

Speaker Information

Author: A.J. BETTS

I am a best-selling, award-winning young adult author, speaker, teacher, and columnist. I have many years of English Teaching experience, and currently teach part-time in Perth. I frequently speak at schools, libraries and festivals. My most popular talks are described below. I hold a current Working with Children Check and speaker's public liability insurance. I hold a PhD on the topic of Wonder. More details can be found at ajbetts.com.

1. **MEET THE AUTHOR PRESENTATION:** This 45-60 minute presentation explores the life of a writer, the nature of creativity, and how I turn small ideas into stories. I share the development of ZAC & MIA, HIVE and ROGUE. This presentation is suitable for students in Years 7 to 12. It is especially relevant for groups studying creative writing, tension, and world-building.

2. **HIVE PRESENTATION (WITH 'STEM' AND/OR DYSTOPIA FOCUS):** This 45-60 minute presentation begins by sharing the trigger in 2005 that sparked the idea behind HIVE. I then outline the challenges of world-building in speculative fiction, and how I used problem-solving, research and symbolism to build a plausible city structure and a credible society. For schools interested in the crossover of creativity and science, I focus on how research into science, technology and engineering influenced the world-building and narrative. For schools interested in the nature of dystopia, I focus on the dystopian elements in the fictional society, and how the novel both embraces and challenges these. A HIVE presentation is suitable for students in Years 8 to 12.

3. **ZAC & MIA PRESENTATION:** This 45-60 minute presentation explores how real-life can influence fiction. I explain how a previous job led me to consider writing a 'romance', and how the story developed through a process of problem-solving. I discuss the characters involved, and the themes that helped shape the story. International book covers are shared for comparison, with a discussion of symbolism, themes and marketing. Finally, I share how the novel was adapted into a Hollywood television series, mentioning changes to structure, setting and characterisation. This presentation is suitable for students in Years 8 to 12. It is especially relevant for groups studying real-life themes, realism, visual analysis and book-to-screen adaptations.



4. **WRITING WORKSHOP:** These workshops can range from one hour to a full day. In these practical sessions, I employ fun and accessible activities which emphasise the idea of 'play'. Using visual stimuli and questions, I lead students through various writing exercises. Students are encouraged to write reflexively, with honesty, courage and empathy. During these workshops, I explain how similar exercises contributed to the development of my novels.

5. **WRITING WORKSHOP FOR YEARS 11-12 WRITING CREATIVELY IN EXAMS:** In this session, I provide practical advice for senior students who must compose texts in exam conditions. I use a series of questions to help students interrogate various visual stimuli and tease out possibilities for story. Through the exercises, I cover the topics of setting, mood, character, vocabulary, syntax, tension and structure.

I have also presented on the following:

- How to harness creativity and wonder (the topic of my recent PhD) in the English classroom
- Writing workshop for adults interested in writing for teenagers
- WAVELENGTH talk
- SHUTTERSPEED talk

REQUIREMENTS

For talks, a data projector and screen are essential. I can either use my own MacBook and dongle or will bring my PowerPoint saved to a USB to use with a school's computer. For workshops, I would appreciate use of a whiteboard.

FEES

For Schools:

Presentations/workshops per day	In-person visit	Virtual visit
1 x hour session for up to 50 students *	\$350 (plus GST & travel)	\$350 (plus GST)
1 x 90-minute session for up to 50 students*	\$450 (plus GST & travel)	\$400 (plus GST)
1 x 2-hour workshop for up to 50 students*	\$500 (plus GST & travel)	\$450 (plus GST)
2 x hour sessions for up to 50 students *	\$550 (plus GST & travel)	\$500 (plus GST)
3 x hour sessions for up to 50 students *	\$750 (plus GST & travel)	\$700 (plus GST)

* For groups of 50-100 students, add \$50 per session. For groups of 100-200 students, add \$100 per session.

For workshops that last 3 hours or longer, please contact me for a quote.

For interstate schools, flights, accommodation and per diems will also be required. If multiple schools wish to book me for an interstate period, these additional costs may be shared.

For public events, I am guided by the fees suggested by the Australian Society of Authors. Please go to <https://www.asauthors.org/findananswer/rates-of-pay#SCHOOL%20APPEARANCES>.

ENDORSEMENTS

A.J.'s willingness to adapt on the fly and adjust her schedule was paramount to the success of the session. It was absolutely brilliant in terms of content and was perfectly tailored to their assessment task. As a teacher, I garnered insider tips and tricks to improve young students' writing and the early feedback from some of my top students was fantastic. In fact, one teacher in the session already shared a writing task to the teaching team based on her presentation today. Thank you, A.J., for your efforts in preparing and presenting. Can't wait to do it again next year.

(English Teacher, Brisbane independent school.)

It was such an inspiration and a pleasure to hear A.J. speak today. As for *Hive* I chose to teach it to my mainstream year 8 English last year. It was a great novel to use as a vehicle for teaching many of the concepts the English curriculum is based around. However, the thing that struck me the most was the joy my students received in reading it. I can't recall another text that I have used in my English classroom that has had the same effect on the students. Initially, I tried to control the pace at which we read the novel to support them in processing the strange world. Here were students chomping at the bit to keep reading it, complaining that they didn't want to wait anymore – for them, I relented. They finished reading the novel so quickly and moved on to *Rogue*. There were only a few copies in the library and they organised the order in which they would each read it – they really chased up the 2nd novel. I was so delighted to see so many of my so enthralled by the world and characters and problems explored in *Hive* and *Rogue*. Thank you, A.J. Betts!

(English Teacher, Perth public school.)

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