



Carindale Writers' Group Meeting

9 September 2010

Start 9:30

Present: Beverley, Jeff, Hazel, Marjory, Debby, Heather, Karen, Len, Lydia, Judy, Brian, Chip, Naomi, Dorothy, Gary, Leslee-Anne, Jeff, Maria, Nick, Marilyn, Dawn

Apologies: Richard, Rolando, Rebekah

News/ challenges/ discussions/correspondence:

1. Project "Allshorts": First we heard from Lydia about the progress of the project. All stories have been signed off and typesetting is underway. Well done to all. In terms of marketing activities, a press release has been drafted and an invitation to the launch is nearly ready to go out via email. It will be sent to libraries, various media and other writers groups. So, we're nearly ready to go. How exciting!

The Launch: The launch will be held at our usual meeting on Thursday 14 October. Rebekah will also be leading a workshop on the critical response process we've all been practising. In the interest of ensuring the day is as organised as possible, can everyone please arrive at the library **spot on 9am** (in our usual meeting room), so we're all ready to start on 9:30am.

Everyone also please bring a plate for morning tea. Dorothy will be organising plates, cups, napkins etc. Thanks again Dorothy for all your help in making sure we're all well fed! Allshorts books will be on sale on the day, so if you can't remember how many copies you've ordered please check with Lydia.

2. News: Karen has been approached by the QWC to do a feature on food writing in their next newsletter. Congratulations Karen.

3. Email critique group: We've still only got seven members interested in being part of an email critique group, but a few people have said they'd like to be involved after Allshorts has been launched. So we might put this on hold for now and take it up again next month. Stay tuned for more news.

Feature Reader:

Len: “Jaapie and his animal detectives”

Overview:

Jaapie and his animal detectives is a series of children’s stories inspired by bedtime tales that Len has been telling to his family and friends over the years. Len would like help tightening the story up.

Critique:

Following the critical feedback response process, we were first asked where we found meaning in the story. There were a few different responses from ‘crime doesn’t pay’ to that it highlighted the terrible practice of poaching animals and that it was a great way to educate children about this important issue. Many people commented that they would have loved the story as a child.

The group then moved into a more general discussion offering feedback. Comments included:

- Chip thought it may be useful to include an appendix of South African terms.
- There were questions as to the topics of drugs, aphrodisiacs and also some of the violence in the story. Are these topics appropriate for a story aimed at children? It wasn’t being suggested that they’re not, but it’s certainly a good point to be aware of when sending the final product to a potential publisher.
- Suitman was an excellent character; a great villain that you loved to hate. We’d like to see more of him.
- The idea of the story is excellent; it does need work on the structure and dialogue though. Some fix it suggestions included simplifying the sentences and working on the plot. We must remember that when Len usually tells these stories, it’s on the fly, allowing him to improvise and fill in back story as children ask questions. What a big job to consolidate all those years of stories into one structured plot line!
- Be clear on your audience. If the story is aimed at children aged 7-11, use appropriate language.
- Using the animals as speaking characters creates a magical and enthralling world for children. Just make sure that each animal has its own distinct personality that’s reflected in the way it speaks.

Well done Len, we can’t wait to hear more as you tame all those years of story-telling into submission!

This meeting’s exercise: Imagine you get a phone call in the middle of the night. Who is it? Why are you being called? 750 words max (but preferably 500)..

Maria: No title

Based on a true experience, Maria told of a cold winters evening that took an unexpected turn for the worse. The news of a birth in the family combined with a fall and a broken ankle ended up with more family members in hospital than expected. Is there a lesson to be learnt here? Kick your husband harder so he wakes up and answers the phone!

Chip: Fido

There seemed to be a theme of lessons to be learnt in this week's exercise as Chip entertained us with the perils of leaving your phone in reach of the family dog in the middle of the night.

Brian: Bed and Board

Brian warned of the opportunities that could be missed if you're a rebellious Scotsman who's easily distracted by the warmth of an enticing widow.

Leslee-Anne: Mrs Tibbets and the Powerful Owl

Leslee-Anne told of a Hoppy the rabbit, who, ignoring his mother's warnings got trapped in a cage. After telling all the other rabbit children of the predicament (including a very funny listing of all their names), Mrs Tibbets goes off to try and find help in the middle of the night.

Time for some other readings...**Heather: A Love Affair**

A very emotional description of an alcoholic working on a divorce from her love affair with alcohol. Heather asked for critique on how to make the story more powerful. Everyone agreed that it was already quite powerful, but that some additional dialogue and a stronger plot would make for an even more moving piece of writing. Thanks for sharing Heather.

Hazel: The Soprano

Hazel read the ending of her historic novel, The Soprano. After reading us the first chapter a few weeks ago, she has now completed the entire novel and wanted some feedback on the ending. Everyone agreed that it was very well written and read and that the ending referring to the main character as a star was perfect. Another very moving piece, thanks Hazel.

Feature Reader for next meeting: Jeff

Exercise to work on if you have time: Write a believable story about a very strange situation or character.

**Until next time... happy writing everyone,
Naomi**

Now for Chip's Computer Tips**Make Your Screen Easier to Read**

I admit it: my eyes are getting old. And more and more these days I find myself suffering from eyestrain after spending hours in front of the computer.

Then it dawned on me: I'm using a big monitor (a 20-inch LCD), but Windows is still showing me relatively tiny fonts, icons, etc.

It's a simple matter to increase the font size in, say, your browser: you just hold down the **Ctrl** key and tap + (or turn your mouse wheel).

But what about making everything bigger throughout Windows? The icons, the toolbars, the text in pull-down menus--everything? Turns out Windows 7 is easily enlarged:

1. Open the Control Panel, then click *Appearance and Personalization*.
2. Under the Display section, click *Make text and other items larger or smaller*.
3. As you'll see, the default is *Smaller*. Choose one of the other two settings--Medium or Larger--and then click *Apply*. (Be sure to save any other work first, as you'll have to log out of Windows and back in again for the changes to take effect.)