

Junior Journal

October 2005

Issue 1

August Author Festival 2005

A celebration of communication between children's authors and their readers.

Welcome to the first issue of Junior Journal, put together by the students of the journalism masterclass during the August Author Festival 2005.

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Thank you, Wendy

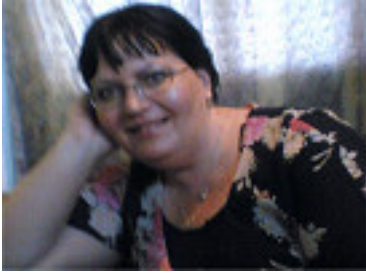
It has been our pleasure to be involved in the first August Author Festival co-ordinated by Wendy Dunn, teacher, writer and motivator. I am being rather naughty right now but I think Wendy deserves to be thanked at the front of this magazine. No matter what unexpected hiccup arose Wendy remained calm and was always ready with a smile and a kind word while working tirelessly to make this dream a reality. Whatever question or problems we came up with was quickly answered or taken care of.

Now that it is over, Wendy, do you wonder: **Were you dreaming the dream, or was the dream dreaming you?**



During this festival authors of children's books proved their courage by sitting in the hotseat and allowing their young fans to grill them by for an hour. If the authors learned as much as the young readers who interrogated them did, then it was indeed a happy outcome all round. Enjoy reading the most popular of these question and answer sessions.

Wendy thanks you



Think.com first became introduced to Australian schools over two years ago, during a time when I taught IT as a volunteer teacher to the upper grades at Montmorency South. By term two, my program aimed for my students to develop their own online sites but only in an online environment also keeping them safe from the wilds of cyberspace.

Through CAER at Melbourne University, I discovered think.com, a global community of schools, which provided a safe online environment for students and more. With the passing of another term, my super-keen students at Montmorency South made their school a leader in think.com use and CAER offered me employment, overseeing their Celebrate project, aimed to encourage other Australian schools in becoming think.com users.

For the Celebrate Project, five Australian writers (Sally P Odgers, Susanne Gervay, Felicity Pulman, Wendy Orr and Sophie Masson) took up residence for a term in think.com's first Author festival: Celebrate Australian Authors.

The legendary success of this festival made me keen to repeat it sometime in the future, but this time on a global scale, reflecting the true global nature of Think.com. I also wanted a festival with a bigger group than just five authors, believing the bigger the group, the greater likelihood of offering students an alive and active 24/7 festival.

Alive and active...I write today in awe how this has been the case. But this only describes the tip of the iceberg – in so many areas, the festival brimmed until overflowing with inspiration and excitement.

Our five global masterclasses blazed with light from the rising young writing stars. In the poetry masterclass, overseen by Sally P Odgers and supported by Carolee Dean, I watched, week by week, as students developed an anthology of verse, poems displaying diversity from the gently humorous to those poems touching minds and hearts.

Davina MacLeod and Karina Machado's journalism masterclasses developed so much content that it took over three world groups by week three.

Sarah Boland's masterclass gleefully scampered in pursuit of its goal, creating an online game, just like her cool cat Mouskie after a ball of string.

Dr Gillian Polack got a new nickname from a student from her masterclass, cyber building a medieval town; History Person suits her very well.

Stewart Ross's masterclass started a powerful story set in Middle East.

Author sites have wowed students and teachers alike. We have seen the festival giving birth to book raps and students and teachers around the globe taking part. Students have been inspired to write and read; some even want to embark on writing careers simply as a result of this festival. I am so very proud of AAF 2005. From my heart, I thank everyone for taking part and hope we can renew the experience in the future. AAF 2006 here we come!

Wendy J Dunn
Festival Coordinator.

Jessica O from Our Lady of Mt Carmel won our short story prize with this story.

End of the Game

It all started on the 3rd day of a boring school term.

'Class, a new educational quiz show is being produced and we need some volunteers to enter. Is there anyone?' Mrs Brown asked. Three students put up their hands, John, Steve and Anna; the smart ones of the class.

'Anyone else?' Mrs Brown said, urging more of us to put a hand up.

I felt sorry for her so I put up my hand. I sort of wanted to enter this quiz show... but what if I had another one of my headaches and let the school down? Don't think that way, I told myself - at least give it a go.

'Thank you, Meg,' she said.

At the end of class, she called us to her desk.

'To enter the game show, you need to write an essay on why you want to be on the show.'

I shivered. I'm not good with essays.

'Give it a go, Meg,' She said.

What's the harm in trying? I said to myself.

That night I sat down to write the essay. *Why I want to be on this game show*, by Meg Gill. I titled the page. I didn't know what to write. I told you I'm bad at essays. I tried to write it again twice more in spite of a headache starting.

The next day I handed it in to Mrs Brown. 'Thank you, Meg,' Mrs Brown said as I walked away.

About four months after I handed it in and I had heard nothing, but I was still hoping it was good enough

Mum asked me to get the mail and when I opened the mailbox... bill, bill, bill... YES! It was there. I ripped it open as fast as I could.

*Dear Meg Gill,
Congratulations! You have been selected
to appear on the game show "Quizmo".
Please come to Channel 10 studios on the
19th August and once again -
Congratulations!
Yours truly,
Robert Johns*

I was so excited! I couldn't believe it. I was going to be on TV.

Finally it was the 19th August. I was so excited! I'd been studying so hard... $E=mc^2$.

At 5 o'clock we were at the studio. I sat in one of those high soft chairs getting my make-up done. I felt so special. I had the expensive shirt and skirt on that Mum bought for me. I was feeling the beginnings of a headache. Then I was taken to the set.

It was all so exciting. There was the star of the show. The audience started to cheer. It was so bright... so many lights and cameras and...my head really hurt...

'Owww... My head...' I just woke up. I didn't know where I was. The walls were so white and so was everything else.

A lot of people wearing white rushed about doing things around me.

'Who are you?' I asked. They didn't reply. They just kept checking things.

Someone asked me my name...

'Umm...' I replied.

'Negative,' someone said.

'Where do you live?' another person asked.

'I don't know,' I answered, confused. 'My head really hurts.'

Two people walked in, they were crying. They came over to me.

'Good-bye... my darling,' the man said to me. Then he held the lady next to him while she sobbed with her face pressed into his shoulder. They looked so sad. I was totally confused. Then something began making a long beep.

A really long beeeeeeeeeeeep...

Silence.



Defining Journalism



Anushree T

Kendriya Vidyalaya, Malleswaram

JOURNALISM: - a discipline of collecting, verifying, analysing and presenting information gathered regarding current events, including trends, issues and people. Those who practice journalism are known as journalists.

What our authors said

Think.com's real benefit is being able to build up a dialogue, not only in Q&A sessions, but by visiting back and forth between sites, so that it's not just authors answering kids' questions - they can introduce us to all sorts of things too. It's also a great introduction to other authors.

Wendy Orr

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This year is my first time eva at think.com. I'm having a great time in the masterclass and I'd definitely be in the festival again next year. It's not like I'm at a school (coz I'm a writer and work in an office) so there's no one around to tell me how to set up my pages at think.com. I just figured it out on my own - I just logged in and worked it out. It's really similar to how I make the html pages at my website bumble.com.au. Which makes me think that think.com is a great way for young people to get an understanding of Dreamweaver, which is the software I use to make websites.

The cool part about the masterclass is the people you get to hang out with and swap emails and comments with. Especially considering that the 5 people in the masterclass are from all over the world. Which means while I'm sleeping they are up and doing stuff and then while they're sleeping I'm up and creating their next masterclass task. Jeromie V is in front of the other participants, coz she's up to Task 4 now. But they'll catch up soon enough and might even overtake. For me, the most important part of organizing the masterclass is to make sure the tasks aren't too much like schoolwork. We get to do fun stuff like write emails, create web pages, post comments, play online games & chat about them, read a book together and make an online game about the book. It's fun checking for emails and seeing if there's a new comment or sticky.

Sarah Boland

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I thought it was wonderful to see participation from so many different areas, including Bathurst and Cairns and Melbourne. Truly, the Internet is a powerful source for good, and this was an exciting example of how positive it can be.

John Marsden

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I loved my August Festival hotseat--I never knew kids could ask--or that I could answer--so many questions at the same time! (My bu*m loved the hotseat too...it gets pretty cold in Melbourne during winter and any form of heating is greatly appreciated.)

Andy Griffiths

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This festival is about the most fun a writer can have at her own desk. I learned about Codelyoko and about Sandringham Primary School and about how to stop being bored. I met a bunch of new people, all of whom care passionately about books. If I hint enough, can I get invited back next year? Please!

Dr Gillian Polack

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It was an honour to work with the Think Poetry Masterclass. I just wish we could have found a classroom somewhere to share. I am bursting with pride at the work everyone submitted and would love to do this again in future.

Sally P Odgers

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Online chatting with a USA and UK author was a highlight as we connected across oceans and culture.

Sharing ideas with students and teachers has been a privilege.

Susanne Gervay

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Being involved with the Journalism Masterclass was inspiring. The enthusiasm of our group and how they put their hearts into what they were doing was totally gratifying. Seeing how quickly they learned when given the opportunity to embrace their passion was a joy for me. To have missed being part of this experience is, now that I can look back, unthinkable. Thank you, Wendy, your enthusiasm and encouragement never wavered. Thank you Journalism Masterclass, for your inspiration as well as all your good work. Lookout journalistic world, competition is on the way. See you all again next year!

Davina MacLeod

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It really opened my (novice) eyes to all the possibilities of fun and instant communications with the readership - the kids (and adults!) obviously got a huge amount out of it!

Would love to be involved again next year.

Charlotte Calder



My ambition to be a journalist.

Anushree T.

From the time I started watching and understanding news I have always wished to be a journalist. I don't think it is a job that can be taken up as fun, but if I would take interest in it, it would surely be fun.

Being a journalist connects us to the common people, the politicians, celebs etc, etc... People in all spheres of life depend on good journalists to provide them with the news from all around the world, be it print media or television.

I am not interested in being a print journalist. I want to be a television journalist. I want people to recognise me and know that people from India can also be excellent journalists.

Being a journalist is a profession full of dreams and desires, and from the beginning of the process to become one, the student has to face the contrast between the university and the real environment. Journalism has an advantage that can be disadvantage too. Everybody can look at the work that a reporter does, because this is the real meaning of journalism, to work for the community and for the public cause.

MY IDOL

The dream of myself becoming a journalist came after I saw BARKHA DUTT, an INDIAN journalist on an INDIAN news channel. She, at present, is one of the best journalists our country has today after RAJDEEP SARDESAI and PRANNOY ROY. I admire her for her simplicity and her way of reasoning.

Unlike other journalists she goes deep into the subject and questions the person until he or she is worn out. She supports truth and that is one of her greatest qualities. She has a reason for every question asked. She confuses the person she is debating with where he or she stands still without any answer.

She has also received many INDIA AND INTERNATIONAL awards.

It is my aspiration to be like her when I grow up. I hope to be the best-known journalist in INDIA & most probably the WORLD.

Writing fantasy with Felicity Pulman

Rachel C, Montmorency South Primary



When Felicity Pulman, a fantasy writer, came to my school she inspired me to write a book. On Friday the 29th of July, Felicity showed students how to write fantasy. I was one of those students.

The first thing we talked about was writing books and what inspires us to write them. Some people said "If you were older you could be inspired by the past, or something in the present". We talked about how this could happen and where the story could take place. Felicity taught us that what you write depends

on the characters or the type of story;

We talked about what magical objects you could have in your story. I found a great way to find out what they look like first. Felicity brought along her bag of magical instruments. She showed us each one and we thought up amazing things they could do.

You don't need to buy magical objects. You can just look at something, anything, and think up special things it can do. Felicity gave us time to make up our own magical objects. When she saw I was struggling, she showed me how easy it was. I was using a pencil to write with and she said, "What about a magic pencil. You could write or draw something and it would come to life." That made it much easier.

Next we talked about difficulties and obstructions. Felicity told us that when you are writing a story, and you have it going well, you then come to a point in the story where you need to make something happen. Have something that is scary, or stops important things from happening. Or something that will make the person reading the book want to keep reading it.

After that, we talked about characters. A main character is usually good. But in a book of fantasy not every one should be good. I can't remember exactly what Felicity said but you should always have a "party pooper" let's just say. At the end of the talk Felicity told us that she hopes some good stories come out of the exercise.

When Felicity came to my school to talk to us about how to write fantasy, I was excited. After listening to her I decided to write a fantasy story. I have never written fantasy before but it was a fun, easy and exciting way to write. Felicity inspired me just by talking to me, showing me things and explaining how to write a story and, how to make it captivating for the reader. At present I am only about halfway through my story, but it is already sounding good, thanks to Felicity Pulman; she should get all the credit.

The Power of Teenage Fiction.

The authors involved in this discussion:

Australian author Susanne Gervay:

As a lecturer, teacher, educational specialist with a Master of Education (UNSW) and an author with a M.A. in creative writing (UTS), Susanne writes with insight into issues that affect both children and adults. Within her writing, she tackles important questions about divorce, bullying, burns, male youth culture, feminism and events that have touched her, creating memorable characters, relationships and stories that continue beyond the page.

An award winning writer, Susanne's books make a difference. Her junior fiction 'I Am Jack,' written for her son when he was bullied, has been endorsed by Life Education Australia and is used extensively in anti-bullying programmes. Her young adult 'Butterflies' explores the impact of burns on a family and is endorsed by the Burn Unit, The Children's Hospital Westmead and Louise Sauvage, the Sportsperson of the World for Disability. However it is not just about burns, it is about family, relationships, meeting challenges, fulfilling hopes and dreams.

Susanne's website: <http://www.sgervay.com/index.php>

USA author Kimberley Little:

Kimberley Griffiths Little is an award-winning author whose contemporary and historical novels have received accolades for well-researched fiction and culturally distinctive characterization and settings. A native of the San Francisco Bay area, Kimberley is a graduate of the Institute of Children's Literature and is a member of SCBWI and Southwest Writers. Kimberley lives in a solar adobe house along the banks of the Rio Grande with her husband, a robotics engineer, and their three sons whom she homeschooled for twelve years.

BREAKAWAY, Avon 1997, Pennsylvania Young Reader's Choice, Battle of the Books

ENCHANTED RUNNER, Avon 1999, Southwest Book Award Winner, Land of Enchantment Young Reader's List, Pennsylvania Young Reader's List, Battle of the Books

THE LAST SNAKE RUNNER, Knopf, May 2002, Land of Enchantment Young Reader's List, Battle of the Books, DearReader.com Choice.

www.kimberleygriffithslittle.com

UK author Stewart Ross:

After several years teaching at a variety of institutions in Britain, the USA, the Middle East and Sri Lanka, Stewart Ross became a full-time writer eleven years ago. With over 175 published titles to his credit, in a remarkably short time he has become one of Britain's most popular and versatile authors.

As well as prize-winning books for children, both fiction and non-fiction, he has written two popular novels, two plays, two librettos, and several widely acclaimed historical works, particularly on Scotland. His books, several of which are illustrated with his own photographs, have been translated into about a dozen languages.

Current projects include a third adult novel, five volumes in Hodder's Survivors series of children's historical fiction, more volumes in their Stories From History for young children, several other historical stories and works of non-fiction, a Jubilee revue, and a musical with Paul Englishby (musical director of Captain Corelli's Mandolin'). A frequent lecturer, notably on the QE2, and occasional journalist and broadcaster, Stewart lives near Canterbury with his wife and four children. Each morning escapes domestic hubbub by commuting ten metres to work in a large hut in the garden.

Source: author's website: <http://www.stewart49.freerve.co.uk/>

Discussion moderated by author and festival coordinator, Wendy J. Dunn.

WJD: You all write about such powerful issues in your Youth fiction, from exploring the “underbelly of male culture with all its potential for violence and courage,” “searching for identity,” “overcoming emotional scars when physically scarred” (Susanne Gervay), to the clash of cultures and passing through the dark tunnel of grief (Kimberley Griffiths Little) and surviving disasters and conflicts of recent history (Stewart Ross). Can I start the dialogue by tossing out this question, “How much is too much for teenage readers.”

Stewart Ross: How much is too much for teenage readers? The answer is simple: nothing is too much for teenage readers. I was at a London inner-city secondary school all day today (amid the bombs) and asked the librarian the very same question. She agreed entirely. There is nothing today's teenagers don't know about or come across - on the news, on the web, in magazines, in conversation with their peers - so what's the point in pretending in books that this is not so? Readers are remarkably adept at finding their own level and will reject immediately what does not interest or appeal to them. The tyranny of the American Mid-west Bible belt is terrifying ... Why, even today I was asked to cut references to drinking wine in a book on Ancient Greece because the US publishers were worried about the response of the 'holy' - i.e. direct religious censorship. We must resist trying to use books to create a false view of the world and instead see them as mirrors. Regarding the phrase, 'Writers' duty,' the only duty a writer has - can possibly have - is to themselves, to be wholly honest. The rest is up to editors and publishers.

Susanne Gervay: Teenager read HONEST writing. Otherwise they disregard it. The only proviso is that it should offer hope and ways to deal with issues. However it CAN'T be didactic. NO ONE likes to be told what to think especially young people.

I've just finished a new YA novel - 'That's Why I Wrote This Song'. It's about music as the language of youth.

The rebel without a cause.

Except there is always a cause.

The rock bands, festival, music as the voice, are all there. I got inside my teenage daughter's head to unlock real life.

Girls searching for who they are with music as their search vehicle.

It was quite a journey for me, my daughter and I hope readers.

WJD: So you think we can totally rely on the teenage audience to *know* what is chaff and wheat in their fiction meat?

Stewart Ross: Over here (UK) the most controversial teenage writer is probably Melvin Burgess. Interestingly, my impression is that his fairly explicit novels about drugs, sex and so forth are far more shocking to parents than they are to his readers. One teacher told me that either children have got to the things he talks about, in which case his books are old hat, or they have not, in which case his books are irrelevant. Our teenage daughter, for instance, recently tried to read his *Of a Lady: My Life as a Bitch* (girl becomes a female dog and loses all inhibitions etc) and found it hugely irritating and condescending. Still, his books are very popular ... Children will read what they want to read and take from it what they want to take from it. Incidentally, I believe 'teenage fiction' is simply fiction about teenage characters. Nothing more or less.

Susanne Gervay: I've heard about Melvin Burgess. I really think it's not about shocking kids and dealing with sex. Writing for teenagers is about going further than that - dealing with the issues they feel.

I believe we have to trust our teenage readers. They do know the difference between chaff and wheat. Sometimes they are looking for chaff. It's called chic lit or escapist books. That's OK. At other times they're looking for wheat like 'To Kill A Mockingbird.'

Stewart Ross: Not sure that one can 'feel' an issue - can you expand?

Susanne Gervay: Feel an issue. Well, I mean that it has to be relevant to the reader. It has to go inside them. It's like when I get emails from girls mainly which say after reading 'Butterflies', it makes them put their own lives in perspective. They understand the journey of meeting struggles. When the book is finished, the emotions and insights they discover remain within them.

Kimberley Little: Whew! I'm here, everyone. Hello, hello! It's great to *meet* you all. I will probably have a more conservative view of YA literature since I personally do not read the really explicit stuff. I've tried to read some of the very *frank* books when I've read about the great reviews or the controversy about a particular book but some of it doesn't appeal to me. I have mixed feelings about how far an author should go. Don't get me wrong, I don't think that there should be censorship, but as a parent (a past homeschooling parent for 12 years) of three teenage boys I have been very involved in their lives and in their reading and choosing of books. I can only hope that other parents will get involved and help their kids choose books that are right for them at the right age and the right time.

I read a book about the age of 16 that totally shocked me which had very graphic sexual scenes that I have never forgotten and I wish I hadn't read it. It put stuff in my head I did not want there. And yet, there was this morbid, awful curiosity, too.

Susanne Gervay: Some YA books are written to shock. I call them inappropriate. Realistic type YA fiction is meant to enrich, help young people on their search for answers to the eternal questions - Who Am I/ Why am I here? Good YA fiction empowers young people on their search for identity.

When I write YA literature I go on this emotional roller coaster. I cry when my characters are crying. Am angry when they are. Laugh when there's something funny.

I find it emotionally exhausting. Often I am scared to start writing a book because of that emotional exhaustion as I write about characters who are real people to me and issues that are real to me as well.

Is it like that for you?

Kimberley Little: Lest I am misunderstood - I do think that issues such as sex, drugs, homosexuality, war, all need to be written about from the teenage perspective, but I do think that as adults with a larger and wider life experience and maturity we have a responsibility to be sensitive to our young readers. And we never know if a ten year old is going to pick up our books. It's a very tricky line we must walk.

Stewart Ross: Mmmm, yes, I know what you're saying but I'd like to go back to your comment about 'wheat' and 'chaff'. It's terribly easy to write 'chaff' (we've all done it, yes?), to play on kids' emotions in a superficial way. That sort of thing is done in run-of-the-mill writing and soap operas all the time. Aren't we really trying to get beyond that, to strive for something elusive - even elitist - called 'literature'? A book that moves the human race on a notch or two? I believe there is too much pulp emotion on the current artistic scene: it's corny (eg 'Love Actually' - what drivel!) and superficial. The one thing that books, as opposed to film and most pop music, can do is go deeper, exploring in an original manner the basic truths of what it is to be human. As writers, shouldn't we seek the eternal? (Cue fanfare?)

Susanne Gervay: I agree with you, Stewart. I don't want to write chaff that's for sure. That's why I think about a book for what feels like forever before I start. I want to reach into the basic truths of being human like you do.

Kimberley Little: Absolutely, Susanne, and well said. Good YA literature, good ANY contemporary literature has the ability to enrich and empower our readers. First, it enriches and empowers the author, too. That's why we all read, isn't it, no matter what age we are. And

it's one reason I write. The themes I end up choosing to write about keep cropping up in various ways and I'm beginning to realize the issues that are most important to me. And yet, it's been so subtle, that it's taken me awhile to figure it out!

Writing is very emotionally exhausting. I've been working on four different projects the past few months and wrote my first chick-lit in May - in 3 weeks! Then switched to my ancient historical and did 200 pages on that in June - I'm feeling whipped!

Susanne Gervay: Jealous me!!!I don't know how you can write so much and be so focussed Kimberley. I find is so draining because I put every part of myself into the writing. Some times I feel anaemic from it!!!

Kimberley Little: Susanne, it was purely because I HAD to. Interested editors and all. It's been frantic and completely draining, let me tell you! The sorry thing is nothing is under contract yet! Boo hoo. But hope springs eternal.

Susanne Gervay: But, yes, Kimberley, it is about empowering readers to make their own choices.

Being un-subtle and didactic has the reverse effect. As a writer, I want to present the issues, give options and hopefully move readers to make positive choices about their lives.

Stewart Ross: A writer CANNOT set out to 'enrich' and 'help' - we are not missionaries! We must write the truth as we see it - and be damned if necessary. Children understand that better than most adults. If a ten-year-old picks up a book written for adults, so what? Either they'll understand it or they won't? If they don't, they'll cast it aside. If they do, then they'll read it and get something from it.

There seems to be a general impression that we are 'do-gooders' - we are not! We are writers! We write because we want to / we have to. Above all, we are entertainers! (This is fun, isn't it?)

Kimberley Little: Hey, Stewart, sometimes we all read *soap-opera* type stuff just for the pure entertainment value or an easy fast read when we're tired. I don't do that very often, but sometimes it IS fun. Although, I'm sorry, but I just cannot get into Harry Potter. It's one of those books that just doesn't appeal to me, after I read the first one with my youngest son. They're all the same. But I'm not here to bash H.P. :-)

Stewart Ross: I think we're confusing the role of the writer with that of the editor, yes?

Susanne Gervay: Stewart, for me writing is about having the courage to personally be exposed. I write so close to my life experiences and adapt for fiction and life and creativity of course.

I guess when my son experienced extreme bullying on a survival camp, I explored male capacity for violence and courage. I wrote 'The Cave'. There was blood on the page there - mine. It wasn't because I was being worthy; even though I hoped it would throw up serious issues and open choices for youth. I know that literature that is didactic and 'worthy' fails.

Stewart Ross: Couldn't agree more about HP! (But we all have to be so careful about jealousy, don't we?) In my writing workshops with children (never demeaning 'kids') I always cite the opening of the first HP as an example of how not to begin a novel ... anyone agree?

WJD: I am wondering from this discussion if there are far bigger cultural differences between our three countries than I ever realised, i.e., what's on and not on in regard to teenage fiction?

Kimberley Little: Stewart, you are absolutely right. I NEVER set out with the thought that I'm planning to *enrich* or *empower* my readers. I don't think about that until after the book is finished and I start realizing what I've just written. And even then, themes or messages are very subtle; it's our own beliefs coming through whether we intended to put them there or not.

Usually not. They just show up!

First and foremost, I have a story to tell and I'm trying to figure out the best way to tell it.

Susanne Gervay: Editor and writer. That's an interesting thing. My publishers censored 'The Cave' - removed some of its heart because of the commercial reality. That is they wanted to keep the gatekeepers happy. They weren't anyway. However that is a book I am very proud of. One day I hope it can be published with the removed bits.

Stewart Ross: Interesting idea that writing is being 'personally exposed' - I agree 100% and often compare it to taking your clothes off in the High Street (US shopping mall) and waiting for everyone to laugh!

Susanne Gervay: I'm running naked with you Stewart. What a team!!!!

Swearing. Honestly. I have to confess that even I do it sometimes. Shock and horror!!

Swearing is not essential to YA literature but on a male survival camp at 3 in the morning as guys slide into each other, maybe they don't say - 'Please excuse me, may I pass by.'

Writing has to be honest and swearing used when appropriate. It shouldn't be the focus of a book but if needed, it's there.

Kimberley Little: There was a question (I think) about how editors might get involved or give their input when their author writes about difficult subjects. I'll tell you a story . . . when I was doing the editing with my New York editor on THE LAST SNAKE RUNNER, which is based on a true story in 1599 between the Spanish conquistadors and a Native American tribe there was a very bloody, three-day battle. Most of the native people were killed, the village burned and the rest taken into slavery for twenty years. Then the remaining adult men had their foot chopped off as punishment.

The book was coming out the summer after 911 and suddenly my editor became very conscious of how the public might take the violence so she asked me to tone it down a bit. Not that I had tried to make it bloody. I just told the story as the records had been written by an eyewitness account by one of the soldiers in 1610. But there were a few lines that did seem to go over the top and so we cut or revised them during the revision process. But, surprisingly, I didn't miss them. The emotional core and the true story were still told in an honest way.

Stewart Ross: I feel this is too fascinating and raising too many questions to be dealt with in one hour of fairly unconsidered responses ... I can't keep track! Cultural differences ... what is writing for ... censorship etc, etc! Help, Wendy!

WJD: "Cultural differences... ? what is writing for ... ? censorship" What question do people vote we continue with?

Susanne Gervay: Censorship is a BIG deal in my writing. I'd love to discuss that.

Kimberley Little: What exactly do you mean, Susanne that censorship is a big deal in your writing? As you write? Or have your books been banned?

Susanne Gervay: Censorship. There's self-censorship. I really can't write books for young people without hope and options for life.

YA's are different to adults as they haven't the experiences we have. Sometimes the mountains they have to climb seem insurmountable.

Australia has the highest male youth suicide in the world I believe.

So I tackle hard issues warts and all, but there is always this ultimate belief that life is worth living. You just have to choose the pathway that's right for you. That's not easy sometimes, but it's always there. Have had censorship of my novels by publishers especially 'The Cave'. I was very upset about it, but in the end gave in.

I have had a book withdrawn. 5000 books were pulped due to writing too close to the truth. I now change names I can tell you. I am VERY VERY careful. It nearly ruined my career. I was a leper for 3 years.

Now it's all right because 'I AM JACK' is a best seller in Oz (junior fiction) and 'Butterflies' (YA) is also. It's amazing how you get forgiven when your books make money.

Stewart Ross: Fascinating idea that the 'deeper' meanings of novels are often unrecognised by the authors ... just what the Lit. Crit. people say. My first adult novel was, according to my brother, "pure autobiography". Well ... Perhaps all fiction is more or less autobiography? (And all autobiography more or less fiction?!)

Susanne Gervay: I agree that the writing is basically autobiographical. Hidden, mutated but ultimately centred on our experiences.

Kimberley Little: Whoa, Susanne! You had a book pulped because of censorship - by your publisher no less? I gotta get a copy of that book! Gosh! I didn't realize Australia had such a high suicide rate. I just came back from visiting my brother out of state and he said that in the last couple of years three teenage boys they knew personally in their neighborhood had committed suicide, one just a month ago. I find this really, really horrible and tragic.

WJD: That's one of the reasons why I personally believe that YA fiction needs to be like Pandora's box. Yes - tell about life, but leave the reader with hope...

Susanne Gervay: I worry for our boys. I have a boy. The apple of my eye of course. No groans from everyone. Some boys are locked into silence and they let things get out of control in their minds. I believe that powerful and relevant literature can give some boys a voice and enable them to see ways out.

I partially wrote 'The Cave' because of that, as well as for my son and because some issues disturbed me.

However I have had too much flack about 'The Cave', so I've decided not to do another confronting YA male novel. I'm sticking to girls. A lot of teachers have begged me to write another type 'The Cave'. I can't now. Maybe I'll change my mind, but not for a LONG time.

Ultimately when you write it has to come from a deep place inside. It's called an honest place. However our motivations which are part of us, are part of the writing.

Stewart Ross: Susanne, I know what you mean when you say that "there is always this ultimate belief that life is worth living" but isn't that your belief, your credo? I don't think that all writers have to hold this position - or do you think writers should not be published if they disagree?

Kimberley Little: I don't deliberately censor myself as I write, I try to just get it all out on paper and then sit down and see what I have once the novel is drafted. Mostly, I think I write for myself, especially during creation. Even as an adult reader I want to finish a book with some sense of hope otherwise I'm depressed for days!

Stewart Ross: I'm interested in this 'YA' concept, which we don't have in the UK. Does it help or is it just a ploy of the marketing people? I tend to think that there are just books and books and books, and one reads whatever one feels happy with. I read what were, I suppose, 'adult' books from the age of 10 onwards and now (aged 194) I also read books intended primarily for children. Surely the best literature is age-less and time-less.

Susanne Gervay: You're totally right Stewart. I feel the YA division has caused a BIG problem in Oz. Catcher in the Rye and To Kill A Mocking Bird would be classified as YA literature today in Oz. The marketing has in effect backfired, as YA sales are much harder to achieve than kids or adult.

I agree that certainly by 12 years of age, most kids are capable of reading anything. However their interest level will determine what they read and it's often not adult books.

However YA readers can and do choose adult books.

Kimberley Little: Books for boys are so important and yet so many seem to get ignored unless they have potty humor. Raising three boys and having three brothers let me know how much emotion and angst boys have as well as girls and I guess it's no surprise that my first three books have had male main characters. My characters are full of emotion and feelings and tears. I think that's important and yet, my books have not been big sellers, unfortunately. Sadly, boys are more likely to suffer depression, autism, ADD, etc, and take their own lives.

Stewart Ross: The boys' issue is enormous - each day I wake up delighted that I'm not a teenage male any more. In liberal intellectual thinking circles they have been unwittingly castrated, and the pain has spread throughout the gender. At the age of eight my daughter was coming back from primary school with 'boys are stupid' jokes. Ouch! (We have two boys and I feel their bewilderment daily.)

Kimberley Little: Yes, yes, yes, Stewart! My 17 year old came home just the other day and told me that he is so sick of hearing boys get bashed for everything. He said he didn't think he even wanted to get married because girls just put down boys all the time. Now there is something wrong here!

Susanne Gervay: have to say another word about boys. I LOVE them of course because of my dad, son, husband and annoying brother!!!! Actually they're all annoying except my father

I agree that the jokes and 'bum' humour, is the focus for younger boy readers. I don't go there. I will continue to write for boys in my younger books, but the older books. I'm giving it a rest. Anyway it was hard to write from a 17 year old male perspective



The night I first saw the Ghosts -

A progressive story from the Ghost story masterclass.

The night I first saw the ghosts was an ordinary night; it changed my life forever...

It was our first night in the house.

We had moved from Washington D.C. into the quiet, stone cottage half an hour outside of London. There was nothing foreboding or spooky about the house, but somehow it had a sad and looming presence, its high windows

seemed to cast a longing glance at any passer-by.

The stone cottage itself had a beautiful yet eerie look about it. It was quite big, large enough for its eerie presence to intimidate you in a strange uncanny way. But still, we settled in quite nicely. I had a wonderful baby pink bedroom, much more stylish than my last, things were going pretty well. That was, until I saw them, that Tuesday night, that dark Tuesday night, I saw them...

There they were, white nearly invisible things. My teddy bears on the pink bedroom wall did not seem so cute or fuzzy any more. I had to do something, something that would at least save my life or maybe even scare the ghost. I decided to SCREEEEEEEEAM!!!!!!

I hid under the doona. What did they want? Maybe if they couldn't see me they wouldn't know that I was here. I heard the door creak open. Something grabbed me. I screamed and struggled. The doona was yanked back.

'What's up, muffin,' Dad said.

I shivered and pointed to the window.

'It's only the wind.' The teddy bears on the wall smiled. Bony finger-like tendrils of the ancient willow clawed and scratched at the glass.

'You always did have a good imagination.' Dad ruffled my hair. 'Snuggle down. Everything will be fine in the morning'. He tucked me in and kissed my cheek.

'Okay if I turn off the light?' I wanted to tell him that I wanted it on. Maybe they would stay away if the light was on. Instead I just nodded. The switch snapped and he closed the door.

The teddy bears' smiles turned into sneers. I dared not look at them. I dared not look at the window. What if they were still there, clawing and scratching to get in? What if...

Another Version of the ghost story

Ever since I was very young I knew something nobody else did. Let me tell you the night that changed my life...

At six, I was a lively little girl, always willing to give everything a go. By the first day of school I had many friends and was very popular. But then Mum and me needed to move to London. It wasn't unexpected; she knew we were moving and had bought a small stone cottage hoping to start a new life with me. But as soon as I saw the old cottage it had effect on me. For it had a sad look, like it wanted to forget its past. A year later, Mum and me still lived there but I felt the house wants me to do something that nobody else can. So that afternoon I promised the house I would do some research on it to find out what its walls hide. At the local library, the librarian directs me to a pile of old newspapers with headlines written dark black ink. Then I saw it, a newspaper with the headline saying "OLD COTTAGE OWNER'S LOST WIFE WANTS REVENGE".

Straight away thoughts spin around in my head, making me dizzy. How? Why? What? Who? I picked up the dusty newspaper, reading nervously. Brett Newton owner of a stone cottage lost his wife a couple of years ago. He states, 'It was very tragic, left me crying for many days.' But he has decided to move as he has been haunted by the ghost of his making...

Nicole H

An Equal Music -
Vikram Seth

Review By Neha M,

Kendriya Vidyalaya, IISc Campus

I found this book in the World Book Exhibition, and never have quite been able to put it down since. If you love music as I do, you won't be able to, either!

The narrator, Michael, is a violinist in a string quartet. The plot spins through recollections of the past and Michael's feelings when his past finally catches up with him.

At the heart of the book lies Julia, a pianist, who has a secret that touches the very depths of her music. How the love story between Michael and Julia re-develops, and how it is lost again, forms the rest of the story.

Above all comes its feel for music. The book is written in the present tense, which gives it a peculiar touch of detachment; the passages about music are as delightful as the music they describe. To me, this has been a book to re-read and savour again and again.



A young reader finds a favourite author's book and can't wait to get started at the August Author Festival Launch 2005

HELP THE HOMELESS

As we watch, our world is dying
There are many who can't cope.
Help each other, stop the crying
Light a candle of hope.

Some don't have, any money
Or other things they need.
Help will make their days sunny
Care and do a good deed.

Some don't have, water to drink
And nothing nice to eat.
No paper, no pen and no ink,
No shoes, just bare feet.

So help them find a shelter, a
home
And they won't have to look or
roam.

Agnes R

Book Review

Private Peaceful - Michael Morpurgo

By Emily G, Wyvern Technology College

"They've gone now, and I'm alone at last. I have the whole night ahead of me, and I won't waste a single moment of it... I want tonight to be long, as long as my life..."

So begins *Private Peaceful* by Michael Morpurgo, 2003-2005 Children's Laureate and author of 'The Butterfly Lion', 'Kensuke's Kingdom', 'The Dancing Bear', 'Dear Olly' and many more. This imaginative and tear-jerking novel about war is a work of fiction, based on a historical incident. The title, *Private Peaceful*, was inspired by a name on a gravestone in Ypres. This novel will open your mind, and help you imagine being a soldier in the First World War between 1914 and 1918. I lived as a soldier as I read this book. This bestseller is studied in some colleges in English Literature courses, and now that I've read it, it becomes clear why.

Thomas Peaceful, the main character, is replaying his childhood. It starts with his pleasant life in the countryside, where he lived with his Mum, Dad, and two brothers Charlie and Big Joe. Big Joe was the eldest but seemed more like the youngest due to his disability. However, his family love him dearly, but sadly, their days as a happy family were numbered. Upon his father's death, Thomas—or "Tommo," as he was nicknamed—was left with one huge and daunting secret about the day his father died. As they cried over his grave at the tear-filled funeral, Tommo decided to tell no one his secret, not even his elder brother Charlie, whom he loved and admired.

When Tommo befriends a kind school friend, Molly, who begins to visit Tommo's house every day, the pair, plus Charlie, soon become an inseparable threesome—a situation that soon introduces Tommo to feelings of envy and jealousy towards his elder brother. Despite this, the bond between the brothers never wavers, as the imminent war proves. The two head to war together—partly out of habit, partly out of a sense of adventure—and together they witness the death and devastation war brings. This book touched me because of the author's skill in conveying the horror of war, and it is amazing how Michael Morpurgo portrays the effect of war on such a happy and united family. The book was really interesting, as I found out a lot more than I'd known about historical patterns and happenings during the war, but I mainly found it sad.

PEACE AND PROTEST SONGS.

ANUSHREE T

PEACE 4 DA WORLD
What is the world waiting
for????
For the stop of every war
Let all the people flock
together
For the EARTH be
better.....
Cross all borders
Cross all boundaries
Forget all territories
Let life be a palace of
memories
Poor children
Wretched parents
All suffering, coz of wars
Dream to look out at the
stars
OH! People, stop these wars
Let the world be one power
Get together, all nations
and join in the celebrations
HAIL PEOPLE
E!!!!!!!!!!!! HAIL EARTH !!!!!!!!!!!!!

KIMBERLEY J -

particle man
particle man
doing the things a particle can
what 's he like
it 's not important
particle man
is he a dot
or is he a speck?
when he's underwater does
he get wet?
or does the water get him
instead?
nobody knows
particle man
triangle man
triangle man
triangle man hates particle
man
they have a fight
triangle wins
triangle man
universe man
universe man
size of the entire universe
man
usually kind to smaller men
but not particle man
universe man
person man
person man
who came up with person man
person man eats some ham

but he doesn't share with
particle man
person man
person man ...

Neha M

HEAT OF LIFE-
The sun comes out
In a fierce, terrible blaze
Nothing can take back
The horror of coming days.
'Tis not sunlight, 'tis not
sunshine,
it is fire. Fire.
Fire in your eyes.
And soon you shall tire
Tire, of breathing
And thinking
Soon you shall tire
Of being alive
It shall not protect
It shall not warm
It shall not delight
Or keep from harm
It will burn, hurt, tear apart
Fine strings of man and
monster's heart.
Say goodnight
For ne'er will you see
The stillness, the quiet
Of night. Night.
Say goodbye
And ne'er will you see
The pain, the heat
Of life. Life.

Junior Journal

Volume 2 – Issue 1

October 2005

August Author Festival 2005

A celebration of communication between children's authors and their readers.

Welcome to volume two of the first issue of Junior Journal, put together by the students of the journalism masterclass during the August Author Festival 2005.

ORIGIN AND SCOPE OF THE TERM JOURNALIST...

Anushree T

In the early 19th century, journalist meant simply someone who wrote for journals, such as Charles Dickens in his early career. In the past century it has come to mean a writer for newspapers and magazines as well.

Many people consider journalist to be interchangeable with reporter, a person who gathers information and creates a written report, or story. However, this overlooks many other types of journalists, including columnists, leader writers, photographers, editorial designers, and sub editors (British) or copy editors (American).

Regardless of medium, the term journalist carries a connotation or expectation of professionalism in reporting, with consideration for truth and ethics. It should be added that some journals, such as the downmarket, scandal-led tabloids, do not make great claims to truth or ethical reporting.



Interview with Felicity Pulman.

Tara, Montmorency South

Q1. What made you want to write?

A1. Just for the fun of it I started writing stories at age ten. But I started writing seriously in my 40s.

Q2. Do you have any kids of your own who enjoy reading your books?

A2. My kids are grown up now, but I have one who enjoyed reading my books.

Q3. What were your first books about?

A3. Many of my first books were about people going to boarding school.

Q4. When did you start to have an interest in writing books?

A4. I started to have an interest when I went to University. The Communication group gave great feedback.

Q5. Have you ever performed in a concert based on your books?

A5. No but would of loved that opportunity.

Q6. Have any of your books been written in a different language?

A6. No but one of my books has been republished in England.

Q7. Have any of your books won an award?

A7. I have won a few awards for my short stories.

Q8. What is your favourite book so far?

A8. My "six series" books called The Janna Mysteries

Q9. Has anyone ever helped you write a book?

A9. Yes, the University Creative Writing group gave me ideas.

Q10. Do you have any ideas for another book?

A10. I am currently working on plans for more books



Fun and Games

A Little Frog.

Hayley C.

A little frog croaked one day
It was about the middle of May
He jumped off his lily pad
And found himself really sad
Why am I sad?
He asked himself
And got answered by an elf
You need to find your family
And bring them back here by tea
So the silly little frog rushed out
Despite of all the drought
He died of hunger that night
And that afternoon was the last
time he saw sunlight



THROUGH A DOG'S EYES

EMILY G



Yes, I'm lazy,
And a sloppy mess,
I cause hard work,
I must confess,

I plea for bones,
Yet I long for care,
I long for love,
With my lonely stare,

You can tickle my fur,
And you can stroke me to sleep,
You'll give me a biscuit,
When I sit and weep,

You'll tell me to 'sit',
And I listen, I do,
But what I really want,
Is a cuddle from you,

Sometimes you take me on walks,
And, yes, that is fun,
Rolling in mud,
Until the day is done,

You give me a ball,
As a Christmas treat,
You'll groom me soft,
As you scrub my feet,

Am I like your baby?
Or am I like your toy?
Am I just a cuddly bear to you?

DHARMINIMANOGNA K

A Rhapsody of Versatility
(I composed it with a friend)
Waves of fantasy, and fun
Sweep by as you get to learn
A moment or two in someone's site
You get to know more, Right?
A treasure of knowledge is hidden
here
Meet people from far and near
Stickies, messages and Emails too
Where your thoughts lie, there's no
clue
A fusion of culture and fashion
Its an enchanting, mind boggling
station
There's History and also Mystery
So many things, a flurry of activity
Days go by, and days will come
Wondering what we are talking about,
It's THINK.COM

KIMBERLEY J

Granny and me
in the kitchen you see
making a pot of tea
granny and me



John Marsden in the Hotseat



Mr W - August 01, 2005

Question: John, last night on Enough Rope Mem Fox said she wrote Possum Magic in a rage about Australia's cultural cringe. She saw our culture as wonderful and mothering. How do you see our culture?

Answer: sheez great let's start with the easy ones. I think Australia's like a schoolyard where you have the cool group, and if you belong to them you're protected, and if you don't, if you're an outsider, you are in a very unpleasant and even dangerous situation.

And the funny thing is that the people in the `cool' group are often horrible to each other anyway!

Rebecca - August 01, 2005

Question: I'm wanting to be a writer and to see my writing published even if they don't sell I wouldn't mind as id have that one book published I no that u should read a lot of books to help you but is there any other info u could give to young writers?

Answer: write heaps. Most people don't write enough. It's like swimming - if you swim 10 laps a week you won't improve much but if you swim 1,000 you sure will. Even if you don't have a coach.

JORDAN - August 01, 2005

Question: What inspired you to write the "Tomorrow when the war began"? And who did you base your characters on?

Answer: Lots of inspirations... it's a kind of `what if' book. What if Australia got invaded? I started thinking about that as I watched an Anzac Day parade a few years back. The characters have about 2% of real people in each one, but about 40% in the case of Ellie, who's based on a girl I used to teach

Marie - August 01, 2005

Question: Where did you get your inspiration from and why did you want to be an author.

Answer: I read so many books! I'd finish a book and think `Gosh I wish I could do that'. I love language too, so that helps.

Patrick - August 01, 2005

Question: why did ya want to be a writer?

Answer: I wanted to be famous! No, seriously, I love listening to stories and making them up and telling them. Plus I wanted to be famous.

Mr C - August 01, 2005

Question: hi John How old are you?

Answer: 54. How old r u? :)

Nina - August 01, 2005

Question: how do you come up with so many great ideas in writing?

Answer: well thanks for the compliment Nina. I keep my eyes and ears open, I listen to people as they chat, I read newspapers... and I daydream a lot.

Patrick - August 01, 2005

Question: G'day

I was just wondering where ya get ya inspiration from?

Answer: From every day life mostly. I'm not into fantasy much, I like realism, so I'm interested in real people trying to deal with real situations in their real lives. Look around you. Everyone in your class has their own struggles, their own stories to tell.

Alex - August 01, 2005

Question: do u like BMX

Answer: nuh. Not for me, but I like watching other people throw themselves around like they're stuntmen on steroids.

Georgia - August 01, 2005

Question: how did you start writing?

Answer: grade 4 we had a class newspaper and I totally loved writing stuff for it and getting my stories published.

Nick - August 01, 2005

Question: why is the teacher in staying alive in year five so evil?

Answer: hehehe he's not evil he's cool.... people who think he's evil sometimes find strange things in their sushi...

John - August 01, 2005

Question: where did u get the idea for the series of books that included the book tomorrow when the war began?

Answer: from my knowledge of world war II, partly, and realising how close Australia came to being a Japanese colony.

Lucas - August 01, 2005

Question: Which one of your books do you like best?

Answer: gosh that's hard, probably Looking for Trouble, Winter, Checkers, in that order.

Luke - August 01, 2005

Question: why do you use the descriptive word hell in a lot of your books?

Answer: Well it's not a descriptive word exactly in my books, but it's the name of a place. I mean, hey, there's a mountain in Victoria named Mt Buggery, because it's such a b..... to climb.

Rose - August 01, 2005

Question: when u were in Bathurst did you get inspired to write any of your books?

Answer: yes, I wrote the first draft of so much to tell you when I was in Bathurst. I wrote about half of it in a cabin at Sunny Corner and the other half in Bathurst itself. Hey can you still get a good coffee at the Stagecoach?

Daniel r - August 01, 2005

Emily

Question: What's your fav book

Answer: It changes frequently, from The Red Tree by Shaun tan to Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen. I liked Curious Adventure of the Dog in the Night-time.

Rose - August 01, 2005

Question: the stage coach isn't there anymore. sorry. It's now called gt

Answer: oh no! How about the Acropole or Acropolis?

NICOLE - August 01, 2005

Question: What is your favourite topic for a book and why do you like that ?

Answer: I like stories about ordinary people whose lives suddenly are thrown into chaos, thro no fault of their own usually. If you're trying to think of something to write about, that's a pretty good way to approach a story.

Andrew - August 01, 2005

Question: do you like talking to children with questions?

Answer: Well yes, or adults, because it makes me think about that I'm doing and why I do it. Sorry this computer's so slow tho, and we don't have broadband here.

Nick - August 01, 2005

Question: do you have an alias?

Answer: Someone else asked the same question only he used the word pseudonym, which is technically more correct. I've written one novel for adults under a pseudonym.

Jordan

Question: Do you have any advise for children who love writing and would like to become an author or a journalist?

Answer: A journalist compared to an author is like a runner compared to a swimmer. They're quite different really. To be an author you need to love language AND MAKE IT DO ANYTHING YOU WANT IT TO. Even to the extent of making up words. So if you hubgubble and bejork for enough vems, it is possible to be successful.

Mathew - August 01, 2005

Question: Has any of your books been about your life or are they just fiction?

Answer: Mostly they're fiction, occasionally my own life sneaks in for a moment. Especially in The Great Gatenby. You need empathy to write fiction, the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes

and feel what they feel and think what they think. You can't write about yourself all the time. It's too boring.

Patrick - August 01, 2005

Question: did you know that John Heffernan admires your writing?

Answer: um... that's great... um... who's John Heffernan?

Nick - August 01, 2005

Question: have you heard of Eoin Colfer?

Answer: no. Have you heard of Jezebel Marrakeesh Agatha Agnes Marzipan Querty?

Adam - August 01, 2005

Question: What inspired you to write a book like *Staying Alive in Year 5*?

Answer: I just found school so BORING. Most schools are still pretty boring. So I wondered what would happen if someone 'changed the rules'.

Patrick - August 01, 2005

Question: have you heard of R.L. Stine?

Answer: yep

Melissa - August 01, 2005

Question: do you like reading other books like Harry Potter for example?

Answer: I love reading, read the first Harry P and liked it, but not enough to read the rest of the series.

of characters in their writing, which makes their stories boring quite often. But girls can get all mushy and girly with that `and then my best friends Lauren and Carly and Vanessa and Veronica and Samantha and Merrin and I all went to Jessica's for a sleepover....' f. Stories need momentum!

JESSICA - August 01, 2005

Question: when do you think that you are going to bring out a new book?

Answer: I have a book coming out in Nov. It's called INCURABLE and it's the 2nd of the Ellie chronicles. I've been editing it

NICOLE - August 01, 2005

Question: Do you know any other authors that are famous?

Answer: yes, most Australian authors for the young are good friends, so Isobelle Carmody, Paul Jennings, Morris Gleitzmann and I are particularly good mates. Lots of others too though.

Julia - August 01, 2005

Question: DO YOU HAVE A SPECIAL PLACE WHERE YOU WRITE YOUR BOOKS.

Answer: I like writing in boring places, where there aren't many distractions!

Dylan - August 01, 2005

Question: did you enjoy writing Millie?

Answer: yeah I loved writing Millie, because I'm really interested in the false way a lot of people regard children, all that sickly `oh they're so sweet and cute stuff! I wanted to show a different side... the true-er side I think!!

Kate - August 01, 2005

Question: Do you like being around children or do you think they're silly and immature?

Answer: Some children are silly and immature; some adults are silly and immature. Some children are boring (to me), and so are some adults. Some children are wise or funny or interesting or all 3 of the above and so are some adults.

Tegan - August 01, 2005

Question: do you have any children

Answer: nope, no kids

Anna - August 01, 2005

Question: HAVE YOU EVER WRITTEN A BOOK THAT INCLUDES YOUR OWN PERSONALITY WITHIN YOUR CHARACTER?

Answer: yes. There's a bit of me in Erle in *The Great Gatenby*, and Chris in the *Tomorrow* series.

Veronica - August 01, 2005

Question: have you visited Bathurst since you moved?

Answer: yes, a couple of times. So where are all you Bathurst guys from?

Two Young Journalists Interview Each Other

INTERVIEW WITH EMILY ...

Anu: How many people are there in your family?

Emily: There are five people.

Anu: What does your mom cook for breakfast?

Emily: For breakfast I usually have cereal, but if my mum cooks it will usually be on Christmas day when she does an English cooked breakfast (Beans, toast, sausage, Fried egg, etc.)

Anu: Are your parents working? (It's an optional question; you can answer it only if you want to)

Emily: My Dad is a property developer and he gets a good income for that. My mum cares for the house and also makes costumes and teaches cycling @ schools but not as a profession.

Anu: What time does your school start?

Emily: 8.30 am.

Anu: Is wearing a uniform to school compulsory?

Emily: Yes, at my school we HAVE to wear Uniform (Blazers, ties, shirts, polos, trousers, etc.)

Anu: If you had a chance to be an Indian for a day what are the three special things you'd be proud of?

Emily: The yummy food and spices. 2) The Indian heritage, the history and bravery! 3) The beautiful land and creatures.

Anu: What do you do during your spare time?

Emily: Dance, meet friends, have a laugh, party, read, sleep, do sports! ETC.

Anu: Do you like Indian food? Are there any Indian restaurants in your neighbourhood?

Emily: I like Indian food except I am a vegetarian and a lot of Indian food is meat. There is an Indian restaurant nearby about 5 minutes away called the Noorani! I like it there.

Anu: Which are your favourite subjects at school?

Emily: English, Music, Drama and ICT

Anu: What kind of books do you read?

Emily: All types. I do like fantasy but sometimes I find it hard to get in to, so generally the more realism books.

Anu: Do you prefer? Reading a book or watching its movie?

Emily: That's a hard question- when reading the book you can imagine it how you want it, but when watching the movie you can picture it clearer and understand more. So it's hard.

Anu: You have joined the journalism masterclass just like me. Do you actually want to be a

journalist?

Emily: I would like to have a profession to do with writing because I like writing so a journalist would be good because I also like exploring different cultures and stuff.

Anu: What attracted you towards joining journalism masterclasses?

Emily: Ms Dunn suggested it to me, and so I checked out the masterclass and it all seemed very exciting, the reports and interviews seemed like a good challenge.

Anu: What kind of relationship do you share with your best friends?

Emily: We have loads of fun and laughs. Whenever I think of my best mates I can remember all the gr8 times we have shared and we are always laughing! I could trust them with my life!! And I hope they feel the same. I luv all of them, they always there 4 me!

Anu: Please do tell me about the education system there...

Emily: We use the national curriculum where we are taught all the basic subjects maths science and English in more detail and then we have languages, technology (our specialist subject for my school), music, drama, art, P.E, ICT, geography, history etc. In year 9 we do our SATS and in year 11 we do our GCSEs, which take us onto college where we do our AS and A Levels which contribute to our jobs and University! You can take exams such as GCSEs early if you're ready.

Anu: Do you have any Indian friends at school? Do you like them?

Emily: I don't have Indian friends at school but I have an Indian friend who went to my last school and yes I do like her otherwise we wouldn't be friends!

Anu: What do you feel about the homework that we get at school? Is it worth doing it?

Emily: I HATE homework but I know we have to and it is worth doing because we will need the extra knowledge for our exams. (And maybe even our jobs when we are older!)

Anu: We are all thinkoholics so, what is the one thing you have learned after working on think.com?

Emily: Um... I have learnt a lot from Ms Dunn and Miss Kennedy and all the teachers! But I have also learnt that

some people can be abusive and you just have to stand your ground and ignore them because Think.com is about meeting new people not arguing!

Anu: How do you find interacting with different teachers on the net?

Emily: It's great because all teachers have different perspectives on things and have different methods of helping young peeps so I can learn a lot and have conversations about my life and theirs too.

Anu: This is the end so I would like to ask you if ever in your life you get to meet me how would you describe me on seeing me?

Emily: That's hard because I've never met you b4 and everyone is different on Think.com to real life, cos you can't be yourself in words you write! I think you seem a really nice person, very intelligent and very stable in life! You know where you are heading and what you are heading for.

INTERVIEW WITH ANUSHREE

Q: Hello Anushree. Emily here, to do an interview about your day- to- day life. So let's start off with age, how old are you?

Ans: I am 13 years old and I came 2 this earth on Dec11, 1991.

Q: What are your hobbies?

Ans: I luv dancing, singing, working on think.com, swimming, playing badminton, reading books, collecting stamps and coins, watching movies and going shopping, chatting and discussing the latest trends.

Q: What time do you usually wake up in the mornings?

Ans: I wake up at about 6:30 am and on holidays at around 8:00 am.

Q: How do you feel about school?

Ans: I luv school even though they give us loads of home work. I luv coming 2 school coz of my friends and the fact that we build our future here. School days are the best

Q: What are your favourite lessons?

Ans: I luv all the lessons I learn coz our teachers are real fun and they make everything really interesting.

Q: Anushree, out of interest, have you ever been bullied or witnessed bullying?

Ans: Actually, in my school bullying is not a common act.

Q: I don't like bullying. If you were a teacher, how would you go about stopping it?

Ans: I would catch hold of the boy(s) who are indulging in this kind of inhumane act and report them to the principal of our school. I would also try to make them understand the importance of friendship and kindness through kind means - hoping it will change them.

Q: I understand that you are Indian. How does this change your day- to- day life (e.g. food, etc)?

Ans: I have only a glass of milk for breakfast. My mom packs me a tiffin for the lunch break. It includes chappatis and vegetable batter. On different days she gives me different types of rice e.g. lime rice tamarind rice, tomato rice etc. Our education system is also different from yours. We wear uniforms to school. We also have several festivals to celebrate.

Q: Please tell me more about Indian culture...

Ans: Indian culture is one of the oldest in the world. India was the first country to set up the University system. Indians respect all their guests really well. We have 28 States and seven Union Territories. People of each State wear different outfits and this reflects our cultural diversity. We also have several types of food. India was once called the Golden Bird. Indians invented the numerical system. We also have several historical monuments here. The saree is the prettiest out for a woman. Salwar-kameez are also worn. Please visit my Indian page for further information...

Q: What festivals occur in your average year?

Ans: DIWALI - the Festival of Light. We burst crackers and also worship Lord Ganesha on this day.

HOLI - the Festival of Colours. We smear coloured powder on each other's faces.

ID - it is a Muslim festival. On this day all Muslims embrace each other.

UGADI - the Kannadiga (people from Karnataka) New Year.

INDEPENDENCE DAY - 15th August

REPUBLIC DAY - 26th January

GANDHI JAYANTI - 2nd October - the birthday of GANDHIJI

VARAMAHALAKSHMI - Worshipping the Goddess Lakshmi

Q: Are there any daily traditions that you do as an Indian? Do you talk/greet people in the same way?

Ans: After my bath I light God's lamp in the small temple we've got at home and also light incense sticks. I pray to God everyday. At

school we take the Indian pledge everyday. Talking to elders means giving them respect. To my younger ones I talk jokingly. We have to do a "namaste" to the elders.

Q: Tell me how and why you take such pride in being Indian...

Ans: India is a country with a rich cultural heritage. It is known the world over and maintains a standard and dignity within the world scenario. Indian culture and tradition is known all over. Indian people also maintain a certain respect in the world. Sanskrit, the mother tongue of ancient Indians, is the mother of all European languages.

Q: How much physical exercise do you do? How much mental exercise, e.g. writing and reading, do you do?

Ans: I dance a lot at home and at school I play throwball, cricket or football. Reading books is my hobby. I write poems and try to read as many as books as I can.

Q: Do you have lots of friends at school?

Ans: I have loads of friends at school.

Q: What's better, school life or home life?

Ans: It has to be school life. You can be at home any time. But school life is precious. That

is where from being a toddler we become children, from children to teenagers, and from teenagers to adolescents. This is the place where we spend the maximum time and grow as true individuals.

Q: What is your bedtime? Is it any different to night time in other countries?

Ans: I sleep at about 11: 00 pm. It is different from the U.S.A. time.

Q: Do you enjoy your life?

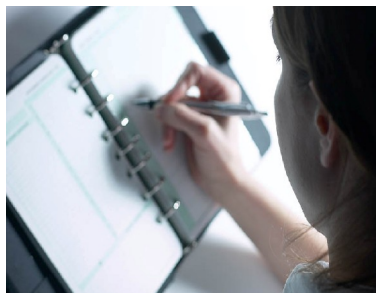
Ans: Yes. I luv life and would pay any price to enjoy it.

Q: What are your dreams and ambitions? Are these reflected in your day- to- day habits?

Ans: I wanna be a journalist. I read books that are very important and I also write reports on various topics that help me improve my writing and presentation skills.

Q: Thank you very much Anu. As you can see, I am trying to compare your life to mine because we have been born into different cultures and have different ways. Is there a final comment you would like to make?

Ans: Always hold the hand of ur true friend. Work hard, for it is the track to success.



UNTITLED - Neha M

Spring cometh, and with it
memories of thee.
Bravely have I borne the
winter,
Yet this I cannot see.
When the sun-god's smile
shone through the trees
to shimmer upon thy face
when the trees did bow in the
gentle breeze
to salute thy sprightly grace
In thee shining eyes did I
glimpse
joyful beauty of spring;
Thine soft voice spake
of music; of poetry; of being.
Many were the noons
thou spent in silence
treading unknown leafy paths;
yet many were the eves
when thou clasped mine hand
and opened mine ears to music
of spring
ere the earth opened up
engulfed thee anon
now I sit by the fire alone
seeking spirit to see spring.



Neha M

Select any you want.
The Creation
You stare in wonder
At the thing before you
Can't believe you've made it
You run your fingers through it
Can't believe it's finally real
You hold it to your chest
Set out
To find it the worship it
deserves
The wind blows away
The first thing you'd ever
created
The double sheet of music.
You take it to him-
You've heard his music
You know he'll understand
He plays it through four times
Laughs at you and throws you
out
With your creation
You put it up on the wall of
your room
Resolve never to deliver it to
them again
It made you beg
It made you insane
Brought you to your knees
But never again
You will feel this
Never again
You will give it them
You throw it in the fire
Destroy it

CALL ME FREDA. Emily G.

Call me Freda
I'm nothing exciting, in fact,
I'm rather plain,
An average girl, with an
average frame,
Nothing special to look at,
nothing to make you grin,
You might as well call me
Freda,

I have a name but it's lost far
away,
No one has found it so they've
nothing to say,
Just look at me smile, say
'Freda', that's all,
You might as well call me
Freda,

It doesn't take long to say
'Hello' or 'Hey',
'What is your name? Do you
want to play?'
But no, I live alone, not even a
name,
You might as well call me
Freda,

I try my best to stand out
from the rest,
With garments of jewels to
stun the blind fools,
But still they pass by, not a
wave, not a 'Hi'
You might as well call me
Freda,

I didn't ask to be lonely, or
bland to the root,
I didn't want to be the cabbage
in a fresh bowl of fruit,
I was made this way, but I was
given a name,
And my name isn't Freda,
But you might as well call me
Freda.

Andy Griffiths takes his turn in the hot seat



Question: WHY DID YOU WRITE BOOKS?

Answer: I was a secondary English teacher and I used to tell my students made up stories about things that had happened to me. They enjoyed them so much that I decided to write them down and photocopy them as a book. That's how I got started.

Question: WAS IT HARD TO WRITE YOUR BOOKS?

Answer: It takes lots of thinking, lots of writing, and lots of patience to take each of the stories through 20-30 drafts to get them as clear, and as funny as I can.

Question: when did you start to write these books?

Answer: I wrote my first little book (about 6 pages) when I was around 7 years old. I started writing seriously in 1987 and Just Tricking, my first JUST book, was published ten years later in 1997. I've published one book per year since then.

Question: how long did u take to write all of these books?

Answer: It takes me about one year to write a book. About 3 months messing around, 3 months writing, 3 months rewriting and then 3 months polishing.

Question: R u going 2 write another book for the just series?

Answer: Ahhh...the BIG question? You know, I thought Andy and Danny had finished and I've had a rest from them for the last few years, but--and you're the first people to know this--I've started writing a new one.

Question: What is your favourite book that you haven't written?

Answer: Great question! I'm actually working on it with Terry right now. It's going to be called 'The Exploding Butterfly Book' and it's coming out in 2006...very silly stories and lots of tongue-twistery rhymes and crazy drawings.

Question: What is your most favourite thing to do?

Answer: Get to my writing desk at about 9.30am, put my favourite music on and start writing.

Question: Have you won any awards for your books?

Answer: I've been lucky to win lots of Australian children's choice awards for my books--they're listed on my website www.andygriffiths.com.au

Question: How Did You Get In To Writing?

Answer: I've always loved filling cheap exercise books with ideas, stories, jokes, newspaper clippings and drawings. All of my published books grow out of these little scrapbooks.

Question: What advice would you give to young people who would like to develop their writing skills? How important is reader feedback in continuing to develop an idea?

Answer: the most important advice I can give is firstly to practice as much as possible and secondly to persist and "hang in there" in the face of rejections and failed stories, which are all part of the process. I listen very carefully to reader feedback -- each new book tries to put more of what they like and less of what they don't like.

Question: do you like to write books that are not funny?

Answer: Funny books will always be my first love and the thing that happens most naturally when I write, but I recently published a book about healthy living called 'Fast food and no play makes Jack a fat boy' which is less funny than previous books, though it still has lots of jokes.

Question: What's the most frequently asked question?

Answer: where do the ideas come from? And the answer is that they come when you sit down with a pen and paper and just start writing.

Question: In the book "Just Disgusting"

Why did you write the "Two Brown Blobs," it is my favourite chapter?

Answer: I wrote it because it happened to me, and when I told other people about it they found it very funny. Sometimes you have to risk being embarrassed to be a writer. But it's okay, because most people have been embarrassed at some time in their lives.

Question: what is your favourite book from any one?

Answer: I love Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll and 'One fish two fish red fish blue fish' by Dr Seuss.

Question: How long did it take to write your first book?

Answer: I started practicing writing seriously in 1987--I wrote for one to two hours in my journal every day. My first book, Just Tricking, was published in 1997, so you could say it took me ten years to write my first book.

Question: As a kid did you like humorous books?

Answer: Yes, I particularly liked 'Alice in Wonderland' which is still one of the funniest books ever written.

Question: What are your Daughters names?

Answer: Sarah and Jasmine

Question: Why did you want to be an Author (not from me from Fin)?

Answer: I didn't...I wanted to be a rock and roll singer! But my musical talent is very limited and I found I was more interested in writing the song lyrics than in singing them.

Question: What is your favourite book out of the just series?

Answer: Just Disgusting is the book that I most like...I like the variety of the types of stories and their extreme silliness was very pleasing.

Question: have u written any books 4 adults??

Answer: I just published 'Fast food and no play makes Jack a fat boy: Creating a healthy lifestyle for you and your children.' Although I've heard kids are enjoying the story, it is written firstly with adults in mind.

Question: have you been to any schools if so where?

Answer: I have visited hundreds of schools over the last ten years, though I have had to spend more time writing than visiting over the last few years.

Question: Was It Hard to become an author?

Answer: It takes an extraordinary amount of persistence and discipline, but it never seemed hard because I just loved writing and wanted to find out everything I could about it and do it as much as I could until I could write the sorts of stories I wanted to write.

Question: how old are you?

Answer: 43

Question: how do u get all your ideas? What is your inspiration?

Answer: I love seeing if I can get my readers to believe impossible things. Even when I'm being very silly, I'm trying hard to make it sound completely believable and realistic. This inspiration has never left me.

Question: In "Just Annoying" in the story "Are we there yet," did your parents really leave you? And will you do that to your children?

Answer: No, my parents only ever threatened to stop the car, they didn't actually do it. But I always used to wonder, What if they really did stop the car in the middle of nowhere and put you out...what would you do then? The story grew out of this wondering.

Question: do you think your books suitable for 4 year old?

Answer: My four-year-old daughter enjoys the Bad Book, but in general I would say 7-8years is a better age to begin enjoying the books.

Question: Ms Nicholls is actually a whole lot of year 6 students that love your books a lot!

Answer: Oh, that's a pity...I'd actually fallen in love with Ms Nicholls and was going to ask her to marry me. Thanks for telling me the truth!

Question: Has Terry Denton illustrated all of your books?

Answer: Yes, all except for the bumfighting novels. We share a very complementary sense of humour and enjoy working together.

Question: have you ever written a true story that doesn't end in a lie?

Answer: No and that's the truth!

Question: what do you think of your career?

Answer: I feel very lucky and grateful to have so many smart and enthusiastic readers...it's very encouraging.

Question: where did u get the idea for the names of the just series???

Answer: It started with 'Just Tricking', which is what my friends and I used to say after playing a particularly dumb joke. Then, when it came out everybody asked me was I going to write another one...I'd run out of practical joke ideas, but I thought Andy could be annoying instead...and it kind of went from there.

Question: How come you write mostly humorous books?

Answer: It's just what happens when I pick up a pen to write stories...I can't help being stupid...but I'm stupid in a very serious way.

Question: when one of your books are published do you get excited?

Answer: Always! It's like Christmas...you can't quite believe that something you've spent so long on and thought about so much actually exists.

Question: How long did it take to write zombie bums from Uranus?

Answer: The bu* novels take about two years to write...I usually spend a year just drafting the outline of the plot over and over again...and then when I'm happy with it, start writing the actual scenes.

Question: What is your favourite animal out of Sooty and Silky?

Answer: Sooty! He was a great, crazy, amazing dog!

Question: **What has the reaction been like for your new book "fast food and no play make jack a fat boy"?**

Answer: It's still very early to tell, but there's been a huge amount of interest. I've always been passionate about the importance of health and fitness in producing happy, alert minds.

Question: **have you been to a different country and if you have where?**

Answer: I have been to New Zealand and the USA on book tours--it's a very enjoyable part of the book-writing process for me.

Question: **will you write any more books?**

Answer: Sure, I have books planned for at least the next four years.

Question: **what will your next book be called?**

Answer: Bumageddon: The final pongflict. It's released at the end of August.

Question: **When you are writing, do you make a plan or write as you go along?**

Answer: to begin with I just waded in and start writing. After a while when I've worked out what I'm writing about I usually go back and plan the story out as much as I can, but that plan always keeps changing as I write.

Question: **why do you think you're books are so popular?**

Answer: I'm never completely sure of the answer to this, but I suppose it's because lots of people can relate to the characters and the situations they find themselves in. Also, with the Just series, Andy does all the things that many of us wish we could do but are too scared to do.

Question: **Busting was a great story. Did this really happen to you please?**

Answer: I've often observed that it's hard to find toilets in large shopping centres, but no, I've never put a burning shopping centre out by weeing on it. Although I have been known to wet the bed!

Question: **Do you ever find yourself wondering where a story is taking you, or is each book complete in your mind before you start writing?**

Answer: It's usually a bit of both. I usually know the sort of story I want to write without knowing the details. I tend to have lots of tries until I start to get the type of content that matches the effect I want. I hope this makes sense!

Question: **Where do you write? Do you have a notebook that you take with you?**

Answer: I carry an exercise book with me at all times, but I mainly write on a notebook computer in my writing office.

Question: **can u get rich from writing books?**

Answer: Only if you write books that people will pay to read.

Question: **do you like writing books or do you just do it because lots of people like them**

Answer: I love writing books.... and I was writing books a long time before anyone was reading them! But it's a good question...I actually think that lots of people like them because I have such an enjoyable time writing them--the enjoyment rubs off.

Question: **Thanks so much Andy for answering questions today! You have had so many hits that you're in the world's top 5 on Think.com!!**

Answer: Wow! Thank you for the opportunity...I hope my answers have made sense and will be of use to people looking to write their own stories.

See you all later!

The THINK CHAIN POEM
by various members...

The mist was falling from the trees
Flowing down like powdered dust.
Magical mystery, bluest night....
Someone wondering in the lost.
To find somebody, he could trust.

A shadowed voice is calling out,
The mist was falling on the trees
"Don't afraid, it is not right !!"
When the morning comes to be
There is nothing we cannot see.

Into the deep and darkest night
Not a voice to scream and shout
"Is somebody inside?" it cries,
"Is anybody out?"
I listen and my mind is full of doubt.

Branches causing gentle breeze
Seeking wings and take their flight...
Mist is falling in my mind
Dedication! it's my foresight!
Of glutinous silence after the fight-

And now, like mist, like trees, I am alone.

AND here's one from Ms Odgers-
REVERSED ACROSTIC FOR THINK.

Though everyone is born with mind and
Has a choice to use it,
In a fine, creative way
Never to abuse it-
Knowledge wins experience
Not meaning to abuse it,
In its use, creatively-
Here's a choice to use it .
Together we must think alone
Having choice to use it,
In a fine, creative way
Never to abuse it
Knowledge wins experience
Not meaning to abuse it
In its use creatively
Here's a chance to use it
Though everyone is born with mind and...

Agnes R

thoughts become words,
words become actions,
actions become habits,
habits become...
...YOUR CHARACTER.
this has meaning. follow to it.

ANUSHREE T
Stars in the sky
shine as bright as diamonds
twinkling all the way
always hidden during the day

A ball of gas
has no light of it's own
A huge mass it has
This is also how the sun is known

Blinking away at night
brightening up the sky
it's a beautiful sight
OH ! my, my, my
As pretty as a pearl
and cheerful as a girl
It's a beauty so magnificent
there are no words to describe

I'd love to be among them
if I ever had a chance
But it's that I can see them
I can only have a glance

It's a true spectacular scene
of glory
And all I can say is
It's the end of my STARRY
NIGHT STORY

My Nation

Dharminimanogna K

I am proud to belong to this
nation of mine,
Where I was born and where I
will die.

Where I can do anything I
want,
In other places, what I can't,
My mom was born here and so
was I,
I will belong to it till the day I
die.

Where people work day and
night,
Till the sky turns black from
white,
I would always wish to guard
her border,
save her honour and serve her
forever.

MY MOTHER -

Dharminimanogna K

When she laughs, I join her
not that something is funny,
but because it is she who is
happy.

When she cries, my heart cries
not that something is painful,
but because it is she who is
hurt.

"Everything wonderful;" is what she
can
be defined by me.
In fact she is everything a person
can and should be.

SPIDERWEBS –

Agnes R.



spiderwebs.
spiders make them in the
night,
really dusty and they're white.

soft as silk, and strong as
metal.
a spider's house and like a
petal.
wrap up insects for spider's
food,
and eat it up for a meal sooo
good!
Spiderwebs.

Here is the story we could not leave out

Blood on his lips

Oliver L



Xaiyou woke to the sound of pounding drums and thundering hooves. She dressed herself and went outside unsurprised, this was not the first time the king's men had passed through her village but it was the first time *he* had.

"Good morning" said the nameless soldier. While he talked to her a devil awoke in his eyes, like the fires of hell swallowing another soul. But she stared at him and, for the first time in her life, felt her own eyes light up with the same fire. She was enthralled.

"You look as though you have been put under a spell sir," said Xaiyou.

"Oh but I am, I am under the spell of your beauty," said the soldier in his capturing tone. "May I look upon it again," finished the soldier kicking his steed into a gallop.

Xaiyou shivered, where she sat crying, in the darkest corner of the festival hall. Her cries echoed through her empty heart whilst festive dances proceeded in the room next door. Then with the wail of the winter wind the doors swung open and a soft jingle of armour tapping the guilt of a sword, brought footsteps her way.

There he stood, his armour shining with the splendour of a million stars and the heavenly light of a thousand suns.

He took her by the hand and said in a light musical tone, "shall we dance?"

In an enchanting spin the greatest passion filled them both and surrounded their angelic movements. He kissed her and his voice deep with passion, he murmured in her ear, "I love you."

Next morning the soldier had left. When Xaiyou woke she saw the he had taken his weapons and armour. Fearing the worst she quickly left for the temple to pray for her love's survival.

When she reached the temple she could hear the screams of men in her heart and she could feel her love lose his strength slowly but surely. In her vision men were falling around him like leaves in autumn and blood was flowing like rivers after the monsoon.

The soldier, she knew, fought for her safety. For her, his one true love.

Xaiyou had prayed all day. Realising she couldn't live without knowing whether her true love was alive or dead, she sought out the wizard who lived by the waterfalls near her village.

When she arrived the doors of the man's old tower swung open. This, she knew, was one of the wizard's magic tricks designed to scare off travellers. She entered with confidence; she would not be intimidated. Walking down the hallway the strong aromas, in the house overwhelmed her. She stepped into the main room

"Hello Xaiyou," said the ugly old man who stood before her. Uneasily Xaiyou sat on the cushion that the wizard pointed to.

"So you're here to know about your love." The old man, stroking his dirty wrinkled chin.

"Yes, yes I am, please tell me if he is alive!" begged Xaiyou.

"Well I have good news and bad news," said the wizard. "The good news is that he is still alive and will not die in this war. The bad news is that he will not return in your lifetime."

While Xaiyou walked home she wondered how the old man's words could be true. She knew that the soldier loved her. She continued down the cold stone road in a state of disbelief and confusion.

The days were cold for the soldier. He longed for the sun. Deep down inside him he knew he would never be happy without the warm touch of his love. Every morning he rose to the screams of men dying; the clanging of swords and the thunder of hooves.

He hated war but he knew that if he did not fight the people would hate him. His general, Mazaki had hit him many times for his incompetence. But, according to the oracle reading at his birth, the soldier knew the general's campaign would not be successful if the soldier was not alive.

The soldier saw the general; he fought with such passion, but in a flash of light the great general fell. Hit by the golden arrow of Hakasan—the most skilled marksman in Japan—the general of the opposing forces. The soldier knew what this meant. Devastated he ran over and picked up the general's sword.

He was now in control of one thousand men.

The soldier fought harder than he thought possible. As the general he needed to set an example, he also knew that he could not survive like that any longer.

He cut and hacked with all his might. Men fell at his blade's thrust. A blade saturated with the blood of the many whose lives he had taken.

Then as though from nowhere two horsemen rode toward him holding a crude iron net. Before he could flee he was tangled in the evil web, and in the fear and failure of the moment he lost consciousness.

When the soldier woke he was naked and bleeding. His hands were tied behind his back and he leant against the harsh stone, which surrounded him.

Hakasan entered the room and, with a devilish grin on his face, said, "Thanks for the armour, it will serve me well." He turned abruptly and left the room.

Hakasan reached the village at nightfall. On his prancing steed he rode down to Xaiyou's hut, dismounted and knocked on her door. He heard shuffling footsteps come slowly to the door. He knew she would be afraid by having enemy soldiers in her village. The door opened a crack and, with a sigh of greatest relief from the girl, it was thrown wide. She had as he planned recognised her true love's armour. Hakasan stood proud in the doorway.

Leaving no time for questions he grabbed her tightly, lifted his mask and kissed her passionately. He then pulled his dagger from its sheath and cut her throat.

That night her left with her blood on his lips. Tasting it he kneeled in the cold snow he laughed. "Give up General your love is gone, I have won."

After that fateful night the soldier escaped his prison. Before fleeing he killed Hakasan. Although he became the greatest general in Japan he could never be happy. His soul was damned and his heart broken. He was alone.

The end

Look out authors - a new talent is developing.

There is nothing left but to say farewell and well met, and hope we can do it all again next year.

From the journalism masterclass team; Anushree T year 8, Emily G year 8, Neha M year 10, Rachel C year 6 and Tara H year 4.

Think.com Co-ordinator Wendy J Dunn: author of Dear Heart, How Like You This? Her book was awarded the ABPA 2003 Glyph for Best Adult Fiction and First Runner Up for Commercial fiction in the 2004 Writer's Notes Book Awards. A serious student of the Tudor period since childhood, Wendy is the online editor of Suite101.com's respected Tudor England site. Wendy is currently working on a novel based on the life of the first wife of Henry VIII: Katherine of Aragon. You can visit her online at www.wendydunn.com

Karina Machado: mother-of-two, freelance journalist and contributing editor at Who magazine. Celebrity news aside, Karina maintains the childhood dream to pen a novel (one day). Like Wendy she's a devotee of the Tudor age, and is looking forward to a research trip to England which she hopes will help coax the story from her heart, and onto the page.

And myself - Davina MacLeod: Editor of fiction and non-fiction, proofreader, and writer of fiction and non-fiction (albeit under a pseudonym), founder of Edit Zone, and writer of historical fiction for children. Mother of three, grandmother to more than is the legal limit, she is sure. Oh, and newsletter setter-upper, designer, compiler, real good coffee maker, head cook and bottle washer and all round pedantic pain in the...

Until next year, we hope, th...th... th... that's all folks!

**Thank you for a month of laughter, comradeship
and sharing.**



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