



Creative Wordshops

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Writing Letter

Oct 2025

re-story, re-create, re-
imagine you

for this letter, a weekly
story and ongoing
opportunities -
dorianhaarhoffblog.co.za

Dear writer, storyteller, reader, lover of words, images, silences...

Thank you for those who subscribe to the monthly letter and/or who receive the weekly Sat story. While the letter and story remain as a gift to all, for those who wish, I appreciate any voluntary donation.

Dr R D Haarhoff Standard Bank Current account 0828 59 248

A Writer's Craft

There are two types of writers, architects and gardeners. The architects have the whole thing designed and blueprinted. The gardeners dig a hole, drop in a seed and water it. They know if they planted a fantasy seed or mystery seed. As they water it, they don't know how many branches it's going to have, they find out as it grows. (George R.R. Martin)

As we practice our craft, we are called upon to read both writers on writing and fiction. Here is the Chinese poet SuShi's (1037-1101) secrets of writing:



Not liable to any set rules, a good piece of writing moves on freely and smoothly like floating clouds or flowing water. Clouds drift and form new skylines every other day; a good writer develops fitting styles for different purposes. Water shapes its course according to the nature of the ground over which it flows; a good writer works out his excellence in relation to the materials about which he is writing. Thus is created the natural unity and coherence with rich spontaneous creativity.

Here is a fictional application of some of these principles, taken from my Oct 2008 letter: In *Kit's Wilderness* (David Almond) Kit plods through boring homework about time differences, writing what the teacher wants when his grandfather, an ex-coal miner, enters the room. The old man bears gifts - "a flat rectangle of coal polished like a pony" with a tree bark imprint and a black fossil, an ammonite - "a spiraling horn-shaped shell." Grandfather talks of the sea laying sediment that turned to rock. Over time the rock pressed down on ancient trees and animals:

When we dropped down in the cage we dropped through time. Million years a minute. Pitmen. Time travellers.... Mysterious business... the light and heat of the sun made those trees grow. They lay pitch black in the pitch-black earth... this stuff blacker than the blackest night, holding the heat and light of the ancient sun..." He giggled, moved the fossil across the desk as if it were alive. He slid it onto my written page. "It's for you...and the fossil tree as well." He slid that onto my page, rested it on my answers. "Gifts from a time traveller.

These thoughts arose out of journaling in response to these passages: Writing, is like sliding objects onto the written page, laying questions on our mundane, routine answers, resting in the spaces between lines, the gaps



between words so the words glow with their presence. Reflected in their origins, meanings and sounds. Here too, overlaid, is the grandfather's oral tale as the boy writes the story of their relationship. And the subtle irony of grandfather's wisdom, childlikeness and his metaphors imposed on the dead school text. A story within a story. Seeing a world in a lump of coal. And from the ancient passage, the sky and surface water flow metaphors that follow the nature of the ground.

Close observation of texts such as these teaches me much about our writer's craft. A gardener architect?

Dorian

Writing Retreat Radar – Spring 2025

detailed flyers on request

1. Mentoring: ongoing one-on-one attention

You help me to sound like myself (numerous clients)

Like a pair of sandals we walk this road together.

2 Magic Carpet Writers (Somerset West)

last Wed of the month writeaway

a fun-loving supportive thinking/being group of aspirant writers

2 places open

3 BookBedonnerd Festival Richmond Northern Cape 30 Oct- 1 Nov

4. Bloemfontein storyshops 3-8 Nov

Igno van Niekerk for info 083 376 1330

5. Creating your Tomorrow

wine farm Bot River

Genevieve MCC <https://share.google/d6aCIpVIGeWj5zlaD>

A Words Breath & Being Retreat Sat 15 Nov 10.00 – 16.30 R....

In this mini retreat we explore our connection to words and presence. These states of grace increase our awareness and wake us up. We consider the changes as we journey along the river of our lives.

The day includes a movement and breathwork session with Fiona Hardie, a certified Breathwork facilitator and Pilates instructor

6 Accra Ghana Storyshop for Authentic leadership

postponed to 19-20 Nov