

Creative writing for Health Services Librarians

Mike Gogan
Head of Customer Language
AIB

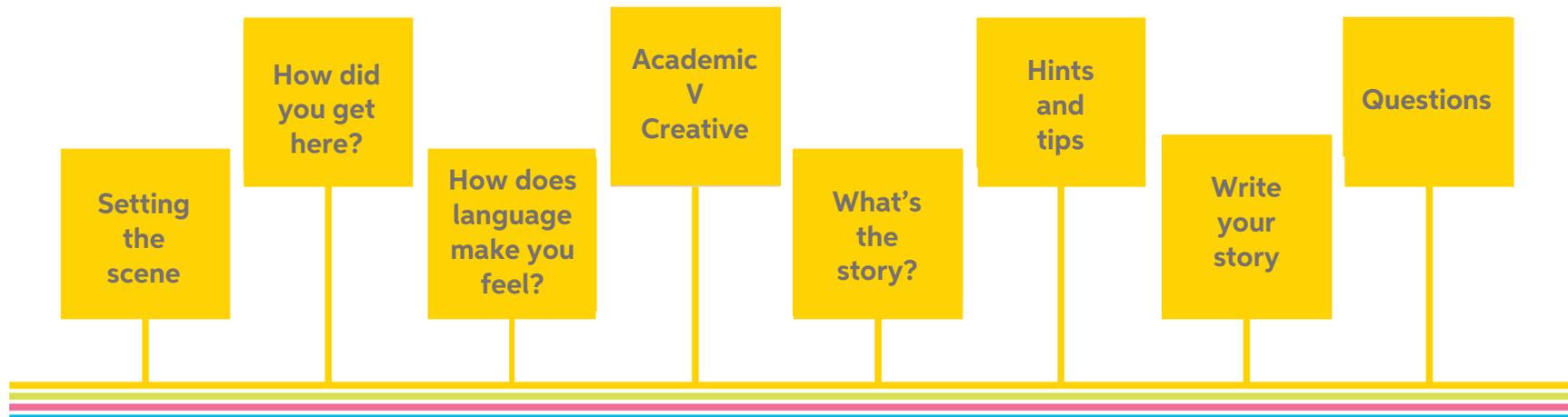


What colour are your wings?

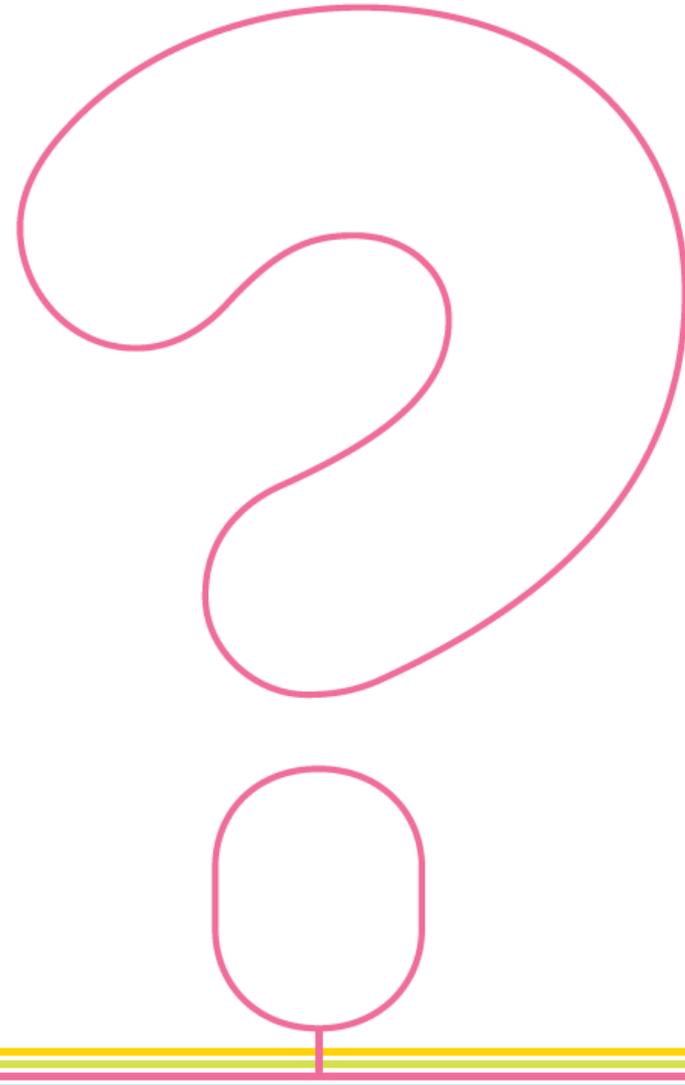
Mike Gogan
Dark Angel



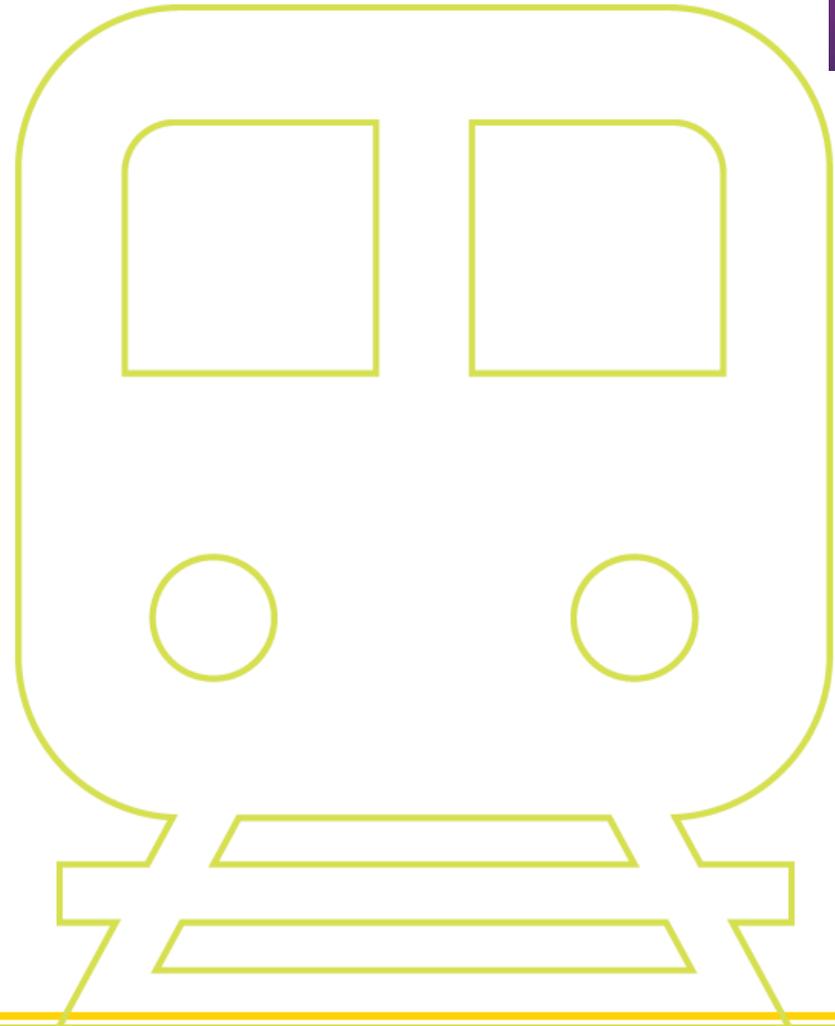
What we will cover today



What's your
favourite
word?

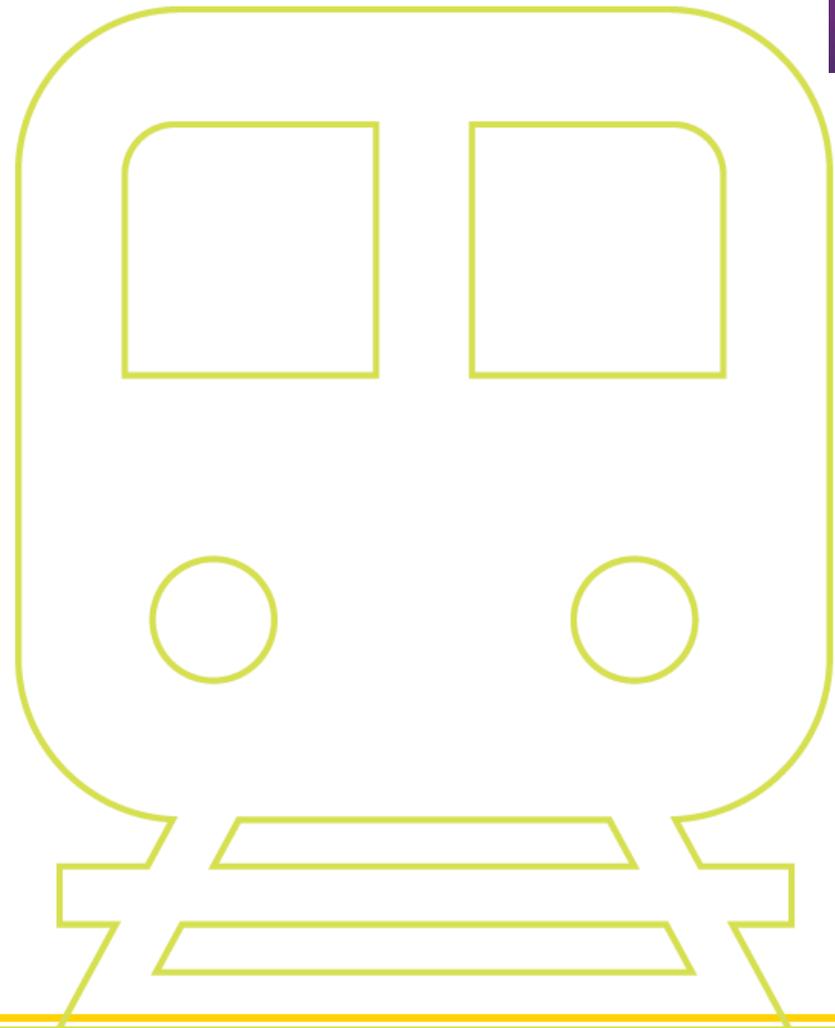


How did
you get
here
today?



What did we learn?

- Facts inform
- Arguments persuade
- Stories engage





Language has an emotional effect

How does the tone make you feel?

Do you trust this bank?

What type of person wrote this letter?

Dear ...

I am pleased to offer you a mortgage loan of the principal sum specified in Part 1 attached, subject to the mortgage loan being secured by a first legal mortgage/charge for present and future advances in favour of the Bank over the property described in part 1, and acceptance of and compliance with the Special Conditions, the Pre-Drawdown requirements and the General Terms and Conditions detailed in parts 2, 3 and 4 respectively ...

Yours sincerely,

The Manager
AIB Home Mortgage Department



How about this one?

Dear <<Customer names>>,

We heard you have plans for a new home, it must be a very exciting time for you. You're almost there.

For our part, we're now making a formal offer of a mortgage. Our offer is subject to all of the conditions that we have set out in the following pages of this letter. Our offer stands for 30 days and if you decide within that time to accept it, you have six months from the date of this letter to take up the loan.

There are a few important details you'll need to know about the loan we are offering. All of them are on the next page.

There are also a lot of details attached to this letter, so we have listed the contents here:

Part 1	has more details about the mortgage we are offering you
Part 2	is about any special conditions to the offer

How does the tone make you feel?

What type of person wrote this letter?

This is bad enough

By Elspeth Murray





From academic to creative

- Academic

- Real facts
- Rational
- Objective
- Logical
- Measured
- Empirical

- Prose

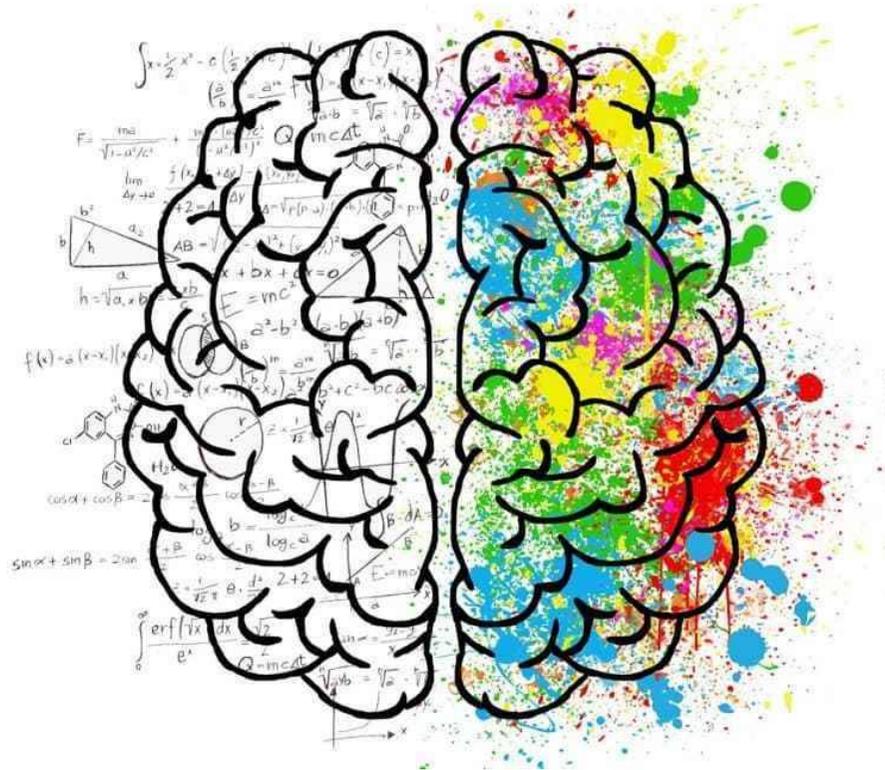
- Fiction
- Irrational
- Subjective
- Random
- Abstract
- Hypothetical

- Creative

- Story
- Imagination
- Narrative
- Flow
- Engaging
- Adventure

These are also the sides of the brain

- Real
- Rational
- Objective
- Logical
- Measured
- Empirical



- Story
- Imagination
- Narrative
- Flow
- Engaging
- Adventure

From academic to creative - the bad news

- Academic

- Real
- Rational

• Logical

• Measured

• Empirical

Not read

- Prose

• Fiction

• Irrational

• Creative

• Random

• Abstract

• Hypothetical

Read

- Creative

• Story

• Imaginative

• Narrative

• Flow

• Engaging

• Adventure

Shared



From academic to creative - the psychology

- Easy-to-read text feels more believable - the fluency heuristic
- Information with personality feels more credible
- We distrust corporate speak
- We favour emotional, human thinking
- Facts and figures don't stick
- If you want to engage, make your story (7) their story (8.5) our story (10)



What's the story?

- Stories make us human – it's evolutionary
- Language evolved to swap social information
- With stories we navigate our physical, spiritual and moral world
- Culture emerged after we learned to tell stories
- Nations are defined by their stories, myths and legends
- The hero, the challenge, the transformation
- Imagery – imagination paints pictures.



Tips for engaging writing

- Avoid acronyms and internal jargon
- Use contractions – they're conversational
- Instead of an abstract noun, use a dynamic verb
 - *The investigation was completed*
 - *We investigated the hypothesis*
 - *We found out if it was true.*
- The passive voice is not used; we say who does what
- Ask questions, open ones
- Use repetition; use it sparingly; use it in threes



Tips for engaging writing

- Whose voice do you write in?
- What's in it for me?
- Sound human, use emotion to make a connection
- Summary up front
- Compelling opening, something unexpected
- Headlines that tell
- Start in the middle



Story sources

- Career – the meaningful events
- People in your life – who influenced you?
- Events – good and bad
- Values – proud and guilty
- Something teachable
- Something connecting – bridges
- Something changed
- Be relevant
- Entertain



Think about your story

- What was your challenge?
- What was your compelling future?
- How did you get motivated?
- What were your actions?
- What were the barriers?



Start your story now, with “I remember ...”

- What season was it?
- What was the weather like?
- What time of day?
- What did you hear?
- Who did you see?
- What did you taste?
- What did you feel in your body, in your heart, in your mind?

Questions?

