

Murrumburrah Writers' Group

Newsletter



WHAT WE ARE UP TO NEXT:

Whilst we're running a class on how to write, the more advanced class is writing one-page articles on some of the history pertaining to the Twin Towns. At present they're focusing on the sculpture Bill the Bastard and these articles will be offered to journalists at the launching of Bill. It's envisaged that a wider range of information will offer journalists more scope, thus tempting more visitors to Harden/Murrumburrah. We will also run a pilot program on zoom to cater for those who don't wish to venture out on cold or dreary nights but still wish to participate the writing group.

IMPORTANT:

Please **bring along any ideas** that you wish to write about and if your interest is **family history**, please don't forget to bring along the details that you already know about your family!
Above all **DON'T FORGET YOUR WRITING MATERIALS.**

OUR NEXT MEETING

Thursday,

JUNE 24 from 6pm until 8pm

at the **Murrumburrah Court House,**

Cnr. Vernon & Albury Sts, **MURRUMBURRAH.**

If you wish, please BRING SNACKS to share,



MEMBERSHIP AND ENTRY FEE

(which covers electricity plus other expenses) is:

\$2's **members per visit,**

\$4's **non-members per visit,**

MEMBERSHIP is \$10's **per year.**

If you'd like more information or need transport and/or wish to let us know you'd like to attend:

Please call **Robin** on **02 6386 2100.**

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Professional Writer Under Focus:

Each month we focus on the career paths of
authors/writers of all genres.

THIS MONTH our focus

is on **author, VALERIE PARV** who was one of Australia's leading writers in the Romance genre. Sadly, she passed away last month. In her memory her sister Leigh and her husband Howard donated a painting of Valerie as well as her Order of Australia medal to our Harden Murrumburrah Arts Council.

Before her passing last month, prominent Australian author Valerie Parv was the doyenne of the romantic novel. Her books sold more than 34 million and were translated into 29 languages.

One of Valerie's sisters, Leigh Fullagar and her husband Howard (both from Harden) made the Harden Murrumburrah Arts Council a generous donation of a painting of Valerie that was entered into the Archibald Prize plus they also gifted her Order of Australia medal which was awarded in 2015 for her significant service to the arts.

Many locals may have met Valerie because she was an ambassador for Australia Day and on occasion, in this capacity visited Harden, Murrumburrah and other nearby towns, plus she visited her sister.

Forever the romantic, her husband Paul Parv could have walked out of one of Valerie's novels because prior to their meeting Paul was a soldier in two armies and then upon his arrival in Australia after a stint as a gardener, he became a crocodile and buffalo hunter in the Northern Territory. Further down the track Paul, who was born in Finland, moved to Sydney and after completing a

diploma from the Institute of Engineering Technology Australia he worked as a layout artist for Nock & Kirby and also as an advertising consultant as well as a freelance cartoonist. Valerie began her career at the same company as an advertising copywriter. After meeting Paul, she believed him to be the most interesting man she had ever met so at just 18 (much to her parents' dismay) she married him. It turned out to be very happy union. Perhaps influenced by Valerie Paul wrote a book about his life in the Northern Territory entitled 'Goodpeller Tucker'.



Author Valerie Parv

"I considered myself lucky to have met the love of my life at such a young age," Valerie often said, and, as a consequence, she believed that because she deeply loved her husband, she recognized how significant love was in her life, and therefore understood how important love was in other people's lives.

The couple decided to leave Sydney and opted to live in Canberra, where Valerie, who was generous with her time, encouraged and influenced many Australian writers; many of whom went on to become published. She became a volunteer guide at the National Zoo and Aquarium for 11 years and often drew on these experiences to add more flavour to many of the 90 books she wrote. Valerie and her husband Paul went into partnership with her sister Leigh and Howard in a café in Canberra. She decided upon the afternoon shift and met many characters who may have been included in her novels. She worked there for about two years until her husband became gravely ill.

Valerie said that she got a buzz writing about characters she called her "blank canvas". She enjoyed not knowing anything about their history, and as such she felt they were free to invent themselves. She used this methodology in her novels as well as the many short stories she wrote for national magazines as well as her movie scripts.

Not content with writing she also conducted seminars and workshops on all aspects of writing based on her best-selling guides for writers. As a former truant during her school days, she soon

realized her short comings as a teacher, so she completed a Train the Trainer course, a counselling course then went on to finish her Masters in writing.

Writing was always in her blood, as a youngster as she was content when putting pen to paper, and Leigh recalls her publishing a magazine called The Rochester Rabbit Club which had a short existence due to a readership of only two, her loyal sisters'.

Many years ago, the State Library of New South Wales, Australia, began acquiring Valerie's papers for their collection and has continued to collect them. These papers detail the author's career as one of Australia's most successful writers in the romance genre and the collection includes manuscripts of her works as well as correspondence.

Paul and Valerie were married for 38 years. He was her one and only hero, however he sadly passed away from cancer in 2008. A little while later Valerie decided move to Young NSW.

In 2000, Romance Writers of America set up an award in her name, (it was taken over by Romance Writers of Australia), for authors of unpublished romance novels, and Valerie personally mentored each winner - she called them her "minions".

Valerie's minion for 2020 Kristin Silk wrote:

"I am so shocked and devastated that I am struggling to even find words. I'm typing while crying on my keyboard".

"Your belief in me when I struggled to believe in myself was everything. Your support, generosity, wisdom and guidance have meant so much to me."

Another recent winner, writer Joanna Nell, wrote that she was "shocked and saddened" by her death. She described Valerie as the matriarch of the romance writing community and her former mentor. "A warmer, kinder, more generous person you could not wish to meet."

Wiradjuri writer Anita Heiss described Valerie as "not only one of Australia's most successful authors, but one of our most generous".

And former minion Rachel Bailey wrote: The romance community lost a legend, and the world lost a beautiful light. Valerie was my friend, but that seems like such a narrow label. I won the Valerie Parv Award back in 2005, and the prize was a year of mentoring from Valerie herself. At the time I was unpublished, and Valerie was something of a goddess, and it was hard not to be starstruck. But through that mentoring and joining the ranks of her "minions", we became friends. She offered unwavering support and generous advice (she was

the person who provided a personal referee report when I applied to do a PhD).

Book of the Month:

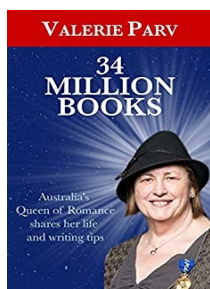
Here forthwith is the **BOOK OF THE MONTH**, which is available via the net and at many book shops.

This month's choice is:

34 Million Books

By acclaimed writer:

Valerie Parv



Have you ever wondered what makes a writer? Or if you might become one yourself? Part memoir and part writing guide, Valerie Parv's book provides a fascinating look into her world of words. Valerie has been published since the age of fourteen when the Australian Women's Weekly accepted her first article. Ninety books, dozens of short fiction, magazine serials, movie scripts and articles followed. As she recounts meeting some of her personal heroes and being made a Member of the Order of Australia, how writing has sustained her, and more. Valerie concludes each chapter with a "writing takeaway" with unique insights and a few caveats for those interested in how she works her story magic.

Writers' Group Support:

According to the **Romance** Writers of America, a **romance novel** must have a central focus on the development of a **romantic** relationship between two people. Following, are three valuable tips:

How to Write An Amazing Romance

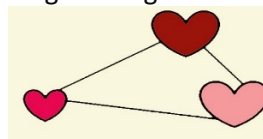
Romeo and Juliet. Scarlett and Rhett. Allie and Noah. Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. Ron and Hermione. Jane Eyre and Mr Rochester. Just a handful of the many memorable couples in literature. I bet you could add a few of your favorites to this list. What do these couples have in common? What is it about their stories that captures readers' imaginations

across the years, decades, and even centuries? In short, what makes a great romance?

Sometimes, romance gets a bad rap for being fluffy, pure entertainment with little real-world insight, but Kelly Faircloth disagrees. In her insightful article 'Here's How Not to Critique Romance Novels', she argues:

Romance is a real and valid literary tradition with its own tropes, conventions, goals and preoccupations that addresses real complexities in people's lives... the genre's true subject, and true great concern, is feelings. Not just romantic feelings, but feelings about one's family, one's friends, oneself.

This is the stuff that great romance novels are made of. The universal conflict of navigating these feelings resonates with us, no matter what century we live in. If you're a romance writer, you already know the genre has value, but understanding that value, and how to bring it out, can still help take your writing from good to great.



Rule number one – Triangles sell

Who doesn't love a good love triangle? They make for delicious drama, and few among us have escaped the sting of unrequited love, adding a frisson of relatability. But what keeps such an oft-used trope from becoming stale?

Two words: high stakes.

Love triangles may be cliché, but readers adore them. Find a way to make it work.

A spurned lover with mere hurt feelings will make a story fall flat, but give your characters something precious, something essential at stake, and you have a recipe for a page-turner.

Think of Scarlett O'Hara, pining helplessly for Ashley, whose devotion to Melanie is so pure and constant. All the while, Rhett is waiting in the wings with an equally passionate and loyal love for Scarlett, but she can't see through the haze of her obsession. Readers feel the heroine's situation growing more dire as, one by one, she loses every person or achievement she cared for. When she finally does realize her love for Rhett, of course it's too late. He's had enough. Scarlett has proven her mettle to readers time and again, but we can't help wondering by the closing lines: how can she possibly come back from this?

The tension running through *Gone with the Wind* is tight as a drum, and it's the stakes of Scarlett's misplaced affections that keep readers hanging on every word. Are the stakes high enough in your story? What will happen if your protagonist doesn't get the lover she longs for? If you keep your reader guessing right up to the end, your book is sure to stand out from the crowd.



Rule Number two– Readers love a happy ending

While Scarlett O'Hara's brand of drama keeps readers locked in, we also can't help swooning over a happy ending. In this scenario, the protagonist does get what she wants, and it's all the more satisfying for the torturous wait we've endured on every page to get to this point.

Think of William Goldman's *The Princess Bride*. The lovers, Buttercup and Westley, part after declaring their love and sharing a first passionate kiss. From that encounter, they're separated by kidnappers, sword fights, R.O.U.S. (Rodents of Unusual Size), torture, and the scheming Prince Humperdinck. We wonder, ***Will these lovers ever overcome such obstacles?*** Spoiler alert: yes, they will. And when they do, it's a happy ending of epic proportions.

Happy endings in fiction can give readers the strength to face real-world struggles.

Goldman's book is, of course, quite fantastical, but the spirit of the story holds true no matter the setting – great love faces many challenges, but it triumphs in the end. Every human encounters roadblocks to love and enduring happiness, and it's one of the chief comforts of fiction to truly believe those struggles will be rewarded.



Rule Number three – Respect your audience (and your genre)

Another essential component to writing a great romance novel is having knowledge of and appreciation for the genre itself. Like every other genre, it has its own conventions, tropes, and nuances.

Not every romance novel is a bodice-ripper. Some do focus on the physical and prioritize entertaining the reader, but others have a more literary bent

and use the genre's focus on feelings to explore themes of human connection. If you read widely in the genre and familiarize yourself with its tools, you'll be better prepared to place your book within it. You'll know how to best reach your audience, how to maximize your story's potential. If you're not sure what the genre's tropes or conventions or subgenres are, I have two resources to get you started:

- Mindy Klasky's list of tropes,
- *Now Novel's* list of subgenres.

Understand why fans are drawn to this genre and keep their expectations in mind as you write. Whether they're just here for the sex or they relish the drama, dilemmas, and emotions, romance is the place for readers to explore an inner landscape often downplayed by society. In the pages of fiction, readers find themselves, they find a sympathetic ear, they find solidarity.

Readers approach romance fiction with a willingness to be moved. Rise to that challenge. Romance novels' capacity for plumbing the depths of human emotion, connection, and sexuality opens a world of possibilities for authors aspiring to try their hand at the genre.

Following is an interesting piece written by one of Valerie's fan's who, at the time, was just 14-years-old. Read it from top to bottom then from the bottom to the top and note how the meaning dramatically changes.

Today was the absolute worst day ever
And don't try to convince me that
There's something good in every day
Because, when you take of closer look,
This world is a pretty evil place.
Even if
Some goodness does sing through once in a while
Satisfaction and happiness don't last.
And it's not true that
It's all in the mind and heart
Because
True Happiness can be obtained
Only if one's surroundings are good
It's not true that good exists
I'm sure that you can agree that
The reality

Creates
My attitude
It's beyond my control
And you'll never in a million years hear me say that
Today was a good day

Murrumburrah Writers' Group's Aims:



The Murrumburrah Writers Group logo

The Murrumburrah Writers Group aims to expand writer's abilities as well as their skills, while focusing on encouraging the love of writing plus endorsing professional writing practice. In alliance with you our Writers Group will endeavour to foster an energetic, inventive, as well as a supportive writing family. Where possible it's the group's intention to guide writers towards publication (if you haven't already published) and also to work towards finding writing opportunities for writers.

Our group is suitable for keen writers of fiction and non-fiction, of most genre, who wish to build their writing plus presentation skills and who're prepared to offer constructive support to other writers.

Introducing Our Team:

The 'Murrumburrah Writers' Group' team is a volunteer board dedicated to using their skills to help grow a thriving arena for those interested in developing their writing.



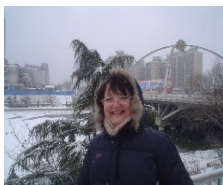
MANAGING DIRECTOR/EDITOR

Robin Cooper - 02 6386 2100, 0408 021 026

Robin is an experienced arts curator who ran gatherings for those interested in the performing as well as the visual arts.

With a background in journalism Robin's interests are in writing, film, literature, art, in fact most arenas covering the arts. She also has experience in all aspects of running her own businesses as well as in events management.

In addition she liaises with members, develops activities, and in general keeps the 'group' ticking.



CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Pam Heys - 6386 4789

Pam has a background in teaching, she has lived in China and is an award-winning artist. Pam has travelled extensively and has lived in Fiji and China. She brings her wide-range of professional skills to our team.



PHOTOGRAPHIC DIRECTOR

Diane Murphy - 0439 785 687

Diane is an avid photographer who enjoys creating photographic compositions for her own use. Diane, held a managerial position within the Club industry for a number of decades. Her interests include writing, photography, reading and art.



FINANCIAL DIRECTOR

Greg Medway - 0487 028 657

Greg has been a successful businessman for more than 35 years. He has just had his first book published which is about 'how to develop a viable business in China'. So far it's received much acclaim from businessmen and academics. Greg's hobbies are writing, poetry and sport.



MEMBERS/GRANTS/PROJECTS DIRECTOR

John McAvoy 0439 785 687

John held a number of positions in the Public Service and although retired, he's currently working with a team of 25 on a ground breaking scientific programme that's developing technology which aims to grow a permanent home within three or so days. If successful this technology will be ideal for third world countries and disasters zones where emergency housing is required. John has always held a great interest in literature and wishes to advance this interest by developing his writing skills.



ALTERNATIVE DIRECTOR

Lena Elphick - 0401 600 301

Lena has studied Visual Art and has a BA, Post Grad Professional Art Studies and a Diploma of Education (Art). She has written two books, one about local soldiers and the other involves her husband Gordon's family history tree.

Membership Form:

If you wish to become a member of our group, please fill in the following form and/or contact Robin on 02 6386 2100

MURRUMBURRAH WRITERS' GROUP (MWG)

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

(A MEMBER OF THE HARDEN MURRUMBURRAH ARTS COUNCIL)

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

HOME PHONE NUMBER: _____

BUSINESS PHONE NUMBER: _____

MOBILE NUMBER: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

HOBBIES: _____

WHAT INTERESTS YOU MOST ABOUT WRITING? _____

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE OUR GROUP TO HELP WITH YOUR WRITING AIMS? _____

SIGNATURE: _____

One year's membership:

\$10.00

OR

If you are **already a member of the Harden Murrumburrah Arts Council** (ie belong to another group within the Arts Council) One Year's membership for the **MWG** is:

\$ 5.00