

POSTSCRIPT

A STUDENT PUBLICATION COVERING THE 9TH BIENNIAL LITERATURE FESTIVAL AT NEWINGTON COLLEGE



Zohab Zee Khan in OBLT with Year 7 Science



Tristan Bancks, author. Image via <https://www.tristanbancks.com>

ZOHAB 'SLAMS' YEAR 7 WITH INSPIRATION

By Aiden Garey and Henry Armstrong-Bailey

Zohab Zee Khan, an award-winning slam poet, motivational speaker, music and dance performer, came in today to talk to Year 7 about his career in slam poetry. During this time he taught his audience about resilience, defiance and the intricacies involved.

The first thing that Khan told the class was how he got to be a National Champion in slam poetry. Not only just this but he was able to captivate his audience through humour, rhythm, poetry and surprisingly, even a harmonica. This story of his resilient spirit over constant adversity and defeat over a course of five years once losing by an excruciating 0.1 of a point, until he finally stood on the stage of the Opera house in front of a standing ovation of over 1000 people.

"If you take away anything from today, let it be that your mood can instantly become better if you are grateful for everything you have in your life." And this is what matters most to him. The journey rather than the destination. What got you to the point you are today. The people, the places and the memories that make you the person you are today".

Poetry became his outlet. Because the page listened where others did not. Poetry was 'word gym.' You didn't have to do one thing poetry was so much more to him 'as far as [he's] concerned poetry is one word or more.' It was a place where he could take from the world around him and turn it into something creative while at the same time able to create discussion. And most importantly present his ideas to the world because the more we know each other as humans the better the world becomes.

LAUNCHING LITFEST: TRISTAN BANCKS

By Raff Talbot

Tristan Bancks is an Australian author and actor. Some of his best books include; "Two Wolves", "Detention" and "The Fall". In his career, he has spent time in London, where he worked as a TV presenter for the shows *Don't Try this at Home*, *The Travel Channel* and *Sussed*. He has also acted in an array of short films such as; *Beneath Clouds*, *Dust* and *Remote Area Nurse*. The most recent of his films is called *Every Day at School*, and it was funded by SBS Australia for their "Change the World in Five Minutes" Campaign. But recently he has taken up writing as his full-time job based in Australia.

Bancks is also an ambassador of the non-profit organisation *Room to Read*, which focusses on gender equality in education by teaching young females how to read and giving them a chance in life.

He tries his best to get others to consider the same path as he has chosen because he thoroughly enjoys his career. Bancks says that you should not be too hard on yourself when writing and just enjoy it. He also says that you need to make the stories come from within and past experiences, this makes it easier to write. He also says that you should get outside, because that helps him.

Bancks brought up how he had a love for reading at a very young age. In Year 4 in fact, he remembers his story about the life of a chocolate bar, even looking into how it travels through the digestive system. You can tell that he has a talent and keen observation skills.

Bancks encapsulated the audience by telling a thrilling story about his library teacher. He referred to her being a monotone and expressionless character who always used to slam a book with haste to scare her students. The story also detailed his best friend Owen's scab. In an attempt to gain interest during what seemed like another boring story read aloud, Bancks ripped his friend's scab off his knee, resulting in a detention. What happened next was a series of events that led him to a hospital with emergency appendectomy, just to avoid said detention. Despite all this, he tried to tell his mother that this was all a farce to avoid detention; she of course did not believe him, and years later, this was the same story told in his novel, "Scab".

Tristan Bancks is an incredibly inspiring author who is very talented with many achievements in his belt. His support for the *Room to Read* association is commendable. He is an author to remember, and his writing is incredibly unique.

ZOHAB ZEE KHAN: *2014 Slam Poet Champion*

Zohab Zee Khan is an Australian slam poetry champion, hip hop artist and inspirational speaker. Khan is prominent for his vibrant and charismatic personality and uses this to help teach young students about his journey throughout life.

Even when watching, Khan performs his love of literature which prevails in his syntax. Khan has an extremely laid back and genuine personality that is accompanied by a quirky sense of humour. When in his element on stage he flexes his confidence and expertise. Khan makes every single sentence a melodic euphony that appeals to all. He tries to incorporate as much rhyme and rhythm into his performances, which further displays his fondness for poetry. Khan started off his stunning performance with a bang, reciting one of his most famous poems titled, 'Imagine'. The poem involves a series of rhetorical questions, compelling the audience to "imagine a world where people are treated as equals, imagine a world that is not categorized by skin tone, religion, gender or size".

As he arrived at the end of the poem Khan repeated this line again to further imply his message. He does this frequently when performing; repeating key messages and ideas until the audience is familiar with them. Khan's quirkiness is further demonstrated when he takes his 'breaks' during his performance by beatboxing or playing the harmonica (sometimes both at the same time).

Khan discovered his love for poetry during his time at school. In this presentation, he mentioned that he used to get bullied very often at school. He would use the world of poetry as a coping mechanism that would allow him to express himself and to show other people that it is possible to still succeed even in tough times. This is when his adventure into the world of poetry began.

By Anthony Cammaroto and Zach Zoud

**"imagine a world
where people are
treated as equals,
imagine a world
that is not
categorized by
skin tone, religion,
gender or size".**

– Zohab Zee
Khan

Khan started off his career by winning his first ever competition with a score of 9.8. After this amazing start, his goal was to take part in the Slam Poetry Championships. The next 4 years saw a series of highs and lows. Nevertheless, he kept trying yet did not find success. In 2013, he had a "huge punch in the guts" because he lost by 0.1 of a point in the championship final. Nevertheless, he kept trying and, in 2014, with the poem titled "I write," he won the Slam Poetry Championship. After hearing the poem in his talk today, the win was extremely well deserved.

From being bullied in school to winning the Slam Poetry Competition in 2014, this journey has made Khan the inspirational man he is today. He is touring the world today inspiring others to achieve their dreams no matter what life throws at them. Khan personal journey of determination and grit is an inspiration to all. Everyone should share a bit of Khan's quirkiness and lively energy to help students learn in an informal but professional manner.



Zohab Zee Khan in OBLT with Year 9 Science



From Desk Chair to Ballerina - James Knight Inspires

By James Lucas

Sports Journalist and non-fiction writer, James Knight kicked off the first period of Litfest with a captivating seminar for Mr Williams' Year 8 Drama class. Knight used his time to teach the boys about the importance of looking through the cracks in the sky. A number of years ago, Knight's then 3-year-old son asked him what was on the other side of the sky. They were watching an electrical storm and the young boy thought that the streaks of lightning were cracks in the sky. Knight mentioned how that very moment has stayed with him throughout the years as a reminder every time he sits down to start writing. He states that everyone views the world through a different lens and one can find a story from literally anything; just by looking through the cracks in the sky and asking questions. Knight then proceeded to run a short activity with the boys. He picked a random object in the room and got the Drama boys to build a story, with the object as a starting place, by asking each other questions. Somehow, they managed to get from an ordinary desk chair to a love story between a French ballerina and a man off the streets of Paris. Knight really emphasises the point this morning; if you look at something from a different angle, and ask the right questions, a story can be built out of nowhere. Coming out of the session one of the students remarked, "It was really inspiring to hear how these little interactions with people had affected his life in such a major way".

There is a good chance that a lot of boys coming out of that talk may have had their lives affected from a small interaction with James Knight.

Image: James Knight, author. Courtesy of <https://www.facebook.com/jamesknight.justwords/>

THE ROAD TO WRITING – THE STORY OF MARK SMITH

By James Lucas



Mark Smith, a young adult author and former English teacher, made his debut at Litfest with the story of the worst day of his life. He broke his neck when he was about fifteen years old in a horse riding incident. He was stuck in a neck brace, bedridden for 6 months, unable to even roll over. At this point in his life, Smith had never even read one book by himself when this accident took place. Stuck in bed for all this time however, there was little else to do. By the time his six months were up, Smith was an avid reader. He shared with Ms Troncone's Year 8 English class details on how he studied to become an English teacher and a writer. It took him about twelve months of submitting his work to various publishers and getting turned away before he saw some form of success. From there, his career snowballed, and he started writing novels. Smith spent the majority of his time advising the boys on how he and many other authors operate and get the best out of themselves creatively. Year 8 English have been studying one of Smith's books of late, titled *The Road to Winter*, and he spent time going over that particular novel with the students, helping them to understand where the story came from and how he went about writing it. When asked what the greatest lesson he has learnt throughout his career, Smith responded that many people viewed writing novels as requiring pure creativity. He said that this simply isn't the case in real life and writing is much more about dedication and hard work than creativity. "Writing is 5% creativity and 95% hard work" he said. Mark clearly loves his job and was filled with joy to see a class studying his book at school.



Mark Smith, author: image via <https://www.textpublishing.com.au/authors/marksmith>

OLIVER'S WORLD OF READING, WRITING, NINTENDO, PLUSHIES AND BURGERS

By Henry Armstrong-Bailey and Aiden Garey



Stand-up comedian and children's author Oliver Phommavanh visited Year 7 to share his ideas on writing and what it means to him. Phommavanh is an award-winning author who has written multiple famous titles such as *Thai-riffic*, *Con-nerd* and *Don't Follow Vee*. During his talk, Phommavanh gave the students four key tips to writing fun, interesting and relatable content (including his love of gaming and collecting plush toys!)

Number 1: *Draw inspiration from fears.* From one simple word, one can get an idea and a setting. If you are afraid of spiders, set your story in a cave. If it's clowns, set your story in a carnival. Don't forget your character's motivation. Why would they be in that situation? Maybe it's because there is a precious treasure in the cave or something to win from the carnival games. Whatever it is, this all comes together nicely to start a story.

Number 2: *Take notes somewhere, preferably in a notebook.* As a writer, one must be observant. Ideas can appear from anywhere and you need to be ready for that. So, have something ready so that you can remember that idea from. When you write it down 'you have that idea forever.'

Number 3: *As a writer you need to torture your characters.* Or, 'push their buttons, make them scared, make them angry.' Really mess around with them. You need to make them behave like actual people. Attach emotions and then change them according to the scenario. A story without changing emotions isn't interesting, take your reader on a roller coaster ride.

Number 4: *You draw everything you write about from your own life:* personal experiences, memories and family. And not all of it has to be real. 'Honestly, being a writer for a living is being yourself for a living.' Part of being a writer is being a good liar. Throw in something to entertain not just the audience, but yourself as well. Enjoy what you write.

'If you don't have a life, make it up.'

- Oliver Phommavanh

AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT:

Comprehending Context with Abbas El Zein



By Aiden Garey and James Lucas

Abbas El-Zein is a scholar, academic and author who was born in Beirut in Lebanon. He is the proud author of two proclaimed fiction works. *Tell the Running Water* (2001); a story based on his experiences in Beirut. *The Secret Maker of the World* (2014) is a short story. He has also published a Memoir which explores his youth growing up in war-stricken Lebanon and his eventual migration to Australia. Meanwhile, his academic works have been featured in many scientific journals and media publications. He is also a professor of Environmental Engineering.

He started the lecture by introducing himself and clearly outlining how he grew up in war-stricken Beirut and asking the audience a question. The question was whether fictional writing piece can be written effectively based of past experiences or using one's imagination. Most of the audience put their hand up in response that it is more effective to write creative pieces based off experience and small minority answered for the imagination. He then gave a brief summary on the history of Lebanon as a nation. Lebanon was part of the Ottoman empire for thousands of years, before being taken over by France and finally independence in 1943. However, war plagued the country from 1975 to 1990. The was basically Islam vs Christianity which was split evenly across the nation. El Zein's house was constantly under threat of being bombed, meaning his family had to keep moving to a new residence. Explosions were so abundant during this time, that him and his family could tell what type explosion had took place just by listening. In his apartment that he lived in during the time when he was studying for his final year 12 exams, he would place his desk on the balcony so he could keep watch on what was happening in the city. One day he left his desk to go to the bathroom and as he was in there, there was an explosion. When he returned, he discovered that his desk had been destroyed by the explosion which out the front of his apartment and if he had been sitting there during the explosion, he would not have survived.

He had been studying a lot of Greek mythology at the time. Utilising this, he brainstormed what all the reasons could have been why there was a conflict but with Greek Gods. This belief in a Godly intervention he felt, was a way that the human mind coped with the experience. That the only reasonable explanation for being so close to death.

El Zein then explained another near-death experience, when a machine gun round went off while he was still at school. The lecture had stopped, and the teacher lit a cigarette on her desk. The students were ecstatic that the lecture had been stopped. There was no panic because school shootings did not exist during this time. People then started coming up with ideas of things that could have happened. What he found disturbing was the pool of blood just outside his school. The scariest part wasn't the blood, but the fact it happened just outside his school.

El Zein remarked that when one goes to school, they submit to certain rules. In return, one obtains safety. Not just physical safety but a psychological safety because of normal interactions with others which also one of the roles of school. "You must believe in the school system for it to work", he said. "It wouldn't work if everyone did something wrong because it is simply impractical to punish everyone", he added.

Going back to the case before, with a pool of blood outside the school, it seems to confirm the safety of school. The incident happened outside the gates, in other words, it will not cross the school gates. "Nothing else had been as traumatising as that" he said. There were other deaths in his family and people he associated with, which traumatised him, but this was worse was the worst and it seeped its way into his writing. This was for one main reason: It is harder to return to normal when there is something the mind can't comprehend. The mind is unsettled by things it can't explain.

Another experience was a 1992 – a man dead in a street. Something tied around his neck. He only had rags across his legs. He was thrown from the 22nd floor of the building, as a sniper terrorising the city. After the first thoughts of horror, the contextualising instinct kicked in and he began asking question that he would never know. Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? This story that came next combined all of this with the sentence, 'he likes to play games.' This was a sentence that may have been said in his head or someone around him said. "But how do you know what a sniper's life is like" he said. "Well you know the setting. How he would have grown up the communities in the city. From then on you rely on your proverbial empathy" he added.

"We all have a range of experiences to rely on. This is why people generally get better at writing as they get older. They can draw on more experiences from a 'richer emotional vocabulary' (empathy). As well as that, writing is incremental. 'Some days you get nothing, other days a lot comes onto the page,'" he added. He related this curiosity to an article he read about a man in China who went fishing for dead bodies for a living. The two-key aesthetics of creative writing are: to take pleasure in language and to learn about the world. "If you understand these two concepts you will get it right," he said. And no matter what you write about a story can be built from a single word.

Image: Abbas El- Zein

Liam Pieper, author. Image via <http://liampieper.com/about-me/>

“A good understanding of the past will help in creating a better today. That's why I think as human citizens we should all endeavour to learn about the horrors of the past to prevent them from happening again”.

- Liam Pieper

LIAM PIEPER: *From Past to Present*

By Will Cordwell and Rueben Agius

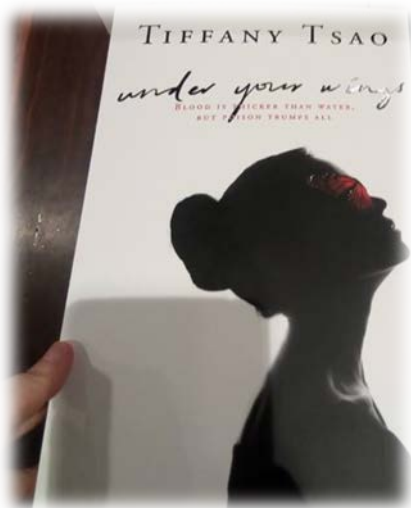
Liam Pieper is an author who has published three major novels throughout his life including; *The Toymaker*, *Mistakes Were Made* and *The Feel Good Hit of the Year*. These stories all try to strike a serious chord with the reader.

Starting with his childhood, Pieper confided in his audience that he was able to turn around an unfortunate start in life into something great. He did this to illustrate that everyone can strive to do their personal best, despite what hand life throws at them. He also talked about the current political climate and how sad politics are in Australia, and how our generation has been dealt a bad hand by this. “I think that if the older generation has left us with a worse world they were handed, then it is our duty to turn it into a better one for the generation to come”, he said.

Pieper mostly writes historical fiction at present. With such a strong inquiry-based mind, he informed his audience that he began to see the present mimicking the past. He states that, “a good understanding of the past will help in creating a better today. That's why I think as human citizens we should all endeavour to learn about the horrors of the past to prevent them from happening again”.

His upcoming novel the about the Boer War will focus on these issues.

TIFFANY TSAO: *Across Oceans*

Tiffany Tsao, author. Images via <https://tiffanytsao.com/>

Dr Tiffany Tsao is doctor and author, who over her extensive career has written three books. These include, *The Oddfits*, *Under Your Wings* and *The More Known World*. Tsao was born in the U.S, but despite her U.S citizenship, she moved to Singapore, living with her grandparents. She went to an international school in Singapore due to her English speaking background. She then went back to the U.S and completed her undergraduate degree on the East Coast, eventually completing her PhD major in English literature at UC Berkeley. She then moved to Australia eight years ago.

During her time travelling, she started writing her own novel, which took eight years to publish. Her first novel *The Oddfits* is about a young teenager who can't fit in and feels like her parents make her life hell, and feels like an 'oddfit'. Tsao then wrote a sequel, *The More Known World*, and has plans to write another.

The boys listened intently as she explained her novels in personal detail. These novels are very close to Tsao; when she was growing up, she felt that she did not fit in with most of her peers, and her parents did not like how she acted at the time. These novels are a personal reflection of her life.

Overall, the presentation was very engaging and we can speak on behalf of the boys in saying that it was an interesting and personal presentation that was thoroughly enjoyed across the entire audience.

By Thomas Foster and Noah Morgan

AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT: AN INTERVIEW WITH SCOT GARDNER

Written by James Davis

Scot Gardener is a Young Adult author, who has published works titled; *The Dead I Know*, *Bookmark Days*, *The Detachable Boy* and *The Legend of Kevin the Plumber*. Scot is also the receiver of many prestigious awards like The Australia Council Grants, Awards and Fellowships, Children's Book Council Book of the Year Awards (CBCA) and New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards. He sat down with James Davis to chat about his views on all things writing.

What inspired you to start writing novels?

"Before writing novels, I started writing articles, and I got into this while hiking with a mate while in country Victoria. At about 10 pm at night, not many people pick you up at 10.00 at night, but they guy who did was an editor for a garden magazine. As a parting gift he asked me to write a piece for the magazine, I got about \$150 for about 6 weeks of work. It doesn't sound like a lot, but I felt like I discovered alchemy, because they were just ideas and someone valued them on paper. After that I wrote some investigative articles. Then I realised I had more stories to tell, at the time I just met John Marsden, who then introduced me to a publisher when I had a manuscript. Then when I took it to her, she loved it and gave me a contract."

How long does it take you to complete a book?

"It takes about 3 months of writing the book; I might do a week here or a day there. And it takes about 8 more months to edit the piece before I send it to the publisher."

What's your favourite book(s) that you wrote?

"I tend to fall in love with my most recent work. In terms of novels its 'Changing Gears', which got shortlisted for the Children's Book Award and Book of the Year Award for Older Readers. If I look at my back list, *Burning Eddy* is one because it was an easy write, it took me about 3 months to write and a day to edit, it was shortlisted for a couple of awards and is still in print after 15 years."

What does your family and friends think of your writing?

"My wife has read *The Other Madonna* which was my first book in the perspective of a female, and I wanted to make sure I got the voice right underdress and she did enjoy it. She said that I was like a bad diary about our family life, which is what I use for inspiration, so she now doesn't read anything I write. My kids read my books, last year my grandson was old enough to read one of my books which was another step along the way, and he loves it. He then later found out that his teacher knew me because she taught my son. My friends, some of them love my work, and some are indifferent. Some of my friends are editors, my dad is a big editor, so they look at things with a critical eye. Some of my friends recognise themselves even if they aren't in there."

Your writing is considered 'absurd fantasy' and 'Gritty Realism'. What your thoughts on this?

"Yeah, I agree on both counts, because some of my work deals with things that are hard to talk about like death, drug use and sexual abuse. Those things are typical young people conversation, whereas an adult talking to young kids, it can be a difficult conversation. That's the 'gritty realism' side and then to take the pressure of sometimes I write things that are just bazar and entertaining for me to write an light hearted."



Scot Gardner with Year 7



Proudest achievement as an author?

"I think it was international recognition, which was my 12th book, which was called *The Dead I Know*, struck a chord and sold internationally and started to sell in the USA and Canada. Another is winning awards, like the Children's Book Council Book of the Year Awards (CBCA)".

AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT:

AN INTERVIEW WITH *MATTHEW LIN*

By Daniel Skontos and Angus Montrose

Year 10 Journalism students and Post Script members Daniel Skontos and Angus Montrose sat down with Matthew Lin to ask him some probing questions.

We know that ever since you could read, you enjoyed your Sunday comics. When you started making your own comics who was your main inspiration?

“Well a most of my inspiration came from things like *Asterix* and *Tintin* when I was growing up, you know as a child. Other things like the cartoon elements of *Bugs Bunny* as well as *Astro Boy* really played an effect on my career as an illustrator. Also, there was this Japanese illustrator who came in to my school one day who kind of showed me his work. It was really interesting, and I guess I took a lot of his methods into my own which definitely has influenced my creative decisions.”

You enjoy using various methods to create your artworks. Can you talk us through a few of these methods?

“I suppose over the last couple of years, I have always enjoyed sketching and drawing using a ballpoint pen for extra details but recently I have been using it as my primary drawing tool in a weird way. I don't know maybe as it is much smoother, and I have the ability to show more the lighter and darker tones I enjoy using it. During my career though I have created various book covers and cartoon characters using this method and it actually has been quite effective.”

From reading your blog, we are aware of your journey as an illustrator, designer, graphic novelist and a manga artist. What would you say is your favourite of these and why?

That's a tricky one because it is always changing, like sometimes I like doing a mavel type drawing and the sketching I also love. It is always changing for me. But I always love and know that I can come back to doing a manga style art because it is a personal favourite and I love the style and the emotion that it puts across.

We hear you're also a traditional gamer. What are some of the things that you enjoy playing and did any of these inspire your illustrations?

Look, I must admit that I am a bit old school and I haven't upgraded yet because I don't get the next one after it comes out. I have to play the games for the PS3 before I can move onto the next game system. Now I am playing a game and now I try and play it from start to finish and I have been playing the *Borderlands* game and it was just mind blowing I just thought that the world creations were great and also the art that was used, I really like the hard outline that was on the art. *Borderland* was really important for me. *Old school Odyssey* was, I don't know if you know that one, but off the top of my head *Borderlands* was a really important for me. So the art and the characters and the world were influential to me for sure.

We also read from your blog, a bit about your career timeline. What would you say was the most defining moment of your career and how it shaped you as a person and an illustrator today.

You know, there were different light bulb moments throughout my career like working in my first job, there was a moment there where the Art Director told me you're too 'arty farty' because back then I was designing boxes for beer, you know, working with Caltex Oil, so it really just hit me when he said that. I guess you could say that it was a very defining moment in my career. Then, working with Scholastic, it really just emphasised how much I enjoy publishing and how much I like books and magazines as well as typography. I love typography as an artform. They would tell me how talented I was and if I had any interest in illustrating for a few books so I guess that was quite defining too. I think though the most important moment in my career was whilst I was in TAFE. This lady told me you will never be good enough to be an illustrator as well as saying you won't be making enough money. That could have crushed me but instead I persisted and next thing I knew I was working in another job and being praised for my work so I guess you could say that was quite defining.



Matthew Lin. Images via <https://www.matthewlin.com.au/>

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