

Descriptive author visits campus

Kyle Steele
The Clackamas Print

Seattle author Matt Briggs read from his works at the college last Wednesday

The *Stranger*, a Seattle publication, recently called author Matt Briggs a "genius of literature."

In Roger Rook 220 of the Literary Arts Center, on Nov. 7 Briggs read a selection of his short stories to the gathered crowd.

People sitting comfortably in unmistakably purple chairs intently listened to his works, witnessing the words that have made him well-known in the literary world.

"It's a story," joked Briggs after telling a tale of a time when a fact-checker asked him

if frogs really burp methane gas.

The evening started with a little delay caused by the ever-prevalent problem of computer difficulties, and then English Instructor Trevor Dodge gave a short introduction before Briggs took the podium to read.

Briggs has won numerous awards for his books of short stories. His 2005 novel "Shoot the Buffalos" won him the American Book Award in 2006.

Along with the awards, he has garnered good reviews from such larger newspapers as *The New York Times* and *The Seattle Times*.

For this reading, he strayed away from his self-described "dirty, old man stories" and read from a varied group of tales that covered a gambit of subjects, from flying men to a wart that gets a little out of hand.

His writing style merges well-thought-out descriptions of events, people and things with a sense of whimsical fantasy. A bit of dark humor also helps move his stories from one point to the next.

Those interested in Briggs' writing can access his Web site and blog at www.seed-cake.com to keep up with his work. The site also features his random thoughts and a sidebar outlining his upcoming readings.

Kate Gray: instructor extraordinaire, active in the community

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and it was a good fit," she added. Gray also enjoys traveling when she finds the time.

"What I mean by that is, a risk can be trying out something in the classroom," she continued, "or confronting someone who is not treating a faculty member fairly, or volunteering at the Red Cross and going to work at a shelter right after Katrina hit."

Gray has taken these types of chances and will continue to do so, a trait which has led her to much success throughout her 15-plus years at the college.

As an English instructor, Gray likes to "mix it up" with the courses she teaches.

"I love inter-disciplinary (teaching)," she said. "I am teaching Arts and Sciences 200."

The class focuses on Africa, and is a "lab science for non-science people."

As for her other classes, "poetry writing would probably be my favorite," she said.

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"I wanted to become an English instructor because I loved writing and it was a good fit."

Kate Gray
English Instructor,
Full-time Faculty
Associate President

about her use of Plath's poetry teaching.

"After reading her poems letters home, hearing recording her reading, launching video pictures, students wrote a poem Sylvia in Sylvia's voice," Gray in her proposal for the symposium. She has her poetry class do assignment each term.

Plath has significantly influenced Gray's own poetry.

"She was a pretty intense character and fascinating," she said. "I studied her work a long time."

Gray has an impressive resume when it comes to poetry. She had her work published in magazines, including *Poetry Northwest*, *The Seattle Review*, *The Oregonian*.

In addition, in 2000, her book, *Where She Goes*, won the Light Chapbook Contest.

So with the many different of her life, how does Gray manage to keep from going insane? What is her secret?

"How you balance it is your passion," Gray simply said.

Recently, she went to Oxford, England, to speak at the Sylvia Plath Symposium, commemorating the poet's 75th birthday. Together with a few other speakers, Gray spoke



Sean Von Walchren Clackamas
Kate Gray sits in her office in Roger Rook Hall; she is back from a recent trip to England where she spoke at the Sylvia Plath Symposium.

WHO IS MATT BRIGGS?

Author of three collections of short stories, "The Remains of River Names," "Misplaced Alice" and "The Moss Gatherers."

Recently published his first novel, "Shoot the Buffalo."

Winner of several prizes, including The American Book Award and The Stranger Genius Award.

Coming This Week To Theaters...

11/16 - *Love in the Time of Cholera*, rated R, starring Javier Bardem, Giovanna Mezzogiorno and Benjamin Pratt.

11/16 - *Mr. Magorium's Wonder Emporium*, rated G, starring Dustin Hoffman, Natalie Portman and Jason Bateman.

11/16 - *Beowulf*, rated PG-13, starring Ray Winstone, Anthony Hopkins and Angelina Jolie.

