

Winning writers workshops

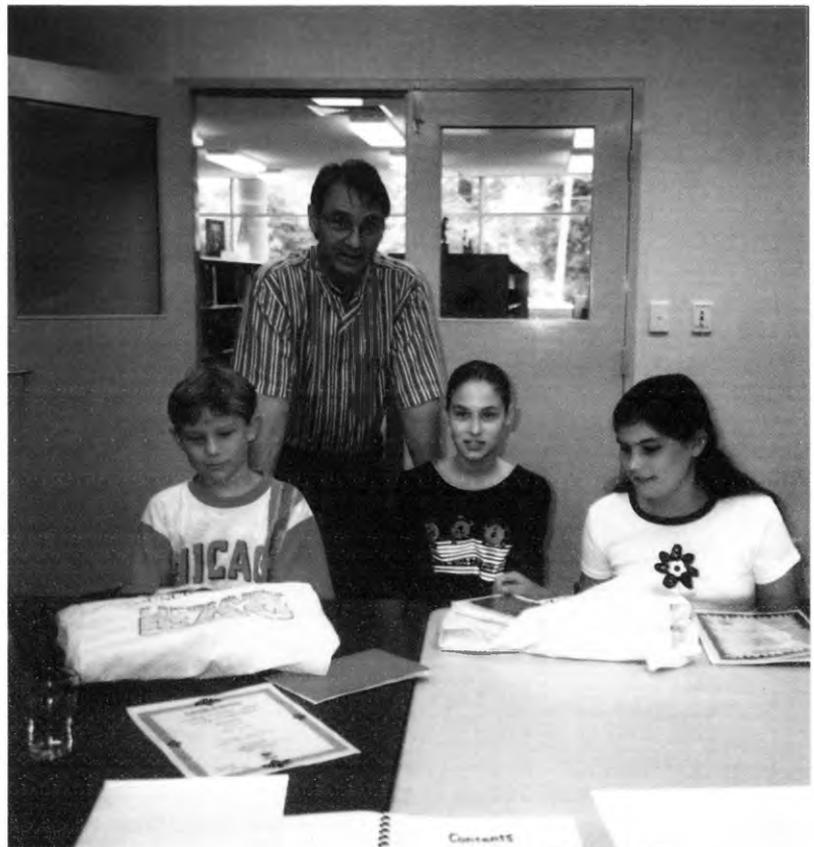
Tracy Gibson, Logan City Libraries

Logan City Libraries were the recipients of the 1998 Bess Thomas Award and used the \$250 prize to run a writing workshop which was offered to the winners of the annual Young Peoples Short Story Competition.

WWW was seen as an extension of the existing writing competition. The inclusion of a creative writing workshop as part of the prize was intended to enhance the status of the competition and improve the writing skills of the participants.

Since 1996 the Young Peoples Short Story Competition has been actively encouraging creative writing to the young people of Logan and has strengthened the links between local schools, the library, and library suppliers. Running from July to August, the competition is open to eight to twenty year olds. In 1998 a poetry section was introduced for the thirteen to twenty year olds, in response to requests from parents and teaching staff.

With the assistance of the Queensland Writers Centre, author and screenwriter Rick Searle was booked to judge the writing competition and lead the workshop. Poet Simon Ellaby performed the same tasks for the poetry sections.



Rick Searle with the winners of the 8–10 and 11–13 year-old story writing competitions: Alex Muller, Kate Roymond, and Leisel Fry

While judging the competition, Rick and Simon were able to assess the abilities and needs of the winning writers. This insight enabled them to design the workshop sessions with a personal touch that the participants found comfortable and appealing.

The winning writers and poets attended workshops on Saturday 17 October at Logan's newest library, Logan Hyperdome. The workshops stressed

the importance of planning, developing the writing process, and of having fun. The workshop leaders encouraged the young writers to be creative and have the courage to include 'yucky' or 'naughty' things in their stories.

Work in process was discussed, constructive criticism offered and participants potential and natural abilities were praised. The size of the workshops allowed for informality where all had the opportunity to be heard and be involved in discussions. Rick shared the journey he had taken to get his yet-to-be-published picture book to its present stage.

The workshops helped to boost the self-confidence of the young writers, and provided an opportunity for them to be taken seriously as writers.

The competition and workshops would not have been possible without the support and energy of the staff of Logan City Council Libraries. On behalf of the workshop participants I wish to express thanks for the opportunity given them by the award — an opportunity which they will remember and draw on for a long time. ■



Simon Ellaby (in striped top) leading the poetry workshop with Dave Shayestehfar, Debra Gibson and Elizabeth Walts