



AUTHOR VISIT - LISA SHANAHAN

Winners from the Year 1 - 6 Writer's Competition were rewarded with a special writing workshop, run by published author, Lisa Shanahan. Lisa gains inspiration from little moments and events that occur each day, through dreams, and by asking herself questions such as "what if?"

Lisa was engaging and knowledgeable as she shared strategies to start writing. Three tools that Lisa uses to generate story ideas include; collecting words, collecting memories and collecting images. She always keeps a writing journal with her so she can jot down ideas or moments that occur. From these she generates story kernels, that sometimes develop into a full story.

Lisa taught the students how to use quick writing strategies to develop these kernels, and to unlock their creative flow. She expressed that there are "ingredients that make a lasting story" such as a focus on the characters, the setting, the story or the language used. Readers and writers can be drawn to different ingredients, but a good writer engages them all, so that more readers are drawn in.



Whilst watching Lisa present, there were certain lessons I think all writers can learn:

A writer is observant

Lisa looks around her daily life to catch a glimpse of something different and something new. She challenges herself to see images or scenes differently to be able to describe them in new ways.

A writer is messy

A writer needs to put their initial ideas down quickly. This is not the time for the perfect phrase, perfect spelling or perfect handwriting. Drafts should be messy, scribbled things. Perfecting the text comes later. A journal should be on hand at all times for when inspiration strikes.

A writer needs time

A writer shouldn't edit their piece of writing once, but keep revisiting the text over and over. Lisa shared that it can take a whole year for her to develop a story from its initial start, until she is ready to send the text off to be published.

A writer must listen

A writer must be willing to accept feedback and critiques. Lisa shared the first manuscript of hers that was published. After she sent what she believed was a perfected piece to her editor, she received back copious notes, cross outs, questions and changes, all to tighten and improve the text. Lisa learned to accept the critiques and hone her craft to continue to improve.

A writer must show courage

Lisa has spent copious amounts of time and energy on some manuscripts, creating something very special and important to her. She needed courage to send them to be possibly rejected, and courage to try again. She needed perseverance to work through the rejections or corrections. This can be a heartbreaking and frustrating process, but Lisa has found it worthwhile. She has been writing for over 20 years, and now has over 20 published works.

Lisa was impressed with the motivation and engagement of the students present at the workshop. She encouraged them to use her quick writing strategies, and gradually extended the time they had to write. She was impressed with the detail and description the students achieved in only a 5-minute period. One task was to describe their grandmother's bedroom in a way that conveyed her character, without ever describing the grandmother herself.

Orlando wrote;

My grandma's bedroom has linen that looks as if made of gold. The detail is thin and beautiful. Her room is covered with souvenirs from different places, each with a story of an adventure. Her bedroom has a big photo of her family on her bedside table which she looks at daily. Flowers and scented candles fill her room, giving it a smell as if I am in a meadow filled with different scents. My grandmother's room has an old clock that's been around ever since I was born. The clock ticks echo throughout the house, reminding me that time is important.

The students left the sessions motivated and encouraged. We are grateful that Lisa was able to work with them.

Mrs Alex Saville

Gifted and Talented Liaison for the Junior School
