

# Books come alive for writers fest

Adults and children get to experience books in fun ways, including retellings and walking tours

Lisabel Ting

**B**ooks will come to life this November, thanks to a slew of programmes led by home-grown authors at the Singapore Writers Festival.

Listen to a macabre retelling of the legend of Bukit Merah, retrace the footsteps of famous authors with a literary walk or hear what public sculptures would say if they have voices with a site-specific poetry performance. Even kids can join in the fun as they put their sleuthing skills to the test with a Sherlock-inspired treasure hunt.

Dive into a world filled with violence, incest, bestiality and bloodshed with *Darkness And Light - Tales From South-east Asia*. Poet and writer Yong Shu Hoong, 46, adapted three regional legends, including the tale of Bukit Merah, to be read aloud by storytellers, accompanied by music from a live gamelan orchestra.

"I know that it's for an adult audience, so I do keep in mind that it can be more mature. I don't have to play down the violence, I can play it up," says Yong. "In fact, the funny thing is that a lot of the violence is already in the story itself and it's only a matter of heightening certain aspects of it."

For example, about the tale of Bukit Merah, which explains the origins of the red soil on the hill, he says: "When the boy is killed in the story, I added a bit more detail, like how someone stabbed him in the stomach and twisted the knife. If you read about it in a normal children's book, it might just say he was killed, without any graphic details."

If the darkness gets too suffocating, lighten up and stretch your legs with a literary walk with Irish-born writer Rosemary Lim, 53. She will be taking groups of participants on a literary walk from Singapore Management University to Raffles Place, passing locations such as Raffles Hotel, Chijmes and Cavenagh Bridge, as well as places which inspired novelists such as Joseph Conrad and Somerset Maugham. At each place, Lim will read relevant passages from texts she selected.

She says: "In a sense, because of the route, a lot of the books picked themselves."

Children can also don their detective hats with *The Sherlock Sam Treasure Hunt*, which is targeted at those aged six and above. Accompanied by an adult, children can run around the Civic District solving word and picture puzzles as well as riddles.



Go on a walking tour with Jeffrey Tan (left) or listen to writers (from far left below) Adrian Tan, Gwee Li Sui and Rosemary Lim. PHOTOS: NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL



Adan Jimenez, 30, co-author of the *Sherlock Sam* series, says: "We wanted to do something fun for kids which mimics what Sherlock does in the books, which is get clues and solve mysteries."

If you want to turn your thoughts to something more intellectual, head for the *Brave New Animal Farm* lecture, helmed by writer, graphic artist and literary critic Gwee Li Sui and lawyer and author of *The Teenage Textbook* Adrian Tan.

In line with this year's theme, *Utopia Dystopia*, the talk will focus on Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *Animal Farm*.



Dr Gwee, 43, says: "I know it sounds very serious, but during the session, Adrian and I are going to have fun, do our usual song and dance, and crack a lot of jokes. But the idea is to tie the books back to our current society and to make them relevant in the Singapore context."

Finally, listen to the whispers of sculptures with the walking tour *Poetic Interventions @ Singapore Biennale Sites*, organised by theatre director, drama educator and arts administrator Jeffrey Tan, 41.

During the walk, five performers will take groups around public sculptures,

which have been installed for the Singapore Biennale and is running concurrently with the Singapore Writers Festival, and perform poetry from local and overseas authors around them.

Jeffrey Tan says: "The idea of poetic intervention is the idea that sculptures are in the spaces that we always pass, and if these sculptures could speak, what would they say?"

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For more information on the programmes available, go to [www.singaporewritersfestival.com](http://www.singaporewritersfestival.com)

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## WIN TICKETS TO AC GRAYLING LECTURE

Want to attend a lecture by the esteemed British philosopher and author AC Grayling? We are giving away five pairs of tickets to his lecture on Nov 2 as part of the Singapore Writers Festival. A lucky draw will be conducted to determine the winners.

To stand a chance to win a pair of tickets, simply answer this question: *What is the title of Grayling's latest book?*

- A. What Is Good?: The Search For The Best Way To Live
- B. The Meaning Of Things: Applying Philosophy To life
- C. The God Argument: The Case Against Religion And For Humanism

E-mail your entry, along with your full name, contact number and NRIC number to [stpromo@sph.com.sg](mailto:stpromo@sph.com.sg) by 6pm on Oct 22.

The Straits Times is the official media partner for Singapore Writers Festival.