



Invites Year 5 and 6 gifted children with a

love of literature and writing to

'Stranger Than Fiction'

G.A.T.E.WAYS is an independent organization offering challenging and enriching activities and experiences to develop and extend highly able children. Established in 1994, G.A.T.E.WAYS runs a range of stimulating school programs as well as the Saturday *Brainwaves Club*.

Are you a writer? A reader? Inspired by questions and history and strange tales from the past? Then join us for this Journeys program where we uncover true tales from history and use these as a basis to create our own piece of historical fiction. If you have a particular passion for an historical era, person, place or event you are welcome to use this as inspiration for your fiction. Be inspired by the works of authors such as Jackie French, Kelly Gardiner and Sally Morgan and discover how they create fiction from fact. Author Kate Mildenhall will also use her own experience of writing historical fiction to guide you through the writing process, including research, creating setting, character and plot, and technical devices such as dialogue and tension, to truly make your fiction shine.

Session one – Unearthing story

What is historical fiction anyway? How much fact is involved? What are the rules? We begin by working out what defines historical fiction, and compare and discuss the fascinating works of historical fiction we have read in preparation. We will flex our writing muscles with warm up exercises, then plunge into five curious scenarios from history. In small groups we will use our thinking skills to ascertain the facts, ask questions and begin to unearth stories. We consider the scenarios provided, or think about a historical person, place or event we are passionate about. Using a lotus diagram we will dig deep for the questions we need to answer to set the scene for our story building next week.

Session two – Stepping back in time

Using the research we have gathered, we begin to create the world of our story and work out our story basics: who, what, where, when and why. We'll use a range of skills to create maps and sensory descriptions of setting and era. We consider examples of writing from great historical novelists, and identify what they do and how they do it. Considering the social context of the era, we establish who our characters are, how they might speak, dress, think and act, and we'll endeavour to get inside one of our character's heads to truly hear their voice.

Session three – Lights, camera, ACTION!

Now we have our setting, and our characters, it's time to get down to the nitty gritty of plot – action, tension and resolution. Using our chosen historical events or people, we plot the rising action of our stories. We think about conflict and pace and consider how we will incorporate the facts into our fiction. Again, drawing on examples from great writers, we look at how they hook their readers in. We map the shape of our story and begin work on a draft to complete at home this week.

Session four – Perfecting the past

All great writers are great re-writers. In our final week, we workshop and share our drafts, looking at techniques to improve our work. We play with dialogue, and bring in a costume item or prop to truly inhabit one of our characters and finesse our descriptions. We help each other fact-check for historical accuracy and authenticity, and leave the session confident with our ability to submit a polished final version for assessment within a week. Finally, we leave with ideas and inspiration for continuing the writer's journey, including tips for keeping the ideas and words flowing and getting published.

What to Bring –

- A notebook; pencil case including highlighters or textas; folder or A4 display book to store handouts
- A small, labelled photograph of yourself; a stamped, self-addressed DL envelope for your report
- A snack (no nut products please); a hat (for participants in Term 1 and 4)

Preparation and homework

In preparation for this program please choose **ONE** of the following books to read and consider for discussion in the first session:

1917: Australia's Great War by Kelly Gardiner (<https://shop.scholastic.com.au/Product/8292001/1917-AUSTRALIA'S-GREAT-WAR>)

Pharaoh by Jackie French (<http://www.harpercollins.com.au/9780207200823/#sm.0000fwe2o1xu4eszq231m48uehbrs>)

Sister Heart by Sally Morgan (<http://www.booktopia.com.au/sister-heart-sally-morgan/prod9781925163131.html>)

Students will be asked to do some research in between sessions; this could be done online at home or at a local library.

About the Presenter –

Kate Mildenhall is a writer and teacher. Her debut novel, *Skylarking* (Black Inc., 2016) is based on the true story of Kate and Harriet, best friends growing up on a remote Australian cape in the 1880s, and the tragic event that befalls them. Kate has taught in schools, at RMIT University and State Library Victoria, and has volunteered with Teachers Across Borders delivering professional development to Khmer teachers in Cambodia. Recently, Kate worked on the Young Researcher Fellowship program, developing an online research course and connecting young Gifted and Talented learners in regional Victoria with experts at the State Library of Victoria. She lives with her husband and two young daughters in Hurstbridge, Victoria, where she is currently working on her second novel.

