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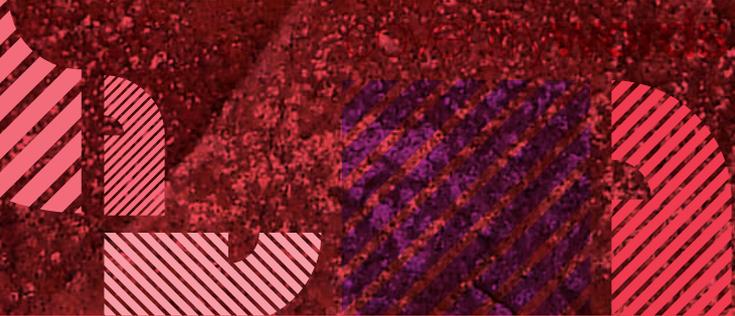
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coventry**words****Editor's letter****Dear Reader,**

Welcome to the BA English Coventry Words creative writing magazine Volume 1, Issue 1. This is the launch of our new look – we hope you like it – and a new editing team with exciting developments ahead. This is a place to showcase your writing talents and any student of Coventry University is invited to contribute.

I would like to say farewell and thanks to Alex Lauder-Bliss and Tom Dodd for being excellent editors for our previous trial issues, and Matt Hutton for proofing – a grand job Matt! Also, a big thank you to our contributing writers to date – keep it up.

Coventry Words is in two parts: a website and printed magazine. The website is full of resources for students with literary interests, and displays lots of creative writing too. The magazine showcases the very best writing we receive – these include short stories, poems, travel articles, creative writing articles and short plays. To enter the website, you can either Google: Coventry Words, or use the web address:

<https://students.coventry.ac.uk/coventrywords>

If you would like to contribute, e-mail your submissions to:

coventrywords.bes@coventry.ac.uk

If you are not part of Coventry University and would like to visit the website, please use this e-mail address to request a guest entry.

Alyson Morris, Executive Editor**Farewells from Editing Team 2009-10**

Hello to all readers. I would like to thank Alyson Morris for giving me the chance to be a part of Coventry Words. It has been a pleasure every step of the way but due to moving into our final year, both Alex and I will be taking a back seat. I will still help and advise the new editorial team and contribute to the newsletter and website. Hopefully Coventry Words will continue to grow and become a huge part of student life. Thank you!

Tom Dodd

Wow! Our first glossy volume! It's bigger and better than before and ready for the new academic year. If you're a freshman with equally fresh ideas then send submissions to Coventry Words for the next issue. For now, enjoy this one in all its glossy glory. I know I will! I'm not disappearing forever, I will still be contributing to future issues. Welcome to the new editing team.

Alex Lauder-Bliss

September 2010

Editorial Team

Christopher Barry – BA English, Year 2

Emma Raymont – BA English, Year 2

Ben Sweatman – BA English, Year 2



I'm joining the editorial team of Coventry Words for two main reasons: I want to help other students coming to study English at Coventry to realise and showcase their talent

and have a platform to do so, and on a more personal level, enhance my own experience of writing and publication.

Chris Barry



I want Coventry Words to be a place where students can find information about careers, tips on writing, how to get published and lots more. My main aim is to increase usage,

and for it to become a place where people think of to find out information regarding anything to do with English today and for the future.

Emma Raymont



I have always been a keen reader and I sometimes believe I can write too. I enjoy sharing my enthusiasm with others and especially my children. I think the Coventry Words website

and magazine are another way of sharing and I hope that whether your involvement is passive or active you will enjoy reading, and who knows maybe there is a hidden spark of inspiration waiting there.

Ben Sweatman



I teach creative writing here at Coventry University. I have a keen interest in promoting creativity, as well as writing my own poetry and short stories. At present I teach poetry,

travel writing, short stories, playwrighting and writing for children. I have a BA Ed. teaching degree, an English as a Secondary Language teaching qualification and an MA in Creative Writing.

Coventry Words was launched in 2008 due to a growing pile of exceptional writing from my students with no way of showcasing it. The editing team consists of second year students who enjoy the experience of editing, proofing, marketing and scrutinizing submissions for publication. They have done a fabulous job so far. Each year the editors make way for a new team, and I would like to welcome Emma, Chris and Ben for the forthcoming year. Coventry Words has a brand new image and we all hope you enjoy its contents.

Alyson Morris

Contributing Writers: Volume 1, Issue 1

Hannah Ward – BA English, Year 3

Sue Phillips – BA English, Year 3

Leticia Alvarez-Vazquez – Socrates
(Spanish)

Harriet Kendrick – BA English, Year 3

Rachel Mordaunt – BA English and History,
Year 3

Emilie Lauren Jones – BA English, Year 3

Sajid Khan – BA English, Year 2

Annie Leonard – BA English, Year 2

Brendan O'Shea – BA English and
Journalistic Studies, Year 2

Emma Talbot – BA English, Graduate 2010

Kirsty Hewitt – BA English and History,
Year 3

Nikita Amin – BA English and Journalistic
Studies, Year 2

Sophia Patrick – BA English and Business,
Year 3

Tommie Lewis – BA English and Law,
Year 2

Jonelle Bradley – BA English, Year 3

Tyson Lane – BA English, Graduate 2010

Amarinda Benson – BA English, Year 2



poetry

Cliché

by Sajid Khan

Keep these conventional thoughts at bay,
Write a poem without a single cliché.
Brain as bare as old Mother Hubbard's cupboard,
No sign of Calliope, my thoughts are blurred.

Up all night to write this poem,
Cinema with friends? I'm not going.
Can only generate
This measly attempt:

Saw two birds hit them with one stone,
All women ever do is moan and moan.
Saw a man made of money, he was all crinkly,
Looked inside my eye and saw beauty.
Ran out of the art gallery, an image was spitting at me,
Found an acorn it was miles away from its tree.
Sat on the fence, it was really uncomfortable.
Went to a man's house, he lived in a castle.

Look at this tat,
Flat as a mat.

I wish I could burn these chestnuts on an open fire.

But.
Then it hits me,
Like a two footed tackle,
Whistling sounds and crackles,

Finally!

The solution to my distress,
Forget trying to be clever.
Be as free as a worm in grass,
And I'll get there with endeavour.

She Says

by Brendan O'Shea

Understanding between two.
Longing for closeness, she wants
Indescribable excitement.
When not together, hollow emptiness, she feels
Natural trust.
Forgetting everything else, she does
Making laughter is a must.
Not minding cold feet, she endures
Love is in the heart and head. She says.

Me

by Sajid Khan

TVs, Mp3s
Mobile phones, chicken bones
Football boots, exotic fruits
Xbox, dirty socks
Cricket bats, don't like hats
Cluttered desk, revise for test
Funding letter, prefer cheddar
Fell off a tree, poem about me

Album Rant

by Tyson Lane

With all the mod cons in the world
It makes us think that
All that we needed was
All the lost souls in the world
To make us happy.

Allow us to be Frank but even when we're
Alone with everybody we're
Alright, still.
Even when Bush was in charge of the world!
I tried to like him and love said no
As cruel as school children
Love said no.

Let's get back to basics though, back to black
And white, let's be here now
In the moment even if we do live in
A beautiful lie, a beautiful world.
It's this lie that's the best damn thing for the majority of people.
If we didn't have this then the streets would look like a black parade
Depressed
We wouldn't want that!
We want to feel
Blood, sugar, sex, magik.

By the way I've got a bright idea, maybe we should put a bullet in a bible
That's right, rebel against religion bring in
Capital punishment
Live in castles
The way it used to be but without God
He's probably just a chocolate starfish anyway.

Or a civilian, we think this
Definitely maybe
Thing is, if everyone believed this then we would be living in the
Demon days
And that would be a
Different class.
The most vital thing you must remember
Don't believe the truth
In the sense not to take it at face value oh and
Don't look back into the sun, that's important as well.

Sleep echoes silence, patience and grace
It's like every individual's empire
It brings employment to our mind.
An end has a start
So when do our eyes open, is it
The end or the start?

Questions like these make us think like our
Favourite worst nightmare does
Something I guarantee is familiar to millions.

Genius loves company you gotta get rich or die trying
The good will outweigh always and the rest of us will find the
Hardest way to make an easy living.

These are our hopes and fears.
Sadly there is a manual on
How to get everything you wanted in ten easy steps.
I'm going to tell you a secret
In between dreams
In time

Through all the labour of love
When you receive the
Keys to the world
You realise that whether you see
Life through a lens
Life in slow motion, or
Life in cartoon motion
The master plan of life is
To never forget there's
A new day at midnight.
Everyone's no angel.

We live by their law, it's time for heroes
If there aren't any then
We'll live and die in these towns
Yours truly, angry mob.

Under a Cover

by Annie Leonard

It's not something easily explained,
Trapped in a world of guilt.
A corpse that lay drained
Beginning to wilt.

The struggle to speak
Not wanting to moan,
A body so weak
Completely alone.

Fragile hands shaking,
Panic and alarm.
A personality breaking
Didn't mean to bring harm.

Insecurity had grown,
No strength to uphold.
Falling into the unknown
The troubles unfold.

The infliction of pain,
Totally blind.
Nothing is to gain
An annihilation of mind.

Locked in a room,
Shadows suffocating,
A tormenting gloom.
An unbroken lingering.

Unrecognisable reflection.
Water flowing from eyes
In want of affection
Full of constant lies.

Trying to end life,
Decades of hell,
Like a playground strife
Want to no longer dwell.

Under a cover,
Wanting to hide.
No one to discover
What has been tried.

Unmanageable secrets
From such a young age,
To the brain like bullets
Constructing rage.

All mentality shattered
Not a trace of joy.
Anything that mattered
Broken like a toy.

Just an existence on earth
With every breath,
From the moment of birth
Until the end at death.

A desperation
For someone to see
A girl in need of salvation.
A girl that is me.

Like A Fish In Water

by Tommie Lewis

There is no need to beat around the bush; it's never too late to learn.

But we must crawl before we walk,

It's do or die, let's go for broke!

This world is masked in pseudo meaning, intent as clear as mud.

The handwriting is on the wall,

Life's a bitch; I'm taking off the gloves.

Ignorance is bliss and we are barking up the wrong tree,

Who is to blame? Don't jump the gun!

People are constantly walking on eggshells through thick and thin.

They all seem as sly as a fox,

We ask with hat in hand, just cut to the chase.

We know the chain is as strong as its weakest link, this chain is swimming upstream.

Up the creek without a paddle? Definitely.

Let's open Pandora's Box; there will be more than meets the eye.

Absolute power corrupts absolutely and actions speak louder than words.

We know their bark is bigger than the bite,

"Do as I say, not as I do." – "When in Rome, do as Romans do."

Each day is just another nail in the coffin, where you give an inch and they take a mile.

You can't fit a square peg in a round hole, so why try?

We are damned if we do, damned if we don't, but we shan't throw in the towel.

Take the bull by the horns and let's get our feet wet!

If I've said it once, I've said it one thousand times; beggars can't be choosers.

But a watched pot never boils and we shouldn't put off until tomorrow what we can do today.

Let the cat out of the bag, for once, or you can take a long walk off a short plank.

All's fair in love and war, so here's the real deal, no strings attached!

Honesty for all? I'd always doubt that,

Clichés vaguely hiding what's really meant.

Scurry behind excuses like a rat.

Even vermin's morals are not so bent!

Corruption reeks of fifty thousand lies,

Each subtle difference shows ignorance.

Elaborate stories shelter the eyes

Of the honest man who only wants sense.

But truth is relative, as we all know.

Every man shaping the fact around him,

Awkward moments hidden away to show

Absolute perfection, free from all sin.

In the eye of the beholder, truth is...

So there we are, every cloud has a silver lining.

And you can always look on the bright side of life.

Don't look at people with backs against the wall, as far as the eye can see,

Look at the glass half full and have the last laugh.

Time heals all wounds, we know, good comes to those who wait,

But it's not you, it's me.

I'll stay as quiet as a mouse, through fear of leaving the frying pan for the fire,

Because being honest is like being a fish out of water,

And we are only a stone's throw away from the next outrageous lie.

A rose by any other name would smell as sweet, whilst true,

Doesn't show that these roses are grown in fresh manure.

Maybe I do have a chip on my shoulder, but be honest with me, for once,

Don't pull any punches. Tell me the truth.

Is this poem too clichéd?

coventry**words** 2010

poetry competition winners

by Kirsty Hewitt

Poetry, according to Stephen Fry, is a fusion of 'songwriting... diary-keeping... problem-solving' and 'storytelling'. It essentially allows the poet to search for the soul, using carefully selected language as his tools, and portraying everyday objects and scenarios in curious and distinctive ways.

2010, the year which has so far brought with it worldwide natural disasters, a new British Prime Minister and an official end to the recession, was the theme for this year's poetry competition. Both Emilie Lauren Jones and Emma Raymont, first and second prize winners respectively, have cited recent events and personal hopes for the future as inspiration for their poems.

Emilie, a second-year student and self-confessed prolific writer, alludes her inspiration to the devastating Haiti earthquake which occurred in January. She says that she 'wanted to show how something so massive can happen to one part of the world', whilst also illustrating the way in which we, as a global nation, 'always have hope and love'. *Extremes of Twenty Ten* is a perfect, polished piece of first-person prose, which compares and contrasts the trivialities of daily life in Britain with widespread global horrors.

The theme of 2010 for Emilie was an enjoyable one, helping to keep her concentration within her writing. Although three very different poetic attempts were made, the winner of The Guardian's short story competition in 2006 states that 'coming up with something I thought other people might like was the hardest part!'

First published at the age of 9, Emilie says that her favourite poet is 'probably Robert Frost', but nonsense poems such as *The Owl and The Pussycat* and *The Walrus and The Carpenter* are also firm loves.

Emma Raymont's poem, *2010* is bold and beautifully crafted. A self-confessed lover of 'sculpting words', she mixes the striking and unusual within her prose to form writing verging on the utterly unique.

Emma describes *2010*, which won her second place in the competition, as 'a dialogue within the self'. Rich with powerful imagery which stirs the soul, this vivid amalgamation of past, present and future is certainly a deserving runner-up. Although she discloses that 'rigidly' sticking to the theme was hard within her writing, Emma liked the way in which such a topic was 'very open to interpretation', using the decade's 'new start' as her inspiration.

She states that she is 'not a fan of premeditated poetry', preferring instead to adopt a natural flow within her work. She cites her favourite poets as 'bold and strong' Sylvia Plath, Carol Ann Duffy with her 'brutal confessional style' and Philip Larkin 'for his grumblings'. Emma has recently joined the Coventry Words editing team.

Voted for by lecturers from the University's English department, both *Extremes of Twenty Ten* by Emilie Lauren Jones and *2010* by Emma Raymont show immense skill in crafting confident and thought-provoking prose.

Runner Up:**2010**

by Emma Raymont

Spectacle, embraces and heart as you count
down to the zero.

Sprinting away from the pre-endured,
Your chest is the clock for its pendulum.
Tired clichés arrive in the mind's station,
This is your new start don't you know?

Spools of promises unreel before you.
Guaranteed opportunities assured.

Oceans of yearning pool; sought after
conquests converging
As they flaccidly swim before.
Crimson follies can be forgotten,
If you sip away your sins;
But ultimately do you long to redeem?

Forgiveness sleeps soundly within the self.
Curled, entwined and heavy.

Ghosts of the past grace your being
With the notion's departing breath;
A welt to the rods of your heart.
To repent is to settle battles with reasoning,
You cannot play advocate for eternity.

As the chimes resound, a flickering candle in
the desert,
Decades of reform swell before.

Woes of the past will become preoccupied
with the unborn,
It is now time to bask in chanced faith.
With the lock lingering for the right key;
You must honour the history and remember
it well,
As a horizon of life waits baited.

First Prize:**Extremes of Twenty Ten**

by Emilie Lauren Jones

When their world collapsed
I was considering what to bet
on the one o'clock.
Then I went and had a shower,
while mothers searched for sons
and children searched for water
I was worrying what to wear tomorrow,
When the news came on
And I switched it off.

Something about a foreign country,
With a foreign lifestyle.
So I went to the pub
And we had to have our fags
outside. I think I noticed the sky.
Perhaps it was a starry night
which separated
two sides of human kind.

The fortunate and the desolate.
A head and a tail.
Sat on opposite sides of the world.
But sharing the same sky.
The burn and freeze of twenty ten:
The love of saving a singing child
and the reality of a broken state.

writing flash fiction

by Alyson Morris

As **flash fiction** is a growing trend and a new addition to the Bridport prize, this year I trialled it with my level 2 students as a way to introduce short story writing. Instead of being greeted with groans of “I can’t write under these conditions”, I was surprised to find the tasks were welcomed, with enthusiasm.

For those unfamiliar with the term flash fiction, it is a short story of less than 1000 words. It is normally written in a short time frame, then crafted and refined for public viewing. These short-shorts (old term) still contain the key elements of a story: characters, setting, conflict and some kind of resolution. Flash fiction encourages readers to use their imaginations, and new writers to infer (they have no time or space to write everything down) – hence the name flash. The mere ‘flash’ of fiction supports the writing skill of showing rather than telling.

Some students find it difficult to be creative during a lesson, preferring to write at home, in a café or in a park. Yet they have taken up my flash fiction tasks with gusto. They were asked to write a story in ten minutes, and many came up with tales of subconscious creative dexterity. Pleased with this outcome, I was further astonished by their keenness to read them aloud. As an educator who constantly worries about student motivation, I knew I was onto something big – albeit small.

Using flash fiction to teach story writing had a powerful impact. Students were surprised by their own invention, and very quickly (miraculously) began to work out the conventions of short story writing, and generally get a feel for writing fiction.

So flash fiction, how do you do it? It’s all about character and situation. Have a prompt such as a painting, give the main character a name and write a story about them for ten minutes. It is not advised to sit and think much about it, just write. I would say that flash fiction is more of an encounter, a moment in time, whereby a conflict is confronted and dealt with in some way. If the encounter and characters are extraordinary, then even better.

In the *Field Guide to Writing Flash Fiction*, Randall Brown says about flash, “First there’s that encounter, something original and remarkable. To give that encounter the sense of mattering, characters often encounter the very thing that will lead them to profundity, vision, and newness.” (2009)

Here are some flash fictions by creative writing students – all of which have some key short story elements and a readable structure. Enjoy. And don’t forget to try it out yourselves, submit to Coventry Words, and enter the Bridport prize (www.bridportprize.org.uk) – just 250 words!

flash fictions:

Chocolate and Flowers

by Hannah Ward

Chocolate and flowers. The way back to any woman’s heart, well before I met Julia anyway. We loved each other too much. So much so that we had started to hate each other, the green light of our jealousy tainting our love.

The violence wasn’t planned and was nothing I could have prevented. She would interrogate me, wearing me down until I could stand it no more. I would feel belittled, a fool for loving her. Everyday was spent trapped between those four weary walls of depression. I would see her coming at me, angry flecks of spit spraying from her mouth, this time because I used the last of the milk. Until.....kerching! I found a way to relieve my tension.

Outside

by Harriet Kendrick

We live in such a parallel world. Jumping between the hazy lines of fiction and fantasy, reality and cyberspace, love and hate, she wrote on her computer. The dark room was her sanctuary – her parallel world. Here, there needn’t be a reality.

She often felt apart from the world which existed beyond those four walls, but every so often the blazing sunshine would creep through the gap in the curtains – almost knowing she was upset. The light would sting her teary eyes, beckoning her from her chair until she approached the window. Goosebumps would rush up her arms as she knew of the reality that one day she would have to step outside – and into the unknown.

Seven Years Bad Luck

by Rachel Mordaunt

Jenny walked quickly down the street. She passed the well kept houses and tidy gardens, and the garages where she could see a man washing his already shiny car. She kept on walking, clutching her purse to her chest. The sound of her high heels seemed deafening.

There was faint laughter. A mother walking down the road caught sight of the young woman and pulled her children away. Jenny tried to offer her a reassuring smile but somehow couldn't.

It was still early and he had been so angry. They both had. And now she walked down the road in her cocktail dress, last night's make-up smudged from dancing through the night and from her tears, and the blood that ran down one hand from the mirror she had smashed. Seven years bad luck but Jenny didn't care, after last night her long walk home couldn't get any worse.

Reflection

by Emilie Lauren Jones

I opened the door and walked into the room, unfortunately I caught a flash of my reflection in the mirror. How could I have thought it was a good idea? I ruffled the short strands that sat awkwardly on my head, in the hope that it might miraculously grow long and glamorous.

'Excuse me Mister.'

I felt a hand move me aside as someone tried to get past. I turned my head to see Anna. She blushed and looked around.

'Sorry Sarah, I uh, didn't recognise you. You've had your hair cut.'

Edge

by Sue Phillips

Arabella sat on the side of the boat, her feet hanging over the edge. Cold water sheared her toes as the small craft cut through the water. She'd lost her shoes days ago on the mountain pass but it didn't matter, she was nearly free. Just another mile.

Drawing herself back inside she wrapped a fluffy towel around her legs, the one luxury item she'd brought with her, though she knew it made no sense and as she dried between her toes she felt a judder. The keel had touched bottom on the enchanted shore.

"Welcome," said the waiting guardian, "your ivory tower awaits."

Joyride

by Leticia Alvarez-Vazquez

Mum takes her son in her arms as he tries, once again, to hit his sister.

'No!' Mum says, 'don't do that!'

The boy begins to cry, starting a duet with his sister and attracting the attention of their older brother who comes down the stairs saying, 'Mum, make them stop. I can't do my homework with all this noise.'

'Go upstairs, Mikey. Don't worry, I'll make them stop,' she says. 'I'll take them to the fair, maybe they'll forget things.'

Mum takes her son and daughter to the fairground. While on one of the rides she thinks about how much her life has changed in the last two months. The accident, the injuries, death...all come crushingly to mind. She has tried to stay strong, but it is no use, nothing will be okay again. His death has shaken them all, and she doesn't know what to think about the stupid drunk driver who cut a life in a mere second. All she can do is try and help her little family be happy again. So she started with a joyride.



pack a punch

by Alexander Lauder-Bliss



Mez Packer is a Coventry University lecturer and award-winning author. How did she do it? I managed to track down the author of *Among Thieves* and asked her a few questions.

What is your main source of inspiration for your writing?

"Everything is a potential source of inspiration – nature, overheard conversations, anecdotes, TV, childhood – so it's hard to pinpoint any one thing. The idea for the novel I'm currently working on came out of an interest in virtual media and the relationship people have with 'reality' in a 'digital world'. But I also draw on politics (race, immigration, concepts of identity, adoption/fostering of black children by white parents) and I draw on current events and personal experience to breathe life into the idea and elevate it from concept to authentic narrative (hopefully). I would also say that learning how to be a critical reader is an inspiration in itself. It teaches the writer the 'craft' – and allows him/her to see how other, better writers drive their narratives forward, what devices they use, and how they introduce dialogue, description, or play with the timeline. In terms of inspiration I'd say – be open to everything."

How did you get writing in the first place?

"I wrote a lot as a child, kept a journal as a teenager (that's when I learnt the lesson about NOT writing everything down) and then stopped writing as a young adult. I had children when I was young and was a musician for years and I thought music was my 'calling'. It was after I became a journalist and had to write eight articles a day that I knew I could apply myself to writing – and application (discipline) is an important part of the game. You could say that journalism gave me the confidence to attempt an extended narrative. So I resigned from the BBC aged 39 and wrote my first novel before I was 40. I haven't looked back."

Do you find that writing helps you learn a lot about yourself?

"Most writers, I suspect, have curious natures and try to analyse people, situations, concepts and relationships. This is helpful when writing fiction but it doesn't necessarily teach us anything about ourselves. My journal helps me order my thoughts, and provides me with a private platform to express my anger/joy/frustration. But I know who I am. I know my vanities, proclivities, secret desires. It's not writing itself that teaches me these things.

Actually, here's a confession, sometimes I tell lies in my journal (even though no one reads it but me). But some of my thoughts are too 'edgy' to write down (if you read my journal you might be scared to imagine what it is exactly that I'm holding back). I'm not embarrassed but mindful – the written word is never entirely private. So if writing has taught me anything about myself it's that the best place for some of my thoughts is 'in my head'."

Does anything help you concentrate on writing?

"Turn off the music. Disconnect from the Internet. Unplug the phone. Switch off the mobile. Embrace silence. Learn to love solitude. Drink coffee. But the thing that makes me concentrate on writing most of all is to WRITE."

What are you most fearful of when it comes to writing?

"What's to fear? Writing is the most fun a person can have with their clothes off or on, ever! And I mean that. Writing is play. Writing is make-believe. Now showing your writing to other people is another thing altogether. That can be a little scary. But get over it. No one will die if it's rubbish. Just get your bum on that chair and try again."

How many pens do you carry around with you?

"Sometimes none! Mostly one. Sometimes more than five – it depends on the day."

Do you base your characters around yourself and anyone you know?

"I don't 'base' my characters on anyone but I do borrow mannerisms and traits and the occasional episode from friends' lives or from my own life. The best part about writing, for me, is making it up. It feels like a licence to be a child again, but there's no doubt it's helpful to use real people, the way an artist uses models, to get the picture as lifelike and authentic as possible. Get too personal though, and you risk losing your character – and possibly the plot. I do however plan to write a book about the life of a particular person – an old friend of mine who died several years ago – so I'll obviously approach that novel from another angle when the time comes."

And finally,

What was your biggest hindrance while you were writing *Among Thieves*?

"Time! Time is always the biggest hindrance. Fitting a creative life around children and work and a husband and cooking and shopping. I hate it. I want to live in a cabin in the wilderness (with food and fire and electricity of course – I'm not an ascetic). My fantasy life: to not wear a watch and be able to write whenever I want to."

Among Thieves is the award-winning debut novel by Mez Packer. It follows the experiences of a Coventry lad when he gets mixed up in drug dealing and money laundering with a couple of university dropouts. The action moves from Coventry to Spain to India and back. The book goes from strength to strength showing that Mez Packer can really pack a punch.

Check out her blog @ <http://www.mezpacker.co.uk> or just keep your eyes out around the University. I'm sure you'll bump into her.



turkish *delight* anyone?

by Nikita Amin

After hailing a taxi from Dalaman Airport, I finally reached Sun City Palace Hotel in Olu Deniz, Turkey. The level of extravagance of this cosy little resort surprised me as I arrived to clouds of faintly coloured smoke that wafted seductively through numerous palm trees. Olu Deniz is about 9 miles south of Fethiye, situated on the Aegean Coast in the south west of Turkey. It overlooks the Mediterranean Sea.

After a few words with my driver, I learnt that the name Olu Deniz came from an urban legend meaning 'Sea of the Dead'.

The humidity of the air was suffocating, as I rubbed the clammy perspiration off my neck, a rather skinny bell boy approached me accompanied by a gold trolley; "Me carry your bag?" he asked in broken English, awkwardly smiling. He mentally noted I only carried one small bag, light enough not to need his assistance. His brows rose as he calculated his lack of services would equal no tip. He gestured to show me the reception.

Trudging along after him on cobbled pathways, I awed in the presence of such unfamiliar surroundings. Miniature bridges hovered over ponds filled with frogs and crickets that cared not to remain quiet in this village full of sleeping tourists. Twisted vines dominated the gardens as they caressed the air with husky whispsers. I felt welcome and humble to be here.

Wide-eyed and energized, I jumped out of bed the following morning eager to be wisely spending my days here. A shower and breakfast later and I left Sun City, with excitement fluttering like butterflies in my stomach.

Jet skiing was my first adventure, an experience both exhilarating yet terrifying. As I hurried to Belcekiz Beach, it was no trouble locating an instructor. Moments later I was sitting on a jet-ski strapped with a life jacket, anxious and afraid. I could feel my nerves jittering inside me with anticipation. The fast paced motion of the jet-ski rumbled and roared beneath me as it attacked the vast open waters with vengeance. Looking ahead was frightening as deep blue water ran endlessly to that faint line in the distance where it seemed the earth had come to a close. Danger invited me with pleasure and the pulsating throb of my heart excited the desire to keep driving. Water trembled underneath this beastly machine, as I continued to attack the army of waves in this liquid battlefield. It was definitely one risk worth taking.

Next was paragliding, which is not for the faint hearted, nor the timid or shy. Baba Dag Mountain was just above Belcekiz Beach, where after a few steps I would be descended into the air and left in life's hands. Feelings of anxiety and excitement numbed the pit of my stomach in conflict as we drove to the summit. I took a deep breath and before my heart could decide if this was a good idea, I was gone. I felt like a paper-aeroplane, light and insignificant as the wind carried me to its destination. Fear was present in my eyes, but my smile could not be erased. The view of the Blue Lagoon was breathtakingly striking and overwhelming when the realisation hit that clouds were within reach. My legs numbed, and my heart pounded as my mind could not rearrange the images it was seeing into reality.

Paragliding: £75

Duration: 25 minutes including 50 minutes jeep journey

Weight limit: 110kg/17st

"I felt like a paper aeroplane – light and insignificant."

The Turkish bath was my one guilty pleasure, the last of the activities I enjoyed over my stay – a centuries old tradition; worldly renowned for skin exfoliation and circulation enhancement through various calming techniques. The room was covered floor to ceiling in marble, made of rich emerald coloured rock. My lungs felt cleansed of toxins like a new born inhaling fresh breath. Tiny waterfalls erupted, interrupting the thick fog, splashing in all directions. I lay on the marble slab, where sweaty condensation stuck to the small of my back. A large cotton sheet was soaked generously and transformed into a foamy towel full of bubbles and froth. My mind cleared, and my body fell into a state of relaxation and tranquillity, while water flowed over me like a nameless pebble in a streaming brook. Bubbles burst softly on my skin and with every delicate scrub of the spongy towel; my shoulders eased the tension of another life.

Olu Deniz is enjoyable for people of all ages as there is something for everyone. I watched the busy streets buzz past me in a blur as I made my way back to Dalaman Airport. Olu Deniz had a simple beauty, which captivated me the most and I was rather upset to leave. I hope to return for a longer stay, and I recommend this to anyone. You will not regret your visit.



"Dominating vines circled the garden. I felt humble to be here."

homeless bullet

by Emma Talbot

Characters:

MAN 1: Middle aged with a scruffy appearance and a tired looking face. His clothes are old and are too big for him, giving him an appearance of being starved somewhat. He has a middle class American accent.

MAN 2: Middle aged, dressed head to toe in black clothes, this gives him the sense of being anonymous. He wears leather gloves and has the Alliance badge sewn onto his left lapel. He stands up straight with military precision. He has an upper class American accent; it is almost mixed with an RP British accent.

Setting:

Indoors, the room is monotone; the floor is made of a natural material while the backdrop is a black sheet. The wings also have back sheets which indicate walls, giving a sense that both the characters are trapped in this room. Music is playing in the background; the music has a deep tone to it and creates a sense of suspense. The instruments used may be a brass quartet.

Props:

A Revolver hand gun. Spot light up on centre stage. MAN 1 is on his knees centre stage with his hands on his head. Centre stage lights up. MAN 2 is standing to the right side of MAN 1, with a revolver gun to MAN 1's head.

MAN 1: (screams) I've already told you man! (whimpers) Please don't kill me.

MAN 2: (monotone) Quit playing games with me. (pause) I guess if it's a game you want, it's a game you'll get, you know the rules of Russian Roulette right? (loads gun) Let's play. (Spins chamber of gun, locks it in place and again points it at MAN 1's head.)

MAN 1: (whispers to himself) Jesus Christ our Lord and saviour, help me now in my time of...

MAN 2: (shouts) That's enough! Cut it, it won't work with me. (monotone) Now I'm gonna ask you a series of questions; I expect the truth in a straight forward answer. Question one, how many of the NASDAP Inserts exist?

MAN 1: That's confidential information contracted to me only.

MAN 2: You forget why I am here. (shouts) How many of the NASDAP Inserts exist?

MAN 1: Ah! (pauses) There are two prototypes, one malfunctioned a year ago and is yet to be destroyed, it's currently in stasis in my personal lab.

MAN 2: And the other?

MAN 1: The other is on my person at all times.

MAN 2: (Pulls the trigger of the gun, no bullet is fired.) Well done, Jesus must be doing you some favours today. (laughs) Question two, when creating the NASDAP Insert what were your intentions?

MAN 1: You know full well the brief for the technology.

MAN 2: You didn't adhere to the briefing, you knew the intention of the Ganda Alliance, the problem is we were oblivious to your ulterior motives. The situation now is that you have a loaded gun to your head and an information-hungry member of the Alliance on the trigger end of it.

MAN 1: Jesus, ulterior motives.

MAN 2: (Shouts, as he speaks he pulls the trigger, no bullet is fired.) Answer the question!

MAN 1: (His body shakes, he screams and whimpers whilst answering.) The Insert would last a minimum of ten years. (His speech becomes unclear.)

MAN 2: (Pulls the trigger of the gun, no bullet is fired.) And why would it last only ten years?

MAN 1: (screams) I had a plan. I had a plan to make the Inserts burn out after ten years, the people would awake and start a new revolution against the Alliance. Hell, please don't kill me.

MAN 2: (Messses around with the gun in his hands.)

MAN 1: (Attempts to turn around to look at MAN 2.)

MAN 2: Keep talking. (Nudges his side with the gun).

MAN 1: Those ten years would bide me time to plan the next revolution, start a campaign for when the people came around when the Insert finally burned out.

MAN 2: Well we're becoming quite the chatter box now aren't we? (Finishes messing around with the gun and points it at MAN 1's head again.) You were clever. So much knowledge on new technology, our own super scientist gone corrupt. But I have a feeling you're not telling me everything. I tend to get upset when people keep things from me.

MAN 1: (angrily) How the hell do you know I haven't told you everything?

MAN 2: Don't forget now, not only am I a highly trained interrogator for the Alliance, I'm also a very good assassin. (smiles)

MAN 1: (under his breath) Damn. (exhales loudly) OK, not only would the Inserts fail after ten years but they would also be able to transmit radio waves between each other, this way I could lead the revolution under the radar of the Alliance. They wouldn't have seen it coming, they would have never had the chance.

MAN 2: You should have known we'd find you. As for a revolution led by civilians (pause) you must be out of your mind. Now, hand over the Insert.

MAN 1: I... I don't have one here, it's in the lab.

MAN 2: You told me the corrupt one was in your lab, the working one you have on you. If you're going to lie to me I think a game of sudden death could come to hand. (Tosses the gun from hand to hand.)

MAN 1: (shouts) OK, OK man, here. (Pulls the Insert out of his pocket and hands it back to MAN 2.)

MAN 2: Well done. (Puts the Insert into his jacket pocket.) Now tell me, I'm curious, what would you give to be a free man? Your wife? Child?

MAN 1: (screams) Don't you dare touch my family!

MAN 2: Maybe your memory? Your freedom? I can give you whatever you want...within reason of course (Lets out a small laugh.)

MAN 1: I won't be happy until the Government take back control.

MAN 2: That's a lot to ask for from one small person.

MAN 1: That's what we need! How did you ever think you could overthrow the Government for good?

MAN 2: (Hits MAN 1 over the head with the gun.)

MAN 1: (Falls to the ground, then slowly gets back up to his knees again.)

MAN 2: Now, you're getting out of line. I ask you, do you want a bullet? We can always find a home for it.

MAN 1: Christ no!

MAN 2: Well you better keep talking then hadn't you?

MAN 1: Hell man, what you wanna know?

MAN 2: What the hell were you thinking when you did that to Senior Korlock?

MAN 1: I've already been punished for that.

MAN 2: Answer the damn question.

MAN 1: The case was closed

MAN 2: (Shoves the barrel of the gun into MAN 1's side.) Hmmm?

MAN 1: OK, OK! I couldn't stand the pressure. I needed a team. Senior Korlock refused each time I asked. I grew sick and tired of it all. It wasn't the life of a scientist that I dreamed of. When I was asked to treat him I found my chance.

MAN 2: (Messes around with the barrel of the gun.) You know, you effectively committed high treason, attempting to assassinate the Senior.

MAN 1: I know that. It just bought me time to flee under the radar of the Alliance. The focus was no longer on me.

MAN 2: For a smart guy that was a pretty poor plan. (Waves gun around.)

MAN 1: (Quickly turns around and knocks the gun out of MAN 2's hand. They both grapple for the gun.)

MAN 2: (Struggles for the gun.)

(Shouts can be heard from both men.)

(MAN 1 wins the grapple for the gun.)

MAN 1: (Stands up shakily and points the gun towards MAN 2.) Punished! Punished! For working all my damn life, for having a career and raising a family. I was punished for that by the Ganda Alliance. I was robbed! (Begins to scream his words and cry.) My life was robbed by the Alliance, by Senior Korlock. All they wanted was my intelligence and to exploit it for their own plans. I was beaten... tortured.

MAN 2: Calm down. (His body language becomes scared and wary.)

MAN 1: I'm tired of being calm, of being calculated, of being a robot to carry out the Alliance's plans. I'm human, I have emotions. I have a family for God's sake. My daughter, I haven't seen her in ten God damn years because you were hell bent on gaining control. (Moves closer to MAN 2, still pointing the gun towards him. He is still shaking and crying.) (All stage lights up.) You know the radio transmissions from the NASDAP Inserts also served for the civilians to communicate, to network without the Alliance knowing. Privacy would be restored. People would be people again, with emotions and connections.

MAN 2: I, I, I'm sorry.

MAN 1: (His voice lowers to a near whisper.) Sorry (pause) You don't know the meaning of sorry! One word won't take away from the torture you have put the civilians through.

MAN 2: I don't know what to say.

MAN 1: (He puts both hands on the gun and walks closer to MAN 2.)

MAN 2: Be careful now, don't do anything rash. You don't want your daughter to know her father is a killer, a murderer. (smiles nervously)

MAN 1: The murder of one man in a corrupt organisation of many is a small crime compared to the crimes the Alliance has committed against the Government's ruling. I'd be doing her a favour.

MAN 2: Attempting to reinstate the Government now would be a bad idea, they're too weak, disorganised. It's better to go on with the Alliance.

MAN 1: (shaking uncontrollably) No! (pause) I think you at least owe me the information I want to know. (with an air of confidence) I believe this game of Russian Roulette you started hasn't finished, considering there's a bullet somewhere in this chamber (holds up the gun) and both of us are still walking.

MAN 2: (Backs away from MAN 1.)

MAN 1: (shouts) On your knees. I have a few questions to ask you before we go our separate ways. (pause) Ready? Now why would the Government really want the NASDAP Inserts to be created?

MAN 2: You already know, the brief told you.

MAN 1: I don't think I was given the whole truth. I tend to get upset when people keep things from me. (laughs)

MAN 2: You really don't need to know. It's all over now, the NASDAP project is closed.

MAN 1: (Hits MAN 2 over the head with the gun.)

MAN 2: (falls to his knees) OK, OK, alright! They were a way of being able to access information about the civilians as well as the Suggestive Technique Strategies.

MAN 1: And?

MAN 2: The information access would allow us to see who was cheating the Alliance, tax evasion, fraud, identity theft. It was what the Government were going to do to the civilians anyway. The thing was the intentions were good, punish those for committing crimes. Those committing fraud would be reprimanded and those who were honest would not lose their tax paying money to the scum that committed the fraud. It was a good system.

MAN 1: Good. (Pulls the trigger, no bullet is fired.) So if the intentions were for the good of the people how come we're living under this mind controlling Alliance now?

MAN 2: That's the thing. Senior Korlock grew power hungry, sent out propaganda to the civilians. He wanted the world at his feet. It was no longer about keeping crime down and making people follow the laws. He began to use it to his own advantage, he made his own money off the taxes that were coming in. He just got greedy.

MAN 1: Interesting. (Pulls trigger, no bullet is fired.) In that case then if he is so corrupt to work for, how come you and the others working for the Alliance stayed true to him and the organisation?

MAN 2: Damn! I shouldn't be telling you this. I'll be heard. The others will come after me. You better leave, now.

MAN 1: I'm not leaving until I get my answers (Pushes gun into MAN 2's side.)

MAN 2: OK, but you better be prepared to run when they find us. Korlock gave us protection, nothing could happen to us, we were invincible and that was precious when civilians were getting picked off for the smallest of things. We didn't want for anything either, it was all provided, we were treated like kings as long as we stayed true to the Alliance and Korlock. So we did our jobs.

MAN 1: It's funny that you all only thought about yourselves when there were other people out there suffering at the hands of Korlock.

MAN 2: We did what we had to do to survive.

MAN 1: There's only one more question I have to ask you.

MAN 2: (Looks at MAN 1 nervously.)

MAN 1: You're familiar with firearms, how many chambers are in a Revolver hand gun?

MAN 2: That's easy, there are six.

MAN 1: Right and I believe this gun has had its trigger pulled five times. So that leaves me with the bullet and where its home will be. (pauses) Now, I can choose to start my revolution against the Alliance, or I can keep this bullet in case I get a second chance of treating Senior Korlock. It's your call, man.

who *are* you?

by Emilie Lauren Jones

I find creating credible characters one of the hardest elements of creative writing, and I know I'm not alone.

One of my first dilemmas is naming the characters; in the book 'How to Write for Television' William Smethurst discusses how people associate certain names with certain characteristics, for example, Wayne is working-class, John is trustworthy and Agnes is old. Basically, characters' names need to reflect their personality. Some useful ways of finding possible names are using online 'random-name-generators' or scrolling through lists of baby names. Many of these sites show the name meaning and list characteristics which people associate with them.

The next step is to get to know your character. Like every real person, fictional characters must have likes and dislikes, wants, desires, memories, secrets, annoying habits and their own voice. I like this part because I'm inquisitive and it involves asking lots of questions. How old are they? Who is their family? Where do they live? It is your job as a writer to ask, 'Who are you?'

The answers can be discovered in many ways, including creating a character profile, interviewing them, talking to them, creating spider diagrams, and possibly drawing or visualising them. It is best that your main character is likeable, even if they are a villain; the audience need to care about what happens to them.

Alicia Cox outlines the importance of dialogue; the character should have a unique 'voice.' Cox states how hearing a character speak enables the audience to visualise them, therefore making them feel real. You should be able to tell which character is speaking by what is said and how they say it.

Finally, you are ready to link your characters and your plot – but remember, never make your characters behave unrealistically to suit your plot; the plot comes about because of the characters' decisions throughout the story, not because you force them into acting in certain ways. Present your characters with a conflict and place them in situations, see how they react and your story will unfold.

"Theirs not to reason why,
theirs but to do and die,
Into the valley of death
rode the six hundred"

– Alfred Lord Tennyson (1854)

I am very much aware that we're dying. Every last one of us is destined to gasp his last rattling breath on French soil, the leaden sky embracing his weary body. We will sink almost immediately into the dank and suffocating mud, joining those comrades who have fallen before us, and awaiting those whose heavy hearts still beat.

These muddy walls and the unshakeable cold have been my home for weeks now. I feel as though I'm a world away from Lancashire, and the cosy cottage of my childhood. The tiny, picturesque village of Tillisham, and the shimmering iridescence of the River Wenning which runs along the edge of our garden. Freshly laundered clothes fluttering in the soft summer breeze, and heavenly smells of baking wafting through the leaded windows. Clusters of dusky wildflowers stretching up towards the delicious embrace of sun. The quiet, majestic hum of hundreds of bees, drunk from the dreamy midsummer air, in Farmer Haislip's meadow across the way. The excited yelps and laughter of my younger siblings drifting across the sky, their naïve elation almost touching the clouds. The beauty of Casserly Wood, where we used to go when I was a lad.

It was a long walk – the next village over and then some, but Mother and Father would make the journey an adventure. We'd have to look out for tiny creatures in the hedgerows beside the mossy paths, and take it in turns to transport the homemade dandelion wine. Mother gracefully carried the heaving picnic basket in the crook of her arm, and Father, who was walking with a stick by that time, managed to lug the tartan blanket we used for such occasions. Byron, our snowy white and copper-coloured Welsh Springer spaniel, would bound along behind us, taking great delight in trying to sniff every inch of the little woodland trail with his glossy black nose. Casserly Wood was so bright, so alive, and everything gleamed so spectacularly in the beaming light.

Here, however, every living thing perishes under the bombs and gunfire of the Germans – bullets hiss past, filling your eardrums with a barrage of hideous sounds when you least expect them. The only objects which shine in the lazy French sunshine are the barrels of our guns. The sky is the colour of mercury, as though all the innocent blood spilt in this godforsaken battle is being transported to heaven via the clouds. The air, sickly sweet, contains the metallic taste of blood, and something immeasurably more sinister. How I long for fresh country air, reminders of a time when I was innocent, thinking nothing of the horrors of war, and was, most of all, alive.

broken lungs

Short Story by Kirsty Hewitt

War in our sleepy village was seen as a great adventure. The old-fashioned men – pasty, pale and permanently stuck in Victorian times – told us young'uns how chivalrous it was to serve King and country and how they would so love to fight. These men were generally decades older than my Father and could barely lift one leg in front of the other, but they still told anyone who would listen that defending England was the greatest honour a man could ever be faced with. We would be heroes. And which young lad hadn't before imagined that? Long, dreamy childhood days spent thinking of St. George, King Arthur, and such extraordinary yet unimaginable courage.

My ever-present fears faded almost into the background once Mother's pride was pressed upon me. Her admiration of me felt like a warm embrace, promising to keep me safe on my 'adventure' abroad. The night before I left, along with four other lads from my village, Mother pressed a cream-coloured envelope into my shaking palms, instructing me not to open it until I was safely at my destination. My journey's end. My resting place.

'I am so proud of you, Wilfred Tennyson Young,' she whispered into the whorls of my ear. Her small frame trembled in my arms as she tried so desperately to hold back tears until I had gone. 'Your Father would be too.'

These words almost brought tears to my own eyes. I was paralyzed with fear. I was leaving everything which I had come to call home and family over the seventeen shrouded years of my life. I drank in every detail for as long as I could – the sunlight dancing through the thin net curtains, the faraway footsteps and spirited chatter of my little sisters Nell and Tilly in their bedroom up the hall, and the sweet, almost overpowering smell of my Mother's violet perfume.

No one ever called to attention that I was too much of a child to become a fully-fledged soldier; my family name being Young, and I too young to be here. No one ever stopped to wonder why I didn't need to shave as much as the other lads, or why my facial hair came through in fine, downy clumps. I had no moustache, and I was still growing at an alarming rate. Trousers which fitted me almost perfectly with the help of a rather decrepit belt of my Father's two months ago were now embarrassingly short, and I was mocked increasingly for this fact. Wilf the giant, the lads called me. I always thought that Wilf the younger would be more appropriate. But now, after spending twelve bloodcurdling days in these horrific trenches, I have aged a lifetime.

He took a bullet to his head. Tobias Harris, the lanky, red-haired farmer's boy, whom I had grown up with. A kind-hearted lad, barely older than myself. My oldest friend. Thankfully, Toby was taken from us quickly and didn't know much in the way of suffering, but his choked screams still echo in my ears at the moment in which darkness descends.

Such tragedies are commonplace here. We don't go more than three hours without being informed that such-and-such has been badly wounded, or that whatshisname from the next village is now with the Lord. But the good Lord has deserted me. There is no room for a God in a place such as this. All the colour has fallen from my heart. In such death and destruction, one can never regain his innocence.

I awake from the heaviest sleep of my life. It felt as though my body had perished before jolting back to full consciousness. As soon as the leaden weight of weary limbs confronted me, I found myself thinking of Toby. Had he felt like a toy whose clockwork mechanism had broken down completely? Had he felt like the last day of autumn before the cruel winter air sucked every last molecule of life from him? Had he realised he was dying?

'Here, Wilf!' I hear a cry from my left, issued from rasping, raw lungs. My daydreams were forgotten as quickly as they had clasped my exhausted body to them. 'Wilf?' came the voice again.

In that instant, I recalled the coarse, cracked words that had been so difficultly delivered on my Father's deathbed. We had all, with the exception of Nell and Tilly who were deemed too young, kept vigil over him. The Young family, almost in its entirety, saw Father grow old. He aged over the period of five days as the influenza took hold of him, ravaging his organs and causing him to grow progressively weaker. On the last day, he could barely lift his own head. My Father had always been a pillar of strength, and to see him deteriorate in such a way was truly heartbreaking.

Knowing not what else to do, we read to him, all of us – even little Frank, who stumbled over every other word. We would pull ancient novels from the teetering stacks which covered almost every inch of our little cottage, and Father would be reunited with the namesakes of his children once again. They were all there, these mostly-dead authors, guarding his diminishing frame as carefully as Mother and I. Tennyson with his handsome poetry, the novels of Jane Austen and the Bronte sisters which had always fascinated him, and the captivating works of William Makepeace Thackeray, Edmund Spenser and Dante's Divine Comedy. We were named to honour them all – Josephine Austen, Honoria Makepeace, Franklin Spenser, Matilda Bronte and Ellen Dante. 'Little literary loves', he used to call us. Father's complete adoration for the novels and poems that he had never quite managed to better, despite spending months of his life boarded up in his study, instructing us not to disturb him when the door was shut, took some of his love away from us. He was always the man I admired, but sometimes it was as though he had more time for the characters and creations of his own mind than he did for his wife and children who worshipped him so dearly.

'Wilf?' the repetition of my nickname snaps me back to the present. Stanley Griffiths, known affectionately by most of the soldiers in the West Lancashire Regiment as Stan the Great, is crouching in front of me. His black hair sticks up in unruly spirals and he blinks continually at me from behind his thin wire-framed spectacles.

'There's a letter for you here.' He holds a shaking hand out towards me and I take the letter, managing a weak smile. I see that the postmark says Lancashire and recognise my Mother's neat copperplate handwriting. I thumb the edge of the envelope before holding it up to my nose, trying to find the faintest trace of her violet perfume. Just one tiny reminder of home would pull me through. But like everything else in this gloomy place, it smells of nothing more than putrid mud and bully beef. I sigh, placing it into the right breast pocket of my itchy jacket. I place an outstretched hand upon it, feeling the reassuring weight of Father's well-thumbed copy of Tennyson's poetry pressing against my heart. Mother insisted that I took it with me, like a talisman to ensure that I was delivered safely back to Lancashire. Enclosed inside the almost archaic-looking book is a faded black and white photograph of my entire family standing outside our cottage. Nell, now five years old, is still in napkins, and Tilly, a year her senior, is sitting on the ground trying to make a mudpie, dirtying her starched white dress in the process. I still long to play tag on hot midsummer mornings and to spend afternoons reading old-fashioned stories to the little ones.

I can barely breathe without them.

We are violently awoken before even the crow has flown the next morning. The sharp and constant firing of the guns – the Hun's guns, we call them – has started yet again. I can feel the shuddering weight of Stanley's body beside me.

'Prepare for battle boys!' comes a roaring voice from the other end of our trench. We can just about make out the portly silhouette of our dictator-like captain R.R. Harvey in the vague darkness.

With every explosion, however far away, I can feel my soul detach from my body, hour by hour, inch by inch. I shield Stanley's quivering frame behind me. He still has the horrifying look upon his face which I have heard Farmer Haislip describe as resembling a 'stag when he spies a shotgun'. Such sheer terror seems to emulate from his own body into mine, but I must be strong. The Germans are upon us. They are young lads just like us, with mothers just as worried as ours.

The barrage is coming.

And then I feel it. Seething pain. Heat which jolts through my body like an electric shock. I choke. I scream.

The darkness seems to shield me now. Like many other soldiers who have fallen before me, the blackest of nights becomes my blanket of death, the stars my comforting nightlights, and dreams of childhood the last thing which I remember.

creating **stories** for teens

by **Hannah Ward**

Creating stories for children and teenagers can be a highly rewarding experience. Not only are you encouraging and maintaining an interest in literature but you are also creating a passion within readers to become the writers of our future. Although they can make for one of the most exciting and open-minded age groups to write for, it can also be demanding work if you are not familiar with your target age group.

Lots of background research is required to know that children will love your story for the right reasons, and that it is written in the right style. From one year to another, fashion, genre and interests change quickly amongst children and it is important to keep up with the latest happenings so that your story will be relevant. It can be hard to capture their attention but once you have it there is sure to be more interest in your writing.

During my second year of university I re-ignited my passion for writing, something which I hadn't had time for since school. My favourite audience is teenagers as I love to take on board their voices of 'attitude' and 'sarcasm' within my writing. First person, diary style writing is often my chosen method of creating a story – this is probably because of my love for the Louise Rennison collection as a teenager. I think this genre is very relevant to teenagers today and I believe that by incorporating their everyday issues into these types of books, problems can be tackled with more ease and they may not feel as alone as they once thought.

I try to use personal experience from my teenage years to make my writing as realistic as possible, but it also helps that I have a moody teenage sister of my own to get inspiration from! To make my writing successful I have had to look at the broader interests of teenagers and one of my first realisations was that you no longer hear of pen to paper diary style entries being made, but instead the increasingly popular use of social networking and blogging spots are being used to vent frustrations and issues. We have become a more open and diverse society and so I believe that a teenager feels more at ease in sharing their problems with others, and they also probably enjoy the fact that someone they do not know may be reading into their lives.

To be able to write for this age group is a fantastic opportunity to offer support without knowing who the reader may be. In the instance of my first assessed piece of writing for children, 'Scarlett O'Meara's Online Blog', I could only cover the issue of friendship and bullying due to my word count. However, I hope to divulge further into Scarlett's life and share her problems and how they become resolved with further writing. It would be a dream come true to create and maintain a loyal readership and if my writing helps teenagers to feel better about their lives and even make them laugh, that has to be a success story for me.



Scarlett O'Meara's Online Blog!

by Hannah Ward

Date: 26th October 2009

Hair: Extremely unruly as usual. There is a weird quiff thing going on as well.

Parents: Ridiculously embarrassing. Mum is wearing a jumper that appears to have people dancing around trees on it! Why would she do that? Dad is planning his next 'save the earth petition' and is currently in full swing rant downstairs. "We must unite and fight!" I hear him yell (at Scruff the poor mong).

School: Yawn. Did some band practice but there was a serious lack of effort from the girls. We are going to get out of this poxy town and loser school, they just don't realise our potential yet. It's all about timing and wisdom I tell them. Also, I got mocked for my two stripe trainers in P.E. AGAIN! No matter how many times I try and explain to Mum and Dad that they look cheap and make me look like a pauper, they just don't listen. "Sadidas!" Tara the trout sang at me whilst intercepting my half hearted shot in netball, with her silly blonde bouncy hair just ... bouncing around everywhere. Oh one day I would show her and her crew just what I was made of. I just hate popular people too much. They think they can look at you like poo on their shoe! Well this poo is destined to hit the big time just you wait! I'm yelling now, punching my fist with glory. I just accidentally punched myself in the face.

Date: 15th November 2009

Hair: Hair, kind of tame in a Tracey Beaker kind of way. But still red red RED. Oh there is no escaping that.

Parents: So I suggested they let me try a semi hair dye thing, because naturally I don't want to look like I have permanent flames of fire up there attracting unwanted attention. Of course they said "NO!" and sat tutting at me like I was some moron. Don't they see that my hair is their fault? The least they can do is try to help me make the best of my unforgiving genes. "Why ruin such earth-like and unique hair?" said the mother. And with raised eyebrows and my best look of disgust I decided to be really childish and stomp upstairs. Then slam my door, play my guitar super loud and then phone the bezzie, Lacey, for hours and hours. Ha! that would teach her. She has pulled the phone line out.

School: Tara the trout and crew in full swing today. All sorts of accusations were flying around in maths. Honestly if you didn't know me and believed everything you were told, today you could conclude that:

- I live in a caravan
- My hair is a clown wig I wear for just fun
- My mum and dad hug trees
- The clothes I wear are my great great great auntie's (I'm that poor)
- My younger brother Jayden still wears nappies aged 8 because if he doesn't he poos all over the 'caravan' (honestly!)

And there were various other sad remarks about my home, girls. I can take the taunts but after looking in Amelia and Lacey's red watery eyes, I knew something had to be done.

Cue: OPERATION REVENGE! If there was one rule my old grandma promised I would live by, it was 'Do good to thy friend to keep him, to thy enemy to gain him'. Not 100% sure on the exact meaning of this but it will do as encouragement for the team. I am the leader of the gang after all, they are relying on my wit and wisdom. Two years of taunts is quite enough.

Date: 27th November 2009

Hair: WILD! (with anticipation!) For once I care not for my hair only the revenge I seek on Trouty Tara and her fellow sheep! In fact the sheer bouffy craziness of it only adds to my enthusiasm! Muhahahahahahahah.

Parents: Mum suspected something as I was leaving for school. "Why are you taking an entire toilet roll to school Scarlett?" she said. "Er, toilet issues!" I yelled. What else could I do but make up a fear that if I didn't carry bog roll around with me I'd be caught short? If Mum knew the truth she would turn this around and make out I'M the bully! Then the master plan would be in ruins.

School: Operation revenge. So here is my plan..... When Trouty Tara and her annoying side kicks go to the bogs to pile on their slap after P.E., I will plant the pritt sticked loo roll underneath their lockers. This should then lead to muchos embarrassment as they trot around the school with it stuck to their shoes! Ok, so I'm not exactly sticking to my granny's words of wisdom but who wants enemies close anyway?

10 minutes later.....

Me and the gang are called into Miss Cluckey Tuckey's office! Surely we cannot be in trouble over this? She is like seriously scary. She has what we call a death stare. Year 7's run in fear of her, hiding in bins amongst mouldy banana skins. Corridors shake as she booms down them and even teachers start to sweat as she enters classrooms unexpectedly. But this is only payback for all of the abuse we have received since first year! Surely Trouty is not a grass as well as a snotty popular little nasty. A bit of tissue never did anyone any harm. Not long lasting anyway. "Girls we need to talk about a serious matter." Uh oh. This was it. My life would be over as my parents would forever ground me, for sure. I would be confined to evenings of earthly debates and suggestions of protest. I would turn into a mini-me of my parents! God forbid. I could not let this happen! Life would not be worth living! I would be a social recluse!

1 minute later.....

"Girls you have been nominated anonymously to represent the school in a battle of the bands. We think you have the talent as a group to go far in the competition and will be competing against other bands from schools all over the country! The school will also provide funding for all the necessary equipment you may need. This could really put our school on the map! Oh and some band called the Kings of Leon will be helping to mentor all the groups."

OH.MY.DAYS...

"Just because it's not what you were expecting, doesn't mean it's not everything you've been waiting for..." Granny, Christmas day 2008.



jane austen review

by Jonelle Bradley

Jane Austen was a writer of realist fiction. She mostly, although not entirely, centred her novels on the higher classes of society.

Her writings still secure the fascination of our contemporary population with such cult-like fans nicknamed 'Janeites.' Austen completed six novels: *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1816), *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* (both published posthumously in 1818).

Jane Austen was born the seventh child of the Reverend George Austen and his wife, Cassandra. Her father encouraged her love of reading and writing. Jane regularly shared her stories with her family, experimenting with parodies of popular romances in her earlier writing endeavours. As is true with most writers, Austen's popularity peaked after her death. Many critics esteem Austen as a prominent woman novelist based on the calibre of her writings.

Jane Austen was not a stranger to criticism during her career. Recently, readers analyse her novels as shallow because her stories embraced marriage as the satisfactory end situation. However, Austen was also interested in the workings her society, her novels open up a rich world of words that help to illustrate how life operated in the 19th century.

Films have aided in broadening Austen's modern fan-base. For instance, the novel *Pride and Prejudice* has been diversified through a variety of film adaptations, such as Bollywood, modern-day re-writings and the classic BBC versions.

On the internet, *Pride and Prejudice* is given more attention than any other of Austen's novels. It contains one of the most treasured love stories of English literature, that of Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet. Of all her heroines, Elizabeth was Austen's favourite. The characters' personalities are wittily impressed upon the reader through a mixture of dialogue and description.

'It is universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife. However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering the neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or another of their daughters' (*Pride and Prejudice*).

Sense and Sensibility was Austen's first novel to be published. The main protagonists are Elinor and Marianne Dashwood. Elinor represents 'sense' with her reserved manner which conceals her emotions, particularly her love for Edward Ferrars. Marianne embodies

'sensitivity' by her passionate behaviour, clearly showing her love for the rogue John Willoughby. In the end, the sisters learn to embrace a little of the other sisters' characteristics to find happiness.

'She found that she had been misled by the careful, the considerate attention of her daughter [...]. She feared that under this persuasion she had been unjust, inattentive – nay, almost unkind to her Elinor: – that Marianne's affliction, because more acknowledged, had too much engrossed her tenderness, and led her away to forget that in Elinor she might have a daughter suffering almost as much, certainly with less self-provocation, and greater fortitude' (*Sense and Sensibility*).

Austen's use of parody in *Northanger Abbey* shows her critiquing the representation of women in gothic novels. Catherine, the heroine, fancies herself in a gothic novel where the characters are either 100 percent good or evil. She allows herself to imagine that her suitors' father murdered his late wife. Catherine comes to realise that the people outside her novels are, instead, a mixture of good and bad; being a cranky widower doesn't mean you're a murderer.

'Her thoughts being still chiefly fixed on what she had with such causeless terror felt and done, nothing could shortly be clearer than that it had been all a voluntary, self-created delusion [...] Among the Alps and Pyrenees, perhaps, there were no mixed characters [...] [but] among the English, she believed, in their hearts and habits, there was a general though unequal mixture of good and bad' (*Northanger Abbey*).

The theme in *Emma* is of the elevating or lowering of an individual's social class through marriage. Austen explores whether differences in wealth and social status affect the relationship between husband and wife. The match between Emma and Mr. Knightly was considered a good one because, not only are they equal in temperament, but also in society and wealth. Emma plays the matchmaker and her exploits, often humorous to the reader, get her regularly into trouble.

'Oh, that I'd been satisfied with persuading her not to accept young Martin. There I was quite right: that was well done of me; but here I should have stopped, and left the rest to time and chance' (*Emma*).

Persuasion, as is titled, contains the idea of being persuaded. Anne was influenced by others to break off her engagement with Captain Wentworth because he was poor.

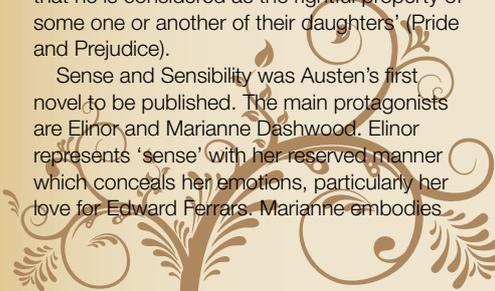
Eight years later, the couple meet again. In the absence, Captain Wentworth has made his money and thinks he needs a wife with a strong character, although he still finds himself in love with Anne. Austen allows the reader to decide whether being persuaded is an advantage or disadvantage.

'She was persuaded to believe the engagement a wrong thing: indiscreet, improper, hardly capable of success, and not deserving it. But it was not a merely selfish caution, under which she acted, in putting an end to it. Had she not imagined herself consulting his good, even more than her own, she could hardly have given him up' (*Persuasion*).

In *Mansfield Park*, Fanny was given to her relatives at the age of ten, who never ceased in reminding her that she was lower than them. Fanny found comfort in her cousin Edmund. While Fanny fell in love with Edmund, Edmund fell in love with a lady named Mary Crawford and Henry Crawford fell in love with Fanny! Mary, often cruel to Edmund, tried to convince him to choose another profession because, after all, she couldn't live as the wife of a clergyman! Edmund not only realises the true character of Ms. Crawford but also of his deep love for Fanny.

'Loving, guiding, protecting her, as he had been doing ever since her being ten years old, her mind in so great a degree formed by his care, and her comfort depending on his kindness, an object to him of such close and peculiar interest, dearer by all his own importance with her than any one else at Mansfield, what was there now to add, but that he should learn to prefer soft light eyes to sparkling dark ones' (*Mansfield Park*).

Jane Austen's novels offer an ageless handling of human relationships. She used humour to criticise what she felt was incorrect behaviour, allowing her sillier characters to introduce themselves through their dialogue. Austen invites a diversity of fans, those who are mature in their loyalty as well as those who are trivial in their devotion. Whether you're a reader or a movie-goer, Austen has something to offer you!



masking light

Descriptive prose by Amarinda Benson

Claustrophobia set in as hoards of people gathered to witness the daily event. The Ibiza heat was as unbearable as dry land to aquatics, and I thought for a moment I was melting, just like a slug drenched in salt. Everyone was preparing for the big event as if the sun would never rise again once it had set.

A sunburnt boy brushed passed me, eager to get to his even skinnier mother. The annoyance of this incident was overshadowed by the apathetic effect the heat seemed to have on me. A dusting of pink diffused across the sky, the colour of the strawberry bon-bons I devoured an hour previously. I imagined silence would ripple from person to person as awe set in, that the romanticist in us all would show itself. That wasn't the case. The pink intensified and a rosy filter distorted our vision as if God decided he was bored so took a can of pink spray paint to the sky. I could smell the wonderment in the air, along with the stench of stale sunscreen and sea-stained bodies that surrounded me.

Gradually, the sky diffused into a golden glow, like the sky had seasons of its own: pink being summer and now the orangey stain of autumn was upon us. Just as the trees lose their leaves, the sun started to lose its rays. I imagined them falling down, like burning raindrops into the sea and with a sizzle would cool and sink down into the ocean. They'd be discovered some time in the future by the inhabitants of the earth in the Ice Age. I could taste the amber sky and its bitter aftertaste. The orange tinge was slowly fading when I noticed the familiar brilliant blue sky hiding behind it as if it were a scared child hiding under his duvet so the monsters couldn't get him.

The heat was now so excruciating. The humid air was clinging to my fingers like summer gloves. I felt the moisture evaporate from my mouth and the beauty of the sunset transformed into a stormy rainbow sea. If I hadn't have looked down and recognised the chewing gum stained pavement, I could have sworn I was on a boat sailing across that rocky sea. I was sea sick. My head swam and I thought I could feel the individual brain cells practising their front crawl. I could hear them screaming as they drowned in the mass of confusion that is my mind. The sea sickness worsened and with a splash I fell onto the pavement. The sun set.

As everything went dark, I could see things as they really were: the women without their make-up, their crows' feet and blemished skin tarnished their faces. Some were uglier than others, and there were a few I could have sworn weren't human. The children had blood red horns, a warning that they were dangerous. The sweaty boy from earlier stared at me with piercing eyes, his horns sharper than most; I could sense the evil in him. He opened his mouth to utter something to me but molten lava spewed from his lips. Men resembled ogres, blood thirsty for human flesh. They were lusting after the women disgustingly and I felt myself retch.

Little did I know I was coming to. The dizziness had gone and I was finally on dry land again. There was a tingling sensation in my fingers and an unrecognisable chill shot down my spine. Eyes of gossip rather than genuine concern set upon me. The cold hearts of the people crowding me were pumping blood of hate, fuelling their brains with loathing. I could hear their hearts pumping in unison, squeezing insult, prejudice and scorn through every capillary and saturating the lungs so hate could be exhaled and infect others.

I opened my eyes and saw my burning knee; deep red blood. I stretched out my arms in order to aid me in standing. I felt something soft and warm engulf my fingers – chewing gum. With a nauseating groan I prised my hand from the pavement and heard it squelch as I remembered how to stand. Blinking, I craned my aching neck north to see the luminous glow of the moon, knowing that sleeping behind it was the sun who would show herself again tomorrow when the world woke. I looked down to see the devil child peel off his mask and reveal his jagged horns knowing that the sun would disguise them again come the morning.

Coventry University English Society

This is a society for students doing single or double honours with English, or for those who just have an interest in English. The society was set up in 2009 to help students with their course and to meet more people with shared interests. In just two years the society has grown rapidly in numbers and has organised successful revision sessions, theatre trips, competitions and nights out. If the society is to continue, it needs a new committee. If you are interested in being a part of this new committee email: emsj13@hotmail.com

Being a committee member involves organising events, attending meetings and keeping the Facebook group up to date.



literary links

by **Sophia Patrick**

www.radiowildfire.com

Radio Wildfire is an independent radio station that provides an outlet for spoken literature as well as new and upcoming writers/screenwriters.

www.webook.com

This is a fun website. Guests can read through extracts of a writer's work and mark it. There is also an option to submit your own work.

www.firstwriter.com/competitions

This currently lists 205 writing competitions for prospective writers to choose which competitions would be best for them to enter based on location, fee (some are free) and amount of prize money.

www.literaryfestivals.co.uk/eventcalendar.html

Lists all literary festivals in the UK by calendar month.

www.manuscriptediting.com/contests.htm

Provides a concise list of writing competitions as well as gives advice to budding writers.

www.unitedpress.co.uk

Offers the biggest free writing competitions throughout the year. Winners are often published in an anthology and receive prize money.