

The **BRAINWAVES** Club

Term 1 2021: Tolkiens – Years 5 and 6

Venue: Forest Hill College

Term Fee: \$285

(Semester enrolments available for \$570)

6 February

Meeting 1: A Mighty Girl, A Brilliant Boy

Focus: How heroes and heroines have changed over time...or have they?

"I Like Stories Where Women Save Themselves." -- Neil Gaiman

In the 20th and 21st century male and female gender roles and the way they are portrayed in literature has slowly become less stereotypical. In our first meeting we will investigate a selection of texts that showcase exceptional male and female characters in literature, starting with female protagonists such as Jo in Little Women written in 1868 (a timeless classic!), to Roberta 'Bobbie' in E Nesbitt's The Railway Children, Scout and Gem in To Kill a Mockingbird (the way that Atticus raises his girls is before his time) all the way through to Lyra in Neil Gaiman's His Dark Materials. To address balance, we will also focus on male characters from as far back as Huckleberry Finn (1885) and the trope of the mischievous boy all the way through to Auggie in Wonder (a hero with a difference).

We will examine how gender imbalance has been an issue in fiction before developing our own modern protagonists for 2021. What in your opinion are the qualities of a modern hero or heroine? Have these really changed in the examples we've explored. Does gender really matter? (Surely a good character is a good character, right?)

20 February

Meeting 2: It's Phantasmagorical!!

Focus: Shakespeare and the Supernatural - Witches, Ghosts and Fairies (or how history found its way into fiction)

Shakespeare is arguably the most famous playwright of all time. Out of all devices used to enhance his drama, the phantasmagorical is perhaps the most imaginative. Think the three witches in Macbeth, the fairies in A Midsummer Night's Dream, the ghost of Hamlet's father and the visions seen by Richard the Third the night before the final battle. All can be viewed as dramatic characters used to enhance his tales and as catalysts to accelerate the plot.

In this meeting we will explore these characters - the language they use; the physicality they embody and, briefly, the origin and historical context of these characters. Tolkiens will create their own phantasmagorical characters, write a soliloquy or spell in iambic pentameter (the rhythm of Shakespeare) and then bring the character to the stage in some way

Bring a costume if you wish (to be discussed in Meeting 1)

13 March

Meeting 3: A Necklace of Raindrops!

Focus: Short stories and how to tell them...

The short story is an evergreen mode of storytelling. Most of us have an anthology of short stories from our early childhood. Just a few timeless examples include Grimm's Fairy Tales, Tales of the Arabian Nights, Old Peter's Russian Tales by Arthur Ransome, A Necklace of Raindrops by Joan Aitkin and Australian Children's Stories by various authors. Our favourite stories are requested repeatedly at bedtime when we are young!

But what is the art of writing a great short story? What makes it different from a novel? Is it a cornucopia of dazzling characters, sensational scenery or is it the narrative voice that is the key element of a gripping yarn? After enjoying sharing some of our favourite short stories we will discuss if it is possible to condense the whole of a story into just a few words. Enter the *Flash Fiction Challenge!*

Embrace the challenge of every writer - word count! Create a short story in less than ten words, thinking of your story arc, and using what isn't said to fill in the gaps. Then, for an additional challenge, using prompts create a fifty-word story. Compare the two - which is more effective? Finally perform your flash fiction - whose story and reading is the most evocative and powerful?

Bring a favourite short story and be prepared to share what you love about it.

27 March

Meeting 4: A Sea Change - The Sea! The Sea! The Sea!

Focus: the sea as a metaphor

ARIEL

(sings)

Full fathom five thy father lies.

Of his bones are coral made.

Those are pearls that were his eyes.

Nothing of him that doth fade,

But doth suffer a sea-change

Into something rich and strange.

Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell

The sea is an important symbol in literature, art and in life. The sea has so many connotations. It can be a metaphor for the eternal struggle of life; a method of travel and escape and more recently a barometer for the health of the planet. In this meeting you will be introduced to poetry, stories and art that reflect on the role of the sea. We will explore shipwrecks and how they impacted on the psyche of the eighteenth-century artist (Turner) and poets (Byron/Matthew Arnold), the famous voyages that have been documented in travel literature and scientific exploration such as Darwin's Voyage of the Beagle. (We will even briefly explore wrecks in our own state of Victoria.) More recently the sea has become a powerful metaphor and mirror of the environmental changes that are happening in our world. *Why the Whales Came* by Michael Morpurgo, Bran Macdibble are stories known as climate fiction. They showcase the sea as an important character.

But what does the sea mean to you? This final session for the term will focus on creating a story, poem or piece of artwork to answer that question.

What to bring

Each week please bring a well-stocked pencil case (including scissors, good textas and coloured pencils, pens and/or writing pencils, sticky tape or a glue stick) and an A4 notebook.

About the club leader: Jenny Frewin

Jenny is a teacher, teacher trainer and counsellor. After ten years teaching English and English Literature internationally, many intrepid adventures later (including the Inca Trek and the Headhunters' Trail in Borneo) Jenny has settled in Melbourne with her husband. In her spare time, she enjoys writing, gardening, supporting vulnerable young people through out of home care and playing with her pets, puppy Bertie and Minnie the cat.