



For gifted Year 5 and 6 children with a
love of reading and creative writing

'THE HOUSE OF MAGIC AND DREAMS'

At Writers Victoria, Level 3, The Wheeler Centre, 176 Little Lonsdale Street, Melbourne

G.A.T.E.WAYS is an independent organisation offering challenging and enriching activities and experiences to develop and extend highly able children. This *ON LOCATION* program for both girls and boys will run over two full days.

You step out of the thick trees, and finally you can see the outlines of the mysterious house clearly. 'House' doesn't seem like an impressive enough word though; perhaps 'palace' or 'mansion' would be better. It's a huge building, stretching outwards and upwards, embellished with turrets and columns and grinning gargoyles. The gardens are riddled with overgrown hedges, wild roses and fallen-over statues.

This house has seen better days, you think.

Dark clouds have gathered overhead and you begin to worry about being caught out in a storm. You scan the countless windows of the house as you walk closer, and you can't help having the feeling that you are being watched. Fat drops of rain start to fall; there's a rumble in the distance. You run up the front steps, and push on the heavy wooden door...

Come into an abandoned house in the middle of the woods and learn to craft an adventure story that includes all of the most fantastical and magical things you can dream up. Will you find a hefty sword, a twisted wand, or a stone that speaks only the truth? Will you meet a vengeful ghost, a sprite in the fishpond, or a powerful old woman who lives in the attic? Will you encounter mist that sends you to sleep, lasers shooting out of your fingertips, or furniture that flies around the room?

Fantasy stories turn ordinary kids into heroes and heroines, helping them discover their true character, their strengths and weaknesses, and maybe even their hidden powers. Enter the House of Mystery and Dreams, if you're feeling brave...

Bring along: nibbles for morning tea and lunch (no nuts please), a water bottle, an exercise book or writing paper, pens and pencils, a thesaurus, a small packet of Post It notes, a creative mind as well as a "magical" object – this can be any curious and pleasing object you have in your house

Before you come along

You might like to find a favourite paragraph in a book where something magical or unreal happens. Bring this along to share.

Day 1: Exploring the House

On our first day we will:

- Explore each room of the house, discovering: magical objects, special powers, mythical creatures, and strange phenomenon.
- Engage our eyes, ears, mouths, noses and skin! What does a unicorn stable *really* smell like? What does a magical electrocution do to the skin on your toes? When a Pit of Despair opens up in the basement, how loud is it?
- Draw a map of the house and its surrounds, and make up a chase/action scene that uses lots of different locations.

- Get to know our characters, get to like them warts ‘n’ all, and then decide how to be really, really mean to them – in other words, decide how we can best stretch, challenge and transform them from the ordinary into the extraordinary.

Day 2: Story Alchemy

On our second day we will:

- Look at all of your ideas from the first day, and decide what the Place, Person and Problem of your fantasy story are going to be.
- Get messy with Post-It Notes and graphs. We’ll try out different plotting and planning techniques, to see which ones work for you and which ones don’t.
- Walk in your character’s shoes and look through their eyes. What kind of mood are they in today, what’s their biggest secret, and what do they really, really want most in the world? You’ll decide if you’re going to write up close and personal with your characters, or zoom far out and be the all-seeing, all-knowing storyteller.
- Work on a few key scenes of our short stories, so that you feel ready to complete your magical adventure on your own!

Over the two days you’ll get to do heaps of personal writing experiments and scribbling, work on your own to develop your idea for a fantasy story, and be inspired by art, myths/folk tales, news items, dreams and memories. You’ll also get to work together in pairs to brainstorm and encourage each other, and you’ll share with the whole group your best ideas, biggest questions and strongest opinions.

Homework

In between classes you can work on your map, character files or practise making “sensory notes”.

About the Presenter:

Leanne Hall is an award-winning writer, children’s and teen book specialist, and regular presenter and creative writing teacher at schools, universities, libraries and festivals. Leanne has written three novels for young adults and children, including the Text Prize-winning *This Is Shyness* and sequel *Queen of the Night*, and *Iris and the Tiger*, her first work for younger readers. She loves to write about magic, fantasy, myth, fairytale, art, enchanting places, strange occurrences, and even odder people.

