

Andy Griffiths web conference held at Orange City Library 22nd December

A group of kids had fun asking questions popular children's author Andy Griffiths at the Summer Reading Club web conference today.

Andy started writing at age five with a get well card for his father – “Get well soon or you'll be doomed.”

Andy likes writing the opposite to what would be expected eg. Have a revolting Christmas.

Just Tricking started as a set of instructions of how to play practical jokes.

He began making little 12 page booklets and selling them around the Melbourne Markets.

Then he found a publisher who wanted the book developed into stories with characters who played practical jokes.

How?

- Write for 15 minutes a day
 - A description of something
 - An event
 - Memories from something in the past
 - Embarrassing situations
 - When he was in trouble
 - Practical jokes (rubber poo or spikers...)
 - Being scared.

When writing he:

- Sometimes writes backwards – starts with an ending and then writes the story
- Uses all his growing up experiences – where he lived, his school, friends – Danny and Lisa (who he had a crush on)
- He believes if he uses real life situations as the basis for his stories that they are more believable
- Confines the number of characters to 2 or 3 main people.

What's the hardest part about writing a book and why?

Rewriting and editing is the hardest. Andy finds it easy to come up with funny titles and all the possibilities on how the story develops but it starts to get hard when he has to narrow down the ideas by making decisions on which ideas to use. The draft goes to his wife Jill who reads it and gives him feedback eg. “that's boring” or “taking too long.”

Why a Cow?

The illustrator Terry.... Wanted to draw cows for a book so Andy decided it would be an exploding cow – the opposite of the usual good natured cow.

What jobs have you had?

- Taxi driver
- Lead singer in a punk band called “Unborn Babies”

- 4 years as an English teacher when he realised that there was a need for some humorous books

Where's your favourite place to write?

- In the past Andy has had a room away from everyone but lately he likes to write in the family room where all the action is taking place AND
- He also likes to write when he is travelling – waiting for a plane or a train and calls this 'Writing on the Run'

What's your favourite story?

Andy doesn't like answering this question as he likes them all. At the moment though, his favourite is *The 13th Story Treehouse*.

Why Macbeth? Andy has written *Just Macbeth*

Macbeth is his favourite Shakespeare play and the Bell Shakespeare Company wanted Andy to write something for children so they could produce it for children and share the wonder of Shakespeare. They have asked him to turn a short story of Romeo and Juliet into a script suitable for children that Bell can produce.

The latest releases are

- *The naked boy and the crocodile*

Andy was travelling to indigenous communities and the children showed a photo and told him a story about the semi trailer which ran over a crocodile. 13 stories and illustrations created by indigenous children during workshops he hosted as ambassador with the Indigenous Foundation.

- *The 13 story tree house* - The 13 story tree house - Who wouldn't want to live in a treehouse? Especially a 13-storey treehouse that has a bowling alley, a see-through swimming pool, a tank full of sharks, a library full of comics, a secret underground laboratory, a games room, self-making beds, vines you can swing on, a vegetable vaporiser and a marshmallow machine that follows you around and automatically shoots your favourite flavoured marshmallows into your mouth whenever it discerns you're hungry.

- *Just Doomed*

Just doomed is a collection of stories where he is doomed in each story. These stories are based on simple but embarrassing memories

Eg. Andy had an ice cream and just as he was about to start eating it his friend Danny came along and had a lick, followed by Lisa and then his sister. When there's hardly anything left the cone is stolen by a seagull. A tiny bit of icecream is dropped on the gravel and Andy gets to lick it up. Even though it is dirty and gravelly he thinks it's really great.

If you would like to ask Andy a question email to amy.ahsam@deta.qld.gov.au and she will forward to Andy.