

## YOUNG WRITERS ONLINE

### Senior Writers Sessions with Mark Smith

Released in Term 3, 2020

#### What is included?

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

##### **Session 1 - One Writer's Journey**

Mark introduces himself and talks about his writing process and how it is intrinsically linked to where he lives. He relates a story of a traumatic accident from his teenage years and traces his development as a reader and writer from that point. He reads a short story based on the accident and introduces a writing exercise where students' draw on their own life experiences.



##### **Session 2 - Getting Past The Blank Screen**

Getting started on a piece of writing is the hardest part of the process – both for professional and beginning writers. Mark talks about collecting resource material that can help make the task of getting started easier. The session focuses on the exposition stage of a story – establishing character and setting in a way that engages the reader and sets up the story. Mark reads from the *The Road To Winter* and sets a writing exercise around beginning your story.

##### **Session 3 - Setting Isn't Just the Background**

In his *The Winter Trilogy*, Mark creates a recognisable dystopian world by drawing on his knowledge of the coast and hinterland in Victoria. He discusses the importance of setting in building a story – accumulating the small details that make it real for the reader. He takes students on a journey through the setting of the trilogy, explaining how immersing yourself in “place” can help make your story come alive. Mark will read from *Wilder Country* and set an exercise that will require students to place the character they have created in Session 2 into a believable setting.

##### **Session 4 - Writing Short Fiction**

Mark reads his short story *Flood*, which won the Alan Marshall Short Story Prize, and talks about how the story was created from a single image that came to him while he was out riding his mountain bike. He discusses the particular skills of short fiction, focusing on the critical first paragraphs and the hook that pulls the reader into the story. Mark then sets a flash fiction exercise for students.

##### **Session 5 - Creating Fully Formed Characters**

How do we create characters that are not clichéd – that are original and believable? And how do we develop them throughout a story? Focusing on the character of Kas in the Winter Trilogy Mark explains his “layer cake” approach to creating relatable characters. He reads from each book in the Trilogy, demonstrating the development of Kas from her introduction to her final scenes. A writing exercise will focus on building a “character map” as a means of creating multi-layered characters.

##### **Session 6 - The Hero's Journey**

The Hero's Journey provides an template for students wanting to develop their skills in writing stories of any length. Mark talks about the inciting incident and the importance of dramatic tension to keep the story moving. Each book in the Winter Trilogy follows the Hero's Journey and Mark reads from key scenes to demonstrate how pacing is critical to good storytelling. A writing exercise will focus on how dialogue can be used to generate conflict and dramatic tension.

**Each session:**

- Is a tailored pre-recorded writing workshop for students presented by Victorian young adult author, Mark Smith. 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 our programme, Mark's books are available for purchase from our Centre.

**About Victorian Author Mark Smith**

Mark Smith lives and works on Victoria's Surf Coast, where he writes novels and stories, and runs outdoor-education programs for young adults. His debut novel *The Road To Winter* (2016) was shortlisted for the Australian Indie Book Awards, the Aurealis Awards and the WA Young Readers' Book Awards. His second novel, *Wilder Country*, won the 2018 Indie Book Award for Young Adults. Mark is also an award winning writer of short fiction, with credits including the 2015 Josephine Ulrick Literature Prize and the 2013 Alan Marshall Short Story Prize, and his work has appeared in Best Australian Stories 2014 & 2015, Review of Australian Fiction, The Big Issue and The Australian.

**Your Feedback**

As this is a new and exciting venture for The Literature Centre, your feedback on our Young Writers Online 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**

See our website for all the details including reduced fee, registration forms, timetable of authors, what to expect and more [www.thelitcentre.org.au](http://www.thelitcentre.org.au). Young Writers Online is suitable for school classes or individual students (home-school or privately enrolled) keen to write.