



# ∞ the textConnection ∞

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Top photo: Maybe Hong Kong streetscapes were once like this, before the high rise—this is a street in Chinatown, Kuala Lumpur, 2008.

Photos inside by Pam Kleemann, our terrific Photography for Writers teacher at Victoria University in Melbourne.

Back page: Castle ruins in southern France.

textConnection

writing ∞ editing ∞ training

## Hitting the road again, Sherryl

Hello from afar to TC readers in Australia, Hong Kong, Malaysia, the USA, France and New Zealand.

Thanks for your feedback on the newsletter again this year. We'll endeavour to get three issues out in 2009, once Sherryl has stopped galloping across the globe.

Our October edition is our training issue, with information about our HK sessions and longer-term online study through Victoria University.

We're settling details for our November HK trip—the global financial shudders appear have kept life in limbo for a month or so. We can tailor sessions for your school or workplace and are available for one-on-one help with your projects. Shoot us an email.

WiPS and YWCA programs are outlined on pages 2 and 3. Remember, you don't have to be a member of either organisation—or even be female—to come to these sessions. Hope to catch up in person soon!

Susanna Bryceson & Sherryl Clark

## WHAT ARE WE UP TO NOW?

**Susanna:** I wrongly thought it would be a calm few months ... Not so! I'm working on a variety of projects, including a newsletter series encouraging people to 'live local'. Great fun finding out about these communities and writing them up.

At Victoria University we're setting up a 'rolling writers' festival', that spreads across the year through our western suburbs, an area not usually associated with literature. Have had fabulous response to our pilot this year; working out funding for next year.

I spent a few days in Kuala Lumpur in June (and then holidayed in southern Thailand). Met some lively encouraging people and talked about running textConnection sessions, perhaps in 2009. As a result, we're now writing for monthly magazine *Time Out KL*. [www.timeoutkl.com](http://www.timeoutkl.com)

Been counting days to our trip since seeing HK on the Olympics.

**Sherryl:** This has been a great year so far. In May, my verse novel *Sixth Grade Style Queen (Not!)* was shortlisted for the Children's Book Council awards, and went on to win an Honour Book award in August.

Sales rose sharply and it was exciting to visit schools and hear kids talking about the book.

I've been on long-service leave from Victoria University since July, getting lots of writing and reading done. In September, I spent four weeks in France where I researched medieval history and early invasions (see page 4). I also met up with a number of children's writers.

This month, *The Littlest Pirate* is published as a full-colour picture book (it looks terrific)! Now I'm planning our Hong Kong trip—hope to see both familiar and new faces in my classes!

## Studying online

At Victoria University, we are running the following online subjects from mid-February 2009:

- ∞ Fiction Elements
- ∞ Short Story
- ∞ Corporate Writing 1
- ∞ Industry Overview (Australia)
- ∞ Writing Picture Books
- ∞ Writing Chapter Books.

Fiction Elements is the compulsory first part of our fiction writing subjects. Students then go on to study Short Story, Novel and Screenwriting.

Short Story and Writing Chapter Books are currently being developed. All going well, they'll be ready for Semester 2 2009. Corporate Writing 2 may also be offered.

### Applying

Participants need to apply for and enrol in the Certificate 4 in Professional Writing & Editing at Victoria University.

Application details are on the Victoria University website:

[www.creativeindustries.vu.edu.au](http://www.creativeindustries.vu.edu.au)

(Follow the links to Professional Writing & Editing. Your email query will go straight to Susanna as Course Co-ordinator.)

## SESSION ENQUIRIES

Non-members—men and women—welcome.

For more information on enrolling in these sessions:

Women in Publishing Society

[www.hkwips.org](http://www.hkwips.org)  
(follow the link to Events)

YWCA  
English-Speaking Members  
Department

[www.esmd.ywca.org.hk](http://www.esmd.ywca.org.hk)  
(on the left panel—Autumn Program—click on Language and Communications)

OR EMAIL US DIRECT  
[courses@textconnection.net](mailto:courses@textconnection.net)

## WOMEN IN PUBLISHING SOCIETY sessions

Choose from four sessions over two consecutive Saturdays at the Helena May Centre in Central, Hong Kong.

### Saturday 15 November

#### Creating your own website and marketing plan

Sherryl Clark ∞ 9:30 am-12:30 pm



Authors today are constantly told they must promote their own books. Whether you're an author or are running a small business, there are plenty of economical ways to promote your "product". Bring a description of what you want to market and be ready to work on your plan.

Whether you want to market your writing or your small business, this workshop will help you get up and running. Planning is the key—start with a great website. How many pages? Who is the audience? Understand design elements, structuring the site, enabling simple navigation, and attracting visitors with keywords and tags. How will Google find you?

### Business writing secrets

Susanna Bryceson ∞ 9:30 am-12:30 pm

Business writing: no one reads it for entertainment. Most of it can bury good ideas and valuable information, confuse rather than inspire.

This session is an all-out quest to revolutionise your business writing. We'll look at essential principles of communication and writing, and show you how to apply them in your next letters, emails, reports or publicity materials. You'll see how to use language, formats and structure to bring your writing and confidence to a new level.

This session will show you how to tackle writing projects and how to evaluate what you've written. You'll know how to energise your text and even add a little glamour when you need it.

### Saturday 22 November

#### Getting published internationally

Sherryl Clark ∞ 9:30 am-12:30 pm

What is a query letter? How do you find out who publishes what? Is the US or the UK a better market at the moment? How do you write a pitch paragraph? Do you really need a synopsis?

We'll answer all these questions and look at market guides and what the internet offers. We'll also practise the main elements of submitting your fiction or non-fiction to overseas publishers. We'll also look at what you can sell in a proposal, and pesky things like postage issues and email submissions.

Bring notes on what you want to submit for publication and we'll come up with a strategy.

### Nitty gritty of getting it right

Susanna Bryceson ∞ 9:30 am-12:30 pm



This session zeroes in on the main elements of grammar, punctuation and expression that will help you to write with more accuracy and confidence. Using practical examples and exercises, we'll demystify the rules and show you when you can break them.

You'll also learn techniques for making sure your work is editorially consistent, right down to the finest details. Learn how to polish your writing like a pro.

This will be our fourth round of sessions with YWCA and again we've introduced new sessions alongside popular favourites.

### Fiction writing

#### **WRITING STORIES FOR CHILDREN**

Do you want to write a picture book or a short children's novel? This class looks at stories for various ages, structuring a good tale, the illustrator's role, getting ideas. We'll cover what's "hot" right now, what kids like to read about, the kinds of characters they love, and using language and rhythm. Bring your own story ideas if you wish—feedback provided.

Sherryl Clark ∞ Monday 17 November & Thursday 20 November, 9:30 am-12:30 pm

#### **WRITE A SHORT STORY IN A WEEK**

How do you start a story? Where do you get ideas? Why is the ending harder than the beginning in a short story? This class will start with writing exercises to inspire story ideas and beginnings. Then we'll focus on what goes next—how to brainstorm plot and character, explore story directions, discover original possibilities—and ending the story in a satisfying way. You'll leave with the structure and tools to finish your story in 7 days.

Sherryl Clark ∞ Monday 17 November, 7-9:30 pm

#### **CHAPTER ONE**

How do you start a novel? Is there a "trick" to it? Once you know what will happen in your first chapter, the rest of your story will fall into place. Chapter One establishes characters, setting, voice and the incident that propels your plot into action. It includes story questions and hooks to draw the reader in. This workshop is suitable for anyone wishing to start a novel, or for those who've written already and are ready to revise.

Sherryl Clark ∞ Tuesday 18 November, 9:30 am-12:30 pm

#### **CHARACTER & PLOT: TERRIBLE TWINS**

What comes first—characters or plot? Current fiction-writing practice talks about character and plot arcs—how your story builds to a climax, how your characters change and grow. We'll look at these keys to fiction writing and show how to develop them together to create strong, engaging stories. This class will suit anyone writing fiction—for adults, young adults or children.

Sherryl Clark ∞ Wednesday 19 November, 1:30-4:30 pm

#### **TALK TALK TALK—DIALOGUE IN FICTION**

Want to write a play or a film script but feel nervous about your dialogue-writing skills? This class will focus on what characters say and how they say it. Dialogue is more than just talk—it can tell story, create action and tension, show character. We'll look at what you need to know, how to put it into practice, and do some writing in class. This session will suit anyone writing fiction or scripts—for adults, young adults or children.

Sherryl Clark ∞ Thursday 20 November, 1:30-4:30 pm

### Writing skills for everyone

#### **WRITE & SELL YOUR LIFE EXPERIENCES**

Your life is chock full of experiences—family issues, travels, funny stories, skills you could share, the film you saw last week ... the list goes on. The sessions look at forming these experiences into articles to send to newspapers or magazines. Or creating meaningful reflections for you and your friends.

How do you structure your experience into a story? What do you put in or leave out? Who'd be interested anyway? The sessions explore a number of techniques so you can begin a short piece immediately. Who knows where this could lead you?

Susanna Bryceson ∞ Monday 17 November & Friday 21 November, 9:30-12:30 am

#### **HOW TO START A BIOGRAPHY**

Reading people's life stories is one of life's pleasures and inspirations. This session looks at the many ways autobiographies and biographies can be created and structured—what's put in, what's left out, what secrets do you tell?

If you've ever wanted to write the story of someone's life or write about a time in your own, this session will get you started.

Susanna Bryceson ∞ Tuesday 18 November, 1:30-4:30 pm

#### **SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY NEWSLETTERS**

For many groups, a newsletter can be the glue that holds them together. This session looks at creating a newsletter that builds morale, builds community, builds a sense of purpose in your organisation, and is fun to read too.

This session covers design principles, niche-building and newsletter structure. It's also relevant to business newsletters.

Susanna Bryceson ∞ Tuesday 18 November, 6 pm-9 pm

#### **FEARLESS FOCUS ON YOUR WRITING**

Good writing doesn't come out of thin air—there's usually a lot of hard work behind the scenes that readers don't see. This session delves into the best ways to get the most out of your writing and give your sentences the impact to tell your story.

Learn to analyse your text like a professional writer and editor. After this session, you'll never see your writing the same way again. If you wish, bring a page of your writing to work on.

Susanna Bryceson ∞ Wednesday 19 November, 9:30 am-12:30 pm

#### **IS THERE A NON-FICTION BOOK INSIDE YOU?**

Have you ever said "I know enough about that to fill a book?" Is there a topic you've tried to find books about? Has the topic been covered in the wrong way—for academics, for children, but not for you?

Well, maybe it's time to give your idea a test run: non-fiction books sell far better than novels! This session explains how to create a topic and work out its niche; how to build a book proposal; how to write a sample chapter and sell your outline.

Susanna Bryceson ∞ Thursday 20 November, 1:30-4:30 pm



## Writing in France

Lots of people go to France and then write about it—think *A Year in Provence* or *Last Tango in Toulouse*. But those are memoirs. What happens when you go to France to write fiction and poetry?

I had some specifics in mind. I knew that I wanted to do lots of on-the-spot research about a period of European history: the Visigoth invasions of southern France. I also wanted to get back to writing more poetry, and planned a small collection of poems about Paris.

But mostly I wanted to be inspired to experiment with new ideas, to explore different kinds of creative energy and to soak up as much as I could of history, art, culture and experience—all of which I expected would feed my writing for years to come.

History was a given. There are museums in all parts of France, as well as cathedrals, churches and historical sites. Some of my favourites were the Roman ruins in Nice, the medieval walled city of Carcassonne, the Roman road in Narbonne and the moat and castle wall underground at the back of the Louvre. Not to mention Napoleon's apartments in the Louvre, where every single centimeter is covered in a decoration of some kind, and the Museum of the Middle Ages in the Latin quarter in Paris.

But my top day was spent climbing three mountains (literally) to visit three Cathar castles—Queribus, Peyrepertuse and Puilaurens. Sitting among the ruins of these 12th century castles and gazing out across the mountain tops and valleys, it only took a few moments to imagine myself back 900 years. I took nearly 100 photos in one day.

After visiting six art museums in Paris, I felt as if I'd given myself a week-long lesson in art history. Both the Picasso and Rodin museums provide a chronological journey

through the artist's creative life in a way that you don't get from books. The Louvre was overwhelmingly huge, and the throng around the Mona Lisa was more interesting than the painting itself (which is actually quite small).

Culture? Well, I've learned how many different kinds and sizes of coffee you can order! I got to try plenty of French phrases—not always successfully—and I ate and drank French food and wine, but somehow never managed to try the frogs' legs.

I found the French to be friendly and helpful, and the stairs to be many no matter where I went. I loved French cafes where everyone sits out the front and watches the world go by. I didn't like the dog poo everywhere. But I did like the sense of being in a totally different world, simply by looking around at the buildings, the people and the bicycles.

Did I write while I was there? Yes. Most days I wrote in my journal and I also wrote a number of poems. I know there'll be more to come. I collected a huge range of material for my historical novel and may end up changing the century in which it takes place, based on what I discovered.

I took 561 photos, many of which will add to my research (while thanking the person who invented the digital camera).

Since I've been home, I've started writing a new short story and have developed two new ideas for stories or novels as well. And I've caught up on what feels like a week of sleep.

There's something about going to a different place to write that re-energises you. You may not make it to France, but try the cafe in the next suburb. Take your laptop or your notebook and write. You might be surprised at what a difference it makes.

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the textConnection newsletter is produced and emailed quarterly.

We see this newsletter as a resource for our readers, with useful information about publishing and writing drawn from our experience as practitioners and teachers.

Please forward it to anyone you think might find it useful.

Just send us an email if you want to be added to our distribution list.

textConnection conducts training courses in writing, tailored to beginners and advanced writers, people working in the publishing industry, teachers and businesspeople.

Our courses include:

- ∞ fiction writing for adults and children
- ∞ poetry writing
- ∞ non-fiction and life writing
- ∞ corporate writing
- ∞ editing
- ∞ publication production.

We have been teaching writing and editing for more than 20 years each, and both work in the writing industry.

We conduct our courses in Australia and Asia.