



Carindale Writers' Group Meeting

13 May 2010

Start 9:30

Present: Beverley, Sandy, Rolando, Leslee-Anne, Lydia, Karen, Dorothy, Marilyn, Judy, Nick, Marjory, Chip, Michael, Brian, Wendy, Dawn, Gary, Pam, Len, Naomi

Apologies: Jeff, Debby, Richard, Io, Heather

News/ challenges/ discussions/correspondence:

1. Leslee-Anne will be leaving us temporarily until the end of July which calls for an interim library representative. Len has offered to take over this role until Leslee-Anne returns. Thanks Len.

2. If you're not sure what books we have in the library, a list of titles can be found on our website at the following link www.carindalewritersgroup.org . If there is something you'd like to borrow please speak to Len until Leslee-Anne's return.

3. Bev has invited suggestions for the upcoming Queensland Writers Week from 11-17 October. Should we launch the anthology? Any thoughts please contact Bev or we can discuss again at the next meeting. Rebekah has also very generously offered to run her Critical Response Process workshop on Thursday 14th October as part of the week (and the day before she returns to the States too, thanks Rebekah).

4. Also, a reminder that if you are reading at a meeting there is the option of choosing someone else to read for you. This may be because you're comfortable to do so yourself, or if you would just like to hear how it sounds. Bev very aptly reminds us to make sure it's someone we trust to do it justice if we do take up that option.

5. Following Rebekah's workshop, Brian presented some suggestions on feedback topics we can use when asking for our critique including: Plot; structure; characters; suspense; and finally language. As I'm sure most of us have felt at some point or another, it can be hard to

know exactly what we want feedback on, and who knows, even if one of these isn't exactly what you're looking for, it might open up discussion that does lead down the right path.

Feature Reader:

Brian: "The Neighbour"

Overview:

Brian came prepared with a bit of a style change from his usual pieces this meeting. It was a confronting look at a young girl named Tracy and her inexplicable attraction to evil in the form of her neighbour, Old Paul. The story was a mix of present and past with nail biting narrative interspersed with flashbacks of memories that gave a glimpse of insight into Old Paul's true character.

Critique:

Highlighting his suggestions made earlier, Brian started by asking us about the plot, was it a page turner? We all agreed yes. Following the critical response process, Rebekah probed further to ask what really made it a page turner. Answers included that it was the flashbacks that showed there was more to Old Paul than we were initially seeing. Also that watching Tracy struggle with her feelings of being repulsed by but also attracted to Paul made you want to find out what happened. Bev liked the fact that all elements of the characters aren't revealed so she can make assumptions about them as the story progresses.

Brian then followed with questioning whether the flashbacks worked. There was some opinion that the transition between the present and past was too quick at times but others felt it created impact. Most agreed that if you were reading it yourself the change would be more obvious through the use of paragraph/chapter breaks.

Delving deeper into the comments regarding Old Paul and Tracy's relationship, the question arose as to whether it was believable that an attractive girl could be attracted to evil. There was some mixed discussion on this topic, but overall it was felt there could be more description identifying exactly what it is that attracts Tracy to Paul.

Finally we moved onto the final question (which following the critical feedback process should probably have been the first). What meaning did we all find in the story? Interestingly, the meaning found was varied, from feeling that the relationship was repulsive but that it made a very powerful story to it being about the frailty and complexity of human nature. Brian's final word was that it reminds us all to 'Know thy neighbour'. Thanks Brian, whether you warmed to it or not, it certainly made an impact.

Additional Readers:

Michael: "The Outside Nettie"

A humorous account of the history of the humble toilet. I'm sure I'm not alone when I say I'd never heard of it being called a 'Nettie' before. What a wonderful writing group we have, ever the educational resource. I hope Michael doesn't mind, but I enjoyed the beginning line so much, I thought I'd reproduce it here... 'It was the haunted Nettie and the plaster hung in crumbs. The seat was worn and blistered by the weight of many bums'. And true to form, each sentence after the first just made us laugh even more. We can always rely on Michael to bring his witty real life observations along to lighten the mood. Combined with his unique story topics, it makes for enthralling entertainment. I only wish they were longer.

Gary: “Politically Corrected”

An ill-mannered political cartoonist gets more than he bargained for. Laughs all around at the end of this one, Thanks Gary your stories do always have a great twist at the end.

Leslee-Anne: “Trust”

On this week’s exercise theme of trust, Leslee-Anne compared spiritual trust to the trust new born birds have in their parents to build them a nest. Comments included that it was very lyrical and it instilled a feeling of peace.

Marilyn: “Trust me”

Marilyn’s mother’s favourite saying, ‘Trust me’ was turned into a reflection of growing up on a farm. Comments were that it was a unique take on childhood memories. An interesting interpretation on the topic as well.

Chip: An adaptation of a children’s story about birds

A sentimental tale about a young boy named Timmy as he cares for a young sparrow until it’s strong enough to release into the wild. As time goes by a relationship of trust develops between the two. At the pivotal moment in the story the release we’d all been waiting for didn’t go quite as planned. Everyone was happy that we did end up with a happy ending but I’m sure for a minute there was a few of us actually holding our breath! Great use of suspense Chip.

Dorothy: “Trust the Parrot”

The story of Veronica the newlywed and Trust the parrot. Another unique interpretation on the exercise today as Dorothy used a parrot as metaphor of trust. As Veronica goes through the struggle of realising her new husband may be unfaithful she goes from feeling trust as a friendly parrot on her shoulder to experiencing it getting more agitated as the seeds of doubt start to grow... and then the Parrot finally goes to sleep as Veronica pushes the suspicion to the back of her mind. Comments included that as usual Dorothy had a good use of imagery and descriptions of everyday objects/occurrences. Very clever and imaginative Dorothy.

Pam: ‘From Dandelions to Detention’

Pam read the introduction of her new book titled ‘From Dandelions to Detention’. A biography about a man in jail told through his Mother’s eyes. We gave a more in depth critique on this one as it had a larger word count than the others and we had some time available. So Pam asked ‘Do we understand the title?’ it was agreed we did, some people suggested removing ‘From’ to read ‘Dandelions to Detention’. When asked for meaning comments included that it was moving without being sappy but perhaps it needed to be more specific, referring to the particular son that the book is about. Also that there’s nothing new about motherhood... what’s new and different about this story? Judy loved the evocative feeling of it and for me personally it reminded me of the pain you so often see when children don’t turn out the way you expected. Some good points, we hope this helps to inspire the next draft Pam.

Marjorie: “You know what I mean?”

We did have a few humorous readings this meeting, so it seemed fitting to end with just one more. Marjorie’s story gave a realistic description of real life through a day in the life of someone who doesn’t feel like they’re getting any older... as it seems a lot of us can relate to. The repetition of the title ‘You know what I mean’ throughout the story added even more impact and humour to the final line ‘I wish she’d fall down the stairs. It’s not that I want her to hurt herself; I’m just not that sort of person. You know what I mean?’ A clever ending and lots of laughs.

Feature Reader/s for next meeting: Wendy

Exercise to work on if you have time: A short piece, 600 words or so with the following criteria:

- Written in the first person
- Written from this persons viewpoint only (no switching to other characters)
- The story must have 3 characters in addition to the main character
- All characters must have dialogue
- They must all be involved in a crime

Thanks Bev, a great challenge. Looking forward to seeing how we all go with this one.

Happy Writing Everyone!

Chip's Computer Tips

Saving Your Personal Information

What are the most valuable information and items on your computer? It's the data that you have put into it. These might be letters, documents, email, photos, artwork, your favourite websites, bank and financial data and your personal contacts and addresses. All this adds up to years of personal information. Without it, your daily routine could be severely hampered. Then the inevitable day comes and you crash. What happens then? Of course, you know about backing up your data, and perhaps you do, such as putting your photos on a CD or DVD. Or perhaps you use the Microsoft Windows/Vista backup program on a regular basis.

These days, the new technology offers you several backup options and you can choose one or more to suit your personal needs. It's just a matter of copying your folders and files from one storage area to another. You have the options of adding a second hard drive in your computer, use a portable hard drive, an external hard drive, a DVD burner or a flash drive. They are all relatively inexpensive, starting at less than \$100.

Adding a second hard drive to your computer has the advantage of allowing you to put your personal data and additional software programs on it while you are using your computer normally. You run just your operating system on your main drive. If your operating system or main hard drive fails you already have your personal data on your second drive. Advantages: This backup method is simple, fast and has a large storage capacity—100gb is considered small these days. And many computer shops will install one for you without a service charge.

External hard drives are the easiest to install. They come equipped with the USB port. They can do full or daily backups from your home or office computers and allow you to copy data from one computer to another if yours aren't networked. If one computer fails, you can simply plug the drive into another computer and continue whatever you were doing.

CD and DVD players and burners usually come as standard equipment for home and small business users. The DVD's have up to 8Gb capacity. If you don't have one, you can add an external burner that plugs into a USB or Firewall port. Advantages: Portable and easy to copy files and folders and programs. Disadvantages: Long term disk storage; the burning software that comes with the drive is not always easy to use.

Portable hard drives are small and fit into a shirt pocket or handbag. They are ideal for to use with a notebook computer or to copy data from your office computer. Advantage: High capacity and portability. Disadvantage: high cost per gigabyte compared to standard hard drives.

Flash drives are the latest items on the market. It's the easiest way to plug in and copy financial statements, photos from a digital camera, software programs and personal information. Advantages: Cheap cost per gigabyte of storage. Easy to plug in and use. A disadvantage is the high cost per gigabyte of storage and their comparative small storage capacity (although 10Gb is now common).

How to Backup Personal Data on your own Windows Operating System:

From Start, go to Programs, click on Accessories, System Tools, Backup. Then, click Backup Wizard. It will ask you what you want to back up. In this case, you don't want a full backup, so pick Selected Files. You will see a Backup Utility page. From that open up C drive and you will see My Computer, My Documents, My Network Places and others. Just tick the files or folders you want to save. Now, here's one more tip. If you use Outlook Express or Internet Explorer as your email client and browser, you won't find it listed under those names. Instead, it is nested in Documents and Settings. So, if you want to save your Favorites, all your email, including your email folders and addresses, tick Documents & Settings, too. You can back them up on any type of drive or DVD. It's that easy.

