

## ‘As Time Goes By’ Topics 2023

The **guideline** word limit is 500 words, however sometimes stories need more than 500 words, so don’t be guilty if you submit more.

If you miss writing a story for a particular month, we have a ‘catch up’ segment for in which class members share stories on previous topics.

Month	Topic	Details	Alternative topics recommended for newer class members	Details – these topics are either stories completed in previous years which worked well, or topics which are very flexible and can be revisited in different ways.
February 20	<b>‘Seasonal Thoughts’ “The (season) I (....)...</b>	Drawing upon Jenny’s concept last year, ‘The Summer I ....’ and Michelle’s member’s choice topic ‘The summer of ...’, develop a title and share a story on a memorable season in your life using the season you remember it happening in as a backdrop or prompt.	<b>‘New in Town’</b>	Have you ever been the new person in town? Or did someone else’s arrival have a profound impact on you? Share your story in 500 words.
			<b>‘The Year that Made Me’</b> (A topic often used by ABC interviewers with Australian living treasures.)	Write about a year which made a particular difference in your life’s journey. Over to you!
March 20	<b>‘Precious Objects’</b> (Life Matters 500 words 2022) (Suggestion by Graham Jensen for 2023) Related <i>‘The Theory of Objects’</i> podcast (Trent Dalton 2018)	Tell us about a memento, an object (or a group of objects) from a time in your past that has been important to you, and why. You always carry it with you whenever you move and find it very hard to let go of.  Maybe it has a story behind it, or it’s been a powerful presence in your life. Bring along the item if you can, or at the very least, a photo! Sample from Life Matters 2022– <a href="#">El’s Silver Ladle</a>	<b>‘Failure’</b> Although this is not a ‘skills course’, we will be sharing some guidelines and ideas in February about how this ‘500 words’ topic might be approached and are keen to hear the results! (ABC Open March 2016)	<b>‘Failure’</b> ‘Write about a failure you’ve experienced – from the commonplace to the catastrophic – in 500 words’. (ABC Open April 2017) Resources: For ‘Failure’ topic – <a href="#">Tips for Writing Your Story in 500 Words’</a> (ABC Open) <a href="#">How to Plan Your Story in 500 Words – sample topic ‘Failure’</a> (ABC Open) At the other extreme - a very personal Failure story <a href="https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/lifematters/abc-open-500-words3b-failure/5125288">https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/lifematters/abc-open-500-words3b-failure/5125288</a>
April 17	<b>‘Friends and Neighbours’</b>	A chance to write about your childhood home and neighbourhood, friends and neighbours you particularly remember, friends of your parents, community activities and organisations you and other members of your family were involved with and more. Use the opportunity to reflect on the social, economic, political and cultural context of the time.	<b>‘Anzac Day’/Easter</b> “A chance to reminisce about memories of Easter or Anzac Day (or Days) which have stayed with us over time”.	<b>‘Anzac Day’</b> Looking back over your lifetime, write about a memory/your memories of Anzac Day (or other memorial day) and its place in the cultural rituals of your family and the communities in which you have lived, moving from the personal to the political if you wish.  <b>‘Easter’</b> Looking back over your lifetime, write about your memories of Easter or other religious event and its place in the cultural rituals of your family and the communities in which you have lived.

May 16	<b>'Learning from History'</b> (Barry O'Connor suggestion for 2023)	"History is a marvellous thing. We cannot change it, we can only learn from it. Tell us about significant life lessons you have you learnt from one or two incidents in your past?"	<b>Shaped by Childhood</b> (First set in May 2016, this topic can be interpreted in many valuable ways)	Describe a formative experience from your childhood, and how it helped shape the person you grew up to be. It could be a treasured family ritual, an early friendship, an influential teacher or your first experience of losing a loved one. Think about an experience or person that's influenced you and share this with us.
June 18	<b>'I Changed My Mind...'</b> (relates to the Sydney Festival theme 'Reciprocity' in 2022 and the topic 'Advice')	Describe a time when you changed, or had your mind changed, perhaps through some advice, direct or indirectly received. Describe the context in which this happened, and what opportunities (hopefully) resulted as a result of this.	<b>'I quit'</b> (June 2015)	Tell your story of quitting. Did you quit a sport, a job, a bad habit? Was quitting your act of defiance or were you giving up? ..."We've all quit something - a job, a musical instrument, a food group or a bad habit. Tell us your story of quitting. What brought you to breaking point? Was it exhilarating or challenging to quit? What strengths did you draw upon and how did people react? What new opportunities were created once you quit?"
July 17	<b>'True Confessions'</b>  (Life Matters 500 Words 2021) "The theme is True Confessions, and what happened when the truth was revealed."	"Tell us about a time when you fessed up to someone, or someone fessed up to you...or when you heard the truth from someone who'd been keeping it to themselves... What happened when the truth was revealed? It can be funny or sad or quirky or powerful, it just needs to be true, and it needs to be your story to tell. You can of course change names to protect people."... "It could be with yourself, or within your family, but please change names if you need to."	<b>'It happened in Vegas'/'What happened in Vegas, stays in Vegas'</b> (September 2016)	Spill the beans on something from one of your holidays, something that just doesn't happen in everyday life. Ideas that could help to get you moving – look at photo albums, emails, letters, even Facebook – get yourself reminders of holidays and the events that happened on them, then describe one of those holiday moments in detail.
August 21	<b>'Retirement'</b>  <i>(From a 'This .... Life' suggestion via Marg McCrohan in 2022 and a yet to be read story by Bev Morton)</i>	Retirement is a transition which can be quite complex, involve a range of losses, may be dreaded, involve celebrations and be looked forward to, indeed all of the above! ... Share the story of your retirement from a role which was important to you at some stage of your life – how did you negotiate it? How did you feel about the transition at the time? How do you feel about it now?  <i>(Please note –'Retirement' stories will not be included on the website unless you agree— people involved may still be alive!).</i>	<b>*'What I was wearing'</b> (December 2015/April 2018)  <b>***'An item of clothing which symbolizes a time in my life...'</b> (Suggestion from Graham Jensen for 2023)	*Some items of clothing are linked to memories, emotions and experiences - the jacket you wore on your first date, a bikini that didn't fare well in water, a unique find at a market, a hand me down. Why is it special? What significant moments occurred while you were wearing it? What do you think, feel and remember when you see it? Bring it, or a photo of it, to class if you can. <i>or</i> **Write a story about an item of clothing you still have (or have a photo of) which symbolizes a time or event in your life. Tell the story surrounding the clothing, the context in which it appeared in your life, significant moments which occurred while wearing it, what it means to you, why you find it hard to let go. Try to bring along the item of clothing, or a photo of it, if you can!

September 18	<p><b>‘(.....) Adventure’</b> Based on Heather Hartland’s member’s choice topic last year <i>‘(Outback) Adventure’</i> <b>Or</b> <b>‘Deja vue’</b> Graham Morris member’s choice suggested for 2023</p>	<p>Share with us your memories of an adventure or two – set the scene, create a sense of the drama involved, and reflect upon the outcome and the meaning of the adventure to you.</p> <p>Write about a time when you thought ‘It’s happening again’ or realised ‘It happened again’, when you felt a strong feeling of ‘déjà vu’. What was happening at the time? What (who) did it remind you of? Why are these memories significant to you?</p>	<b>Member’s Choice</b>	This is your chance to develop your own ‘500 words’ topic and share it with others!
October 16	<p><b>‘This (.....) Life ’</b> (Please note that the <b>Benalla Festival’s writing competition</b> topic will replace this topic if the competition is reinstated in 2023)</p>	<p>The Australian newspaper’s weekend Review column considers original submissions of 450 – 500 words for their ‘This (...) Life’ story each weekend. Our topic for October draws upon this format! <i>Examples ‘This (Downsizing) Life’ by an 80+ year old about planning to farewell loved home; ‘This (Number 8) Life’ about growing up as ‘Number 8’ in a family of nine children. Also –see our <a href="#">‘This (...) Life’ stories!</a></i></p>	<p><b>‘Right Here, Right Now’</b> (A flexible topic first offered in November 2017, now repeated annually, which reveals something about your ‘life and times’). <b>‘This (...) Life’</b> can be another alternative if the Benalla competition topic becomes available.</p>	<p>‘A time capsule of the present. Write a story about a situation currently unfolding in your life, right here, right now.’</p>
November 20	<p><b>‘One Moment, This Year’</b> (Annual)</p>	<p>Looking back on 2023 to date, what single moment stands out for you? Whether it be loss, love, discovery or disappointment, share your unforgettable moment.</p>	<p><b>‘Triggers’</b> (Annual)</p>	<p>Keep a notebook close by this month in which to note any ‘triggers’ which led you to reminisce about a time in your lives. You may have been talking to someone, watching television or a film, driving somewhere, reading a book. Choose one to three of these - write about the memories evoked, keeping the total words to 500 – 750 words.</p>
<b>Back up topics to do if monthly topics (above) don’t suit!</b>	<p><b>‘Interesting people I have known....’</b></p>	<p>Tell us about an ‘interesting person you have known’, someone who you would definitely include in your memoirs. (This could be the beginning of a collection of stories prompted by this theme ....)</p>	<b>Memoir Review</b>	<p>Head for your bookshelf, the library or an online bookstore to retrieve a memoir which has meant something to you. When did it enter your life? How did it then, or does it now, relate to your life story? What universal truth/s does it relate to. <i>You might find it useful to draw upon our <a href="#">framework for responding to memoir.</a></i></p>