

Josh Earl is 'particular'

Josh Earl is a comedian, librarian, cake enthusiast and aging hipster. There's so much we could ask about all that, but for this issue we invited Josh to consider his inner librarian-ness.

For 10 years now I have been a comedian, for seven of those I also worked as a children's librarian at a school in inner city Melbourne.

One day I was reading the book *A Particular Cow* by Mem Fox to a class of year 2s. If you don't know the book, it tells the story of a cow who sets off for a walk.

can't leave a table without making sure my chair is all the way pushed in. And most importantly, when I take my glasses off and let my hair down I become quite sultry.

So let's give it up for librarians! But not too loud, we don't want the secret getting out that we are quite fun people.

LIBRARIES AND COMEDY CLUBS ARE BOTH PLACES WHERE PEOPLE GO TO DISCOVER DIFFERENT OPINIONS AND NEW IDEAS.

She ends up with underpants on her head and a farmer chasing her into a lake. Oh, and the word 'particular' is used about 78 times across the 32 pages (I'm not sure if this is true. Please don't go off and get the book and count all the times particular is used. I know you want to. I want to. It's something about years of researching and collating and sorting and storing that we just need to know the answer to things. Ok... go and look it up. Have you done it? How far off was I?).

I finished the story and asked the 25 eight year olds sitting in front of me if they enjoyed it. The answer, in unison, came back as 'Yesssss'. Then a hand shot up. 'What does 'particular' mean?'

'Ummm....it's like if I wanted to emphasise one thing in a series of ... other things'. I saw 25 faces looking at me like dogs do when their owners drive away ('What... but...I don't understand'). The teacher gave me that, 'Don't look at me, this is my break time,' look.*

After what felt like an eternity a young boy put his hand up and said, 'I think I know what it means, it's like if I had two meat pies and one had sauce I'd want that one in particular'. Kids are brilliant!

As an ex-librarian (I still work very casually at the State Library of Victoria but not as a librarian, I'm in the learning services department doing tours and workshops with school groups) I often catch glimpses of my old librarian persona creep out. My books, CDs and records are all alphabetically ordered. My notebooks of my writing are all very neatly contacted (no bubbles) and I

*This is a side note (and a little bit mean) but that teacher who was on her break used to come into the library the day before parent teacher night and borrow over 100 books to put in her classroom, only to return them the day after the interviews. When I said to her that maybe she should keep them in there for a bit longer (and this is just me brainstorming here) and actually let the kids read them she said, 'No, the kids would just wreck them and dog-ear the pages'. The good news is she is no longer teaching at that school, she got pregnant and didn't go back to teaching. I was going to buy her some bibs as a present but then I thought the baby would just spill food on them and wreck them, so I didn't.

Comedian Josh Earl may not be in libraries much anymore but he still likes to keep his books and CDs in alphabetical order.

