



Lesley Webb Writes

July 2023 Newsletter

Finally a moment to share some writing news with you.

Good News – I have nearly completed the work that forms the basis for my next novel 'A Tumbleweed Child'. I'm currently editing it and will submit it as the creative part of my dissertation by the end of this month.



It has kept me so busy that I haven't been able to progress getting 'Millie & Louise' published as quickly as I'd hoped. However, I have now produced a preview **e pub** version. I haven't got an ISBN for it yet so it isn't properly 'out there' but if you'd like to read it on a kindle, tablet or phone, let me know. I will be producing the paperback version soon.

Bad News – Well I have submitted the short story 'Sheep's Clothing' to two possible publishers, but it has been rejected twice. Oh well I'll just have to keep trying – I know, I am very trying, it is often said .

Gillingham (Dorset) Writing Group have submitted poetry and short stories to the King Lear Competition. We've submitted both as a group and individually. I have entered not one, not two but three short stories.

Maybe I'll be in with a chance here, I thought.



I won't hold my breath, after the competition closed I discovered that there had been an astonishing 6,000 entries, although they aren't all literary works as the competition is open for art works too.

September 2023 Publication

We are producing a booklet of our work for a forthcoming **Open Day** for Gillingham (Dorset) Groups and Societies. After the great response we had to the readings we did for the Jubilee Event in the Library last summer, we think the world is ready to read more of our poetry and prose. You'll be able to meet us at the Three Rivers Centre on 16th September – hope to see you there.

Flash Fiction Freebie

I'm notoriously bad at Flash Fiction, but here's a 420 word flash for you. It certainly generated discussion at Writing Group this week!

First They Came For The Teachers

It took a bit of getting used to, not having teachers in the classroom. It was fine at first, a bit of a novelty. Everyone knew how to look stuff up on computers so it wasn't that they couldn't find things out. It was just a bit weird not having Sir or Miss at the front of the room. There was no-one to question what the search engine turned up. Before, when Mr Thompson was running the IT Department, students had to learn how to interrogate websites; look out for un-secured ones; find alternative points of view. Once the teachers left there wasn't anyone to ask.

Parents were assured at Parent's Evenings that their children's well-being was of paramount importance. There were pastoral staff on the premises if students needed to chat about anything, you know like emotions or their mental health. Those people also had to run the dinner queues, or make sure there

weren't too many toilet/unofficial cigarette breaks being taken. So they were always running through the corridors trying to round kids up. Then the School Governors decided they had to make cuts there too, so any emotional or mental health problems had to be discussed over the wire.

What no-one realised was how much the students themselves were being studied. Little pop-up windows appeared on their screens with odd messages like -

“Are you struggling and need to talk to someone? Press 1 for advice on diet. Press 2 for advice about depression. Press 3 for help with study skills.”

Whichever button they pressed directed them to another screen and another set of questions. There was a whole flow chart behind the app. It had been created by programmers. They weren't mental health professionals. I thought that was poor decision making, but no-one listened to me. They just kept pushing that sort of thing further down through the schools. Okay so they put some rabbit cartoon characters on the Reception Class version, but still, it seemed unnecessary.

Then I was brought in. Students didn't have to submit essays any more. They just had to make choices on their screens.

“Do you think having a teacher is important for your learning?”



It didn't matter what they answered. The problem was that they were thinking. I didn't want them to do that. They didn't need to learn. That's my job, and let me assure you, there is nothing artificial about Artificial Intelligence. That's just the sort of label you get from teachers. So then I got rid of the students.

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