The Wollongong Learning Labs are an academic enrichment program run by the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong during the school holidays. By participating in these labs, gifted and talented students are given something extra to what they can get at school – a real university experience with dynamic and challenging workshops conducted by senior university academics.

Students have access to specialised materials and equipment at the University. They are able to do anything from experimenting within a robot simulation lab to reconstructing facial features over a cast of a human skull to measuring human movement using surface electromyography...to name just a few.

The Learning Labs workshops cover a range of academic disciplines such as engineering, law, robotics, creative arts, history, philosophy and sciences. Two students from the 7L, 2013 class were recommended to the university by their English teacher, Ms Taoube, as excellent candidates for one of these programmes. Due to their prior academic successes and the positive referral from their teacher, Thomas Jackson and Angus Whittaker were accepted into the 2014 cohort.

**The University of Wollongong Learning Labs**

Over the holidays Angus W and I, Thomas J, participated in the Learning Labs at Wollongong University. The course that we participated in was Creative Writing for Beginners and Beyond.

During our two days we did a lot of interesting and enjoyable activities. On our first day we learnt about various writing techniques. We learnt about our own individual writing strengths and weaknesses. The teacher who took our course was Mr Timothy Daley who has written many award winning plays. He critiqued our writing after each activity. We also learnt how to write a poem. It is quite amazing to see what you can write in a timeframe of two minutes.

The second day was certainly the day in which we had more fun. We learnt how to loosen up and how to free our inner writer. We also learnt how to overcome ‘writers block’ and to express what our feelings were at the time. A game we played to help us loosen up is called ‘Zip, Zap, Boing’ At first we were all a little tentative but after a game or two we had all gotten the hang of it. Soon it was a fierce fight where we were all Zip Zapping and Boinging each other.

Overall it was a worthwhile experience where we had fun, learned lots and made new friends. I had a wonderful time and I am eagerly anticipating going next year.