

# TEMASEK PRESS

## Words Go Round at TJC

BY ALLYSON TUTAY (4D'17)

PHOTO CREDITS: MS CAROLINE SNG, ALLYSON TUTAY (4D'17)



“Ever since I was 12, I knew I wanted to be a writer,” Mr Felix Cheong said as he shared how his love for literature was realized at such a young age.

This exact passion for literature is what was showcased during Words Go Round, the Singapore Writers Festival outreach program for schools and the community. Temasek JC hosted this session of Words Go Round, attended by the IP4s and students from various schools, connected by their unanimous love for the arts.

Cheong shared with the audience how his love for the arts started with simple doodling, and then eventually evolved into writing, with his first piece published in Primary 6 followed by his second in Secondary 2. “It was partly an ego thing,” he joked. “I loved seeing my name in print.”

Cheong also spoke about his sources of inspiration, and how it differs for each of his pieces. He even shared an anecdote on how a crush during his JC days drove him to write one of his first poems, earning laughter from the audience.

Sobering up, Cheong then went on to talk about the short story he wrote in the anthology *Here and Beyond: The Lost Years*. He highlights how the story had two starting points –

first, real cases of missing people and second, the 5Cs. Ultimately, the curious mélange of ideas culminated in Cheong's short story, 'True Singapore Ghost Story'. The story focuses on a man called Wong, who is 'basically a zombie, an invisible man'. Not wanting to give too much away to those who haven't read the story, Cheong cryptically says, "Wong dies before he really dies, because of money."

Cheong's story draws similarities to 'Here Comes the Sun' a short story by Yeo Wei Wei, who also spoke at Words Go Round. In both Cheong and Yeo's story, we see the recurring theme of death and the ambiguity of their endings. "You don't really know if the main character's dead or alive," the writers suggest.

Yeo's inspirations for her short story, however, differ from Cheong's. "Three things," she said, "A visit to the old folks home, a bridge with blue lights and The Beatles." These three seemingly unrelated events in her life brought her to write 'Here Comes the Sun', a clear reference to her love for the band. Yeo shared how the story wasn't based off of someone she knew, but the emotions in it were just as real.

"I was a gypsy with two dogs at the time," Yeo shared. She told the audience how she felt a bit lost back then, and when she saw the bridge, she wondered what was on the other side. Bits of herself can be seen in Madam Goh, the story's main character. She understood the feelings that Madam Goh felt, she told the audience, the feeling of not wanting to do something that she had to do.

Yeo also engaged in an active dialogue with the audience, even giving study tips to the students who are studying her short story as part of their O Level exams, and at the end of the talk, the writers were kind enough to sign the students' books.

It was an honor to have hosted Words Go Round, and we certainly hope to not only host more sessions with distinguished writers, but to also cultivate the love for the arts in TJC.

