

South East Writers (SEW) Notes and Meeting Summary

Date: 12 July

Topic: Matt Eaton, Guest Author

Welcome & Introductions

We were delighted to welcome **guest author Matt Eaton** to our July meeting of South East Writers.

A warm introduction was made by all attendees describing their current projects and positive thoughts for the day: Jenny, Damien, Margaret, Else, Daphne, Karen, John, Dee, Ranine, John, Ian, Marilyn (1), Marilyn (2), Mavis, Ian H, Danielle, and Mark.

Tech Corner

Ian Harvey opened the session with a brief segment on the usefulness of ChatGPT as a writing tool. While he emphasised that it's **not a substitute for creativity**, he shared how it can help "make my work a little better," especially in the editing and rewriting stages.

He illustrated this with a humorous example: a simple story titled *A Boy with a Dog*, first written in a childlike (and intentionally terrible!) voice, and then improved through ChatGPT's rewriting abilities. The contrast provided a fun and enlightening glimpse into the potential of AI for polishing drafts.

Guest Speaker: Matt Eaton introduced by Jenny Mc.

Biography

Matt Eaton is a seasoned journalist, writer, and independent publisher. Born in Sydney and now based on the Gold Coast, Matt spent over **30 years working for the ABC**, reporting and producing across radio, television, and digital platforms. With more than **40 years in journalism**, his deep experience in storytelling informs his fiction writing, which often blends history, conspiracy, and character-driven drama.

Matt has self-published **six novels and two novellas**, and continues to write prolifically across genres including speculative fiction, thrillers, and historical mysteries. His approach to writing is practical, disciplined, and deeply researched, often inspired by real-world events and political intrigue.

Currently working on his seventh novel, Matt's creative process combines chapter planning with intuitive rewriting. He champions indie publishing, is hands-on with editing and cover design, and shares his journey openly to help emerging writers navigate the evolving world of storytelling.

Screenwriting & Adaptation

- Consider writing your story as **both a novel and a screenplay**.

- **Film adaptations** are in high demand and often more likely to be optioned than books alone.
- Think cinematically, what scenes, characters, or dialogue might translate to screen?

Three-Act Structure

Use a **concise narrative structure** to shape your story effectively.

Referenced Examples:

- Couple / Atomic astronauts
- Presenters with purpose
- Story seed: “*She fascinated, well done.*” (Possibly a comedy concept.)

Advice to Writers

- **Keep writing** “You’re a writer. So, write.”
- **Push through writer’s block** keep showing up and showing your work.
- **Think like a sculptor** draft and refine in layers.
- **The gem is in the rewrite** clarity and voice emerge in the editing process.
- **Own your voice** don’t treat your work as if it belongs to someone else.

Publishing & Promotion

Cover Design

- Matt (on Canva) created a standout cover design.
- Example reference: “*A Hundred Covers*” visually powerful.
- Covers and titles must align with **genre** and **tone** to attract the right readership.
- Pay attention to **style** your cover is a visual shorthand for your story.
- The goal: create something **instantly engaging**.

Marketing & Tools

Professional Support

- **John Hamburg** screenplay consultation available for approx. **\$400 USD**, prior to market release.

Advertising

- **Facebook ads** are effective for:
 - Building **mailing lists**
 - Attracting and retaining **readers**
 - Targeting your ideal audience

Writing Tools & Process

- Continue to **edit and revise as you go** — perfection comes through progression.

- Use **overhead word maps** to visualise your story’s flow and structure.
- **ChatGPT and AI tools**
 - Use to draft blurbs, brainstorm titles, or summarise your story.
 - Example: “*Get ChatGPT to write a blurb*” — get quick, helpful drafts using digital tools.
 - AI can assist, but your unique voice still leads.

The Hero Journey first described by Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell

Handout: The Story Core

- A character
- The character wants something
- But something prevents her from getting what she wants easily
- So she struggles against that force
- And either succeeds or fails

- **Three-Legged Outline**
- **Character Arc**
- **Theme**
- **Pacing**

This operates within **the plot**, the order of external events in which these elements play out.

Plot is not the same as story, which is all about your character.

Story Development Outline

- **Main Character**
- **External Goal**
- **Antagonist**
- **Character’s Journey**
- **End**

Character Elements

- **Flaw:**
- **Allies:**
- **Theme:**
- **Story Structure & Plot Beats**

Opening Scene / Inciting Event

Introduces the world, character, and emotional tone.

- **Inciting Event**
Something disrupts the status quo and launches the journey.
- **Character Realizes External Goal**
The desire becomes clear; pursuit begins.

- **Display of Flaw**
Early indication of what internally holds the character back.
 - **Drive for Goal**
The character takes action toward their objective.
 - **Antagonist Revealed**
The primary obstacle or force working against the goal becomes clear.
 - **Thwart #1**
A significant setback. The first major roadblock.
 - **Revisiting Flaw**
The internal weakness resurfaces; character begins deeper reflection.
 - **New Drive for Goal**
Renewed determination, often from a more vulnerable or authentic place.
 - **Antagonist Attacks**
The stakes rise as the antagonist escalates conflict.
 - **Thwart #2**
Another, more difficult challenge. The cost of the journey intensifies.
 - **Changed Goal**
Character realises their original desire was incomplete or misguided; shifts direction.
 - **Thwart #3 / Ally Attacks**
Betrayal, misunderstanding, or loss involving a close ally.
 - **Girding the Loins**
Gathering strength, resources, and resolve for the final act.
 - **Battle**
The final confrontation—external and internal.
 - **Death**
A literal or symbolic loss—of ego, identity, belief, or even life.
 - **Outcome**
Resolution of the journey. Transformation, success, or acceptance of failure.
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