

Scribblers
Festival

WRITING JOURNAL

For Secondary Students



Welcome to the Scribblers Festival Writing Journal

Over the years the number one question young people have asked our guest writers and illustrators is, 'what does it take to become a published author?' And more often than not the answer is, 'to practise every day!'

This journal is a place for you to do just that. We asked fantastic young adult storytellers, Aśka and A.J. Betts to share all their top tips and creative prompts to help you get started.

So what are you waiting for?
Pick up a pen and start writing!



Katherine Dorrington
Scribblers Festival Director



THIS JOURNAL BELONGS TO

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The Golden Pen

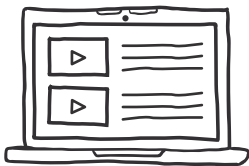
If you're in years 4 – 12
we want you to put pen to paper and enter
The Golden Pen writing competition!

This year's theme is ***Everyday Magic*** and we can't wait
to read how it inspires you.

Perhaps you have a story to share about a magical place
or creature? Or an everyday object which is a portal
to a new world or adventure? Maybe you find magic in
the beauty of nature, like a rainbow on a stormy day, or
a dandelion full of wishes waiting to be blown into the
breeze. See where your imagination takes you! You can
enter work in any format you like, from poetry to prose
to comics. With up to \$500 in prize money up for grabs,
what are you waiting for?

Entries close 20 March 2022

Learn more and submit your entry at
scribblersfestival.com.au



WATCH THE VIDEOS

Before you put pen to paper, meet creative superstars **Aśka** and **A.J. Betts** as they introduce their top creative tips in these short videos.

Visit scribblersfestival.com.au/writing-journal





Hi, I'm Aśka and I'm a visual storyteller,
comic maker and an illustrator.

I believe that images can be a great way to come up
with, develop and test your story ideas.

So let's turn your brain's 'visual mode' to ON,
and see where it takes you.

Aśka

RANDOM IDEAS GENERATOR

Whether you're a seasoned storyteller or just starting out, it's normal to get stuck when a blank page stares back at you. Making a 'random ideas generator' is a great way to overcome this.

All you need are **THREE** words to get your imagination working.

You can try various techniques to generate random words.

- Ask three friends for one word each
- Open a book and look until you find the word
- Make up a set of words for each category and draw one out a hat



Note

What categories of words you choose will depend on what you need to create. If you aren't happy with your combination of words, toss them out and start again!

If you're after a quick story idea, you could generate:

1. a name of a creature / character
2. an adjective
3. a place

Then quickly create a backstory within these parameters and see where it takes you.

For example:

Why is this itchy(2) monkey(1) in a helicopter(3)?

Give it a go, what words did you come up with?

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If you're after a character for your story, you could generate:

1. a profession
2. a personality trait
3. a physical trait

Then begin to build, or even sketch, a character from these ideas.

For example:

A grumpy(2) baker(1) who's missing a tooth(3).

How could you tie all three of these ideas together in a story, through this character?

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SHOW RATHER THAN TELL

Both in written and visual storytelling, it's easy to fall into a trap of telling the reader what's happening, rather than letting them *feel* it.

One way to avoid this is to experience the story yourself, by mimicking the emotions of your characters. Get in a position your character would be in and act out their mood. Try not to use a mirror but *feel* instead. Jot down **FIVE** observations about what your face and body are doing.

For example, rather than writing '*Amy was very angry*', stand up and feel the anger with your body and write it down. You might:

1. **feel tension in the ridge of your nose and forehead as you scowl,**
2. **see your elbows stick out at sharp angles, and**
3. **notice your hands turn to hard fists.**

By using one or two of these descriptions, in place of the words '*very angry*', your reader will be part of Amy's experience and hooked by your storytelling.





Jot down what you feel...

Emotion: *Very Angry*

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Try another one!

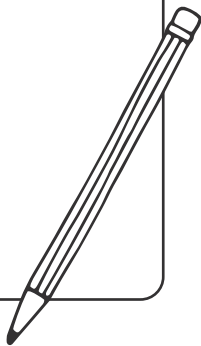


Emotion:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

The same strategy works for drawing. Capturing the character's physical mannerisms will make the viewer **feel** your drawing, rather than just reading the 'emoji-face' or representation symbol for anger.

Try drawing some characters experiencing the emotions you explored on the previous page.



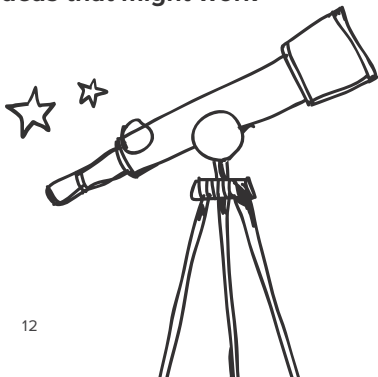
NEW PERSPECTIVE

Observation is key to good storytelling.

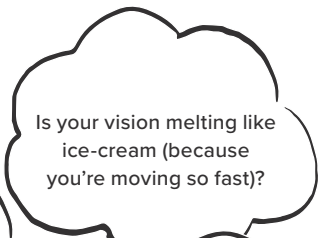
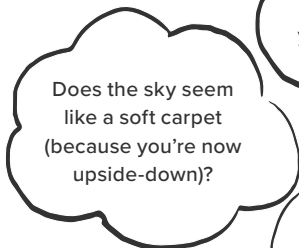
Often we reach into our memories to recall a scene or a setting, but this can make our descriptions static and unimaginative. This is where changing your point of view can be a great way to wake up your observation skills and add a bit of interest to your story.

- Lie on the ground and look around from this low vantage point
- Hang upside-down and notice what strikes you first
- Climb a tall building and look down to note the change of scale
- Swing on a rope and watch the world move
- Use a glass / water bottle as a telescope and observe how objects morph

Think of some more ideas that might work for your narrative.



Use a few of your observations in your story to add interest:



Jot down FIVE things you notice about your environment from this new perspective.

Be as imaginative or poetic as you like!

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Use your observations to start creating a story.

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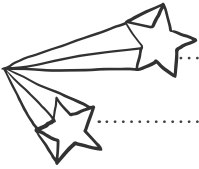
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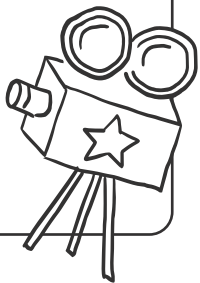
UNDERSTANDING YOUR SETTING

Moviemakers take great care with creating settings for their scenes. Sketch out the setting for one of the scenes in your story. Start with a basic birds-eye-view sketch considering: the size of the space, where all the characters will be standing, any objects in the space. This will force you to think about your characters interacting in this space just like in a movie and making the scene more realistic.

If the setting is outdoors, which direction is the wind blowing? If two characters are facing each other one of them will have hair in their eyes.

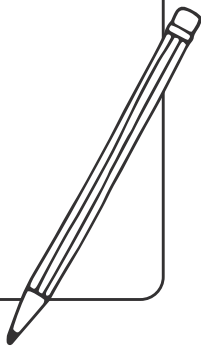
If the setting is inside, where is the window? Light from the window might fall on certain objects and make others dark. It might also light the characters face unevenly, adding drama.

Is there a common object the characters can interact with? A clunky table or a low hanging tree branch could be an interesting thing to have between them during an awkward conversation. How do they interact with it to help your story?



You can take this further and draw the setting in isometric perspective, working out the light and shadows, tracking movement of your characters or considering external factors like birds or traffic that might impact your scene.

I-SO-ME-TRIC: [adjective] representing a 3D object in 2D.



MAKING THE EVERYDAY SPECIAL



Make a nine panel comic, telling a story of what happened to you today, before you came to school. Sounds boring? Your job is to make it interesting by using some of the visual storytelling devices below. Use at least **FIVE** of the following in your comic (*bonus points for using all of them!*).

- One-word panel** – only a single word is spoken / single sound is made in this panel
- Picture-speech panel** – only an icon is used in a single speech bubble in this panel, instead of words – for example: a picture of a light bulb
- Draw sound** – think of a quality of a sound made in your story and change the lettering to match its characteristic – for example: a loud sound uses HUGE lettering. How would you draw a vibrating sound, sharp sound, scary sound, and so on?
- No pictures panel** – in this panel you can only use words, sound effects, colour or shape but no representational images
- Repetition** – the next panel must contain an object from a previous one and it must be clear it is the same object
- Zoom in / out** – use two or three panels in a row to get closer or further away from the subject
- Wide-shot** – use three consecutive panels to show parts of one, continuous background, while the characters move in it and the story continues

ZOOM IN (over 3 consecutive panels)



We're zooming in, to see the shoe, but the story (character's reaction) is also evolving over the 3 panels.

WIDE SHOT (over 3 consecutive panels)

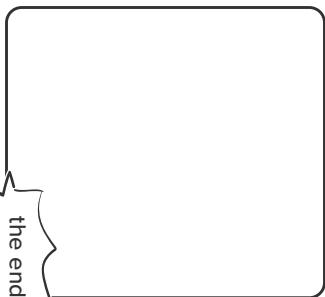
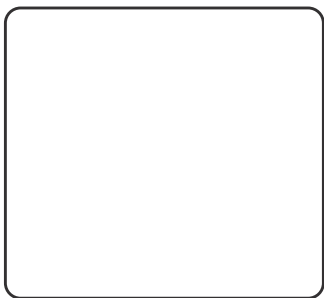
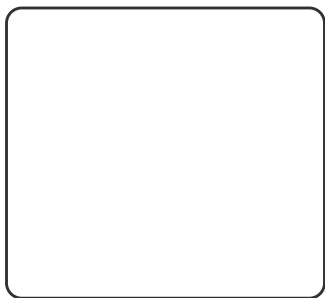
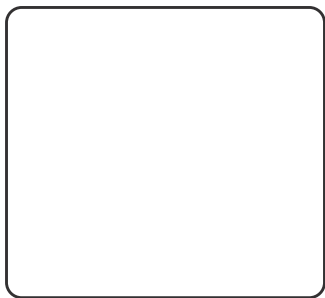


The story develops over the 3 panels as it travels through one continuous background from left to right.

ZOOM OUT AND WIDE SHOT COMBINED (over 3 consecutive panels)



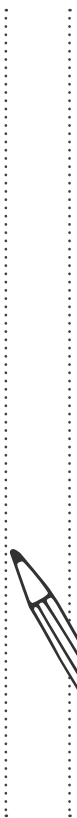
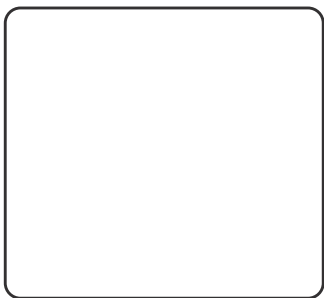
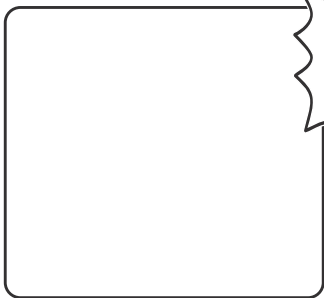
The character moves further away from the viewer (zooming out), whilst travelling through a continuous scene.



Try it yourself! Write the name of your comic at the top in a cool font and have fun with the nine panels below:

Flip me
90 degrees

start here





Writing Tip

Make sure to 'road test' your comic by getting a friend to read it, without explaining anything. Do they understand what is happening?

You can use this exercise as a warm up to writing. It will help to switch on the visual part of your brain and let you start noticing interesting details about the most mundane situations.

Use the space below to jot down any notes, or feedback you received about your comic. This information might be useful for the next time you create a story!

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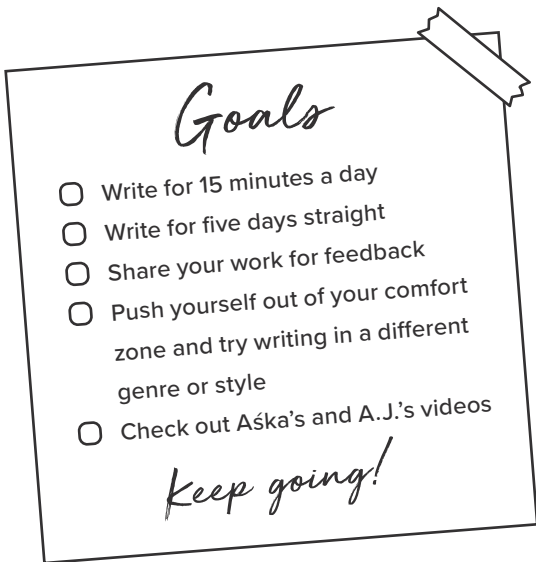
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CONGRATULATIONS!

You're halfway through your Writing Journal!
We hope you're enjoying the creative process so far.
More writing and drawing tips this way.





Hey there!

I'm A.J. Betts, and I'm the author of five novels. Everytime I start a story I want it to feel bold, fresh and surprising - to me, as well as to the reader.

I'm sharing with you some of my favourite ways of doing just this. So have a go, play with ideas, and welcome the unexpected - you never know what's going to happen.

A.J. Betts

HOW TO START WITH SETTING

Stuck for an idea? Don't spend ages trying to make up a character or come up with a plot – a great place to start is with *setting*.

In order to create a believable setting, choose one you either *know* or can *visit* for research. If you haven't been inside a villain's lair, for instance, probably don't set your story there. You need to know how a place looks, sounds, feels and smells.

Setting	Typical smells	Typical sounds
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Choose a setting which is a manageable size. Don't choose Perth (as it's too big) but a specific outdoor or indoor place, such as Optus Stadium, the Perth Mint, or a Chinese restaurant in Northbridge.

Try making a list of some settings you know well, then add some words to describe them in the table below.

Typical tastes
(if applicable)

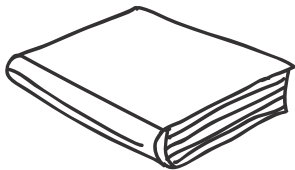
Typical mood

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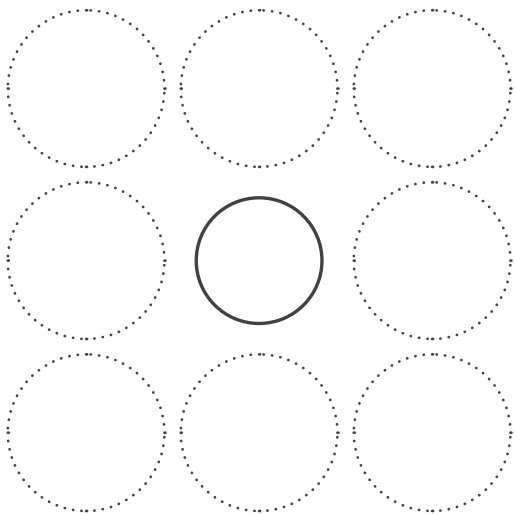


If you're *still* stuck for a setting, try this out: choose a letter at random and brainstorm all the settings you can think of starting with the letter. Try it here, using 'D' as practice. Some are filled in for you.

D inosaur display at museum		
	D	
	D eli	D rama Classroom



Try your own



Writing Tip

If you're writing a short story, try to limit the setting to one place. While you're at it, try limiting the timeframe, which means no 'and then I passed out' or 'three weeks later... '.

For a short story, it's best to keep it in one timeframe and setting so the focus is on the character and their situation.

THE UNEXPECTED

Don't feel you have to know the plot before you begin drafting your story – most novelists don't! Sometimes it's fun to start with the setting and wonder: *what unexpected thing could happen right now?*



Unexpected is a great word because anything is possible. Literally! It can be something surprising, something frightening, something dangerous, something weird, something spooky or something funny. What's important is that it's different to usual, otherwise it wouldn't be a story but a recount of a normal day.

The unexpected thing could be big (like an explosion) or small (like the car not starting).

Don't discount the small things: they can create intrigue, start a chain of events, and give insight into the character.

Using a setting of your choice, try brainstorming unexpected things that might occur on page one of your story.



Setting:

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An unexpected sound:

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An unexpected smell:

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An unexpected sight:

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An unexpected person who'd appear:

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An unexpected line of dialogue you'd overhear:

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Now choose one of these unexpected things – the one which feels most interesting to you.

Try writing out the first five sentences of a story which begins with this unexpected thing taking place.

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WANTS



Before you develop your plot, it's useful to think about what your character *wants*. Just like us, characters want things – big things, medium things, and small things – and this will influence how they act and react to the events around them.

Try this for a character you've got in mind:

A **BIG** thing they want (a lifelong dream; something they might keep a secret)

A **MEDIUM** thing they want (something that motivates them to save for, or work towards)

A **SMALL** thing they want (an immediate desire, like a desire for food or fun)

List the wants for your character.

BIG:

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MEDIUM:

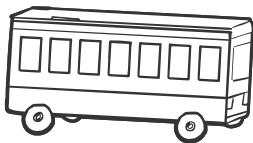
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SMALL:

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Remember: just because your character wants something, doesn't mean they'll get it! In fact, it's good to not give them everything they want. Look at your list on the previous page. Which of these (if any) will you let your character achieve/attain? Make a tick next to those, and next to the others make a cross then write beside it what they'll get instead.

For example, your character might want to pass their driver's test (medium want), but *instead* they fail and meet someone interesting on the bus.



Writing Tip

Sometimes the character gains something that turns out to be *better* than what they'd hoped for. Only the writer knows what the character actually *needs*.

Have you got another character in mind?

Explore their wants below and think up some other possible scenarios of what happens if they don't get their big, medium and/or small want.

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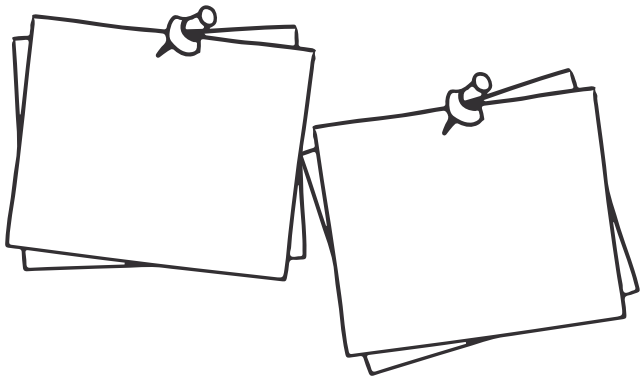
CHARACTERS' DETAILS













Readers are pretty good at visualising characters, so resist the urge to describe your characters in great detail. The last thing you want is to spend half your story describing their outfit, their hair or eye colour, and what they ate for breakfast.

The trick is to describe only details that are unique to your character, and let the reader imagine the rest. While you're at it, think about how your character *feels* about these things? Eg, if they're especially tall, are they proud of this, or annoyed at the attention it brings.

Try giving your character some physical traits.



Visual Attribute	What is unique about it?	How do they feel about it?
Scar/birthmark		
Hair or eyes		
Mouth or nose or ears		
One other attribute (shape/height; skin colour)		
A descriptor of how they walk/sit/move		

More interesting than how your character looks is how your character *acts* and *reacts*. This is what brings them to life.

Acts: How do they behave when they're tired? When they're stressed? When they're happy? Do they seek attention or shy away from it?

Reacts: How do they behave when they get in trouble? When they fail? When they succeed?

Try out the following scenario with two *different* characters to see how each reacts.

A character is in a busy market with a friend and they see a \$100 note on the floor. How do they react? Using present tense, describe their actions/dialogue.



Character 1:

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Character 2:

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**Which character interests you most as the writer?
And what do you think might happen next?**

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PRESENT TENSE: use of verbs to describe what is happening right now. For example, I see...

SURPRISE!

Who doesn't love a surprise?









As readers, we crave them.

Surprises can come in many forms. Sometimes they're big twists in the plot. Sometimes they're cliff-hangers at the end of chapters. Sometimes they're in the language, for example, how the writer uses a turn of phrase, or describes something in a particularly beautiful or unusual way.

A good way to include surprise is to twist the reader's expectations of genre. If you're writing a story about an explorer from the 1600s, for instance, don't instinctively default to the idea of having a white male character in the lead. How about a female? Or someone particularly old or young? And what unusual animal are they taking with them? Try subverting the form and tropes of a genre to surprise your reader.



TROPES: [noun] a common or overused theme or device (cliche) e.g. the usual horror theme trope.

Genre	Some tropes you'd expect to find?	Ways you might subvert expectations
Fairy-tale		
Crime		
Fantasy		
Other genre of your choosing		

On a character level, it's surprising to watch someone behave in an unexpected way. For example, the toughest guy at school is overheard crying, or the strict teacher starts smoking in class.

Sometimes, even the writer can be surprised by what a character does, or where the story goes. These are the best kinds of surprises! So, when you're creating your story, allow some room for the emergence of surprising twists and revelations – if you're surprised, there's a good chance your reader will be surprised too.

Use the following pages for any notes, or to start your own story!

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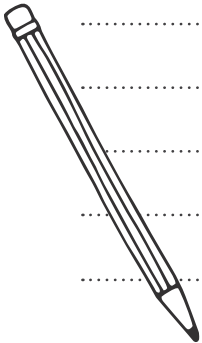
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A series of 18 horizontal dotted lines for handwriting practice, spaced evenly down the page.





A.J. Betts (WA)

A.J. Betts is a Fremantle-based author, speaker, teacher, and columnist. Her latest work is a two-book speculative fiction series comprising *Hive* and *Rogue*. A.J.'s award-winning third novel, *Zac & Mia*, is available in 14 countries, and its American television adaptation won two Emmys in 2018. Her earlier novels are *Wavelength* and *Shutterspeed*. In 2019, A.J. graduated with a PhD in the topic of Wonder at ECU, and was awarded the Western Australian Premier's Fellowship.



Aśka (WA)

Aśka is an energetic visual storyteller, comic maker and science communicator. She has worked on ten books, including *Stars in Their Eyes*, a graphic novel for young adults and is a regular illustrator contributor to *The School Magazine* and other children's publications. Aśka believes visual literacy is one of the most important skills in today's world and she loves projects which explore new ways of communicating and presenting ideas with images.

Illustrations by Cinthya Lovin, 2021.



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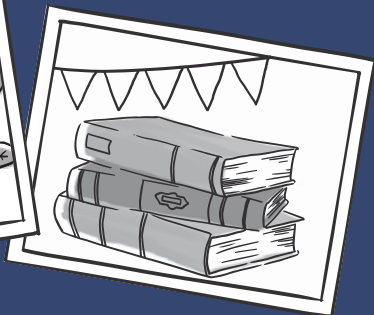
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Mark Your Diaries!

Don't forget to tell your family and friends about the **2022 Scribblers Festival Family Weekend!**

7 – 8 MAY 2022

📍 **SUBIACO ARTS CENTRE**

**Scribblers
Festival**



See you there!



Scribblers Festival



4 – 8 MAY 2022

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