

— BEST OF THE —

CREATIVE

Writing Club

2014

2015

EAST BARNET WRITERS

INTRODUCTION

The writing club has gone from strength to strength over the last year and the group is now bigger than ever. Some of the members have been coming along since the very first session almost three years ago and it has been a privilege to see how they continue to grow and improve as writers. We have also had a welcome and enthusiastic new influx from Years 7, 8 and 9. The larger number means that sessions can be lively and energetic but they are certainly never dull.

It remains one of the most satisfying aspects of running this club that students of such a wide range of ages are mixing together. I sometimes wonder where else in the school students from Year 7 rub shoulders with those from Year 12?

The broad age range means I have to think carefully about pitching activities so everyone will both enjoy and learn from them, but this is one of the challenges that makes my role at East Barnet School so satisfying and rewarding.

Most sessions are filled with laughter and talk but there is always a moment every week when everyone has settled into their work and the creativity in the room is almost palpable. Each student is completely focused on their writing and tuned into their own imaginations.

When this happens I look around and think once again, how very lucky I am to be the Writer in Residence at East Barnet School. I would like to offer my sincere thanks to Mr Christou once again for inviting me to take on this role.

I hope you will enjoy the excellent work that has been produced this year as much as I did. Happy reading.

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June 2015
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OPPOSITES

I believe conflict is at the heart of good story-telling. But conflict isn't just about arguments or war. It can occur whenever two forces with different goals cross paths.

One of our early exercises was taking two seemingly disparate concepts and putting them together.

This piece, which opens our collection, places the image of a ballet shoe and a battered working boot in the same scene.



As the ballerina takes her first silent steps onto the stage she glances up at the dusty hiking boot hanging, immobile, from the bar of the spotlight. She kisses her left palm and reaches it towards the boot, eyes longing. Her collarbone lifts as she inhales slowly then runs to centre stage. Her eyes search the audience as she lowers her slender frame into a perfect arabesque.

The ballerina almost cries out as she glances at a man in the front row with a weathered face and bright blue eyes. But her excitement fades as she realises her mistake. The man's eyes seem suddenly dull when she pictures her lover's. No one else's could burn so piercingly.

She leaps and pirouettes, her steps faultless, perfectly balanced. But her mind is elsewhere. Her gaze flicks to the boot again, hidden to all but her behind the musty velvet folds of the curtain. Stage right because he couldn't have left.

The ballerina spins. Spins again and again, her face a blur. Her eyes are fixed on the worn façade of the Upper Circle.

And then her arms falter. Her pointed foot falls flat because he is there.

He is *there*.

His blue eyes are locked onto her. The hiss and boo of the crowd mean nothing because she can see him and his huge smile stirs a thousand hidden memories. As she runs off stage, ready to collapse into his arms, she smiles - truly smiles - for the first time since he left.

She runs off, stage left.



CHARACTERS IN CONFLICT

I often think that making up characters is like having access to an unlimited ‘dressing up box’. You can ‘try on’ a whole range of different personalities, including those who you might try to avoid in real life. In fact, those can often be the most fun.

One task early into the new term was to write a piece from the points of view of two people utterly at odds with one another.



I peer through the gap in the window. Their garden is such a mess as usual. There are pots, pans and barbecues. Once I even saw fridge in that pigsty. Last night there was horrible heavy metal music blaring through the walls from them. Totally disruptive. I wouldn't mind if it was classical. I do like a bit of Bach. But our neighbours are absolutely revolting. They have no class. I mean, compared to my perfectly welcoming house, theirs is like a bomb has gone off. They seem to enjoy that screaming music in that tip for a house. Parties all the time! How uncivilised and they are never courteous enough to warn us about them either. They did invite us when they first moved here but I was quite insulted. I would never be found mixing with their sort.

She is staring through the window. Again. Her beady eyes are wide and her over-large nose is pressing against the glass. It's not like I've never tried to be friendly. I invited her over when we first moved in but she gave me that look, like she had just eaten ten sour grapes in one go. Somehow I got the feeling she's not the kind of person who likes to mingle with people with ten piercings in each ear and hot pink hair. I went in there once and the atmosphere was suffocating; so quiet and perfect. Everything was in order. She treats me like I don't deserve to live here next to her perfect house. I would rather have fun enjoy life. Even if I am a bit wacky and not perfect.

ROISIN TAMBIMUTTU



I hate him. He's so annoying! He always follows me around wherever I go. He never leaves me alone and there is no private space for me at school. He always asks if he can be my friend. Yeah, right.

I tell him he can't but he just asks again straight away, the same questions every day. I hate him so much. I just wish there was a way for that little weirdo to leave me alone, even for a minute. That would be perfect. No wonder he has no friends.

I just don't understand why Bob doesn't like me. I follow him around asking about his day and if he likes games. And if he will be my friend. My only goal in life is to be his friend but it's so hard. I wish he and his friends would forgive me for whatever it is I've done. But all I am to them is an annoying little brat. I don't understand what's so wrong about following them around and wanting to hang out with them. It's not fair! I just don't understand it...

JAMES TIVEY



HALLOWEEN!

No one can resist a creepy story. At Halloween I took in a series of images to help spark some spooky tales.



The moon started to rise, letting white light onto the world. I was sitting in my room looking out onto the field. I had woken up in a bed. But who was I? I was in a strange, empty house.

Well, I think it was empty.

I got out and asked myself how old I was. At least thirteen, I thought, looking into a mirror. The moon shone onto my pale face. Next to the mirror was a round bowl and I saw it was filled with worms, spiders and maybe worse...

Suddenly a dark, hollow voice rung into the room. 'Hello. You might be confused. I have kidnapped you. You can try to escape but you must work how to. Each room is different. And some are more deadly than others.' As he spoke I heard a shrill scream from another room....

BEN TIVEY



I open the creaky door. The forest seems to scream “Turn back!” as I step into the house. I stop and look around.

‘I could have sworn that doll over there moved,’ I whisper to myself.

I hear a creak and look over at the doll again. It was sitting on the coffee table before but now it is standing in the middle of the room. I turn to run. But before I can take a step I look down to see that the doll has grabbed my ankle!

‘Get off me!’ I yell.

‘Come play with me,’ says the doll. ‘We’ll have fun for all eternity..’

ALANA MCDONALD



It was pitch black. Everything was silent. All you could hear was the faint moaning of our neighbours. My dad and I shut the curtains and blew out the candles. We did it silently.

My mum and sister were waiting for us in the Anderson shelter. I advanced downstairs following the footsteps of my dad. We had to be cautious. Two thoughts were slowly pecking at my mind: are we walking the right way and are we being quiet enough?

A humming noise got louder and louder like a crescendo. The neighbours had opened the curtains and lit a candle. The faint humming turned into a hiss and then into a mighty roar.

The Nazis used the light to their advantage. They flew closer and closer to the light. They had found London.



TRUTH IS STRANGER THAN FICTION

Newspapers can be a great source of story ideas and a trawl through some local papers yielded this gem:

‘Terrifying moment office workers forced to flee deadly scorpion’

I asked the group to write a story from the point of view of someone connected with this piece.



I was half an hour into work, typing away at my computer when I heard Ellen scream.

'She's probably chipped a nail,' I thought. But suddenly, everyone was screaming and running around the office. I sprinted out of my cabin to see some sort of goo everywhere and my co-workers running around like headless chickens.

Ellen saw me and came over.

'The deadly scorpions are here!' she cried.

Great. Now she's just lost it, I thought. Where is the boss when you need him?

'Quiet!' I roared and everyone stopped.

But then I turned around to see the scorpions staring at me with nothing but a 'I want to kill you' look in their eyes.

Finally the boss appeared. 'What is going on?' he asked.

'Scorpions,' I said, trying not to scream.

'RUN!' was all he said before tearing out of the building.

The next thing I knew, chaos....



SURPRISING PLACES

Creating good settings is an important part of the process when it comes to telling stories. Sometimes settings can even seem like characters in their own right. I asked the group to write about a character who reacts to a setting in a way that might at first seem surprising.



I should not long for a place such as this. I shouldn't feel at home here. It's not safe, hasn't been for years. And yet still I am drawn here. It's the only place I can truly call my own.

The feel of the salt-encrusted plants beneath my hands is one of the few things I look forward to. The stinging spray that hits my face when the waves get rough (which is most of the time) feels like the sweetest caress.

It's my own little seat at the edge of the world. There is nothing but miles of ocean before me, the deep grey with the occasional flicker of blue matching the blanket of clouds above. I've no idea how long the pier has been abandoned or why, but I hardly care. It's mine now.

There is nothing else to see, just these stony beaches that are my own private paradise. I can do nothing but sit and watch the grey gradually become darker until all that is left is blackness, sometimes lit by the moon, sometimes not.

I don't mind whether it is light or dark, only that I can hear the roar in my ears, feel the dampness in my clothes and finally have a moment's peace.

JENNIE GROUNDS



The boat pulled into the shore. John stepped out carefully, balancing one foot as the boat wobbled from side to side. He looked up at the island.

It was beautiful. The blazing hot sun beamed down on him and the sky was a cloudless opalescent blue.

John took off his sandals and felt the hot, white sand under his feet. He turned around and watched the little sailing boat go further and further into the distance until it was just a pale dot bobbing around in the aquamarine waters.

He turned to face the island again. Overgrown trees towered over him, their tops obscuring the view of what lay ahead. John sighed. It was disguised to look like paradise but he knew it was anything but. He imagined the baboons screaming in his ears and monsters of every kind.

He imagined the corpses of the other intruders strewn across the sand.

John looked up. The sun twinkled and sent a brilliant white light across the sea. He had come to prove them wrong. He could get through this.

It was now or never.

He walked anxiously into the vegetation and immediately he was thrust into darkness. He could feel the animosity from this place. Nervousness washed over him.

ROISIN TAMBIMUTTU



WRITING FROM LIFE

While everyone is usually encouraged to write in new voices and to step inside the mind of a different character, this week we wrote pieces as ourselves.

I asked the group to picture ‘snow days and sick days’. They are the moments when time seems to stand still and ordinary life happens elsewhere.



I woke up with a start and looked around the room.
Blackness.

A loud snore came from the room next to mine, which didn't help with the headache. My head felt like there was someone inside it bouncing on a trampoline and every time I move my head it got worse. Slowly forcing my feet to the ground, I pushed myself up and walked to the bathroom. This suddenly changed to run as I felt a wave of nausea hit me like a slap in the face....

Later, bright blinding light woke me up like an alarm clock, making me groan and bury myself under the covers like a dog digging a hole.

"Phoebel! Wake up! I gave you a 10 minute lie-in and now you have to get up." I answered by giving my mum a whimper and a groan. The next thing I knew, there was a hand on my forehead and my mum confirmed there was definitely no fit state to go to school.

A small smile made its way onto my face. Sure, I felt horrible. Yes, I was in pain but I couldn't resist. I forgot my mum was there and she pulled the covers to my chin. "Honey, you must feel horrible. I'll go and make you a steaming hot cup of tea," she said in a voice that made me believe I was two years old again. My eyes fluttered closed as I went back to sleep.

PHOEBE GEORGIU



STRANGE OBJECTS

One of the most popular workshops is where I bring in a bunch of different objects in a bag, which the group must use as inspiration for a piece of creative writing. It has become known over time as just, “Things in a bag”!



The watch sits on the mantelpiece, untouched for many years. Its silver chain is covered in a layer of dust. I don't know why I have only noticed it now. I've had it all my life but it has always just been...there. I've never even opened it.

I feel a strange feeling wash over me as I approach it. I pick it up and it is cold to the touch. Why have I never paid attention to it before? Why have I never looked inside? I notice the strange symbols carved into the metal for the first time. Circles and hexagons. Although I fail to decipher them, they feel meaningful. Like I should know what they mean.

There's an impending sense of dread now as I finger the catch. But I have to open it. I have to see what is inside. The lid clicks open and before I can react, I am engulfed in a fiery, golden light.

NATALIE SWATOWSKI



Everything seemed muted. I could see and hear a professor – well that was my first guess. His voice was muffled and he was larger than a normal human. His hair was gelled back although there were some disobedient kinks in certain places.

He had a long pale face and a large chin. He had golden spectacles on the end of his crooked nose which covered his bright blue eyes. The rest of him was blocked from my view by a long white streak that slithered down the sheet of glass that was controlling my every move.

The surface I was sitting on began to tremble and the world seem to be spinning around me as if it had suddenly jumped off its axis and I was hurtling through the galaxy. I helplessly tried to grab onto something wind-milling my arms frantically through the air.

When I finally plopped onto the ground with a start I started to feel something cold rushing onto my head like rain from a cloud. I looked up to find tiny snowy white specks of sand gracefully pouring onto my head. My heart seems to crumble inside me. My whole world is falling apart.

KATIE-MIA DIAMANDI



INSTANT EXPERT

Writing isn't always a serious business. We have a lot of laughter in the after-school club anyway but one exercise in particular stands out as one of the funniest ever. The idea was that you write out a list of instructions for something wildly complicated as though you really were versed in all its mysteries.

How to operate the space shuttle



1. Enter Shuttle.
2. Get told off and sent away, as you clearly are not allowed to be anywhere near a Space Shuttle.
3. Attempt to enter the Shuttle at night. You're closer to space that way and there's no security.
4. Try to find key for the door.
5. Give up on looking for key. Notice bright red 'Open' button next to the door.
6. Enter Shuttle properly this time.
7. Disregard the space suits. They are not necessary!
8. Find chair, which is above you for some reason. You guess this makes sense.
9. Climb into chair and feel proud of yourself for having got this far.
10. Text a trustworthy friend who you instructed to break into the control centre to start the countdown and launch you into the cosmos!
11. Be informed by trustworthy friend that they got bored and went to Starbucks across the road, after trying to break into control centre by hitting the window with an inflatable bat for a total of five minutes.
12. Inform them that you are going to try and find less Frappuccino-obsessed friends when you get back.
13. Be called 'dumb.'
14. Accept the fact that you are dumb.
15. Hope there is an override button.
16. Search for non-existent override button.
17. Realise that you didn't think this through.
18. Press all buttons in hope of something happening.
19. Give up and pretend for a bit, making shuttle noises and tilting from side to side.
20. Realise you can have far more fun in space with your imagination. You can have adventures galore!
21. Go home.
22. Ignore headlines the next day, especially the ones about someone breaking into the Space Shuttle.
23. Ignore texts from ex-friend.

How to fly a plane

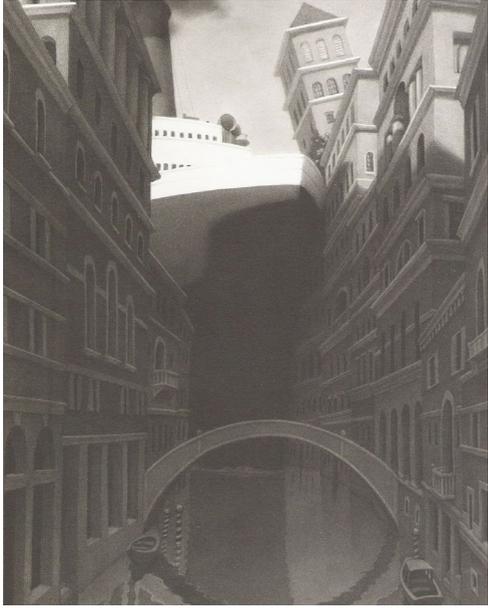


1. Firstly wear your safety equipment
2. Next, push the pink squashy thing to start the engine.
3. After that, dance around. You have started the engine! Scream in joy to the passengers because the engine has started.
4. When you have done that, go back to your steering wheel and start moving the plane around.
5. Grab a stick and start whacking your co-pilot in excitement.
6. Fly into the sky and start waving to the clouds.
7. When you have done that, start dancing again and make sure your passengers are dancing too.
8. Go back to the steering wheel and fly to the destination.
9. When you have reached your destination start hugging your passengers because you have landed safely!



The Mysteries of Harris Burdick

I have Mrs Colangelo-Lillis to thank for introducing me to the wonderful world of Harris Burdick. The story (created by writer/illustrator Chris Van Allsburg) is that a man called Harris Burdick arrived at a publishing house one day with a series of strange and beautiful drawings, all of which had enigmatic captions. He left them there for the publisher to look at but was never seen again. The pictures have many possible interpretations and provide a well of inspiration for creative writing.



The tall buildings toppled, chunks of ochre façade creating deep ripples in the previously glass-like surface of the water. The liner belched ashy clouds of smoke as its prow scythed inexorably towards the perfectly engineered arc in front of it.

Deep in the hold sweating, soot-faced men worked desperately to put out the smoking furnaces and pull the brake levers further back. Their faces, creased and weather-beaten through their years of service, twisted in desperation. A sudden crash and the floor slid sideways

under their feet. A cry of ‘the bridge, the bridge,’ echoed through the engine room as the men scrambled back to their tasks.

Outside the bridge had not yet fallen. The convex side of the ocean liner, which incidentally had been cruising the South Pacific just a little while earlier, had been unable to slip around the curve in the waterway and had instead powered straight through it. The remains of the Royal Institute of Medical Engineering were now slowly sinking to the sandy depths of the canal.

The flurry of activity in the hold had ceased as the men had slowly given up on their various unappealing tasks. They sat slumped against the stacks of crates and cans of fluid lining the hold, their vests dirtied, as the liner moved further along the canal. The Captain chose this moment to leave his cabin and ask the First Mate if he had any idea what to do in a situation like this.

‘Even with her mighty engines in reverse, the ocean liner was pulled further and further into the canal.’

The Captain had once been a bright young prospect. His knowledge was admirable and he learnt fast. However, as all accomplished sailors know, crossing vast expanses of empty ocean can play havoc with one's mind. The Captain, with his once bright future, had fallen victim to this and his once great mind was not as it had been. His reliance on his First Mate to map and chart their passage and to actually steer the ship had increased over the years until his own role seemed to be nothing more than the ship's figurehead.

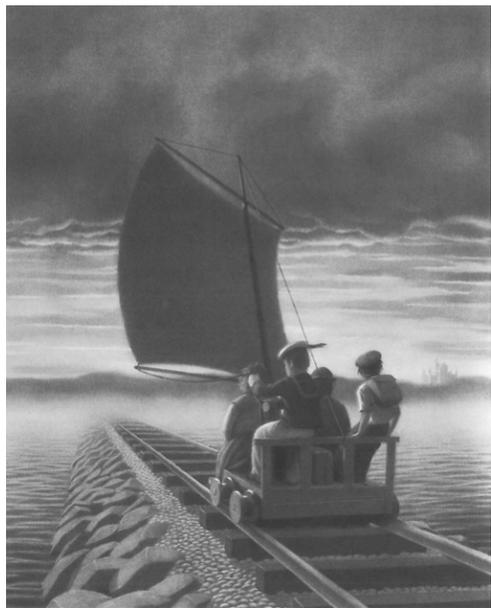
As he descended into the hold his stomach felt the warm pleasure of his third brandy of the day. While listening to the first mate's reply he thought vaguely how nice it would be to stop for a while, leave the ship, stay in the pretty houses that lined this place. Venice was it? It didn't particularly matter where it was really. As long as there were music halls and liquor stores.

The first mate came to the end of his report and stood waiting expectantly.

"Ah, yes, jolly good First Mate. You go and do that, if you don't mind," said the Captain, waving a vague hand of affirmation.

The First Mate looked slightly disgruntled for a moment, then strode off up the stairs calling men as he did so.

The Captain settled down on a crate contentedly, oblivious to the sudden renewed rush of activity around him, and the occasional crash. As soon as this little misdemeanour was sorted he would disembark for the nearest matinee performance.



Oliver watched the rippling ocean pass by as the wheels of his cart rolled across the metal tracks. He remembered his father's excitement when they had first been constructed. They were like a bridge leading off into an uncertain location.

Nobody knew where the tracks led to. The builders claimed that they half finished on a crisp moonlit evening and the next day they had been continued by God knows who. Nobody in the village dared to ride them because the people who did never returned. Though the trucks

remained untouched the carts that rested on top had grown old and squeaked when Oliver placed his foot onto the steps. Phoebe and Thomas made fun of him for the fright passing through his mind, although he'd spotted the two shivering as they sat down. Since it was the middle of the summer Oliver knew why. But they had no choice.

A few days ago Oliver and Thomas received the same letter, informing them about the disappearance of both their fathers. When Oliver had mentioned the tracks, Thomas almost cracked up laughing. But what else could it be? Both Oliver's and Thomas's fathers has been intrigued by the mystery and always talked about taking a ride and finding out what lay on the opposite side of the tracks.

'If there was an answer, they'd find it there.'

The cool breeze found Oliver's sweaty face now. Phoebe and Thomas were watching the ocean as if it were the most fascinating thing they've ever seen. But the sight of land caught the edge of Phoebe's tired eyes and she shot up in excitement, eagerly pointing towards the land which stretched further as they continued to move. Thomas broke out of his reverie and Oliver shot up next to Phoebe. He could make out the outlines of trees and rocks, a thick fog bathed the tops of them. Oliver swallowed nervously, the blood pumping through his veins as the train finally came to a sudden halt. The air smelled distinctly of metal. There was nothing but grey clouds above the children.

Thomas hesitated before talking. "Ain't exactly paradise," he said. Oliver exhaled. "Let's go," he said.

Phoebe was first to step off the train, feet shaking slightly as they rested on to the ground. The ground was sheathed with autumn leaves and once Thomas placed his feet up on them they crunched in recognition of his presence. Oliver was the last to step down cautiously, then he scanned the area.

Oliver was certain they were safe until he felt a strong bang against his skull from behind.



As the wind rushed into the window, the vortex swirled. The carpet rose as the lump grew. I grabbed the antique chair and bashed my beautiful carpet until the chair broke. Shapes grew on the lump and the vortex swirled faster. He was coming..

(Two weeks earlier)

Cheerios, milk, apple juice. Yum! The sun was bright and the birds were singing. After I'd finished breakfast I walked to the window. I touched my sweaty palms to the glass and my brain shrieked in alarm. My hands jerked back, red and painful. The window was burning!

I peered closer at the sky. The sun was a scalding mass of purple spiralling towards the Earth...

BETH PETERS

'Two weeks passed and it happened again.'



Genres: Writing Fantasy

This was one of the most popular topics we covered over the course of the year. Many of the group are big readers of this genre and so the ideas flowed when it came to writing in the style of a fantasy novel. We had some interesting discussion about how exactly you could define fantasy as a genre, but the consensus was that it should always involve some sort of magical element.



I walk through the woods feeling pleased about slaying the dragon. Our kind have been at war for centuries. It has been so long that I can't even remember the purpose of the war or how it started.

I am the last of my kind, the last dragon slayer, the last sorcerer. I am Jonathon, son of Diagonese, son of of Thorian. The last battle was the battle of the lords. My father discovered that the Sorcerer Council wanted to cast a spell that would kill both the dragons and the sorcerers. Better to draw than be defeated?

My father cast a spell to protect us but by doing so he lost his own life. The rumour of this ancient spell was spread by the ravens, the all-knowing beings of our world. Now word has reached the dragons...

THE CREATIVE WRITING CLUB

Katie-Mia Diamandi - 7G

Phoebe Georgiou - 8F

Jennie Grounds - Sixth Form

Alana McDonald - 7A

Saul Mishra - 8E

Nicole Mousicos - 8H

Beth Peters - 7A

Lily Rachel - 9A

Aafreen Rafique - 9H

Aqsa Rafique - 7B

Natalie Swatowski - 7A

Roisin Tambimuttu - 9A

Ben Tivey - 9C

James Tivey - 8G

Omed Zarifi - 9D



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Thanks to Miss Bain and Mrs Monahan for their work in putting together this booklet. Thank you also to all of the brilliant students for come along to the group and contributing such great ideas.

Thanks for reading this collection of work from East Barnet students.

We hope you have enjoyed it.