



Carindale Writers Group newsletter

19 May 2011

Present: Annette, Suellen, Sandy S., Beverley, Rebecca, Heather, Judith, Hilary, Peter, Leslee-Anne, Hazel, Rolando, Brian, Chip, Jeff P., Maria G., Debby, Dawn, Nick.

Our meeting was a lively one today, helped by having an exercise theme to write on that most members contributed to. To begin with though, we have the good news that Jeff Petersen has had his manuscript, *A Boy, A Creek, A Dog*, accepted by American publisher Dorrance. Jeff's is a long short story, and is to be published on the internet. It shows that you don't have to write a full-length novel or even a shorter novella to have a chance of being published.

Peter Hart is in talks with QAHC (Queensland Association for Healthy Communities), to make further progress in getting his play/musical staged. It is intended to be a pro-am production combining members of a professional theatre company in the lead roles, and amateurs taking on the roles of a Greek-type singing chorus. We wish both Jeff and Peter good fortune and success in their endeavours.

The Queensland Writers Centre 'e-zine' ('electronic magazine' to give it its full description), is not reaching Beverley anymore for her to re-broadcast it to our members. Instead, Beverley has sent by email to each member of the Carindale Writers Group the password so that we can individually access the magazine online. See <http://www.qwc.asn.au/MyQWC.aspx> then use the User ID and password to log in. WQ (*Writing Queensland*) has a host of advice and articles for aspiring and established writers and is well worth a look-see. It also showcases competitions you may be interested in entering.

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Today's featured reader.

Dorothy Vicary was unable to attend today as our featured reader. We look forward to her returning soon to present us with more of her work.

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Suggested exercise today was 'Hair'.

The topic clearly stirred memories or pushed buttons for a quite a number of our members.

In our usual way we heard from writers in order of the word count of their stories from shortest to longest, and from those who had written on the topic first. Then we followed with writers who had different subjects to present.

Providing encouragement through sharing and discussion

Annette began with a piece called Cellos and Hair Cuts, covering in brief the maturing of a young girl who was a keen cellist until her mother unwittingly drove over the instrument in the driveway, to the same young lady's desire to have a hair cut in the fashion of the day.

Jeff P. followed with his observations, including pictures, of current hairstyles sported mostly by today's younger generation.

Rebecca wrote a lovely flowing story called Montague, a nostalgic piece documenting her mother's passage through life according to her hair styles. This story was very well read, too.

Debby's story was how she couldn't afford the money for a proper haircut because her father expected her to hand up at home an unjustly large portion of her earnings. A friend used a nail scissors to cut her hair.

Suellen covered in a gentle, nostalgic way, the importance of how your hair looks to a pair of teenagers who ultimately raise a family and grow old together.

Brian composed a social commentary on the vanity of humanity regarding our hair. He noted the paradox of a shop selling depilatories to remove bodily hair standing next to a hairdresser and wig-maker.

Maria S.'s article on being a hairdresser was read aloud in her absence by Leslee-Anne. Maria eventually had enough of rude or insanitary customers importuning her. She decided to become a dog-groomer instead!

Sandy S. wrote a moving yet factual piece on how it feels to lose your hair to cancer and what it's like to regain it. Her article would be very appropriate to a health-care magazine or distributed to those who might benefit from her personal experience.

Heather read an uplifting piece about how looking after a fluffy puppy can be just the therapy required for a young woman suffering from an eating disorder.

Hilary read out A Hairy Fairy Tale, a most amusing story set in mythical times, about a hairdresser to the crowned heads of Europe whose overwhelming ambition was to dress the fabled tresses of Rapunzel.

Rolando gave us a passage from his book about the time he was first let loose with the clippers as a hairdresser's apprentice. Shock and a major learning experience followed when he unintentionally shaved a swathe from the side of his customer's head.

Bev wrote a moving piece about receiving the box of mementoes her mother had accumulated for her from her childhood, the most affecting contents being the long plaits Bev had wilfully got a neighbour to cut off when she was thirteen.

Chip contributed two stories, on subjects other than 'Hair'. Azure is the story entered by Chip in the competition held by the City of Rockingham in WA to write a story of a painting. The cat in the painting (whom Chip called Azure), proved to be more canny than her owner when she helped to avoid their eviction. The Last Class was entered in the Cowan Writing Centre competition. It details a lecturer about to depart for a permanent 'long lunch'. We wish Chip good luck with his entries.

Peter gave us a further extract from his play, scenes called 'The Bleeder' and 'The Hooker'. They portrayed a dark humour as they alluded to taking risks.

Providing encouragement through sharing and discussion

To have so many of our members write on the suggested topic manifests our engagement with the Carindale Writers Group. To write so well and in such varied styles demonstrates our broad-ranging interests and abilities. (And no one wrote about 'the hair of the dog' ...!) Very well done to all.

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Suggested exercise for next time is **Tooth and Claw**. Your story of about 500 words should be written entirely through dialogue, without any narrative whatsoever, especially not 'he said.' This will be a challenge for some writers. Remember - rising to any writing challenge will help to make us better writers.

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Critique Checklist

The where, when, who, what, why and how of the story

Where is the event taking place?

When is the event taking place?

Who are the characters?

Who is the protagonist and who is the antagonist? The protagonist is the hero/heroine and the antagonist is the character or circumstances that work against the protagonist.

These first three elements should be provided to the reader as soon as possible. They need to be absolutely accurate in time and space and the way the characters inhabit that space. Particularly, costume and dialogue should represent the era and character.

What does the protagonist desire? Is the quest for a tangible outcome? Sometimes the quest is psychological (internal) and sometimes the quest is for something external. There may be both inner conflict and outer conflict.

What is at stake? **What** are the barriers/conflicts preventing the protagonist from achieving the goal? Apart from 'real' causes and character antagonists, are there psychological barriers also preventing the protagonist from achieving the goal?

Why are the characters acting out this story? Why do they behave as they do? These are the 'causal effects' that push the story forward and have to be, like the characters themselves, believable in the 'where and when' framework of the plot.

How is the plot resolved? Are all the loose ends tied off? Is the resolution satisfying to the reader?

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Our next meeting at the Holland Park Library is **2nd June**. Start time 10am prompt.

Our featured reader for the meeting on 2nd June will be Jane Furey. On 16th June we will have Dawn Johnson feature her work.

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Writer's websites

Thanks to Jane for contributing the following.

<http://www.writingforward.com/grammar/good-grammar/10-good-grammar-resources>

<http://www.contentmarketinginstitute.com/2011/05/write-a-book-and-change-the-world-11-steps-to-creating-a-successful-business-book/>

<http://bubblecow.co.uk/blog/2011/05/11/publishers-that-accept-writers-without-agents-legend-press/>

<http://bubblecow.net/how-to-write-effective-dialogue-in-your-novel>

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Chip's Computer Tips

Members who have niggling computer issues are invited to contact Chip by email or otherwise. He will suggest a solution to the problem, explain it or perhaps steer you in the right direction to information that will help solve the problem. He will send the info to you directly, then perhaps insert it into the computer column if it's of general interest. Today's tip follows.

Replace Slow, Bloated Adobe Reader with Tiny, Speedy Sumatra PDF

Every computer user needs a good PDF reader, but many users make the mistake of thinking Adobe Reader is the best and/or only option. It's not. In fact, I'd say it's overkill for most folks, offering features you don't need, plodding performance, and enough resource-hogging bloat that it can actually make your system run slower.

Not to worry: just uninstall Reader and replace it with a smaller, faster, less-intrusive PDF viewer. There are plenty of programs that fit this description, but if you're looking for the smallest, fastest, and least intrusive, check out Sumatra PDF.

I'd call Sumatra a bare-bones, quick-and-dirty PDF viewer. It loads in an instant, consumes only a few megabytes of space on your hard drive, and uses just 6MB of system RAM when running (not including whatever documents you load into it). Adobe Reader uses closer to 30MB of system RAM (when you factor in its startup utility, which is always running).

By design, Sumatra has very few features. It lets you view pages in whatever configuration you want (single-page, facing pages, full screen, etc.), rotate pages, e-mail pages, and so on. If a PDF has a hyperlink, you can click it to open your browser. Interestingly, it also includes an Open in Adobe Reader option, just in case you encounter a PDF that does require a Reader-specific feature (and assuming you haven't uninstalled Reader).

If you're a fan of running programs from a flash drive, make sure to grab the portable version of Sumatra PDF; it can run directly from an executable, meaning there's nothing to install.

FN KARMAZ