



Nurturing excellence in  
*children's* and *young adult* literature

## Young Writers Online

### Year 9 to 12 students with AJ Betts

#### What is included?

#### **6 x Creative Writing Sessions**

##### **Session One: Everyday Stimulus**

In this first session, you'll meet A.J. and learn about the qualities she draws on to be an author. She'll focus on two of these - observation and curiosity - and explain how these can turn everyday items (even shopping lists!) into fuel for stories. You'll try developing your own backstories from small, found things, and you'll finish by using a fragment of a note as stimulus for a piece of writing of your own.



##### **Session Two: Setting and Mood**

Some authors begin with character; some with plot or theme. A.J. prefers to begin her stories with setting. This session gives tips on how to choose the right setting (tip: there's no such thing as a 'wrong' setting); how to establish it in a sensory way; and how mood influences every detail that is used. Setting and mood are inextricably linked, as you'll discover when you create your own piece of writing that begins with a given setting.

##### **Session Three: The Unexpected and Change**

This session is all about the 'unexpected' - A.J.'s favourite word. Once you've established setting and mood, the best thing to ask is: *what unexpected thing could happen right now?* The possibilities are endless. A.J. will show you how to apply this question to all sorts of situations, before asking the next important question: *what will change as a result?*

#### **Session Four: Character and Voice**

Characters can be shy, only revealing themselves after multiple drafts. A.J. will discuss how her characters develop and show themselves (eventually) through their dialogue and actions. More important than a character's horoscope or hair colour are their secrets, dreams and fears. In this session, you'll observe several images from which you will tease out aspects of a character's inner truth and outer voice.

#### **Session Five: Tension**

We all know tension is important, but what is it? And how can you create it? In this session, A.J. analyses the four types of dramatic tension - task, relationships, surprise and mystery - and provides examples of how they work in texts and film. You'll try injecting tension into the most unexpected of settings, and will finish by workshopping your own tension-driven piece of writing.

#### **Session Six: Plot, Structure and Editing**

A satisfying plot takes years to nut out. For those who lack the patience, A.J. has some tips. In this session, you'll hear how A.J. approaches structure using a nine-box table and some important questions. You'll then learn about the different stages of drafting, revising, editing and proofreading. The session ends with a focus on word choice and style, with some examples of how you can sharpen your writing to be engaging, animated, and authentic.

#### **Each session:**

- Is a tailored pre-recorded writing workshop for students presented by WA author, AJ Betts. They are designed to be used in sequence.
- Can be used at the teacher's discretion; one session at a time or together, as six private video links are provided. Privately enrolled students can watch as they wish.
- Includes a writing exercise and a short reading by the author from one of his books.
- In keeping with the writing program, AJ's books are available for purchase from the Centre.

#### **About WA Author AJ Betts**

AJ Betts is an Australian author, speaker, teacher and cyclist, and has a PhD on the topic of wonder, in life and in reading. She is currently teaching part-time at Fiona Stanley Hospital in Perth, writing columns for AEU Magazine, reading and renovating her home. She has written four novels for young adults and her third novel, *Zac & Mia*, won the 2012 Text Prize, the 2014 SCBWI Crystal Kite Award, and the 2014 Ethel Turner prize for young adults at the NSW Premier's Literary Awards, and is available in 14 countries. It was adapted for American television by AwesomenessTV, and will soon be available on Netflix. AJ is busy working on a new manuscript, and at the time of recording these sessions, was on her third draft

**Your Feedback**

As this is still a new and exciting venture for The Literature Centre, your feedback on our Young Writers Online workshop is appreciated. We know there may be improvements and adjustments needed along the way. As always, the content and presentation style of each of our award-winning authors will differ. A short feedback survey will be emailed to all participating teachers after sessions are released.

**Full details on our Website**

Young Writers Online is suitable for school classes or individual students (home-school or privately enrolled) keen to write. For all the online program details including reduced fee, registration forms, timetable of authors and what to expect, see our website -

<https://www.thelitcentre.org.au/young-writers-online.aspx>