meat
shredder.

He ran over to a big, thick bush and with one last effort John lunged over the bush and to
his surprise he saw the tall tree and began to run to it. ‘I’m going to make it, I’m going to
make it,’ he kept repeating to himself. ‘I’m almost there...’

Michael Says:

My favourite TV show is The Simpsons.
The Simpsons has many cultural references, it has everyday life in it e.g. it has a clown
called Krusty and things normal people encounter every day. It contains guest stars of
voices like Alec Baldwin and other celebrity voices. The intertextuality is popular culture
references like castles and fairytale based stuff.

My favourite book – looking at a picture:
Star Wars:
My favourite book is Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith. In this book you see pictures and the
picture I’m referring to is one of Anikin Skywalker. He looks ferocious because he has a
dark hood like a pit of tar and his eyes glow red from the reflection of magma. His sweat is
making his hair drip and overall he looks like a character made from intertextuality [other
bad guys you have seen].
Mikaila Says:

My Favourite Movie…… by Mikaila
I like Enchanted because it has many well known fairy tales mixed into 1 funny movie. Some of the many fairy tale parts that are added to the movie are; the poison apple from Snow White, Prince Charming from Sleeping Beauty, Wicked Witch from Snow White, the Magic Wishing Well also from Snow White and many, many more.

It is about a young lady named Giselle who dreams of her prince, but on the day they get married the wicked witch pushes poor Giselle down a wishing well into real life. In the real world Giselle learns that fairy tales don’t always happen, and finally Giselle meets her true love and really does have a happily ever after….. but in the real world!!!

Look at the picture:
Belonging by Jeannie Baker
The family in this picture look happy and the greenery is absolutely stunning. This is a beautiful book with amazing pictures and the pictures are the best. If you haven’t seen it, you must get it from your closest library. BTW: Jeannie Baker, your books are amazing!!!!

squibly Says:

Principal Kromp wasn’t known for her caring nature and it didn’t look like she was about to introduce it anytime soon. All the new students always thought she looked pretty and nice, but the older students knew her stilettos were used as weapons and her handbag was full of stones so she could bop students on their heads. Kromp didn’t just torture the bad students, but she ALSO tortured the good ones, oh, and of course the in-between (me for example).

Today for assembly (Wednesday was always assembly day), everyone in the hall held their breath as she walked out, her stilettos playing an awful tune on the floorboards. She swung her handbag around with relish, almost hitting Mr Meatle in his eye.

We noticed that today Kromp was carrying a rather large ruler. It was much thicker than usual rulers and some of my classmates suggested that wasps were trapped inside, ready to be released onto the unlucky children of the school. The hall seemed to tremble as Kromp lifted the ruler over her head. Everyone held their breath. Kromp looked around scanning the room. With one quick breath, she uttered “Delilah, come here”.

Everyone gasped with a sigh of relief. Everyone but me. This was mainly because there was only one girl in the entire hall with the name ‘Delilah’. That person was me…

Mitchell Says:

The Jump

I wake up, feeling dread, knowing I am jumping from a plane later today. I open the dreary, grey curtains to see a cloudy, grey sky. I don’t feel any better as I eat my tasteless, cold toast and drink my sour, warm milk.
As I get dressed into my army training clothes, I try and tell myself that it will all okay, but my head is telling me that it won't. I comb my hair making myself look neat for the final day of army training.

If I pass this test I will be sent overseas to work for the army. I have been through many tough army training sessions, but none as scary as this.

I approach the plane nervously, trying not to think about the jump. As we near the jumping point the General gives all of the trainees a speech and tells us the jumping order. I'm last. Everyone has already jumped successfully and now it was my turn. I was freaking out, I took my time and as I was about to jump, the General called me over to him. “Why are you taking so long?” barked the general.

I am feeling stupid. I am just standing still, opening and closing my mouth, without any words coming out, as the General shouts insults at me.

“I don’t want to jump” I manage to say weakly.

“Well you obviously don’t want to work in the army” shouted the general.

“I want to work in the army” I weep “I just don’t want to jump”.

“Well you have to if you want to work in the army” said the General, with a little more sympathy this time.

“Okay” I answer nervously as I walk over jumping zone.

I was scared stiff. I wish I could just run and hide but I can’t. I have to jump. I mustered up all of my courage and jumped. The wind is blowing against my face wildly causing my eyes to sting. The ground is getting closer and closer. I fumbled for the cord. I can’t find it, I am starting to panic. I close my eyes and hope for the best.

To be continued……

Elements
• Dialogue – to show relationships, themes and power dynamics
• Symbols – symbolic places and objects to show themes; figurative language

maty the4 gamefreak Says:

Story 3
It was properly on fire now. Orange and yellow tongues of flame licked at the sides and around the edges. Thick smoke billowed up, all black and grey, and from the centre of the fire came pops and spits, and that horrible, hissing roar.

Then suddenly fire fighters emerged from the gulping flames with an extremely burnt man in a fire proof stretcher. As they passed me I asked them nervously if they had seen my mother. They replied in a sorrowful voice ‘No, not yet, but we’ll try’.

After placing the poor man down they went back to find more survivors who had been lucky in this shocking fire. As soon as I had given up all hope, mum appeared from the burnt down rubble which used to be a shopping mall.

Running as fast as I could I ran to go and hug her and she said, ‘Georgia, you survived’.

Yes, so did you,’ I replied…

Super Maths Guy Says:

Stories by Wei-feng

‘So you decided to come.’ His hands were withered and his voice strangled and wheezed as if he was being choked. ‘We are going to have such fun.’ I hobbled up to him cautiously and slowly gave him a penny. He grinned and chuckled. ‘Come inside. We have fortune
telling to do,' muttered the old man. He directed me to the tent by pointing his bony finger at a huge mystical tent.

I ambled to the tent and sat on an uncomfortable, wooden chair. There were mysterious pictures on the wall that had something to do with fortune telling. The man snatched my hands to him and started humming a weird tone. His hands were wrinkly and crinkly like rotten chips. It was disturbing of him, making an annoying, humming noise. Suddenly, the man screamed, 'Horrible things will happen to you! Tigers will chase you! Alien bugs, as big as humans will chase you and a foreign virus will infect you!'

I shook my head with disbelief. 'What a rip off! This isn't true!' I shouted. I walked out of the tent as angry as a bull seeing a red sheet. I could hear a deep growling sound coming from behind the bushes. It sounded like a tiger. I twisted my head carefully and I could see a big eye in front of my face. My face was full of horror and I was breathing quickly.

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Jamie Says:

Story 2
Principal Kromp wasn’t known for her caring nature and it didn’t look like she was about to introduce it anytime soon.

Her thick grey hair was pulled into a tight bun. The wart on her chin was so dark it looked like a chocolate chip. Her ugly grey jacket was tight around her large chest, and, with her matching grey skirt she looked like a grumpy grey giant! Her deep frown lines were a desert of sand dunes on her bossy head.

Little Emily had to use the toilet, so she thought it would be okay to run on the concrete so she could make it in time! 'Well, do you want to know what I think?' questioned Mrs Kromp sarcastically? 'I think you can wet your pants instead!' she bellowed loudly.

Emily’s face was as red as a beetroot. She already had. Wet her pants! 'I am v…v…very sorry your majesty,' Emily said shakily while bowing.

'Well, just because you're a SUCK UP doesn't mean I can't give you detention!' she cruelly yelled into her scared little face. Mrs Kromp flicked her hand for the petrified child to go. She looked at her cane. Mrs Kromp was an extremely old principal and still remembered the days she used the cane.

'I miss the days when I used the cane,' she said aloud to herself. The cane was her only friend. It was her shoulder to cry on, but now she was not allowed to use it. 'One day I'll use you buddy, one day. But, for now I'll hand out slips instead!' She jeered, then broke out into a chorus of evil laughter!

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ganesh Says:

Ganesh

Principal Kromp wasn’t known for her kind nature and it was pretty obvious that she was not going to show it any time soon.

It was Halloween, and she was stomping down the hall in a witch’s costume. It suited her. Some kids were chatting in the hall and she barged through them, not caring at all. She was in a foul mood and she knew exactly who she was going to take it out on. . . me.
Last week it had been a detention, two days earlier it had been a slip and this time judging by her mood it would be a black slip or if I’m lucky, a warning.

I was in my classroom doing my work. My mum had bought me a zombie costume the night before and I couldn’t wait to put it on. The door swung open and she came in. The teacher hid, scared stiff, I could not blame her! Miss Kromp was pretty scary. Miss Kromp started shouting, ‘Oy, Davies, my office NOW.’ she boomed.

She grabbed me by the ear and dragged me out, I looked back just in time to see the teacher emerge from behind the door. . .

libby Says:

The Angel Child
Prologue
“Run you idiot!” cried Alex.
The ghost was upon Hail now, looking like some evil being from the dreamtime.
“Can’t... too...die.” panted Hail. Alex strained to hear the exhausted girl’s words. The wind was snatching the words from her mouth and throwing them away, laughing as though it was a great game.

“You can run but you can’t hide!” taunted the ghost. He was clearly enjoying the chase. Hail was slowing down rapidly and suddenly tripped.
“No!” cried Alex in fear that he had lost his friend...

Chapter 1
Beep went Alex’s alarm clock. Alex, who was still half–asleep, rolled over and stared at the clock. 8:30 it read. With a groan, Alex heaved himself out of bed and rubbed his still bleary eyes. Thank goodness it’s not a school day, he thought to himself. Alex slipped on a t-shirt and a pair of jeans and shuffled into the kitchen.

“Morning sleepy head,” said his mum. “Boy, you look awful. Get enough sleep?” Alex shook his head. “Well your father’s gone to work early again so you’ll have to entertain yourself love,” continued mum.
“How am I supposed to do that?” muttered Alex.

“How about the new people that just moved in next door? They’ve got a little girl your age! Maybe you could go play with her...,” his mother’s voice trailed off as Alex wandered back into his room.

No way! A girl?! As if! She’d probably just want to play dumb girly games. Yuck! He looked out the window at the fair-haired girl, who was sitting on her front step, staring into space, thinking the same thing.

Several minutes later Alex was still sitting at his window, feeling more bored than ever. He was beginning to wonder if playing with the girl was such a bad idea after all. Worth a shot. So Alex went downstairs and out the door.

“Changed your mind?” he heard his mum say as he ran across his front yard. The girl was still on her front step and looked excited when he came over.

“Er... hi I’m Alex and um... I’m not sure if you know this, but I live just next door to you and.. “

The girl looked very happy indeed.
“I know. I saw you from your room. Want to hang out?” Alex was surprised at this girl’s confidence. “Sure!” replied Alex.
“Well, I’m Hail,’ beamed Hail reaching out a hand. Alex took it, delighted that Hail hadn’t turned out to be some freaky girl. What Alex didn’t know was that this day was going to change his life forever…

caitlin Says:

Vampire tale
My blood boiled. It hurt like hell but it gave me a desire. I begged him to continue. Why was he sucking my blood? The thought popped through my mind and almost instantly another pushed it away. Who cared?

NO! I was not going to let him continue. I knew I was not going to be able to push him an inch but I tried anyway. Pushing him was like pushing a desirable brick wall. He felt my urgent push and he stopped. I must have looked horrid because his cocky grin disappeared and was replaced with a worried expression. I felt dizzy and I had a killer headache. There was a line, covering about three quarters of my vision. Then darkness swept me off my feet…

I woke and saw faces with rivers running down them. I saw Naomi bawling her eyes out. Then I saw him standing at the back. Nobody knew what he really was, noone but me. My caramel coloured body lay on a hospital bed and my almost-black hair hung lifelessly down the side.

‘Holly! It’s a miracle! She’s awake!! Erin’s awake!!’ My mum, who had been bawling her eyes out too, screamed.

‘Pipe down! She’s had a serious blow to the head! She doesn’t need your screaming!’ The doctor said in a voice that was quiet but demanding.

Erik’s (the person no-one knew about) apologetic eyes had me hypnotised and I hadn’t realised the doctor was talking until he tapped my shoulder,

‘Erin. Are you still awake?’

‘Oh, sorry. My mind was bab-

‘ERIN. Can you get up?’

‘Sure, sure.’

‘Good. Because you can go now.’

We left the building in a mad rush, hurrying so I could get home, have some panadol, take a shower in a really expensive shower and get some sleep in my king size bed. I was almost drooling to get into that shower.

I stepped into the polished shower and thought about what had happened.

Why hadn’t he stopped like he usually did? I didn’t know. And even before that, Erik had been acting weird. Okay. One thing was for sure – something was wrong with Erik.

My body froze. I quickly got out of the shower, snuck out the window and sprinted to Erik’s house. I spied on him and overheard him talking to someone.

‘What do I do about Erin?’ I heard Erik’s voice and jerked my head up to see him talking to a face in the mirror.

‘Kill her. What else?’ the voice replied, matter-of-factly.

‘But I love her…” he replied and my heart fluttered.

‘Love is for wimpsssss.’ The voice said sourly, she practically hissed the word wimps. It had the familiarity, she, it was definitely a she, sounded like a girl I knew that was murder – that was it! She had a crush on him! Wait! That was not a good thing. She hated me.

‘Who do you love more? Her or Me.’ she said in an innocent voice.

‘You…” I risked a glance up. He looked like he loved her – he sounded like he loved her!

‘You know what to do. Kill her.’ She really sounded like a villain when she laughed.
‘Yes!’ he exclaimed joyfully. I couldn’t breathe properly, but I did something any girl would, I sucked in as much air as I could get, and ran. I knew what I had to do and I dreaded doing it – I had to kill him. I ran to the church. He was a vampire, so I needed a cross.

I ran to his house, hoping mirror girl wasn’t there. I was safely armed with a wooden cross. I burst through the door. He didn’t have parents so I didn’t have to worry about them. I ran straight to his room and threw the cross square into his chest. He started to burn like I thought he would. I fell to the ground, unable to stop the tears from running down my face…

Zac Says:

Unforeseen Accident!

‘So you decided to come.’ His hands were withered and his voice strangled and wheezed as if he was being choked. ‘We are going to have such fun today,’ said Will, as if he was planning on doing something devious.

Will and I arrived at the theme park called ‘Bubbles Of Fun’ at exactly 10:43am.

‘What shall we go on first, Paul?’ said Will.
‘Well I’m not really sure, so let’s go on that big waterslide?’ I said.
‘Yeah, why not,’ said Will.

As we approached the waterslide with our tickets all ready, in the corner of my eye I saw a bolt fall on the ground from a high point. Immediately, I looked up at the water slide and it shook like crazy, so I finally got Will’s attention and we ran for the exit.

But Will stopped.
‘What are you doing, Will!’

‘I’m sorry, Paul but this is my fate’ he said with tears. ‘Go – get out of here – while you still can!’

So I ran for the exit once again – but I just couldn’t leave him there to die, even if it was his fate. I ran back as fast as I could and leapt for him but it was too late. The water slide had already crashed onto him, leaving only his remains for people to see. I dropped to my knees and cried, he was my best and only friend. We had done everything together and now Will is gone!

A few months later a post came from an anonymous person, so I opened it up and it was Will’s will from when he died. He had put in that he had given me $20,000. I was not sure why he had left me with this large amount of money. And I was not exactly sure what I should do with it until I read further down and it said, ‘I would like you to spend the money on feeding the poor and giving homes to the homeless.’

So for the past 5 days, I have been donating money to feed the poor and give the homeless a home. It has been hard work but I have managed to pull it off.

A week after I donated the $20,000, I decided to visit Will’s parents in London, where he had stayed while he was in college studying art. Later that week, I bought my ticket to Europe and went there the following day. I rang them to let them know I was travelling there to pick up some stuff that had belonged to Will.

I got to Will’s parents house at about 4:00pm and asked if I could stay there for a few nights to get to know them better because Will had never really talked about his family. That night, I took them out to dinner at the Gordon Ramsay.

‘So Paul, I presume you were good friends with Will.’
‘Oh yes, I was, we did everything together,’ I said.
‘Like what?’ said Rima, Will’s mother.
‘Well, for instance, I wanted to go to a marine biologist convention, and even though Will wasn’t too fond of it, he still went.’

‘I see’ said Rima. ‘So I was just wondering, why was it that Will never really talked about you guys. You both seem like good people.’

I said, ‘Well, thank you for that comment.’

“It all started when we had no choice to put him in a mental institution because he was so unhappy with the life he had, he tried to kill himself. You see he was never really any good with making new friends, but he always used to get bullied, no matter what he did, he always got picked on. So when he got enough money to start a new life, he moved to Australia, and he never spoke to us since. That’s when he met you, and his life completely changed,” they both said.

‘So I pretty much changed his life?’ I said.

‘Yes, and we are very, very grateful that you did that.’

After that, I felt like I had done something important as a friend of Will’s and I felt warm inside. Later that night I was really tired so I decided to go to bed.

The next day, we all went out to the park to have some time to talk about Will’s life but neither Rima or Jim wanted to talk much, so we went home. ‘How did you sleep last night, Paul?’ said Jim, ‘Very well, I slept like a baby.’

They looked like they hadn’t had much sleep though. They looked terrible.

Soon enough it came to lunch time, and we all went out and got fish & chips and returned home. All day that they had this devious look in their eyes as if they were going to do something they would regret.

‘What’s wrong?’ I asked, but got no reply. ‘Is anything bothering you?’ I asked with extreme confusion.

‘No, no everything is okay.’ they both replied.

As soon as they had finished saying this, Jim tackled me to the ground, and Rima bagged my head with a potato sack. I screamed in terror, and I could hear someone getting something out of the drawer in the kitchen. I tried to get up but someone was sitting on me yelling, ‘Hurry up! I can’t bear his screams.’

The person ran over to where I was lying and they took the potato sack off my head and started cutting my hair, and changing me into Will’s clothes. ‘What are you doing!?’ I shrieked, ‘Your new name is Will.’ Jim said as I tried to get away.

Finally, I squirmed away from them both and ran for the door. But as I reached for the door, I felt a tug on my leg. I pulled as hard as I could and finally ran out the door and went to the nearest house to ring the police to tell them what had just happened.

A lady called Paula let me use her phone and within 20 minutes the police came to Will’s parents home and arrested them. I was so relieved that I got out of that mad house, I do not know what I would have done if I hadn’t escaped….

Ella Says:

It was properly on fire now. Orange and yellow tongues of flame licked at the sides and around the edges. Thick smoke billowed up, all black and grey, and from the centre of the fire came pops and spits.
He had done it. His Dad had said that he wouldn’t be able to light the fire but he had. He liked going camping with his Dad more than he did with his Mum maybe it was because he hardly ever got to see his Dad since the divorce, he didn’t know.

His brother Ryan wasn’t so excited – he was supposed to be at his friend’s house not here. Matt looked away from the fire and looked at his brother; he was on his brand new touch screen phone not even noticing the fire his brother was so proud of.

“You did it!” His Dad said as he left the tent “Good on ya’ Matt!” Well, at least his Dad noticed. “Thanks Dad, I told ya’ I could do it!” he said, as he reached down to get a marshmallow.

“It’s a fire – get over it, Matthew!” his brother told him. “I’m going to bed!”

The next morning they went down the creek to fish. After a while of getting bites and snags but in the end not getting fish, Mathew decided to lie down. He was tired maybe he should rest his eyes.

Crack. Mathew opened his eyes and looked around. Someone or something had stepped on and broken a stick. He looked at his brother and Dad; they were still down at the creek fishing. There it was again.

Someone was trying to be quiet but not quite succeeding. They were moving away from him he stood up and went into the forest towards the noise. It was running now, running away from him. He ran after it but stopped because he didn’t want to go too far away – he turned and went back.

At dinner, he told his Dad all about it. “It was just a deer or something mate, don’t worry,” his Dad told him.

All through dinner he felt as if he was being watched. Matt kept looking behind him but there was never anything there. He had just finished his dinner when he remembered. “Ohh, come on Dad, I left my brand new billabong jumper at the creek! I’ll have to go get it!” he exclaimed.

“Okay, but be quick! Your brother will go with you to get it!”

It was just after twilight now and he definitely wanted to be back at camp by dark. His brother didn’t want to come but his Dad made him; he was walking fast listening to his ipod not even acknowledging Matthew.

Suddenly Ryan stopped, put his arm out to stop Matthew, put his finger to his mouth and shrank down behind a bush. Then he pointed in front of him. Matthew saw a man, a man holding HIS jumper!

The man was about 180 cm tall. His hair was like a lion’s but as grey as storm cloud. He looked as if he hadn’t eaten in weeks. Matthew couldn’t see his face. “HEY YOU!” Matthew yelled! “THAT’S MINE!” The man looked at him and bolted into the forest!

“He took it!” Matthew exclaimed angrily. “Why would he want it? It wouldn’t have fitted him! He’s too tall! Let’s go tell Dad!”

“NO! There’s no need – it’ll only worry him.” Ryan demanded

Matthew couldn’t sleep. He tossed and turned. Smash, someone had broken something outside. He looked at his brother, he had heard it too! They jumped up and hopped out of the tent not to see Dad but to see the man they had seen earlier at the creek run back into the forest.

Without thinking, Matthew sprinted after him! Ryan followed, not to chase the man but to stop his brother. “STOP!” Ryan screamed to his brother but Mathew kept on running.
for 15 minutes non-stop until he tripped over a root of a huge tree. That was when Ryan caught up to him, his lungs exploding.

“You idiot! Not only did you lose the man but you lost us!” Ryan told his brother, turning red. “Where are we? It’s pitch black in this forest!”

Ryan was exaggerating, Matthew thought. You could tell where the trees and where the gaps were but if you look at the ground you couldn’t tell the difference between grass and rocks. This was because of the moon.

Matthew felt tears come to his eyes but he knew if he cried his brother would never let it go. He sat down with his head in his hands, pretending to be tired.

“Get up! We’ll go back the way we came,” Ryan told him, taking charge. Matthew got up and walked with his brother, who was putting his ipod back into his pocket. They were walking the way they thought was camp but really they were going too far to the right.

There were no tracks and after half-an-hour Ryan gave up. He sat down, “It'll be easier to find our way back in the light so we'll wait until then.” He told Matt.

Matthew dozed off. He woke when a strange voice said, “You boys! What do you think you’re doing out here this late?” It was the man who had taken his jumper. Matthew moved behind Ryan.

“It’s okay. I won’t hurt you.” But Matt stayed behind his brother. “Who are you and how come you’ve been touching all our stuff?” Ryan said, pretending not to be scared.

“Listen boys, I owe you an explanation but I’ll do it on the way back to camp,” the man said. Ryan agreed. They started walking. “I am a park ranger. I could have sworn when I saw your jumper that it was mine but before I could have a good look at it you came.” He stopped for a moment. “I don’t really like other people you see. That’s why I ran but when I got home and I actually looked at your jumper, I figured that I was way too big for it. I tried to give it back to you without actually having to give it to you. You know what I mean?”

He looked at Ryan, his eyes pleading for him to understand. Ryan nodded and he continued to talk. “But then I tripped and made such a racket that I woke you up. I left your jumper but you came after me and I was scared you had got lost so I came back to find you. And well, here I am!”

By that time, they could see their tents. The ranger nodded towards the tents, waved them goodbye and was gone...

Georgia Says:

TEN MINUTES AND FORTY SECONDS
A cold drop of sweat dripped slowly down my spine. The room was bright with red and yellow flames. Walls and beams fell straight to the floor, wiping out any structures in their way like a bulldozer flattening a building site. The smell of flames and dangerous chemicals filled the air suffocating me and forcing me to gasp for each breath.

Suddenly, large flames battled as they made their way through the falling beams and walls. I could hear my own heart beat as it echoed through the ruins of this tragic site. Boom, boom, boom. Dark clouds filled my eyes as the smoke scratched like sandpaper. I squeezed them shut to find no relief.

I remembered my eighth birthday. I was watching “Fire Frenzy” at my uncle’s house and Fireman Pete used to always sing a song about staying low to “go, go go”. This used to
drive me mad because I didn’t understand the meaning. Now I was in the middle of my own fire frenzy, it seemed like the best idea in the universe! I stayed low and slowly crawled to a small sliver of light hoping it was the way out.

A loud noise came from the ceiling and I felt a searing pain in my left leg. I struggled to look at my leg but the light was dim. I slowly crept my hand down my leg and felt a sticky, oozy and warm substance. I felt no relief at all from the pain. Luckily I had a large handkerchief in my pocket and I tied it around the leg to put pressure on the wound. Large throbs were coming from my leg like I had two hearts, one in my chest and the other in my thigh.

After five minutes, the pain had decreased to give me enough energy to stand up and continue on. That’s when I heard the baby. Loud, echoing noises were coming from upstairs, like a high pitched alarm clock used to wake me each morning. I limped up the stairs. The crying got louder with each step.

When I reached the second door on the right, at the top of the stairs, the heat off the door was incredible. Using a piece of wood as a battering ram I opened the door. The baby was wearing small tartan overalls and its face was red and wet with tears. Before it was too late, I grabbed the baby and wrapped it in my sweater to protect it from severe burns and inhaling the smoke.

Limbing down the stairs, dodging all the dangerous objects, I finally reached an area of bright light. There was a glowing green light that read “Exit”. Was this the sign that could lead me to fresh air, glowing beaches, delicious lasagne and all my favourite things?

As I burst through the door a wave of fresh air blew right past me and it was like eating chocolate. It was so delicious and it felt like heaven. I could hear singing birds as the breeze flowed straight to my lungs.

Someone reached down and released the baby from my grip as I fell to the ground. That’s when I heard a deep voice congratulating me. “Great work, Richard. That’s the second fastest time of the day. Ten minutes and forty seconds. If you can shave forty seconds off that time you’ll be a fully qualified fireman.”

I groaned, “I’m only twelve years old, so I think I’ll leave it a few years before I try it again.”

annie Says:

My story

Imagination

Nothing. All there is, is nothing. It is like my imagination is turned off, with no “ON” button. “Now tell me what you see in this picture by Kadinsky,” pronounced Mrs Archipelago, our teacher of art class. “Miss Anderson, may I ask why your hand is not up?”

“Well, maybe because there is nothing in the picture,” I replied whimsically.

“Actually there is a moon woman!” encouraged Mrs Archipelago.

“Well what about ‘Blue Poles’?” I sat and all I saw was nothing.

“A bunch of paint splatter if you ask me,” like it was no big deal. Ding, dong. Yes, class over, school over, double yes. I hate art class because it is the worst class ever.

The Next Day………

“Please turn to page fifty-four in text book three, and there you will see Michelangelo,” whispered Miss Apia, only because we were in the library. “Michelangelo missed some important details,” I thought wickedly with my best doodling pen in hand. “Ha, now he looks better with a moustache and glasses.”
“Ciao Bella, that tickles. But, I can see perfectly well without glasses and hate shaving. So why did you do that?” questioned Michelangelo.

“You can talk?” I sat puzzled, rubbing my eyes.

“Yes I can Bella,” chorused Michelangelo. “Have you seen the angel on the next page?”

“Yes I have. Even though I don’t really get art, she is beautiful,” whispered Michelangelo. “You need to understand that art is special, it is a way of expressing.”

Snap, pop!! It was as if an elastic band had pinged in my brain.

My mind fizzed. It popped with imagination. I finally saw it. The images, movies and sounds had come to life within these art works. I could now see the ‘Moon Woman’ and the ‘Blue Poles’.

This is fantastic!! I can imagine anything possible. Anything imaginable! Thanks to my new friend Michelangelo.

Megan Says:

One morning my mum came in and said, “Olivia, time to get out of bed and get ready for school…”

“Oh, do I have to get out of bed right now?” Olivia replied

“Yes, of course, you have to get out of bed right now because you have go to school and if you miss the bus I am not driving you, you can walk!” Olivia’s mum yelled.

So Olivia got out of bed and got ready for school. While she was getting ready for school, she told her mum about her dream which was along the lines of a tiny little fairy coming to her window and taking her to a place called fairy land. While Olivia was talking, her mum looked at the clock and cut Olivia off and said “Hurry up and get out the door or you’re going to miss the bus and you’ll be walking, whether you like it or not.”

When Olivia arrived at school she told her friends about her fairy dream. All of Olivia’s friends said, “That’s really, really weird because I had the same dream. Well, nearly the same dream. You’ll know what I mean by the same dream, when I tell you my dream.”

One of Olivia’s friends had the same dream but hers was about a giant not a tiny little fairy and if that friend’s dream was about a fairy she would wake up because she hates fairies. Olivia’s other friend had a dream about a giant duck. Olivia kind of found that weird but anyway. Olivia’s friend had a giant duck come up to her window and take her to a place called Giant Duck Land and in Giant Duck Land there were no people just giant ducks. Olivia’s friend found that really weird – no people – just giant ducks.

All of Olivia’s friends told their teachers about their dreams and you know what’s really weird? All of their teachers had basically had the same dream as Olivia and her friends. By then Olivia was kind of freaked out…

When Olivia got home, she told her mum her whole dream, well not every little detail because that would take forever to finish. She also told her mum that all of her friends and teachers had had the same dream as her. Olivia’s mum then told Olivia that everybody at her work had the same dream as her, her teachers and her friends, and then Olivia asked her mum, “Mum, did you have nearly the same dream as me?”

“The scary thing is that I did nearly have the same dream as you,” replied Olivia’s mum.”
By now, Olivia was really freaked out and she told her mum that. Olivia's mum said, “Do not get freaked out by this because this can happen sometimes.” Hearing that made Olivia feel a whole lot better and she wasn't so freaked out any more.

The next few nights the same thing happened where everybody in the whole entire town had nearly the same dream. But Olivia was not freaked out by that now that she knew that this happens sometimes. After those few nights things went back to normal and everybody had different dreams like they’re supposed to. But everybody couldn’t help but talk about those few nights where everybody had the same dream.

The End

Patterns from writing for the Week 5 tasks

- Most students did not attempt the visual literacy analysis task – analysing an illustration from a picture book.

- Student understanding of the notion of intertextuality and its symbolic purpose in texts was generally shallow and poorly developed.

- Students generally focused on writing longer pieces of their own choosing OR on completing the story starters provided by the authors.

- Chase concluded that the teaching materials about visual literacy and intertextuality would need to be updated and made more explicit in any future rap. However, a better solution would be to drop all tasks unrelated to the final task – Create a story which shows description, actions and dialogue to strong effect.

Digital Tools Appendix – Glogster EDU

Chase offered an optional set of homework writing tasks, using online digital authoring tools such as Glogster EDU, Wordle and Storybird. Most students did not take up this option. She decided to remove most hyperlinks to students’ writing in Glogster EDU, to preserve students’ privacy.

Vanessa Says: EXTRACT

In my Glogster EDU poster link, I put on it lots of things that I like, such as notebooks and the colour purple, paper and animals. If you read what’s on the notebook, letter and piece of paper you’ll find a list of books, song lyrics and a letter to a friend. I put on sneakers because they’re my favourite type of shoes and I added lots of birds because I thought they looked very beautiful. I think from looking at my poster, you find that I’m more of a subtle person with a hint of funky-ness! (Yeah!) Please enjoy!

Ashish Says: EXTRACT

My Glogster is about....
My glogster is about my passion for anime and my personality. By looking at my pictures
you could say that I am cool. My glog expresses that I like to study. My glogster also indicates that I can endure most hardships.

Neila Says: EXTRACT

My glogster poster represents my characteristics and personality. It shows that I like delicate, pretty things like flowers. I like animals and puzzles as well as challenges. It also shows I am compassionate, caring and thoughtful. I am also very cheery and bubbly.

**Digital Tools Appendix - Wordle**

**Week 2 – Write about big issues affecting the world**

Neila Says:

I created a wordle page…

http://www.wordle.net/show/wrdl/1344956/BIG_issuses

that is the link. It’s a scattered picture about how I feel about some of the major issues.

shae Says:

Here is my wordle about the things I believe in…

http://www.wordle.net/show/wrdl/1736838/shae

Fortune Says: ACTION writing

Here’s the link to my wordle: http://www.wordle.net/show/wrdl/1736634/Fortune

Amy Says: ACTION writing

http://www.wordle.net/show/wrdl/1736716/Amy

**Digital Tools Appendix - Storybird**

Students wrote a story and represented a theme visually, using Storybird.

Andrea Says:

http://storybird.com/books/why-2/

This storybird outlines some questions the protagonists in my story want to answer. I’m sure lots of people could relate to them too.
Vanessa Says:

This is my Storybird link: [http://storybird.com/books/i-was-happy/](http://storybird.com/books/i-was-happy/)
This storybird is from the perspective of my protagonist, Juliet, who finds that she has no friends. But one day she meets someone who is like her, alone in the world, trying to find someone else like themselves.

**Digital Tools Appendix - Timetoast**
Students created a plot timeline for a novel they wish to see published.

Vanessa Says:

This new novel from Newbery Award Winner, Kate DiCamillo, is a ‘Marvellously gripping adventure about finding your true self.’

Amelia had always been a very lonely little girl. For some reason she had been rejected from friendship groups and ignored from games, but one very special day, she meets the owl. A truly extra-ordinary owl.

‘Be yourself,’ the owl replies, ‘don’t hide behind a mask.’
After following the wise owl’s advice, Amelia will find her happiness, inner peace and most importantly, who she really is.

‘One of the most deep and morally motivated stories I will ever read.’
‘A perfect blend of self-discovery, individualism and happiness.’
‘The perfect childhood story about finding your very own place in the world.’

This is my timetoast timeline for ‘The Wise Owl’. (See ‘My World 4’)
Vanessa

Neila Says:

When an impatient driver is pushed to the limit he breaks down and stirs up trouble by running over a girl. Everyone fights for her survival not sure what will happen next while the girl lies unconscious facing mental challenges of her own.

‘A novel certainly not for the faint hearted!’
Sunday Telegraph
‘A great read, I recommend it’
The North Shore Times

This is my Timetoast timeline for my narrative. Sorry it doesn’t have a name yet. They always say leave the best till last.
[http://www.timetoast.com/timelines/32762](http://www.timetoast.com/timelines/32762)
ANNI ROXS [nom de plume] Says:

My Blurb:
Ella is a newby at Hartley High School and finally says this is the worst school ever. She is always teased by this one boy called Tim and his gang. Tim makes her embarrassed and hungry. Will she ever stick up for herself or will she always be scared?

Dialogue:
As shadows moved towards her, Ella stood with no expression, even though her heart was melting at the sight of Tim. "Where is it!” demanded Tim.
"W-w-what?” sobbed Ella, at the sight of his eyes flashing blue to red.
“Come on, spit it out, I want your lunch money!” yelled Tim as frustration ran though his body and made his knuckles itch.
“Here,” she whispered, as he snatched it out of her hands. Pain swept through her like a tidal wave.
“You better make sure you’ve got more tomorrow,” he snarled as he skipped to the front of the canteen line.

My URL:
http://www.timetoast.com/timelines/45313

Steven Says:

Blurb
This is the amazing adventure of Bob and his adventures with his best dog Snowy. He finds treasure in Ancient Egypt and gets stuck in the Pyramid of Giza. What will happen next?……Will he escape?….. Or he will he die?!

http://www.timetoast.com/timelines/47203

Leon Says:

http://www.timetoast.com/timelines/47204
This is my timetoast for the blurb:

“Win or Lose” is a game where you fight bosses and win points. Although Bob is at the last level, he can’t finish the game. Bob tries to cheat. Bob knows if he cheats, he is a cheat. Bob doesn’t want to be a cheat, but if he doesn’t win, he’ll get frustrated. And when I mean frustrated, I mean REALLY FRUSTRATED! What will happen to Bob? Will he cheat...

Jake Says:

My Blurb:
Monsters of Dragith Nurn
The protagonist Jason has just turned 25 and the land which he used to live on has been changed into a deep, dark land by the Dark Lord’s beasts Diescus, Thamowitchy, Blazo, Gem master and the one and only Dark Lord’s son.
Jason is a wild person and now he has been told to destroy the 4 Dark Lord’s beasts and his son so he can save the land from the Dark Lord. Jason can’t wait to start his adventure
but is scared that the animals that lived in the land have turned evil and have become ferocious animals.
Will Jason destroy the beasts or not? Will Jason survive? Or will the Dark Lord rule forever more?
My Timetoast:
http://www.timetoast.com/timelines/47214

ana Says:

Blurb
Lucinda picked the lone rose in the middle of the field. A single, solitary tear slid down her cheek and onto the sleek petals of the rose. Her hand slowly crushed it until all that was left was a crumpled heap of red. Just like her heart.
When a young girl finds out that her parents have been brutally murdered by a strange figure, she surrenders to the dark side of herself. Her friends, her family even her pet dog Bruce Lee dismiss her from their lives. A strong vendetta burns in her heart.

Time Toast:
http://www.timetoast.com/timelines/47217

James P Says:

Blurb
Going to a new school is hard, but it’s even harder when everybody hates you, looks down on you and that even includes the teachers…
John has just moved into a new home which also forces him to move into a new school. Here at Howards Lake Elementary School, everything is very different and new to him, including the people’s attitudes. By the first day, the majority of his grade already hate his guts. So when he changes and everything is suddenly perfect, his mum finds out and is very upset about what is happening…

Timetoast:
http://www.timetoast.com/timelines/47213

rustaib Says:

“This is my blurb”
The first challenge was to take a Japanese guy on a tour around AUSTRALIA. Just because Goosta was new gave them no reason to give him an easy job like that… And what did taking someone on a tour have anything to do with Taekwondo?
Goosta has a mission – an impossible mission and what seemed like a walk in the park just became a lot harder. As Goosta takes on his challenge he realises that skills aren’t everything but he needs to use his brain…

Time toast
http://www.timetoast.com/timelines/47206
Fiction with a twist: E-Literacy in action – School Libraries and Information Literacy Unit

Samii B Says:

My Blurb
When Shelly moves to the country, something happens that will leave Shelly hurt and angry forever…
Shelly was fine living her plain and simple life in the city, but everything changed when her family decided to move to the country. When she moved to the country something happened that led her on to a rampage to find out why it happened, how it happened and who did it.

My time toast:
http://www.timetoast.com/timelines/47236

Blogging Protocols Appendix

In the moderation process, Chase removed these details before blog comments were posted live to be read by others:

- Blogger’s surname
- Blogger’s school name
- Siblings’ names
- Parents’ names
- Suburb names
- Club names [such as sporting clubs]
- Swear words [there were 3 instances of mild swear words, unsuitable for the blog]
- Graphic violence – one story [Chase emailed the student author in question and explained it couldn’t be posted, it was for an older audience]
- Humiliating/comical events [Chase changed the names attached to 3 fictional anecdotes which seemed designed to embarrass someone at school]
- Embarrassing self-revelations/self put-downs [Chase removed a couple of silly autobiographical mentions which students would regret later]

On the blog there was a Students page. Here is the message for students from the page:

Cyber safety – Email me to flag any problems

Welcome students – please observe the following measures to ensure your cyber safety.

1. If you are a student whose name and picture is not be published anywhere, please post your stories under a nom de plume [anonymous nickname] and do not include a personal introduction.

2. Please email me if you find an example of inappropriate content [e.g. if someone has been insulted].

3. Please email me if anyone makes contact with you after reading your blog posting - this blog is in a public place. We have removed a number of identifying details so that your privacy is maintained.

Lizzie Chase
Rap Coordinator
elizabeth.chase@det.nsw.edu.au
On the blog there was a Teachers page. Here are two messages for teachers:

This area of the discussion blog is for teachers to ask questions, and share ideas and successes as they work with their students during this rap. It is great to see the enthusiastic participation so far. Feel free to send a brief introductory post to this professional teacher page.

I’d appreciate it if you could email me at elizabeth.chase@det.nsw.edu.au to let me know your school is participating. I look forward to working with you.

Here are some reminders about important aspects of online/blog etiquette to reinforce with our student participants:

1. Consider audience and purpose – encourage students to post a polished response that you and your school can be proud of rather than a first draft
2. It is a public discussion:
   a. be respectful
   b. use first names only or an appropriate nom de plume
   c. avoid posting details that make individuals identifiable

In this rap, we have found some responses do make individuals identifiable when combined with their school’s name. In order to maintain privacy the school name will be removed before a posting goes live.

We do encourage the use of nom de plumes because it maintains maximum privacy for students. Please keep a list of your students’ nom de plumes in case the students are chosen to participate in the writers’ workshop in May.

Happy rapping and blogging
Thanks
Lizzie Chase
Rap Coordinator

Dear Teachers

In some cases, where the particular spelling of a student’s name may breach privacy requirements, I have allocated the student a nom de plume. Please contact me by email, if required, to establish which students these changes apply to.

Similarly, I have removed identifying details such as siblings’ and parents’ names and the names of suburbs or sports clubs, to maintain privacy for students.

Some students are not to have their names or photos published in any context – please ensure that these students use a nom de plume for their fiction pieces and do not post a personal introduction.

Lizzie
Wirreanda Public School Appendix

Holiday Recount – Kyah

During the holidays, I went to Sydney on the 28th of December for the New Year because we had to drive my grandma home.

The reason why is that on the Wednesday before Christmas, my grandma was driving from her house to ours. We got a call from her and she told us that she had been in a car crash not very far from her house. She told us that she had to brake quickly because the truck in front had to stop because the car stopped for no reason; but, the car behind Grandma did not stop so Grandma got squashed. My uncle drove the car away while my aunty drove my grandma home.

That night at 5 o’clock mum and Joshua went to Sydney to pick her up and bring her here for Christmas.

When Mum, Grandma and I got to Sydney we unpacked then looked at the car in her garage and it was a mess.

The next day I went to my aunt’s and uncle’s house to visit them. We were there until 9pm and I didn’t want to leave because I hardly ever get to see them.

We had to leave because on New Year’s Eve they were going to Botany Bay in a boat to watch the fireworks. I had a wonderful holiday with my family and hope to see them soon.

Kyah: Fiction with a twist - Task 1

As Lexi watched the people at the beach playing in the water, her wide blue eyes opened in shock. Her glossy blonde hair, which had grown down to her lower back, blew in her face as the warm wind started to rip the sand up slightly from the ground and the waves started getting higher. Lexi grabbed her rescue board along with the other lifeguards who ran out into the waves, which were so clear that you could see the sand in the waves, to rescue the other people who needed help. Lexi didn’t have any thoughts about her life such as her pet Labrador, Bridi, who she adored so much, or her favourite days on the beach just chilling. Her only thoughts were of her job. She didn’t care if it was raining, as she now suddenly realized it was, she still had her job to do; and right now, people needed her. Lexi ran straight past the boys who were staring at her, into the crystal clear water.

Holiday Recount - Olivia

After morning broke on that very special Christmas Day the Leonards were up and about, or at least I was. Christmas Day, it was going to be fun from here. I had woken up after tossing and turning all night trying to guess what I would get for Christmas. Later that morning, I had opened all my presents. There were too many to list them all. We had a filling lunch and tea to go to later on. YUM YUM!!! Christmas was fun!

One of our New Year’s resolutions was to get a permit for a beach called Birubi. We fulfilled it on New Year’s Day. It was so fun there because we got to drive on the sand and there is some big sand dunes there but we did not drive on them. We just went for a swim in the freezing water. It was so cold it was like stepping in a freezer, but very relaxing. We visited Birubi a lot of times in the holidays but that just shows how fun it is. One time we had a belly dancing harem party. There was a hula-hooping competition and I won. I could have hula-hooped all day!!
After Christmas, the Boxing Day sales were on. I got lots of stuff with my money. It was so busy it was like walking into a jungle with a herd of wild animals in it and they were all hunting for the best buys and bargains. I REALLY LOVE SHOPPING!!!

Yay Yay Yay!! "Amanda look out I'm coming for a sleep over," I said on the way to her house. Yippee. It was very fun. We did lots of stuff. I really enjoyed my holidays!!

Olivia: Fiction with a twist - Task 1

BING!!!!! Mia's toast was ready, so coffee in hand she walked sleepily like a lazy cat on a Sunday afternoon to the toaster in her favourite bunny PJs. She slowly placed the toast on her plate then scuffled to the pantry with her oversized dog slippers on, took as always, the peanut butter and jam. “YUM,” she said to her dog, Caramel who was a beautiful, silky, shiny, fluffy Cavalier King Charles Spaniel. Caramel was like Mia's baby because she is so cute you could mistake her for one. She finished spreading her toast, sat down and ate it; after it was all gone, she got up and went to her clear and polished kitchen window. Mia started twiddling her long strait brownish-blondish hair, it was so soft like velvet, and decided what she was going to wear to work….after all, she had a whole lot of dresses - as you would have according to Mia, if you had the best job in the world - a Wedding Planner.

Holiday Recount - Amy

During the holidays I visited my father’s house in Port Macquarie. When my sisters, Brooke, and, Ashlee, and I got there I gave my dad a hug. I gave, Brodie, a hug too and my little sister, Sienna, who is only about nineteen months old.

Mt sisters and I had a lot of gift cards to spend so we went shopping on the first couple of days. We went to ICE where Brodie (my step mum) dragged us around asking questions like ‘what do you need?’ or ‘do you like this colour?’ I spent all my money for that store but Brooke and Ashlee just wandered around like a couple of lost dogs.

Afterwards we went home and had some yummy chicken rolls. I played outside awhile with my adorable sister Sienna who has way more energy than me. She’s very cute with curly dark hair and I love her so much. My dad sat on the couch like a potato and watched TV making jokes about the people on TV he really is funny. Ashlee was playing my Ds (she doesn’t have her own) looking really bored. Brooke was up on the balcony reading TWILIGHT again. She’s read the series about five times but for her going anywhere without that book would be like a horse going without food.

The next day my sister, Brooke, my dad, Sienna and me went for a walk around the street. We walked past an old lady who thought Sienna was a boy which is silly because she was wearing pink and riding in a pink and purple bike. Dad laughed and mocked the old lady afterwards. Sienna listened and when we al laughed she smiled a cheesy grin that made us all laugh some more.

The car ride home was torture. Two and a half hours in a car with my gran yakking away like mad when all I wanted was quiet isn’t exactly what I call fun. I love her and all but it just gets annoying. Ashlee didn’t have to worry about Gran she had her iPod blaring the whole trip. She put it so loud I could hear it in the back seat. Brooke just fell asleep or pretended to fall asleep. I couldn’t fall asleep in the car as hard as I tried. Gran’s voice kept me awake. I was relieved when we got home. No more long car rides. Yaaaaaaaaay!
Amy: Fiction with a twist - Task 4

‘Go away or I’ll, I’ll,’ stammered Jessica.

‘What. What will you do, baby? Run and get daddy to tell the principal,’ I teased.

‘She’s getting all red,’ I thought. ‘She always gets red when I tease her.’

‘Leave me alone or I wi..., will tell the principal,’ replied Jessica. Her face flushed as red as a tomato.

‘We’re outside of school, dummy, so I can’t get in trouble,’ I said while racking my brains for something else I could say to make her feel bad. ‘I know!’ I thought ‘She hates it when people laugh at her parents.’

I laughed and snorted which made Jessica look at me with a puzzled expression.

‘Wha..., what’s so funny?’ Jessica questioned.

‘Oh nothing...just...well... your uniform, it looks so old and worn out,’ I answered. My statement made Jessica glance at her uniform with an embarrassed look.

‘Oh wait it probably is really old considering your mum works at a butcher shop,’ I laughed some more. ‘How much money can that get you?’ ‘Not a lot I bet, ha-ha, I can picture your mum coming home with bits of bacon stuck in her hair.’

Jessica looked up at me and I saw her face had twisted into an expression I’d never seen on her before. Anger.

‘Don’t you ever talk about my parents again, Hannah, or I’ll make your life MISERABLE!’ exploded Jessica.

I stepped back in surprise. ‘No, this is not happening. Jessica is a baby. She can’t be standing up to me’ I thought to myself.

‘You think you’re so much better than everyone else, but you’re just as much of a wimp as anyone else you’ve bullied.’

Tears were running down my face and I couldn’t stop them. ‘I’m not a wimp,’ I thought. ‘I’m not!’

Jessica was smiling at my tears like she couldn’t be happier than she was right now. Emotions welled up inside me ready to burst. Hate for this girl who had made me cry and a deep sadness that seemed to consume every inch of me. I couldn’t let Jessica see me like this, so I did what anyone in my situation would do - I ran.

Holiday Recount – Michael

For six weeks of the school holidays I had a great time, I went to Queensland! It was the most exciting thing I did.

Well first of all we had to get to Queensland, (which was very boring). Loading our bags and checking in our flight was incredibly long and stupid. We finally were on the tarmac where we saw our plane, it was a shiny red. We hopped aboard and found our seats. The engines roared like a bear, we were on the runway soaring across the ground rumbling left to right then we smoothly we lifted in the air.

It took about 1 hour to get to the Gold Coast where the weather shone unlike back home. We rented a car that was so silver, it blinded me.
Driving in our resort, I smelt hot chips and my mouth dropped. Our cabin was beautiful; we settled in and explored the park. There was a luxury tennis court, mini golf course and 3 relaxing, heated pools. The day died and we went for dinner, it was simply “Yuk”! The very next day, the sun lit the sky; we were dressed in our swimmers and were ready for a wet, fun filled day at White Water World.

The ticket line sucked, but the moment we entered I was head over heels in adrenalin waiting to thrill my senses on some whacky rides. First I had to ride the tallest one, The Green Room. At the beginning, we really moved and went airborne, making my stomach tingle, we landed in a tube and stopped. We rode it again and moved on. The Hydro- Coaster was next and it was great.

During the day we went to a lot more rides and dips but those others to me were boring. Of course the time came to leave which was annoying. Back at home we ate at the restaurant again, “Oh boy”.

After a great sleep, we had to wake up to frighten our minds at Movie World. Arriving was long but entry was quick yet the rides had not opened yet. ‘Sigh’ well the stupid line to ride the Superman Escape drove me to insanity, but when we were at the front of the gates my heart raced like a V8 Super car. We took off not going fast, so I wasn’t as scared then with sudden impact we stopped. After a brief moment we took off with extreme G- Force up into Heaven and dropped vertically into Hell. It was the most awesome ride ever! My favourite rides of the day were the Superman Escape, Wild West Falls and the Scooby Doo- Spooky Coaster.

Leaving, I never felt more alive, after testing myself on all the other rides and dips as well with fright for seven hours.

The day had come to go home. On our final morning in the Gold Coast we took our final breath there and hopped on the plane. Knowing we were going home my mind went nuts. I didn’t want to go home.

Michael: *Fiction with a twist* - Task 1

Felix Kowalski

The buzzing of the clock whistled through his ears. He got up feeling like a tired zombie, the shining of stars was still in the sky as he made a coffee and left for work. His SUV drummed pulling out of the driveway. The midnight streets were as dead as a door nail with the street lights looming the darkest of alleys. His brown hair dangled around his ear and his dazed blue pupils grew to see his work - he was an architect. With his workaholic ways he stressed to his desk and got to his design, while dozing off he still sketched until the chill of his boss’s evil voice *cackled*, ‘FELIX, in my office!’ Walking out with a grin on his face he stepped through the doors and headed home. He was promoted.
**Birrong Girls High School Appendix**

**Betty97**

Hi, my name is Betty and I am 13 years old and am Asian. I LOVE school and my friends. I am very short for the average 13 year old and like books that involve fantasy. I particularly like anything that involves Vampires, Fallen Angels, Mermaids and Faeries.

I love hanging out and talking to my friends but then I also like spending time with my family. I'm considered to be a computer nerd because I spend most of my time on the computer on social networks like Messenger Live and Facebook and I play games such as COD4 and Halo3.

I have many embarrassing moments, but one of the most embarrassing moments is when in pre-school, a boy chopped off my fringe with a pair of scissors. I cried for hours on end till my eyes went sore and bright red. I attend the best school ever.

**Character sketch:**
Chloe sags in her plastic grey chair that lies near the computer desk. Her light brown hair, straight as a ruler hair is out, lying on her shoulders. Her fingers lean toward her laptop, brushing quickly across the keys on the keyboard, while her blue marble-like eyes stare at the computer screen. Her pink sheep-printed pyjamas hang loose on her shapeless tanned figure.

Chloe feels cold and depressed after the repetitive bullying seasons at school. As she clicks into her inbox, her sad face droops even more. Hate Mail. One of the most cruel and horrid things in this world, more than 12! They contain all the bad words in the world that you could possibly think off.

Tears drop from her eyes. After all she has done for her Best Friend, it has led to betrayal. Chloe doesn’t even do anything. Yet inside herself she suffers and regrets the things they’ve said about her personal life.

**h@r33m Says:**

Hi there, I’m Hareem. I am a BIG fan of Elmo 9 and I’m really into books. I’m 12 years old and currently in Year 7. I have an Indonesian/Pakistani background. Some people say I look like Vanessa Hudgens (I certainly DON’T agree with them) and, because of that, they call me Gabriella (grrr….). For some reason, they even call me Kream. Anyway, enough about my nicknames.

I have lots of friends, and I am really into handball (because it’s awesome and I’m a pro….sort of). And I like creative writing!

I had woken up from my beauty sleep when I smelled my breakfast. It was the usual cooked carrots and hay. I trotted to the breakfast room and my assistant brushed came to my mane. “Good horsey…” he said. When would they ever address me properly? I munched on my breakfast while my owner was preparing for the Melbourne Cup…
haneen Says:

Hi, my name is Haneen – I’m turning 13 in April. I love learning Italian and I absolutely adore French people and food. My bff is Belinda. My favourite colour is green and Edward Cullen is REAL!!!! I am Iraqi and proud of it.

Ten things I know are true:
- I believe that everyone has the right to be who they are as long as they are not psychopaths.
- I know that the world is not as it seems...
- I value my beliefs.
- I care about how bunnies are being treated.
- I treasure gold and triple chocolate ice-cream.
- I feel strongly about the weather today.
- I declare that potatoes are best eaten mashed.
- I hope that you will keep reading this list.
- I work hard in my own life to pass my extremely hard math tests. Science too.

Character sketch

Abby raced through the alleyway with the police behind her. As she dodged dumpsters and stray cats she dove into a secret compartment just big enough for a 12 year old girl with a small backpack full of stolen goods. She hid in there and held her breath. A few moments passed before the police declared that the thief had escaped.

Meet Abby, 12 years old with long dark hair and bright blue eyes. An averaged sized girl with an average life by day. By night Abby worked for a secret gang that stalked the city stealing whatever they could lay their greedy hands on.

Abby went through the tunnel and out an empty street. She ran to the stolen black Porsche. Inside there she gave the bag to the man. His name was Stealth. Together they inspected what they found. Two diamond rings, a pair of 20 carat gold earrings, a pearl necklace and $1500 of money.

Not a bad raid for a night.

lilmizchatterbox515 Says:

About Me

Julie N. – That’s me. Just your typical 13 year old girl. I’m Asian and I’m what you consider ‘smart’. I have dark brown eyes that perfectly match my dark brown hair. I’m in love with books. The best are supernatural romance novels. And yes, I’m a Twilight fan, but before you roll your eyes I’m not as crazy as the other fans.

I enjoy Japanese and Chinese culture even though I’m Vietnamese. And when I said I love reading books, I have to add that I love reading Japanese mangas and watching Japanese animes. I love sushi, chocolate, spaghetti, hot chips and all my junk food. Considering that I love my junk I’m quite average, not too fat not, too skinny.
Did I mention that I love the internet? I’m so glad to be born in a generation that has so many advanced technologies. Everything is at the tips of your fingers. MSN, Facebook and YouTube, I’m all for it. Even though I love technology, I also love hanging out with my best buddies.

My parents, like any others, are over protective and have high expectations for me but I still love them. That’s me – fun, creative and cool to hang with….

Character Sketch
Sylvia Jones skidded to a halt on her skateboard, sweat slid down her narrow cheeks. Her chocolate brown eyes peered out at the passing crowd. The wind whipped her dark wavy hair against her cheeks flowing softly against the breeze. Today was her first day at another new school.

Her parents loved moving around a lot and they would always drag her along the way. This meant that Sylvia never really settled in one place long enough to call home. She loved her parents and considering that she was not a very social person it meant that she didn’t make a lot of friends. She would move away before anyone even noticed that she was there.

Sylvia never did fit in with the popular crowd. Judging by the baggy jeans and black hoodie she had on, it was quite obvious. Her skateboard was battered and scraped but she still loved it. It was something she loved to do by herself. A sport that didn’t involve a team which she preferred over any group activity.

Sylvia liked being alone, it gave her a sense of independence. She approached the school and pulled her hood over her wavy hair, hoping once again that no one would notice the new girl.

Silver dragon Says:

Silver dragon
Hi, my name is Kristine, but I preferred being called Krissie. I am turning 12 on the 30th of March. I am around 1m 64cm tall and my background is Asian. My most amusing friend would have to be Claire.

Claire likes being called Fredrick Hans Gluten burg Squibideedee. My favourite subject is art because I am soo pro at it though I want to learn how to draw anime.

I love playing my Nintendo Wii almost every Saturday but I don’t have time to play with it now. I use every spare opportunity to play my uncle’s PS3. I used to play Diablo but I got so fed up with the game that I used a cheat code to upgrade my character to level 99.

My lucky number is 8 and I am an Aries in star sign and a Tiger in Zodiac… not a very good mix, don’t you agree. My favourite colour is baby blue. My favourite animal is the dog. I also like kittens but not cats so much.

I used to play the piano but I didn’t like the way my teacher used to squish my fingers against the keyboard like they were some sort of bug. I think ice cream is the best thing you could ever get in life, without it children would be so hot on a summer’s day.

My biggest fear would be those huge black hairy spiders that can kill a full grown man with one single bite…
Zhi Says:
Hi, my name is Zhi and I am 13 years old and currently in Year 8. My favourite books are The Catcher in the Rye, Franny and Zooey, Lolita, Breakfast at Tiffany's and The Great Gatsby. I enjoy classic novels or stories written in the 1900s.

My favourite fictional family is the Glass family including their cat, Bloomberg. I like French, German, Russian and Japanese culture and I like films that either have Audrey Hepburn, Audrey Tautou, and Zooey Deschanel in them or that are directed by Sofia Coppola.

I enjoy going to art galleries, shopping, browsing around bookstores, looking at photography (e.g. old Polaroids), walking around IKEA, looking at old architecture and travelling. I enjoy going on Twitter but I don’t really like Facebook. I also don’t really like sport or maths.

Character Sketch
Sybil Holmberg sat in the backyard of her new house. She was wearing a canary yellow dress reading The Virgin Suicides, while her cat Leslie was playing with a ball of red wool. She was wearing a pair of sunglasses, not knowing that her mother, Rosemary, wanted to repaint her room.

It was chaotic enough to move from Manly to Paddington, a place where her parents found it ‘closer to work and the city’. They moved onto a street where everybody knew everyone and everybody knew what everyone was doing and there was no privacy.

Sybil already felt the eyes of her neighbours, the de facto couple Audrey Greenwood and Nic Bell and the retired Edith Bartholomew (mainly known as Edie Bart), looking over into her backyard. She had a feeling that Katie and Jorge Persons, the bakers, were coming over with a cake that Katie made, as a welcome to the street.

She heard her father, Brian, talking to Jorge and Katie already, and offering them to sit in the backyard with him. Sybil, annoyed by the prying of her new neighbours, picked up Leslie, her blanket and book, and went upstairs to the balcony.

Extract from Birrong Girls High School newsletter - http://tinyurl.com/23stwe5
“Fiction with a Twist” involves a blog for enthusiastic and accomplished readers and writers in Stage 3 and 4 English. Students have the opportunity to discuss their favourite authors and books and to continue a story thread started by an author collaboratively. This blog began on 22 February 2010 and continues for the remainder of the term.

Nine students were targeted to develop their writing skills and gain expert advice from published authors. These students, who came from 7B and 8B, are having fun creating their own work. This DET initiative is a writers' workshop using blogs to improve writing and literacy skills. The girls have already completed two tasks writing all about themselves and developing character sketches. Some of the benefits that the students themselves have gained include sharing ideas, posting to other schools, flexibility of creativity at home and school, improved writing skills and most importantly, making new friends. You can view their awesome writing at http://rapblog8.edublogs.org/

The highlight of this experience has been the way the girls are able to communicate with published authors and gain expert advice as well as being exposed to the work of other students. Next term there will be a writers’ workshop with the authors.

Ms Pazin and Mr Davidson
Coordinators
Online Authors Appendix

Overview – Specific mentoring samples for each author follow below...

Authors’ mentoring styles – Fiction with a twist blog

Fiction with a twist was fortunate to have 3 authors with complementary mentoring styles. They had the same messages to communicate about LESS IS MORE, SHOWING and not telling and the power of individual voices. Each author commented on various students’ work, reacting to it, praising ideas or making suggestions.

John Larkin: John gave his top 10 tips for writing and shared a short story as a model.

Deb Abela: Deb gave a lot of specific feedback to a large number of students, as well as providing general comments about the craft of writing.

James Roy: James was humorous and shared his personal take on writing and books.

Optional story starters supplied by the authors for the Week 5 story task

Deb Abela and James Roy Says:

Welcome to this Book Rap!

The main aim of these first sentences we are giving you is to help create the beginnings of a story in your head. Before you start to write, think about who the characters might be, where they come from, what kind of person they are, even what they may be wearing. Think about why they are doing what they’re doing, what they are thinking and always with stories, what is about to happen next. Sometimes it’s more interesting not to go with the first idea that you get so keep thinking about what you can write that will be unique and original in either content or style. Stories, quite simply, are about creating trouble. Your job as a writer is to think about what kind of trouble could happen next that will create drama and conflict and keep your reader intrigued. Happy writing!

Story 1
‘So you decided to come.’ His hands were withered and his voice strangled and wheezed as if he was being choked. ‘We are going to have such fun.’

Story 2
Principal Kromp wasn’t known for her caring nature and it didn’t look like she was about to introduce it anytime soon.

Story 3
It was properly on fire now. Orange and yellow tongues of flame licked at the sides and around the edges. Thick smoke billowed up, all black and grey, and from the centre of the fire came pops and spits, and that horrible, hissing roar.

Deb and James

PS If you continue one of these stories we have started, put “Story 1 [continued]”, “Story 2 [continued]” or “Story 3 [continued]” at the top as your title!
Larkin - Online mentoring in Week 1 – Character sketch task

**John Larkin (Author) Says:**

Good character sketch, Issa. Try to develop this further. Look at the potential impact on all facets of Derek's life and then develop your story from there. Always come back to these words: “What if?” What if Derek discovered something in his computer generated world that he wasn't supposed to? What if as a result of this he now has a contract out on him and is being chased by these shadowy figures? The phenomenon of teenage boys locking themselves in their bedrooms to play computer games and hide from the world is so common in Japan that they actually have a name for it. They're called the hikikomori, the literal translation of which is “Those who isolate themselves”. You're onto something here, Issa. Go for it. Write on.

Ciao
John

**John Larkin (Author) Says:**

Hello again. I was just going to put a general comment about and then I came across Jeremy's which reads: "Jack is a maniac because he thinks evil spirits are after him. He is well known at school because he once stabbed himself. He lives with his foster parents who he hates."

This is a great pitch because it’s intriguing. We are both fearful and concerned for Jack’s fate. It also shows us that character sketches need only be brief and can be linked to a plot outline.

Write on

John

**John Larkin (Author) Says:**

**John’s top ten writing tips.**

I'm going to list below, one at a time so as not to daunt you, my top ten tips for writers. Although we've discussed a couple of these already, I thought I'd hit you with my top ten tips for writers in one go. Tuck these away somewhere or print them off and stick them over your desk or whatever works for you – eat them if you like.

Ciao
John
John Larkin (Author) Says: The 10 separate POSTs have been put together

Tip 1:
Show don’t tell (I’ve discussed this, but it’s really important, hence its position at the top of my list)

Tip 2:
KISS. This means “Keep it simple stupid”, though don’t worry too much about the stupid. It’s not a writer’s job to impress readers with our word power. Eg: “I perceived the canine in what was tantamount to an anthropomorphic projection.” Writing is about blending everyday words together and there is great beauty in simplicity.

Tip 3:
Good writing isn’t written, it’s rewritten. (As discussed previously). Publishers will publish about one in 1000 manuscripts that they receive. It’s the writer who goes over and over and over their work, improving it each time, who becomes that one in 1000.

Tip 4:
Evoke, evoke, evoke. This is a camp recount from one of my year 6 students last year: “Dad came into my room and turned on the light and said that if I didn’t get up soon I would be late for camp.”

This was it after I’d worked it a bit for him:

“Dad exploded into my room like Krakatoa erupting. He flicked on the light which burned my eyes like a vampire leaving the cinema at noon. I’m not sure what language he was speaking but from the way he was leaping about the room, it seemed I was running late.”

Okay, I’ve overplayed the hand a bit for teaching purposes but you can see what I’m getting at.

Tip 5:
Similes. I’ve given a couple of examples above and apart from the fact that I love them (similes, that is) they can be very effective. Remember, the difference between a simile and metaphor is a simile is a comparison “like a”, “as a” whereas a metaphor “is”.

Tip 6:
“A writer writes always”. This is taken from a great movie about writing called “Throw Momma from the Train” and it’s a philosophy that I subscribe to. What it’s saying is, the physical act of writing is just the end product, you need to be writing in your head as you’re walking around, going on long car trips, train trips etc. The movie is old but it’s worth renting if you can find it or else download it (legally of course).

Tip 7:
Take risks. Not in your life but in your writing. Experiment, try things out, try different genres, experiment with form, try writing in the second person, which is the “you” pronoun. “You come to the edge of a precipice and stare out into the unknown. You wonder about the circumstances that have taken place in your life that have led you to this point.” Take risks and your writing will be better for it.

Tip 8:
Have fun. Writing should be a pleasure. If I’ve got work to do I make writing a treat. For eg: after I’ve mowed the lawn, clipped the dog, vacuumed the pool, redirected the Biblical flood away from my garage, then I can write for two hours. Make it your treat. It’s certainly better
than watching TV, unless of course Blackadder is on Go. Then watch Blackadder (because it’s brilliantly written) and then write yourself.

**Tip 9:**
Get advice. Ask people, whose opinion you trust, about your writing. They don’t have to be writers themselves, but they should at the very least be readers. English teachers are worth getting to know.

**Tip 10:**
Research, research, research. If you’re going to write about something then you must know about it. I’m tired of reading stories about brave heroes scampering ashore an Antarctic ice floe only to find themselves being savaged by a particularly ravenous polar bear. There are NO polar bears in the Antarctic, ravenous or otherwise.

Today my Year 9 daughter was writing a speech on gender issues in relation to Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice. I started talking to her about the suffragette movement which, not surprisingly, she didn’t know anything about, so with my encouragement she did some research on it and now she does know about it.

You can never have enough knowledge, particularly if you are (or are going to become) a writer.

Have fun. Take risks.

Ciao

John

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**James Roy online mentoring**

**James Roy Says:**

I’m with John – codas are annoying. So are most prologues. It took me a long time to get into Star Wars, simply because of that big block of information scrolling away into the far reaches of space at the very beginning. A better storyteller than George Lucas would have shown – rather than told – us all that stuff without having to spell it out in letters a metre tall. Fantasy writers have a term for this kind of “telling” in a prologue: “info-dump”. Which is ironic, because fantasy writers are often the worst offenders…

The only way a prologue really works is if it’s done like it is in that brilliant little animated movie “Up”. That first ten minutes shows us everything we need to know about the main character, and his reasons for doing what he does when the movie really gets going. But even in up, there’s no coda. I agree with John – your reader should be able to see what you’re trying to say and what you feel passionately about without being told. A coda is like one of those people who explains the joke after everyone else has already laughed.

**James Roy Says:**

… Haaanc, you like short stories? Does this mean you like writing short stories? Then here’s a tip – short stories don’t necessarily need a twist. Sometimes they can just be a slice of life.

And here’s an example. It’s the shortest short story ever, and it’s by Ernest Hemingway.

Ready?

FOR SALE. BABY SHOES. NEVER WORN.
It’s all there – characters, a complication, emotional engagement.

**And some other short story collections:**
- The Turning, by Tim Winton
- Black Juice, by Margo Lanagan
- Anything of Raymond Carver’s
- The Boat, by Nam Le
- Town, by me.

Check ‘em out!

James Roy Says:

Rather a lot of fantasy fans, especially of the vampiric variety. Only problem – well, ONE of the problems – I have with Twilight is that he watches her sleep. WHA…? That’s just creepy! It’s like Santa Claus – he knows when you are sleeping, he knows when you’re awake. I’m sorry, Santa, but that’s stalking!

Rebecca did say something very true, though. She said that what makes a good book is TROUBLE. Exactly right. Any good story needs some conflict, because no one wants to read a story or watch a movie where everyone agrees with each other all the time. Can you imagine Romeo and Juliet without conflict?

“Hi Romeo, I’m Juliet.”
“Hi, Juliet. You’re cute.”
“So are you. Wanna pash?”
“Sure. Mum and Dad won’t even mind.”
THE END.

**Deb Abela online mentoring – Week 4 – Power dialogues**

deborah abela Says:

Hi Imogen,

Wow that school you are describing seems to be having a bad day!!! Especially Mr G. Can I ask a question: Is Mr G the teacher who screamed that all his students were getting Es?

If it is then I would use his name straight away. Names are an important way for readers to start to relate to characters, especially when they have just met them.

This also means you can cut back your piece so it is punchier and sharper. eg “You’re all getting ‘Es’ I tell you – ‘Es’,” screamed Mr G, who stomped off to the staffroom to discuss his horrible morning with the principal.’

This has the same meaning but gets to the point more quickly, which is a very important skill for a writer.
I was also curious about Nancy’s reaction….Mr G seems pretty mad….and you say she is really scared. It’d be great if you could build up the tension in story about what is to happen next. What do the other kids in the class do while they are waiting for Mr G to return? Are they scared too? With Mr G so angry, maybe the principal’s reaction won’t be very terrific.

I look forward to seeing what you write next!!
From Deborah Abela (Author)

deborah abela Says:

Ooooooohhh Sophie….great power dialogue!!!! I really felt sorry for Granny and was curious, like she was, as to what had made Ginger so awful. Instantly I wanted to know what had happened to her since Granny had last seen her. My head filled with all sorts of possibilities.

Sometimes in stories it is better to SHOW not TELL what is happening. As writers, we can show what kind of person our characters are through their actions, dialogue and our descriptions of them rather than simply telling our reader. eg in your first line you have said: ‘Ginger, a rude, arrogant young girl believes that she makes ALL the decisions. Ginger believes that everyone must be at her command.’

All of this we know from how you have described Ginger below. The first sentence is TELLING but your other sentences are SHOWING us the same thing eg: ‘If you baked them I expect them to be horribly stale, chewy and full of wholegrain. I expect to find a shrivelled up, old white hair in it, just floating around. So that would be a definite NO!’

These are definitely the words of a rude, arrogant girl.

See if there are other places in your work where you have TOLD the reader something rather than SHOWED them and have a think about how you can change it.

Now to your blurb….
This is an intriguing blurb because it doesn’t tell you the whole story but sets up a story with lots of great atmosphere! I really feel nervous for the boy approaching the door. We get such a great sense of how scared the boy is when you SHOWED us how he was acting, eg: ‘His hand reached out and slowly picked up the brass door knocker, his hand trembling, face as pale as a ghost. Slowly, and carefully, he let the door knocker hit the door, sending bolts of electricity through his spine.’

That’s great!!! I can see everything so clearly and still feel like I have started to know your character and even feel for him. A very important job of a writer is to create characters we care about and you have done just that! Congratulations.

There is a sentence at the beginning where you have TOLD us rather than SHOWN us. See if you can find it and rewrite it so it is as gripping as the one I’ve quoted above. Congratulations on your pieces and Enjoy your writing,
deborah abela Says:

Hi Buzz,

I’ve just read your chapter 1 opening paragraph….Good To See You. I really like the idea that you have opened with a title that quickly turns out perhaps not to be true…we know Molly was excited to be meeting Viola and her mum but of course when she does, she is quickly saddened and confused.

I have a few points to mention that you can think about:

Point of View:
This is a very important part of writing…whose point of view us the story being told from? Sometimes each chapter may belong to a different character, but in this case you point of view changes in the same paragraph. I hope I can explain this clearly enough….at first you start from Viola and her mum’s point of view…they are heading off to the airport on this special day, but then you switch to Molly’s point of view…

Since the big change in personality is in Viola, I think it may be better to start out with Molly’s point of view. She is so excited about the meeting but then we all feel for her as she becomes sad when she sees how depressed Viola is.

I really felt for Molly…you have described her disappointment so well. One thing though, try when you are writing to SHOW your reader what is happening and what your characters are feeling rather than TELLING them. eg saying ‘Molly was confused,' is TELLING your reader but it is more interesting for us to know this by what she does or says. See if you can go back over the piece and see if you can find other places of TELLING and change them to SHOWING, either in description, dialogue or action.

I would have loved to have heard some dialogue too. I know you have only just started, but this is great way for the reader to get to know your characters.

Also, be careful of any repetition. See if there are any places where you have repeated words or the same idea. I love the idea of these people meeting up again after being apart….I am instantly curious about how they know each other, why Viola has become depressed and what is going to happen next! Congratulations….I’m in and want to read more.

From Deborah Abela (Author)

Imogen Says:

Have you ever swum through the deep blue ocean, opening your eyes to see that there is a mystical but scary world below? The world of the ocean is yet to be discovered, but the level of potential in the ocean is amazing. To write a paragraph and see your own mistakes and fix them is like swimming in the ocean with your eyes wide open!

From Imogen
Writing Workshops Appendix

Authors’ writing tasks – writing workshops

John Larkin: 10 sentences sequence to support evocative writing for the senses

Deb Abela: What if? Finding ideas for stories: I opened my eyes and saw. Showing character through dialogue, description, action: S/he walked into the room and...

James Roy: Speed writing using real life experiences: When I was younger/Outside my window/What makes me angry

John Larkin Workshop notes – Lizzie Chase

John Larkin’s workshop
- 3 elements in a story: orientation, complication, resolution
- Make the complication a mega problem
- Kill the codas!!
- Story driver – is the thing that keeps you reading...

1. Get to know the main character / so we have empathy for him/her (show vulnerable side too)
2. The character wants something – a clearly stated GOAL
3. WORK LIKE HELL not to give it to them – keep taking their goal away
4. Give it to them OR the thing they’ve discovered they need instead
   (OR 4.5 Don’t give it to them – if the character hasn’t grown/hasn’t changed)

BUT character IS transformed/better for the journey

- All stories are road movies/journeys
- Learn to be a writer by unpacking the magic moments of a movie or book [Empathy, Goal, Obstacles, New Goal/Give Goal]

- Hook your reader from the get go
- Good writing isn’t written, it’s rewritten
- Rework, rework, rework
- Show don’t tell
- Less is more
- Hook your reader from the start
- The sound of words…
- Bum glue – sit down and write

10 sentences writing exercise
The main character is 18 years old and has not seen one parent for 15 years – every detail contributes towards a meeting

- Take risks
- Literary writing
- There’s no right or wrong
- Better to evoke than to spell it out
10 sentences
1. Weather – mood
2. Sound
3. Article of clothing
4. Small action/gesture
5. Object
6. Flashback
7. Reveal something about your character [back out of flashback, a change]
8. Weather
9. Dialogue
10. Surprise ending

10 sentences writing - John Larkin’s workshop

Vanessa – St Ives North PS
The clouds were undecided on whether to unleash their rain or let it be another day. Juliet’s mum’s voice droned out into the air. She fingered at the locket her mother said her father wanted to give her for her 16th birthday. Juliet’s mother turned around at the red light and touched her leg with a loving smile on her face. She opened up her locket and studied the faded picture. The picture jolted Juliet back to the day he left, when she was so happy playing with her father in the back yard for the last time. She couldn’t believe that her father left because of her. As Juliet looked back out the window, the rain began to fall, lightly first, then like a storm. ‘Here we are, Juliet. Are you ready?’ Her mum smiled forcefully. There they were, parked in front of a ramshackle, collapsed ‘house’.

Sunny - Caddies Creek PS
The rain thudded against the pavement, exploding into little droplets as it pelted the ground. Far in the distance a roaring car engine could be heard faintly. My coat billowed around me as I strode through the quiet streets. I reached into my pockets and drew out a photo. It was from the last time I had seen my father when I had been 3. That had been the happiest moment of my life. It seemed so long ago. Suddenly a roar of thunder shocked me out of my thoughts. A flash of lightning lit up the sky for a split second revealing the lifeless body strewn across the end of the street.

Andrea – St Ives North PS
The clouds hung about heavily and the trees swayed, warning of what was to come. Squawking was diminished into faint beeps. I pulled the folds of my jacket closer into my chest. Taking another few hesitant steps, I realised my laces were untied. I reached down and felt the leathery texture of my shoes. I glimpsed a gold chain on my wrist, and reached over with my other hand to finger the familiar coolness of the bracelet. An image formed in my mind of my mother, smiling gently. As I opened my eyes, I could see the sun just beginning to peep through the dense layers of cloud. “Yeah, well, that sun’s not gonna come out like that for me. If it does, I’ll be one lucky person,” I mumbled. Trying to keep my hopes alive, I finished up tying up my shoelace and kept shuffling up the track.
Students write about John Larkin’s workshop

Eeshaa’s notes – St Ives North PS
- Characters should change during story
- Give clues, one at a time
- Never let characters achieve GOAL until very end
- Use metaphors for real life
- 3 parts to the story: orientation, complication, resolution
- Break down great movies/books for tips
- The start is one of the most important things
- Second person is ‘you’
- Professional editors only read the first paragraph to decide
- Use bum glue – just sit down, write, edit, keep editing
- Good writing isn’t written it’s rewritten
- Show don’t tell!
- Get rid of ‘very’ & ‘really’
- Get rid of boring verbs
- Use words like ‘decapitated’ instead of ‘headless’
- Alliteration – sound of words
- Less is more powerful

Question: What did you learn from John?

Dakota – Wirreanda PS
- Get rid of the coda
- Get to know your characters, understand what they’re going through
- Deconstruct movies
- Don’t tell, show
- And most of all, you need bum glue

Michael – Wirreanda PS
- John has taught me that the best writing is rewritten
- We should use new techniques
- Be creative and show don’t tell

Shae – Wirreanda PS
- John said make sure they don’t achieve their goal, don’t use a moral and good writing isn’t written it’s rewritten plus he kept me intrigued with his humour.
- Show don’t tell
- Don’t forget the bum glue

Deb Abela’s workshop – What if? writing exercises

Lizzie Chase’s notes
- The writer’s main job is to CREATE TROUBLE
- Keep readers wanting to know what is going to happen
- Use 5 senses - Show not tell
- Punctuate last – doing the story is more important than punctuating

Thinking of story ideas
- Ask WHAT IF?
- I opened my eyes and saw…
Who? Why were eyes closed? Saw what?

Characters – show them through:
- Dialogue
- Description
- Action

Writing tasks
1. What did a character see when s/he opened their eyes?
2. What happened when a character strode into a room?

Eeshaa's notes
- Think of all outcomes – choose the most appealing
- What if? – Use to begin (for ideas)
- Use things you like – chockies, marshmallows, ice cream
- A writer’s job is to CREATE TROUBLE!!!
- Need to solve trouble
- Always MORE TROUBLE
- Lives in danger
- Every word needs a job
- Keep readers intrigued
- It is fine to go off plan
- Description, Dialogue, Action
- Feelings, passion, loved ones (all for ideas)
- Make someone stride into room, v.arrogant but privately sad, coward (Twist!!)

Character opened eyes and saw – Writing task 1 from Deb’s workshop

Andrea – St Ives North PS
Nathan’s eyes fluttered open, but immediately he shut them again. Being a brave boy, he forced his eyes to scan the scene once more. Where was he? A wave of confusion hit Nathan. He was trapped. The walls and the ceiling were painted white. He had no idea about the floor because he couldn’t see it. Picking his way through the mist, Nathan shuddered. Lonely. Lost. He collapsed to the ground, not worrying about the strange smoke that rose from the floor. Nathan glimpsed a panel of the wall shaking. He shook his head and straightened his glasses, and looked again. A tall, dark figure had entered the room. But that was all he saw, for the smoke dragged him into unconsciousness...

Vanessa – St Ives North PS
Amelia gasped. It was wrong. Everything was wrong. She tried to lift up her arm to rub her eyes rid of the image, but it didn’t move; as if it’d been stuck down.
“Dirty Jews…” a gruff voice growled at her. “Ye can’t move, girl. It’s the white stuff. Makes you tired.”
Amelia could barely make out his voice over the rattling beneath her. I’m on a train. “Who…” “I’m Dogface.” The man was half obscured by a shadow horizontally slashing across his face. Just like his scar. He bit into his sandwich like a savage before speaking again. “Boss’s orders. Stay there.” He jumped up suddenly, and Amelia longed to crawl into the shadows and hide. Dogface grasped the top of the opening in the corrugated iron and spat out some seeds. Only then did Amelia hear the coarse, shallow breath behind. She twisted her neck painfully, and realised a huddle of shivering men, women and children sitting behind her with yellow stars painted across their clothes.
Amy – Wirreanda PS
Opening her eyes was difficult. Carly never wanted to open them again. She didn’t want to believe what she was seeing. “Be brave,” she told herself while forcing her droopy eyelids open. All around her were candles. Candles sitting on long sticks bolted to the walls of the dark, damp tunnel she was trapped in. Not a single thing was familiar to her. Pipes of all sizes and lengths ran along the roof of the tunnel as far as she could see. Which wasn’t very far seeing that the only thing the candles did was send distorted dancing shadows across the tunnel walls.

Carly snapped her head up to the pipes across the roof, sending her red hair flying across her freckled face. She saw to her dismay a crack as big as a door appear along one of the many pipes. Water poured down, flooding the tunnel and putting out the candles. The current was heading right and taking Carly, struggling and weak, with it.

Olivia – Wirreanda PS
I opened my eyes. The water cold as ice. It had shocked me. From the beginning. Where was I? Water. I hated the stuff. Wet, cold, murky, dead. It took me by surprise the state of the water. The damage. What could have done this? Splurt, bubbles started forming around me - but nothing. Not a trace was in my line of sight. I shut my eyes, gripping my head, I felt a bit… I opened my eyes and was in my room. It took me 5 minutes to realise I could transport to different places. It was all in my mind.

Character walked into room – Writing task 2 from Deb’s workshop

William - St Ives North PS
“I am the King of all Kings!” shouted the immense figure as he strode into the room. He wore a gold crown decorated with jewels, and gold bracelets hung from his hands. “I deserve royal treatment! All who disobey me shall be slaughtered at once for no-one is a match for me, the Lord of the World!” Servants showered him with gold coins as he sat down onto his shining, spotless throne.

Matthew – St Ives North PS
The crime lord entered the torture room, his dark and merciless eyes glaring at everyone in the room. He had obvious authority, walking slowly and deliberately and making everyone look like ants compared to the giant. “Get the prisoner in!” he barked at his servants. They quickly obeyed, shying away and hauling the exhausted prisoner in.

Michael – Wirreanda PS
He strolled down the hall and losing his balance, collapsed into the principal’s office. He got up as slowly as a turtle and walked clumsily to the principal’s desk. The principal had a smile on his face which made Alex a bit more confident. In a split second the little paper bin was caught between Alex’s legs, tripping him over like an unbalanced scale.

“Oops, sorry!”
He blew his brown hair off his face and shyly smiled and sat down, awkwardly. The principal looked angry so Alex hopped out of his soft chair. His pale hand reached forward and went to uncomfortably shake his hand. He dizzily flopped forward and with the force of his “next” fall his fragile arms waved about like a distressed octopus, spilling a coffee on the principal’s lap, paralysing him in pain.

“Alex has got (off) to a good start,” explained his friend, just outside the office.

Question: What did you learn from Deb about writing?

William – St Ives North PS
- When trouble affects the main character it is most interesting
- Characters stick together and take risks in order to do so
- Ways to describe character: Dialogue, Description and Action
- The information that Deb Abela gave us about writing was very helpful because I wasn’t very sure where to get ideas and how to make writing more interesting

Caitlin – Wirreanda PS
That you can use dialogue, description & action to describe characters. Anyone can write. No two stories will be the same.

Mahdia – Caddies Creek PS
- There is not 1 place to find ideas
- The senses make stories very interesting
- All writers make mistakes
- There should always be more than one problem
- It was an awesome experience – I hope to see her again 😊

Sunny – Caddies Creek PS
- Don’t put too many telling words; use actions to get the message across
- Create trouble to further engage the reader
- Use your real life experiences to make the reader more curious

Angus – Caddies Creek PS
Deb told us to describe how a person is feeling within their actions and movements rather than writing something like “the person was feeling scared.”

Jack – Caddies Creek PS
When Deb was talking about the way she writes the main thing I remember was that “when writing try and let the reader guess things and figure them out themselves.” She also told us that when we are writing a story, “write about things that we want to and not just about what we think other people would want us to.”

Amy – Wirreanda PS
Deb told us that writing can come from things you’re angry about, things you know, anything really. She also told us not to be afraid of writing dialogue and that a writer’s main job is to cause trouble.

Speed Writing Appendix

Speed writing at the writing workshop – Secondary students

Rhiannon
1. **When I was younger**, when my little brother was born, we had a party at my house and I thought it would be funny to hide him in the shower. When my family got there, my mum was majorly panicking and she even called the police. After about 15 mins, I told my family where I had put Kyle and I got in BIG trouble. I only did it because I hated him getting more attention than me.

2. **Outside my window** is my next door neighbour’s backyard and they have 4 dogs - 1 huge golden retriever (that insists on barking 24/7), 2 greyhounds and a Chihuahua. Every time I open my window, all four of those stupid dogs bark consistently. Once I threw one of my unwanted shoes out my window to those annoying dogs.

3. **What makes me angry** is not getting my own way. Like if I want to go somewhere, either my mum or my step-dad, or even my little brother, will PERSIST in telling me why I can’t. I hate it. I always have to ask multiple times but I just get ignored. It really
ticks me off. Just as much as my little brother makes me angry, I know I shouldn’t let him get to me but he just does.

Nathan
1. **When I was younger**, I used to like many different things. Some things I have kept liking but others I have not. I wasn’t aware of most everyday things. I only knew what my parents had told me. Then I started school. I learnt to read and was taught many things.
2. **Outside my window** there isn’t much to see. Just a few houses and the sound of the T-way. At night there are few stars. The dog from two doors down can be heard early in the morning. And the neighbour across the road screaming her head off.
3. **What makes me angry** is noise. Lawn mowers, cars, people yelling and loud music playing. It gives you no peace to think or concentrate. Even trying to relax is difficult.

Claire
1. **When I was younger**, I went to my cousin’s house and played a few games. All too soon my mum decided it was time to go home. My cousins, Victor and Ryan, were very upset. At first we hid underneath a small blue tarpaulin in the backyard but somehow my mum found me. We sat around pondering what to do. Run away? Actually go home? Hide somewhere else? Yes, perfect idea. We finally decided to hide behind the car.
2. **Outside my window** I could see the street below. Usually whenever someone was about to come over, I would hide behind the blinds and secretly spy on the street, waiting for the car to come by. It made me feel like a secret agent. I even made the gun gesture with my hands.
3. **What makes me angry** is when my dad eats with his mouth open. Whenever he does, it sounds like a pig having a pillow fight in the mud. The worst part is what I am able to see. Let me tell you what almost all mushed up food looks like – porridge with few rotten mashed egg yolks with a bit of dog poo, all in one serve.

Jasmine
1. **When I was younger**, I had a fear of babies. The vomit smelled disgusting, the crying, and don’t remind me of the nappies. Now everything rushed back to me like a lightning speed (of) when my parents gave birth to my brother. He was not cute, nor adorable. His eyes faced mine and I could sense evilness. There was one thing I was thinking of…
2. **Outside my window** was darkness. It was raining. Although the window was closed, I sensed rain, fear and horror. Thunder struck, I huddled under my blanket. I peaked slowly out of the window. Thunder struck again, I ran under my bed and curled myself like a little rain cloud. It was only then I fell asleep, under my bed. After loud noises, I slowly opened my eyes and found the police staring blankly at me. Oh! No! Was I going to be arrested?

Anna
1. **When I was younger**, I wanted to become a vet and it was a dream I continued. I loved animals of every kind and thought how awesome it would be for me, to one day, be able to help all animals when they were sick. My favourite animal is, and always has been, dogs. It would be great for me to help them one day. Yet when I realised putting down animals was part of the job, I kept my love of animals and set my eyes on a new (job).
2. **Outside my window** I can see the plants my mum has grown, all the beautiful flowers and growing trees. There is luscious green grass and wild flowers in which my 2 cute little dogs like to jump and play around all day. Behind my house, there is a park where I can play all day with my dogs.
3. **What makes me angry** is when my brother annoys me. I absolutely hate it when my mother forces me to do what I don’t want to do, and go to schools which I don’t want to attend. Yet all the time, I try to hold it in. But when I can’t take it any longer and all my privileges are taken away, the whole thing is taken out in a big bomb.

**Hareem**

1. **When I was younger**, I had a bad dream about dinosaurs. That dream changed everything about how I thought about dinosaurs. It was horrifying. In my dream, the dinosaur chased me around my house with salt and pepper in his claws and shouting, “I’m gonna get ya!” I hid in a closet, hoping that the dinosaur wouldn’t notice my heavy breathing.

2. **Outside my window** I saw something I had never seen before. It was raining, it was sunny and windy, all at once AND there was a rainbow in the sky. Once I saw the rainbow, I wondered if there was a pot of gold at the end. And leprechauns. That would be awesome.

3. **What makes me angry** is when my ‘so-called’ angel-like brother chucks toys on the floor AFTER I have made it spotless. When I politely ask him to clean up, he says, “No!!” and he whacks me as well as himself and we argue until my mum forces me to make the living room spotless again.

**Evaluation Appendix**

**Primary students**

**Kyah – Wirreanda PS**
I thought that writing on the blog was absolutely fantastic. The way that it was set up and the topics that we were to write about were wonderful. It was totally organised and I thought it was utterly unreal. I could trust the website and I knew that it was safe because it was based for schools. The topics that we were given to write about were very good topics because I knew that I could make up whatever story I wanted, as long as it had that week’s topic in it. I know that my friends thought it was great and so did I. I was very pleased that I could show my writing talents and show people that they can do whatever they want as long as they have the support and courage to do it. I thought the workshop was awesome and if I could, I would do it again.

**Shae – Wirreanda PS**
I really enjoyed it being a young writer and all. The blog helped me to let my imagination run free, to think of my wildest fantasies. The experience was life changing. It allowed me to become a better, more creative writer. My love of writing has increased so much. I would write and post my stories on *Fiction with a twist* any time. Also to learn how other children wrote their stories. The blog is my favourite bit about writing. Now when I write it is as though I have entered a whole new world where nothing is impossible. I think about all the different things that could happen in my story, it’s amazing!

**Secondary students**

*What did you get out of writing for Fiction with a twist? Suggestions for changes? Books for possible future blogs?*

**betty97**
The blog was a really good chance to write what I wanted to write, expressing my feelings, thoughts and ideas. It was also interesting to read other blog comments that other schools produced and posted. Writing about the experiences and feelings gave me a way to incorporate them with my imagination and get it off my chest. I finally got to write about what I wanted to write, rather than having a topic that I had to write about. The blog also made me
think about what genre my style of writing is related to, which is fantasy, angst, drama and romance. In the end, the blog did help me improve my writing skills by making me conscious of bad grammar and spelling. I would love to do it again any day. Some blog topics that I would like to be done are maybe writing poems or journal entries. Some authors and books that would be good to read: *Fallen* by Lauren Kate, *Hunger games* by Suzanne Collins, maybe manga (Japanese comics) somehow…

2good2btrue
Over the days, I felt more confident in writing and I felt like I was creeping out of my shell. The confidence I gained from this workshop also made me interact with other peers from the workshop in my school as well as the online posts. I found it very exciting each week to find a task set out for me, as I worked on it for the rest of the week. Getting critiqued at my work by James Roy and peers was always a benefit for me as I felt like it was a message to work harder. I don’t think I would suggest any improvements, but I would suggest more interesting tasks, and more tasks!

Ideas
Something imaginative
- Your last nightmare
- If you could be someone, who would it be?
- Something that would get people in another world, being imaginative

silverdragon
*Fiction with a twist* made me more confident in writing and it gave me a lot of opportunities such as meeting authors. It was fun meeting other students in Year 8 also participating in *Fiction with a twist*. I enjoyed writing down my stories and letting my imagination run wild because my teacher wanted me to stick to realistic happenings but I enjoy fantasy over any other kind of book. *Fiction with a twist* let me do this without having teachers to stop you from your imagination running wild. It is a wonderful program.

Ideas
Derek Landy (number 1 violence/fantasy/supernatural writer) Whole *Skulduggery pleasant* series. All so Awesome!!

*Audience Awareness Appendix*

*Primary students*
*Question:* What was it like writing on the blog? *Responses:* Individual written evaluations.

*Supreet – Caddies Creek PS*
It was an enjoyable experience to write on the blog, to know that other people will read and hopefully like your piece of work. There is also a warm feeling of satisfaction inside myself. It’s wonderful to know that anyone can read your piece of work! 😊

*Jamie – Caddies Creek PS*
I think the blog was a really great idea! We could see what other peoples’ stories were like and the authors could as well. I was glad that the authors could read our work and that the rap coordinator could too. Everyone could comment but all comments were monitored so they could go on.

*Sunny – Caddies Creek PS*
I enjoyed posting my stories on the blog and sharing my pieces with others. The activities taught me some new things about how to make my writing more engaging. My favourite was the lesson on Symbols.
Secondary students

Anna

*Fiction with a twist* was quite exciting for me. It has been the first workshop I’ve done since 3rd grade. I love writing and reading other students’ work. I’ve learnt a lot, from writing skills to category themes. Reading the work of other students piqued my interest and made me really careful with everything I wrote as students from other schools would be reading my work, and just like me, forming and creating in their own minds different and similar writings in the near future.

Suggestions

*To kill a mocking bird* by Harper Lee
The *Twilight* series by Stephenie Meyer
The *39 clues* series
The Harry Potter series by J. K. Rowling
Roald Dahl

Hareem

Writing for *Fiction with a twist* was enjoyable for me, because I like creative writing. Looking at other people’s writing actually helped me improve on my writing because it gave me new ideas. It also showed me how other people write. Before writing for *Fiction with a twist*, I wrote my own stories and I was used to keeping my work to myself, because I thought that people wouldn’t like my writing. But when I started *Fiction with a twist*, it allowed me to share my work to everyone, so that gained my confidence.

Ideas

Emily Rodda (I particularly like *The best kept secret*)
Paul Jennings (I love ALL his books)

lilmizchatterbox515

This program we did was something that I’ve never experienced before. Writing and blogging for the website was a great learning experience as it explored our every aspect of writing. I had the chance to share my writing with other bloggers and was fortunate enough to even have published authors reading my work thanks to *Fiction with a twist*. I really enjoyed and learnt a lot about my writing and other people’s writing. This experience will definitely help me further my literacy skills in the future.

Suggestions

Poetry writing
Journal entries

Suggested authors

Cassandra Claire (The *Mortal instrument* series)
Holly Black (All books!)
Suzanne Collins (*Hunger games*)
Vivid Writing Appendix – Selected by Chase

Josh McE Says:
Silence sat with them for the rest of the journey.

caitlin Says:
‘Your death will mean a new life,’ the thought echoed through my mind. It was a dog following an imaginary owner.

Andrea Says:
… whenever an opportunity rose, he would back away from it like a mouse shuffling away from a piece of cheese, but hallucinating it into a huge cat.

CZY GRL Says:
While she was writing history on the blackboard, the chalk kept making squeaking noises. It was like hearing a mouse cry for help while having a microphone in front of it.

Vanessa Says:
… her hair hangs across her face like a flouncy stage curtain, hiding talent behind it.

…her body was as flexible as a rubber band, but if it was stretched too far it would snap back. Her feet were like her hands as she grappled with the trapeze rope and hung upside down, metres in the air above the old stage.

Imogen Says:
To write a paragraph and see your own mistakes and fix them is like swimming in the ocean with your eyes wide open!

Eesthesa Says:
… it is like my generation is the generation of Subtle Danger.

… The tree comforted her like a second mother.

dakota the dash Says:
His mouth dropped as wide as an opera singer hitting a high note…
Facilitator Comments Appendix

rapcoordinator Says:

HI THERE EVERYONE – I am Lizzie, the rap coordinator. It means that I get to read all your wonderful writing. You will notice that it may take a day until your writing appears – I go into this blog each night and approve the comments.

I am REALLY enjoying your introductions – finding out about you and all the things you are into. Thanks so much for sharing your ideas about life and how it works – some of you are very reflective.

Feel really free to comment on each other’s writing – I hope you don’t mind, but if anything critical OR too personal is written by anyone, I don’t put it up on the blog because it might embarrass people…

Thanks so much to everyone who has written so far – I look forward to reading more of your writing in the weeks to come!

REMEMBER:
STORIES – Put your first name, year and school at the bottom of your story – I will remove your school’s name before it is published, but I need to know that information…

By the end of Week 9, write a longer piece [it doesn’t have to be finished and you can continue a story started by one of the authors in the Stories section] and scroll down on the home page of the blog to paste your story in…..

AUTHORS WRITING WORKSHOP IN MAY
We will choose some of the Sydney students who have participated in this blog to come along to a writing workshop in May at Bonnyrigg HS…
Cheers
Lizzie Chase

rapcoordinator Says:

Hi Everyone

I am really enjoying hearing about what you care about and believe in. Thanks for the “character in action” paragraphs you are writing. I can very much see that some of you are showing how a character feels through ACTIONS or through their senses – showing what they SEE, TOUCH, SMELL, TASTE and HEAR…

When you show us what a character is feeling, rather than just saying it, that is called SHOW NOT TELL… Thanks also to people who are using interesting comparisons!

Remember – you can build optimistic or humorous scenarios as well as suspenseful or action packed ones. Think about what voice you want to use in your writing – it can range from urgent, to relaxed, to chatty, to formal etc… Remember to READ YOUR WORK ALOUD [or at least in your head] so you can hear the voice and the flow…

THANKS FOR YOUR WRITING! Lizzie, Blog facilitator
Copy Editing Appendix

Chase proofread the blog comments and copy edited these elements, as required:

1. Run on sentences – commas or full stops were added
2. Paragraphing
3. Subject verb disagreements
4. Perspective shifting
5. Tense shifting
6. Tense mistakes with the past perfect [e.g. had believed]
7. Apostrophe errors [possession]
8. Missing single words
9. Missing capital letters
10. Spelling errors
11. Singular plural disagreements
12. Preposition mistakes – for common expressions

These elements were NOT copy edited:

1. Conjunctions were not added
2. Vocabulary was not altered
3. Repetition of character’s name [pronouns required]

10 Things Appendix

Fili’s example was the first one on the blog – placed there as a model.

Fili Says:

The big issues:
Ten things I know are true
I believe: That we shouldn’t take life for granted.
I know: That I don’t know everything.
I value: Everyone in my life.
I care about: My family and friends.
I treasure: My life and everything in it.
I feel strongly about: My religion and my culture.
I declare that: Life is not a game.
I hope that: People would start to care more about each other and not just themselves.
I work hard in my own life to: Achieve something in my life and in the future.
The world would be a better place if we all: Work together as a team.

Brea Says:

I believe in the quote, ‘Believe the Truth’.
I believe everything happens for a reason.
I believe the people who stand by me through ups and downs are there to stay.
I believe that if you believe in what you want to achieve and are going to accept the challenges that come with achieving it you will achieve what you were aiming for.
I believe that people who treat others with respect will get the same in return.
I believe that music and quotes can guide you through hard times.
I believe that you never know what you have until it’s gone.
I believe life is an adventure.
I believe that doing your bit for the environment will better the world.
I am strongly against animal cruelty.

Ally Says:

I believe that life isn’t fair, no matter where it takes you.
I believe the people who honestly understand you and never turn their back on you are your true friends.
I believe that just because people wear black or listen to screamo they are not all emo.
I believe people should like you for who you are and if they don’t they’re not worthy.
I believe you should treat people the way you want to be treated.
I believe you can achieve anything if you put your mind to it.
I believe a good family is one that guides you through everything and is always there.
I believe that everything happens for a reason.
I believe that you never know what you have until it’s gone.
I believe that you will always face so many challenges in your lifetime.

Arvan [nom de plume] Says:

I believe that life is an adventure
I value friendship
I declare that we should do our bit for the environment
I hope that one day poverty will be removed from this world
I care about my family
I work hard to change my lifestyle
I treasure the days that make me happy
I know that most of the things in my life won’t come true.

Patterns of response
Students often included comments about:

- Personal values – such as working hard or having self-belief
- The importance of family
- The value of good friends
- The environmental issues they care about – such as global warming
- Their belief system [religious orientation]
- Big issues such as poverty or war which concern them
- Their desire for a better world and to make a personal difference
- What they are opposed to – such as animal cruelty
Blurs Appendix

Blurb pattern: Some students wrote an extract, not a blurb, because they have seen extracts as the introductory part of blurbs. They did not know that they needed to end with a brief plot summary and inducement to read the book.

Blurs

Mikaila Says:
This is for a made-up book. It is the blurb.
Hope you like it…
The runaway child
What will happen to 14 year old Bella Jonsen when she runs away from her apartment? How will her parents react when they find out it was because of their chores, punishment and abusive language towards their 4th daughter? How will she keep warm, have decent meals, and make money to buy supplies? Will she find companions or be lonely? Will Bella survive all alone on the cruel streets of Melbourne? What would you do…..

Kyah, WPS Says:

Blurb
Lexi’s Beach
As a 25 year old, Lexi’s going okay. She has great friends and family and believes she has a great life. But what she doesn’t know is how dangerous a job on the beach can get, even if she has been working as a lifeguard for 3 years. She is about to experience the most dangerous day possible at the beach of her dreams, and while doing that she finds the man of her dreams.
Will Lexi be able to save everyone at the beach and fulfil her happiness in the man of her dreams?
You will have to read it to believe it…

Michael Says:

The Undercover Agent
Rex is on a secret mission to steal high government documents for A.C.A. Will he complete his mission without alerting the government? Will Rex risk his life just for a piece of paper? And most important, is he going to make it out alive and undetected by the entire world’s defence systems? Can he stop his country before it’s too late?
Penrith Public School Appendix – Feedback from the teacher librarian Ian McLean

One hour a week did not allow for individual drafting AND blogging

Joint construction of a whole class response each week
Some primary schools undertaking book raps have a weekly process which runs along these lines:

1. The class as a whole group discusses the book rap topic for the week
2. The teacher writes down a mind map of ideas which the class has brainstormed
3. Students write brief individual responses to the topic
4. Students read aloud their responses in small groups
5. The class reconvenes as a whole group, the teacher composes a response together with the students, using suggestions, ideas and quotes from the students.

The whole hour is a teaching session and the class response is posted later. The class post is read by the class on the blog at the beginning of the next week’s session. This approach emphasises a process of thinking, discussion and composition within a specific class group and the blog is the final destination of the writing. It does not emphasise reading other blog comments within class time, although students may perhaps read them in their own time. It is a wonderful approach to support teaching, thinking, discussion and writing within a limited time frame each week. Fiction with a twist provided extensive teaching resources which some schools used within their English classrooms over a term, as well as in weekly sessions in the library. Ian’s feedback below highlights the significance of the teaching purposes and of time in any blogging process. Each teacher will choose whether the focus is primarily on discussing ideas or on writing; it is important to consider whether the goal is to blog individually or as a whole group; it is vital to schedule enough time for teaching and discussion, as well as for drafting and blogging.

Ian’s feedback
I really got snowed under by this activity. We tried to do it with the five small groups, each coming one afternoon a week and me entering their responses, but I really ran out of steam. I have piles of students’ paragraphs I thought I’d get entered over the holidays, but it’s really tiring and time-consuming trying to interpret their handwriting and get enough segments up to make it look worthwhile. And it takes forever asking the kids to enter their own work. When you’re evaluating it, we should mention the problem John Larkin brought up in one of his early blog entries - that this kind of writing shouldn’t necessarily be a first draft, and yet there was barely time to finish each first draft, let alone polish it. By the same token, I did a survey with the kids - not yet tabulated - on “What I learned by doing ‘Fiction with a twist’”, and when I get a chance I’ll put the results on the Teachers page of the blog.

A class teacher working across a whole week might get more time to revisit, but trying to use a book rap format didn’t work. As I mentioned in a recent email, the strength of the book raps is the focused Talking & Listening, and the negotiation of a group response. With this rap, the emphasis was on individual responses every week and there simply wasn’t time to do anything justice. Very few showed any interest in visiting the site to read each other’s writing. They were more focused on their own pieces.

Despite all that, the kids really enjoyed the small group writing sessions. One group has just done a book review each for the local newspaper and the group conferencing went really well, with confidence boosted from the work they’d done in "Fiction with a twist".
Springwood Public School Appendix

Fiction with a twist – adapted for a whole school context
Reflections from Ann Wharton – Principal of Springwood Public School

Writing at Springwood Public School
In 2009 we researched approaches to teaching writing that would engage both teachers and students. School based evaluation led to the conclusion that a focus on “text types” was taking the fun out of teaching as it was an excruciating process for some students and a “left brained” approach to what should be a creative and exciting process for teachers and students. It was also obvious that time spent on spelling lists and vocabulary was not translating to improved writing and this frustrated teachers. NAPLAN results backed up the school evaluations indicating writing was a focus area.

Time spent evaluating Accelerated Literacy (AL) gave us a shared belief that starting with quality literature led naturally to investigating spelling and descriptive vocabulary. All teachers were keen to embark on training in AL and it was written into the 2010 plan. Concurrently, our teacher librarian, Pam Priestly, was involved with the School Libraries and Information Literacy Unit in co-presenting sessions on Visual Literacy with Lizzie Chase. This drew our attention to this aspect of literature as well as knowledge of the Fiction with a twist professional learning opportunities being conducted by the School Libraries and Information Literacy Unit. When we were cut from the AL training due to staff shortages and a focus on disadvantaged schools, we focussed our attention on Fiction with a twist as it had a similar focus on improving writing through the analysis of quality literature. This year some staff attended the Fiction with a twist course and the results have been quite extensive.

Gary Halpin, the Assistant Principal leading Literacy across the school, took up the leadership of professional learning with the staff and the following results have occurred to date:

- The literacy committee planned a series of sessions for the whole staff to become familiar with the following aspects from the Fiction with a twist teaching resources – Voice, Action, Symbols, Power. The committee analysed quality literature and selected paragraphs that featured these aspects. These are currently being added to the school intranet for easy access.
- Staff sessions were held to immerse the teachers in the aspects with opportunities for teachers to write with specific emphasis on voice, action, symbols, thus engaging the teachers in the same processes that they would use with the children.
- During these sessions, samples of student work based on the aspects were shared and discussed.
- Time was allocated for teachers to use extracts to prepare tasks for students particularly those suited for use with interactive whiteboards.
- Teachers implemented “fast write” writing sessions, appealing to students who find timed brief sessions spark their interest.
- Samples of work have been collected along the way for analysis.

As the Principal also engaged in the above professional learning activities I have observed the following:

- Teacher dialogue about writing has increased and teachers are finding the teaching of writing interesting, using these approaches coupled with visual literacy analysis.
Teachers have shared work samples with me that indicate improvements for both the talented writer as well as those who usually struggle to present ideas.

Students are asked to produce less lengthy pieces of writing but shorter, richer descriptive pieces of writing.

Shared understandings about teaching writing have been gained or in some cases reinvigorated and this has enthused our experienced teachers.

The AP leading the learning has gained valuable understandings about literacy and leading whole school change.

In the future we need to do the following:

- Further staff sessions on writing and spelling.
- Analysis of work samples comparing those at the beginning of the year with those based on current approaches and analysis of 2011 NAPLAN results to gauge measurable change.
- Write policy statements outlining our approach to teaching writing to clarify and embed our philosophy into teaching programs.

In conclusion, I would like to say that sending some teachers to the *Fiction with a twist* training has had profound ramifications for the way we teach and the achievement of our goal to improve writing for all students. It was a timely vehicle that we could access to move that step forward in achieving our goal for the students.

**Springwood Public School – Student Samples**

**Bronte’s story**

Once again, the guns shoot. A small boy falls down to the ground beside me. Blood covers his chest and he is beginning to turn pale. He takes his last breath then stops breathing completely. His dead body is beginning to shrivel up like an old lime. All the children are running to the underground bunkers, including me. I am 9 yrs of age and my name is Mary. Both my parents are somewhere out there, I’m just not sure where.

We all run as fast as we can down to the bunkers. This is where we are safe. I hope. We can still hear the guns shooting and occasionally there is a cry of pain. It makes me shiver. I’m scared. I huddle up to my little brother Arlo. He is only 5. He doesn’t remember mum and dad. I do.

We are pretty certain it is night time now but we are not sure because we can’t see the sky. I wish I could. The stars are my best friends. They are my only friends. I want to see them and speak to them.

I can’t sleep. I don’t think I will ever sleep again. I am too scared. Both my Uncle and my parents are out in the war. I don’t know if my parents are still alive. I just hope they are. Arlo and I live with our uncle. I’m scared for my parents and my uncle.

I feel it is morning. Its cold and I’m shivering. I hear a boom of thunder and then heavy rain.

The rain doesn’t stop for hours. Arlo and I are sitting on the cold, damp floor. I am crying but Arlo is too young to understand. He doesn’t get what is going on. Things are whirling through my mind.
One of my mum’s old friends comes and sits next to me. The silence ends when she pulls an envelope out of her pocket. She hands it to me. I just hold it for a while.

“Open it,” she says gently. I slowly, carefully open the envelope. Now I know what it is. It’s a telegram.

I start to cry. Tears start streaming down my face. The silence has been broken.

My uncle is dead? I’m never going to see him again? Why did this happen?

I jump up and race out of the bunker. I am running through the battlefield, aimlessly. Maybe I should let myself get shot! That would take away the pain. But what about Arlo? What will Arlo think? He’d be all alone! He wouldn’t know where to go or what to do! I change my mind because I know Arlo needs me.

I turn around and begin to walk away from the shooting.

Suddenly, I feel a stab of pain. I scream and hit the ground. I am breathing very fast and sweat is covering my body at a rapid pace. The soldiers are running around dodging bullets. I am panicking! What about Arlo?

“Arlo!” I scream. It is painful but I refuse to give up.

“Arlo!”

I see a small boy approach me. Is it Arlo? No. Is it the same boy that died yesterday? I think it is! It’s him!

There’s something ghostly about him. I feel confused.

He slowly comes up to me with wide eyes. He sits down next to me. For some reason as he sits down the pain of my wound begins to fade. Now, everything is alright. Now I am no longer sad.

THE FLAMING ARROW By Nathan

His pinched nostrils flared. He knew they were there. He could feel them like you feel a bug crawling up your chilled skin and he could smell their rotten stench. His cat like eyes caught a flicker of movement. His instincts kicked in. He ducked down just in time to hear a solid thunk. Right where his head had been there was now an arrow shaft. The deadly bronze tip was buried deep in the wood. With one swift movement he reached up and effortlessly removed it from the tree and flung it at its owner who was lying in the long slightly burnt grass in a green mottled cloak.

He dived into the clear, blue refreshing water and swam into a narrow underwater fissure, surfacing again in dark desolate cave. He lit a fire which flowed through an opening in the top of his cave. He redressed in a lime and silver silk shirt. He hung his wet things to dry by the fire and bit into a smoked fish letting the blood drip from his fangs onto his prominent chin. His ears pricked as he heard the sound of rapid breathing. His forked tongue flicked out to wipe the blood off his chin. He calmly pulled a large hunting knife from its sheath and walked to an old chest engraved with many patterns and emblazoned with gems. It was an ancient family heirloom. He sighed then flipped the lid off and plunged the knife straight down. The man’s eyes widened with sudden realisation as the gleaming blade plunged into his heart at an alarming rate. A soft sigh escaped from the man’s lips as the
light of life left his eyes and blood poured over his white clean, hairy torso and stained his white pants.

The bloodied man sank to the bottom of the river. The water flowing downstream was scarlet as the man watched eerily fire lighting his vibrant green eyes. The spy deserved his fate. The corrupt King and his scientists had done this to him. They had made him an outcast. They had changed his body, giving him the sight of a wild animal, the hearing of a lion, and the smell of a snake. There was no doubt that these had helped him when he was in danger, but yes they had made him an outcast and he wanted revenge.

He took his powerful longbow and a clutch of arrows out to a brown field. From there he could see the king’s men with binoculars and crossbows. He would wait till night, then, silent as a mouse, kill all of them. In the meantime he would sit and sharpen stones and find as many straight sticks as possible. He already had a vine to tie the two together. His clutch of arrows had doubled by the time knight had fallen. He rose, silent, as the shadows. He could still see them and he could smell drowsiness in the air. They were tiring. Things were about to get interesting.

A soft hiss sounded in the air and one man dropped dead. Then another, and another, and another. As he fired with uncanny skill, a surprise was suddenly revealed. In the moonlight, there was the king’s army a few hundred meters in front, slowly advancing, stretched out as far as the eye can see. Even with his incredible vision it stretched out to an incredible range. For one of the first time in his life he felt a tingle of fear. He lit an arrow dipped in the petroleum, aware that as he did he revealed his position. Taking careful aim he released.

Time seemed to slow down. Nothing mattered except for the fiery arrow flying in a graceful arc. It thudded into the ground, lighting a stock pile of explosives. As the carnage tore through the kings men, he slipped quietly away into the night, feeling satisfied with one man’s revenge against a cruel king.