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The Society presents these poems in the belief that each is the work of the submitting student. Teachers of the award-winning students have verified the authenticity of the poems. In some instances extensive searches have been made to check originality.

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"My Country"

The love of field and coppice,
Of green and shaded lanes,
Of ordered woods and gardens
Is running in your veins.
Strong love of grey-blue distance,
Brown streams and soft, dim skies –
I know but cannot share it,
My love is otherwise.

I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,
Of ragged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains.
I love her far horizons,
I love her jewel-sea,
Her beauty and her terror –
The wide brown land for me!

The stark white ring-barked forests,
All tragic to the moon,
The sapphire-misted mountains,
The hot gold hush of noon.
Green tangle of the brushes,
Where lithe lianas coil,
And orchids deck the tree tops
And ferns the warm dark soil.

Core of my heart, my country!
Her pitiless blue sky,
When sick at heart, around us,
We see the cattle die –
But then the grey clouds gather,
And we can bless again
The drumming of an army,
The steady, soaking rain.

Core of my heart, my country!
Land of the Rainbow Gold,
For flood and fire and famine,
She pays us back three-fold.
Over the thirsty paddocks
Watch, after many days,
The filmy veil of greenness
That thickens as we gaze...

An opal-hearted country,
A wilful, lavish land –
All you who have not loved her,
You will not understand –
Though earth holds many splendours,
Wherever I may die,
I know to what brown country
My homing thoughts will fly

Dorothea Mackellar
(1885 – 1968)

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2014 Entry Data

Total entries	8544
Number of schools	618

Categories

Senior Secondary	631
Junior Secondary	1335
Upper Primary	3830
Lower Primary	1742
Assisted Learning Secondary	285
Assisted Learning Primary	663
CRC Award	58

State

ACT	201
NSW	4726
NT	267
QLD	867
SA	355
TAS	401
VIC	1287
WA	440

President's Report

On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the national Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards. I would like to extend a warm welcome to those of you celebrating such a special milestone with us. The longevity of this competition owes so very much to our founder, Mrs Mikie Maas.

There is one other person I would like to thank who has been a guiding light and an inspiration to our society and the competition. That is Anne Knight, who has been there every step of the way. Thank you Anne. Our society is empowered by each and every one of our volunteers over that time and I want to express my gratitude for that contribution.

However, the most crucial and essential part of this equation is the many students who have participated in our competition over the last 30 years. Without them and their enthusiasm and talent we would have no competition. My thanks and appreciation is extended to all of them on behalf of the society.

May this legacy endure for another 30 years and more.

John Lemon

'The best of birthday wishes, Dorothea Awards, and for fair weather in the future. It has been an exciting trip, with times when I beat my head in frustration and others when my heart flew - and I wouldn't have missed it for worlds. Huge thanks to all those who have travelled with us, in any guise, for "no man is an island" and there have been many helpers. A big hug to the dazzling line-up of judges, who brought back-packs laden, not only with knowledge, but also with appreciation, understanding, compassion and encouragement. But the biggest hug of all for those who have written poems to enchant us during the last 30 years, whether prize winners or not - you are our communicators, our visionaries and dreamers, our future movers and shakers. Thank you and good luck.'

*Anne Bell (Knight)
Founding committee, Life member*

Primary Sections

Judge's Report

It has been an honour and a privilege to be involved in such an important part of the learning of Australian children, as the 2014 junior categories' judge of the wonderful Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards.

'My Country' has always been a poem dear to my heart and my memories of reciting it out loud is something which will remain with me always. Writing and poetry were my favourite subjects at primary school and reading the creations of today's primary school students has been both a challenging and rewarding experience. I cannot think of a better way to start each day than by opening the judge's page of the Dorothea Mackellar competition to find word-treasures from 4 - 12 year olds, poems that started with a tiny precious seed then grew and blossomed into a story-poem, told from the heart, from children all across this spectacular country. One moment I'd be reading a poem from a child who lives in a far away and remote outback area where peace and a slower pace of life reign supreme. A moment later I would be looking at the words from a student at an inner city school, close to traffic and chaotic busyness. I would like to thank all those wonderful teachers who encouraged their students to pick up their pens, pencils, lap tops, iPads or whatever electronic device I've forgotten and let their words take flight. I could see as I was reading, some of those flights were more difficult than others. Some flew easily while others struggled to take off.

One specific comment I would like to make is that many students started out with strong words, strong messages which often petered off by the end. To me, good writing is about writing, then rewriting and rewriting, looking at our words over and over again, making every line, each word, as perfect as it can be. This always takes time. So I often looked for poems where students wrote through to the end, retained their focus and passion for their subject and a passion for their words.

There were acrostic poems, rhyming poems, free verse and diamante poems to name a few. Strong themes were darkness, saving the world from bad things, and the environment, with topics about refugees, dance, memories, food, the seasons, spiders, Minecraft (whatever that is), Lego, bullying, family, depression and there was a thread of sadness. The history of war was understandably strong this year, the Anzacs particularly, but there was also an overall worry and concern about what is happening now and asking why does war have to be? The contrasts in subjects made each opening a surprise. There were powerful, funny, very strong and not so strong poems - some made me laugh out loud and others caused tears to trickle on to my keyboard.

To me poetry is often about letting your feelings, your fears, your inside-of-you-thoughts run free. Some were written in a flash, others clearly worked on for a very long time but all of them, were precious, a pleasure and an honour to read. Thank you.

Corinne Fenton

Secondary Sections

Judge's Report

What can I tell you? Apart from the fact that I have groaned, grizzled, laughed, read, thought, smiled, shuddered, marvelled, imagined, talked and walked poetry, I have 'growned' to be more of a poetry lover, more than I thought possible. This is a precious gift and to all of you, I am eternally grateful.

I can tell you that I have accompanied poets on their journeys through subjects and content ranging from war and soldiers and loss, grief, daydreams, spiritual journeys and philosophical comments of life and living it. I have had the opportunity to read mirror versions of Australian bush poetry – my goodness, 'Harry Dale the Drover' rides again – how brilliant they were. I have ridden quadbikes in the bush and watched life in distant places through the eyes of others. I have experienced a snapshot of what it is like to be young and, I can certainly tell you, that politicians and world leaders, merchandisers and media magnates could do a lot worse than sit down and read this collection. They couldn't fail to be impressed but, more importantly, would be bearing witness to how they are observed, considered and critiqued. Nothing has escaped the analysis, judgements, observations and exuberance evident in these works. The hopes and needs, fear and apprehension, love and passion are all here and, on a special note, those responsible for caring for the environment and the state of the world have been put on notice; this generation of new, young, vital poets are counting on you to fix it or, by golly, by the time they get there, they'll be doing it for you! Actually . . . they already are.

What else can I tell you . . . that it has been an honour and a privilege to have been on this journey. The winners and the runners-up tore off the page, bold and undeniably heaving with talent, and the others – oh, how glorious they were and how truly, truly desperate I was trying to keep them from sinking to places they shouldn't have been. Every single one of them, every single poet who sat down and penned a poem, whether you did it voluntarily, happily or under the thumbs of a handful of teachers (I know because there's a poem or two that have grabbed that moment as well and made me live it) your work deserves to be kept afloat, on top of the sea of wonderful words to remind us of your willingness to put your feelings, your life and your incredible thoughts into poetry.

Finally, my last 'tell-you' is borrowed. I heard once that writing forms a pyramid, with novels and long works providing the base. On the next level are short-stories but up there on the pinnacle, the absolute peak of all the most beautiful words is . . . poetry.

Thank-you for letting me climb to the top of your pyramids with you.

Nette Hilton

Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards

2014 Anthology

WINNERS AND RUNNERS-UP

Upper Primary

WINNER

Sarah JAEGER, 12

*Launceston Church Grammar School
LAUNCESTON TAS*

Death's Kaleidoscope

The master of pain is prominent in Dachau,
Perfecting a frown on a gaunt and shrivelled face,
Playing unconscionable games with my beautiful mother,
Reminding me I'll be next if I survive a few more years,
Debating death is like an alluring melody hammered inside my
head.

Violins bring a magical essence of self-achievement,
Comforting disheartened and shattered hearts,
But I was not permitted to bring anything with me,
Without my violin I feel incredibly lonely,
Unable to let out my suffering through music,
Hitler has taken away my purpose.

An undefined soldier waltzes over to my mother,
Raising his brutal fist above her emaciated back,
Characteristically, my brother and I intervene,
A cacophony of sounds sprint through my ears,
My mother's unrelenting and mortifying screaming,
A haunting laugh from my mocking captor,
The resonating sound of a newly fired gun.

Death entangles it's lanky arms around my heart,
Draining my crimson liquid onto the frozen ground,
Leaving three distinct colours for all to contemplate,
Dazed red, for the shapes I see from tear filled eyes,
Blotched grey, for a monstrously mislead Germany,
Cumulus white, for the colour on my dying brother's face,
The shifting pattern of colours lingers momentarily, then dies.

Judge's Comment

This poem blew me away and in one reading I knew it was the winner. The maturity of Sarah's words, her vocabulary, the way she tells this achingly sad story and her knowledge of such a difficult subject, have all come together to create something truly special. This poem could not be ignored. Congratulations Sarah.

Upper Primary**RUNNER-UP****Alice CLARK, 11**

*Mount Claremont PEAC Centre
MOUNT CLAREMONT WA*

Shades of Eternity

As night moves on, the city sleeps
And through our minds the dream-haze creeps
Like spreading fog. By midnight's chime
We dream of worlds long lost in time

Whole worlds of wonders to behold-
Of mystery, of long-lost gold?
Or verdant wilds, and in its sky
Might jewel-bright birds and dragons fly?

Dangers in dense jungles hide
The ancient ruins deep inside-
Time-worn remains, now overgrown
Where skulking shadows roam alone.

Jagged mountains capped with white
Mark land's sheer cliffs bathed in light
Where roaring waves swamp ships at sea
In tides of blue eternity.

A world where magic fills the air
From sunlit glen to dragon's lair
A thread of music weaves its way
Through every dream-lit night and day.

And yet, as strange as it may seem
You had but glimpsed this world of dreams.
If only you could be there still!
Although you try, you never will.

We find such vibrant fantasies
Live but in fleeting memories
Of worlds we cannot recreate.
Worlds gone forever when we wake.

Judge's Comment

This is a powerful poem and takes the reader away into a world of dreams with lovely use of simile, metaphor and rhyme. 'Where skulking shadows roam alone'. Wonderful!

Lower Primary

WINNER

Jenna ROGERS, 8

*St Michaels Collegiate School
HOBART TAS*

Fire

Quoted from Fire by Jackie French and Bruce Whatley, Scholastic Press, 2014.

*Hills bleached gold,
a baked blue sky,
leaves lay limp in the air,
sucked dry.*

The burning fire, *licking trees*,
turning them to ash,
fire flared, flames cracked.

Fire, a beast, ate it all,
then ordered more.

Leaves like tissue,
trees like cardboard,
the burning sun,
the howling wind,
air too thick with smoke to see,
nothing calming this *fire sea*.

The fire cleared, revealing the dead,
grass singed down to dirt,
not a thing spared.

King Fire has had his word.

Judge's Comment

What could be a clearer description of a bushfire more than this young poet's words - 'Fire, a beast, ate it all, then ordered more.' There are many wonderful descriptive passages in this poem with its personal response to what I believe is Jenna's experience. The last line is a powerful statement saying much in a few honest words.

Lower Primary**RUNNER-UP****Chloe FAMILTON, 8**

*Cherrybrook Public School
CHERRYBROOK NSW*

Cat

The midnight clock strikes twelve,
All prey must beware.
The hunter pads on her feet,
Cat. Cat.

Glinting emerald eyes
Glitter in the dark,
Snowy paws colour her black fur.
Cat. Cat.

Fieldmouse scurries, unaware of danger here,
She prepares to pounce...
And soon the deed is done.
Cat. Cat.

By day - no feathers round her mouth,
No blood-matted fur.
She is a sleepy furball 'til night.
Cat. Cat.

The midnight clock strikes twelve.
All prey must beware,
The hunter pads on her feet.
Cat. Cat. Cat.

Judge's Comment

The repetition of 'Cat. Cat.' is a clever device in this poem, it slows the pace making the reader pause. The poem gives a very clear image of the cat as a hunter and touches on the poor little mouse, only briefly, but effectively. The feeling of danger and trepidation after midnight is strong and clear.

Assisted Learning Primary

WINNER

Maryam SATHAT SOBHANI, 12

*Footscray North Primary School
FOOTSCRAY VIC*

Me

I wonder who I am?
Or where I am meant to be?
Or where I could be?
Or how to leave?
Or how to be a true person?
I wonder!
I wonder how I can fit in this world
Or how to be right?
But no one can answer my questions.

Judge's Comment

Beautiful. Simple and heartfelt. This poem is a universal question which has been asked by generations of people from all over the world for as long as time. This young student has expressed it so succinctly and so well that it makes the reader stop and wonder.

Assisted Learning Primary

RUNNER-UP

Zoe FOGARTY, 11

*SCEGGS Darlinghurst
DARLINGHURST NSW*

Child Abuse

*Good turns to evil,
I scream but no one hears,
My body turns cold.*

Judge's Comment

This is an excellent poem - once again, so much said in so few words. Oh, so powerful.

Senior Secondary

WINNER

Jehannah MAY, 17

*Hornsby Girls High School,
HORNSBY NSW*

Breathe

I want to crawl
inside you. Excavate
your lungs until there's nothing left
for you to breathe
but me.
I want to be
Gasped and
Gulped and
Guzzled
Nuzzled safely inside your ribcage.
I want to strut
across the stage of your collarbones,
Swing my legs into the
dent
of your manubrium.
I want to be off balance,
Uncoordinated
as I tread the tightrope of your eyelashes
trying to watch the world
the way you do:
with all its ricocheting cries of chaos
and ecstasy. All its flashes
of brilliance.
Every blink threatens to dislodge me
but the view is so breathtaking
I stay as long as I can until
your tears slip me away.
I want to ski
down the slope of your stomach
then carve it out
like a canoe. Curl up with
a book and a promise,
set you adrift
and just float away -
Earthbound clouds.

I want to break your brittle bones until they're tinder -
set you ablaze.
Convince you
Show you what it feels like to be warm
inside.
I want to rock climb the ladder of your spine
Trace the freckled constellations flung
haphazardly
across your cheek
Occupy the hollow in the curve of your neck
and teach you how to breathe
slowly.
And kiss you till all air is gone
and there's nothing left for you to breathe
but me.

Judge's Comment

The immediacy of the words in the first lines of this poem literally make me breathless. Such images; perfectly chosen words taking the pace and cadence of the piece from knife-edge pauses and searing, searching stretched out moments. Aagh, the beauty.

Senior Secondary

RUNNER-UP

Gemma CHRISTENSEN, 17

*Oxley Christian College,
CHIRNSIDE PARK VIC*

Bird of Paradise

Here in the woods lies an abundance of trees,
Some pure-blooded and strong and some shaky like weeds.
The floor beneath is covered with treasures and traps,
With hidden trails, long and short, that wind snakely off maps.

A sheen of fine silver and a glistening eye,
Holds the hope of a young bird who is ready to fly.
She craves to find freedom and seek all that she's worth,
She wants to taste for herself the bittersweet of the earth.

But there's a price for this bird to seek what she yearns,
For if she leaves the nest now she can never return.
Or if she finds her way back it will not be the same,
For adventure and loss can taint what remains.

But she turns down her feathers and prepares for the journey,
She cares not if she gets homesick or lost or lonely.
She darts down through the trees with precision and grace,
With a heart full of wonder to explore some new place.

She now walks with her legs on the densely packed leaves,
What she feels, what she sees, she can hardly believe.
There's new life, different people on this land down below,
And if she hadn't left her nest she would never have known.

She hears a voice in her head, "there's danger down there,
There's tricks, traps and crooks so you better beware.
Those strangers you'll meet, they won't like who you are,
Just stay here at home, please don't stray very far."

She brushes off the bad thought and with a pride-filled look,
Sets off to find the great streams and the babbling brooks.
She regrets not what she's done, she'd do it twice, even thrice,
For now this unremarkable bird is a bird of paradise.

Judge's Comment

The forest in this poem, so beautifully described, slips so seamlessly into a metaphor for life that you could be forgiven for overlooking it. The 'unremarkable bird of paradise', a well- chosen contradiction, reveals layers of meaning hidden among 'the densely packed leaves'. Then, our bird 'walks' - in this one word we sense the trepidation of the new traveller in paradise. A masterpiece of poetry.

Junior Secondary

WINNER

Jemma GRAY, 14

*St Leonard's College
MELBOURNE VIC*

The Cleaner

Our past washed away,
Our history is being dismissed
My background is being wiped off
Their life, gone.

The past is bleeding across,
A clean and white new slate.
The strands that drip down
Show those who still remember.

They remember our history with pride not displeasure,
They remember even after it being wiped clean
They remember everything,
Their life without dictation.

Judge's Comment

Ah, what can I tell you about this poem. What an image to choose to convey, so succinctly, the bitterness of hidden histories! How cleverly we are forced to consider our related histories when 'the past is bleeding across a clean and white new slate'. If a poem can pivot on its last line, this poem is a masterpiece; 'their life without dictation.'

Junior Secondary

RUNNER-UP

Saraya MUXLOW, 14

*St Philip's Christian College
WARATAH NSW*

Underage Marriages

She died when I was 3
My mother
He died when I was 4
My father
Baby Nujood died when I was 6
All dead

It's hard on your own
Taking care of a baby
It's even harder
When you watch their little brown eyes
Roll to the back of their heads
And their bodies become listless like a rag doll...
Lifeless... Loveless...
Silent

I walk the long dirt streets asking, begging people for money
But they ignore me or command me to move out of their path
I stand here empty as a vacuum
Invisible to the thousands of piercing eyes that brush past me daily
If only they heard me screaming from within
Imploring them to see how I ache to be loved
Engulfed by misery

A figure appears over my enervated body
Promising a better life
One where I will be loved and live in a house with a family
A place where I could call home
Finally, Allah answers my prayers
I'm saved. Taken from the streets,
Cleansed and hopeful
And live the life that was planned for me...
Hulleluah!!!

I should have known better
He was older
He came to me
And stripped me of my clothes and my innocence

I am Parvana
I am 9 years old
I am married

Judge's Comment

This work astounds me. The subject matter is so confronting but is related in such a way that we are initially distanced from the anguish. The final verse, reflecting the style of the first slams the message home with so few words. They are perfectly placed.

Assisted Learning Secondary

WINNER

Simione LUA, 14

*Redeemer Baptist School,
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

Dream

I sit and think,
What's a dream?
What do they tell me?
What do they mean?
Sometimes they tell the future of me.
Sometimes taken to places I'd like to see.
Day or night, happy or fright.

As I sit in class today,
My mind starts to run away,
Out onto the field it strays,
Where I'd much rather go and play,
My daydream the teacher did take,
Thud! Now I'm wide-awake.

As I lie awake at night,
The dark slowly drawing me away.
My eyes open in my mind
And makes me start to think of something bright,
There was this light that was at a great height.

As I rise from a good night sleep,
It was long and it was deep,
The story was played in my mind,
But as I wake, I cannot find
The greatest narratives that could ever be,
Are locked and lost inside of me.

Judge's Comment

There is an absolute delight in the final lines of this poem. Not only do these words resonate with anyone who has tried to capture a dream, they allude to a different text; our inner lives. It is a rare gift to be able to write something that creeps under the skin of the reader so they smile and nod in agreement as something that they, too, have experienced.

Assisted Learning Secondary

RUNNER-UP

Alamanda MICK, 15

*Redeemer Baptist School,
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

GUINEA PIG

You feel like a hairy pillow in my hands:
Desert brown and cloud white
You wriggle, squeak and try to run away.

I still like you even though you are a fat, furry, food forager
Your desert dirt colour reminds me of home
Hot, red, dusty, brown dirt.

I carefully feed you every day
Your house is a river of food
But you never thank me.

You run from me but you will never get away
You are smelly, sweaty and small
I can't understand why you like it in your cage.

I hate seeing you in this cage
You never smile
Locked away from your freedom

But I never want to see you go
I never want to say goodbye
To this furry little puddle of fun.

Judge's Comment

There is a delicious honesty in this work. I can almost feel the guinea pig as it is held. Words are carefully selected to bring the images into view effortlessly. A great effort.

Community Relations Commission (NSW) Award

For the best poem
highlighting the value of cultural diversity
within Australian community

Community Relations Commission (NSW) Award

JOINT WINNER

Yash GOEL, 6

*Castle Hill Public School,
CASTLE HILL NSW*

Being Nani

My Nani was born in India,
And now she lives in Australia.
I love my Nani,
Because she cares for me.
She has black hair and brown skin.
She is tall and very thin.
When my Nani wears a sari,
She looks very, very pretty.
Nani always wears a bindi on her forehead.
It is round and the colour red.
I like to wear the bindi for fun.
It makes me feel like I am an Indian.
My Nani cooks me Indian food.
Her cooking is very, very good.
Nani calls me 'Beta' in Hindi.
'Beta' means 'Son' she told me.
Nani goes to the temple to pray.
She prays to statues made of clay.
I watch my Nani as she chants.
I stand with her and clap my hands.
I have fun learning about our Gods,
And all of their different jobs.
My Nani does lots of fun things on Diwali.
She makes colourful patterns called 'rangoli'.
We eat lots of Indian sweets,
And I get lots and lots of gifts.
My Nani tells me about India,
Because it is different from Australia.
She wants me to know,
That although I am Australian, I am Indian too.
I love you Nani, thankyou.
I am proud of being like you.

Judge's Comment

This poem has such a gentle honesty about it. Told from the heart this young poet shares with us a precious aspect of his cultural heritage and the line 'although I am Australian, I am Indian too' says it all.

JOINT WINNER**Naomi SO, 10**

*Lindfield Public School,
LINDFIELD NSW*

I Am a Refugee

What shall we tell you?
The ear piercing cries that went through our ears
Or the heart breaking bangs of gunshots in war.

What shall we tell you?
How we fled?
How we survived
Or why we fled?

What shall we tell you?
The anxious feeling of getting on a boat with no clue
what you're doing or why you're doing it,
Or when we were dragged on a boat drifting off to sea,
Clueless of what's coming

What shall we tell you?
The rough boat trip with hundreds of anxious people
Or children sitting lonely and depressed to leave everything?

What shall we tell you?
The sensation of relief as it is an island we see
Or how we tremble with fear hoping we're not caught.

I struggled,
I survived,
I am a refugee.

Judge's Comment

Such powerful imagery in a few words. Attitude captured in the use of questions and finally, the simple lined contradiction creates a powerful conclusion. It encompasses the fight and bravery to be classified as someone starting out all over again. Brilliant!

Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards

2014 Anthology

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Upper Primary

Lower Primary

Assisted Learning Primary

Senior Secondary

Junior Secondary

Assisted Learning Secondary

Upper Primary

Eden ANDERSON, 11

The Knox School
WANTIRNA VIC

The white scarf and the rifle

Embraced with fear
He ran from the trenches
Face wet from a single tear.

Night falls alongside his comrades,
He watches them one by one as they hit the shaken Earth,
Fire lights the dark spaces around as he takes his final stand.

He walks to No-Mans land
and surrenders with a white
scarf tied around his rifle.

The soldier fell upon the Earth,
The scarf rest upon his head
The solid ground beneath him stained
red as the wound poured blood beside him.

His closest loves lay red roses on where his body lay.
Under the blood stained bed is where his soul will stay.
The White Scarf tied around the rifle resting on his grave.

Judge's Comment

There is a wonderful understanding of sense of place in this poem and because of that the images are very clear. 'Fire lights the dark spaces' is a wonderful line, close your eyes and you are there.

Harriet BRINDLEY, 12

New Lambton Public School
NEW LAMBTON NSW

Bush Ballad

Sitting around the campfire
Playing the didgeridoo
Cooking up the tucker
Kangaroo

Chinwagging with mates
Singing all our songs
Wearing Aussie work boots
Thongs

Watching out for snakes
Crocodiles too
Seeing Aussie landmarks
Uluru

Driving in my ute
Horn goes honk
They call me Lozza Rozza
Bushgronk

Got bitten by mosquitoes
One night while I was in bed
Got the danghi fever
Dead

Judge's Comment

This poem is something really different. It's simple, complete, the rhyme is a joy to read and it made this judge laugh, which was wonderful.

Tamzyn CALVITTO, 11

*Lowther Hall Anglican Grammar School
ESSENDON VIC*

Gossip

It starts with a whisper
and ends with a tear.

It's easy to spread
like soft butter on bread.

There may be some truth
but often there's not.

It's hard to resist
and dares you to tell.

It's easier to believe
and harder to fight.

It starts out as gold
but quickly turns cold.

A whirlpool of lies
that is sucking you in.

Gossip...

Judge's Comment

There is a wonderful message in this poem which makes the reader stop and think. I hope many take notice of this message.

Oliver CUMMING, 11

*Fitzroy Community School
NORTH FITZROY VIC*

The Game Tag

Lion was eyeing out bull,
Roar! Lion pounced at Bull
Bull only just dodged lion
Lion took a tumble

Monkey was swinging by
Lion jumped but missed monkey
Lion got a bruise
Monkey laughed at lion
Lion was not giving up

Lion saw hippo
Lion charged at Hippo
His claw skimmed Hippo
Hippo was 'It'

It was Hippo's turn to tag
Hippo saw Bull and he ran to him
Hippo missed bull
Then their mums' called
"Time to come inside."

Judge's Comment

What a wonderful imagination this young poet has - a smiley, good-feeling type of poem and the ending was so unexpected and perfect.

Rishi YOGESAN, 9

*Christ Church Grammar School
CLAREMONT WA*

Soul of Africa

A freedom fighter
The father of Africa
Lives in people's hearts

Judge's Comment

Powerful and so simply said. Another example of how much can be told in three lines. What a perfect Haiku.

Sarah JAEGER, 12

Launceston Church Grammar School
LAUNCESTON TAS

Paradox

Asha
Poverty devours me,
I can not read or write,
I do not sing or dance,
I beg for food and water,
For shelter and a blanket.

Clara
Wealth shadows me,
Yet I live in a place plagued by death,
I look out my spotless window and see the homeless,
I walk out my elaborately carved door and see the diseased,
I want to help but I am only young.

Asha
I see a rich girl looking out her beautiful window,
Day and night she watches me with sorrowful eyes,
I look up at her from my filthy home on the street,
She smiles and waves but I do not.

Clara
Even when I wave she does not wave back,
I ask my father if I can help but he says I am too young,
And it is not safe for me here in this disaster stricken land,
But I am brave and strong.

Asha
She walks over to me and I am scared,
She gives me her hand and cautiously I take it,
She smiles and slowly I smile back,
I gratefully take the food and blanket she gives me,
And when I tremble at night and hide from men who would do me
harm,
I remember the only person who ever showed me kindness.

Asha and Clara
We live in a shattered place destroyed by poverty,
And afflicted with pain and misery,
Both of us are twelve, often we are troubled,
And now we have someone else to worry about at night,
This is our story.

Judge's Comment

This is such a clever poem which illustrates the contrasts of two lives very well. Excellent and engaging storytelling.

Sarah JAEGER, 12

Launceston Church Grammar School
LAUNCESTON TAS

Right or wrong, good or evil?

I have a dream,
of a box ancient with age,
but radiating with newness,
into which is placed,
all the right and wrong, good and evil,
of our magnificent, but troubled world.

I have a dream,
that when this box is found and opened,
right will conquer wrong,
and good will defeat evil.

I will put in my box,
a race of evil people,
a fierce dragon that blows icy cold fire,
the right to have no emotions or feel any pain.

I will put in my box,
warmth the like of which you have never seen,
stamina from the fastest cheetah,
the strength to lift a mountain.

I will put in my box,
new strange and wonderful creatures,
all the magnificent animals that have previously been extinct,
a beast prouder than the proudest lion.

I will put in my box,
the terrible truths of the real world,
a book of wrongs that every man or woman has committed,
a mountain that represents good and evil.

My box is crafted from the oldest, warmest wood,
with truths in every carving, and lies in every hinge,
it's contents are unknown to all but one.

I will search through my box,
through the truths, the lies, the rights and the wrongs,

then I will wash ashore in the brightness of reality.

We can't change the past,
but we can change the future,
the power of possibility is astounding.

If we have the courage to speak out,
one voice can make a difference.

I have dreams that have the power to change the world,
and so do you.

Judge's Comment

'With truths in every carving' - what superb use of words which echo all the way through this outstanding poem. The idea of a box which holds good and evil, right and wrong, is something for us all to think about.

Angus THOMPSON, 12

*West Balcatta Primary School
BALCATTWA WA*

An Ode to Fire

Fire,
glows bright,
ignites dark,
burns hot,
warms cold,
harbinger of the attack,
saver of lives,
though ender of such,
glowing spectrum,
unique but simple,
starts generations,
ends generations,
extinguished,
reborn,
to those who revered it in the past,
to those who fear it in the present
FIRE burns all.

Judge's Comment

Wow! This is such a powerful, thought-provoking and beautifully written poem with economy of words.

Erin MORAN, 12

Individual Entry
LOWER MITCHAM SA

ANGER

Anger is wasted energy,
thoughts of annoyance drawn to each other the way that moths are
drawn to light,
thoughts of annoyance collecting,
accumulating,
creating a blazing orb of

Anger flushes itself into all parts of the body,
reaching and clawing at your thoughts,
it drains them,
controls them,
and the only thought,
the only objective that hasn't been sucked into oblivious wasteland is

Anger peers through our eyes and controls what we see so we are
deceived,
deluded to believe that everything and everyone has turned against us
and we lash out with the crack of a whip against our back,
we are driven by the devil that is

Anger leaves no mercy,
it crushes our defenceless self,
weakened by the continuous and tireless blows it is constantly firing,
and only when looking back on the path of destruction,
seeing the monster's flames licking and biting at others who have seen
the monster so easily take over you and it is then,
only then that you realise you have merely been a player in his devilish
hands,
a victim of this monster that is

Anger.

Judge's Comment

This is a very strong and powerful poem. I love the way the writer leaves the word 'is' dangling at the end of each stanza. This certainly adds to the power of the piece. It delivers a strong message and an equally strong ending add to its completeness.

Lewis ORR, 12

Individual Entry
DALKEITH WA

Regret

Blade clenched deftly twixt finger and thumb,
Plunging and parrying to the combative hum,
Every stroke of the quill was a thrust of the sword,
A lunge finding home and an enemy floored.

But also his morals were engaged in this fight,
His soldier's dignity, his pride-ridden might,
For the parchment was a canvas on which he etched a sad tome,
Of sorrow, and tragedy, dislocation from home.

For his time as a soldier rendered him far apart,
From family and all that was close to the heart,
And when the battle was lost a schism was rent,
In mind, and memory, his soul truly bent.

He ran far from those memories, instead to this place,
Where those like him dwelt, those with wreckage to face,
He hid there in silence, but his hurt rang out loud,
And his heart grew twisted in misery's shroud.

And now, on his deathbed, he sought to repair,
His kinship with family, the rupturing affair,
That racked him with guilt every time he thought,
Of his daughter, his wife, and the pain he'd wrought.

So he swung his quill to the battle hymn heard,
Drawing enemy blood with every proud word.
For the ink ran true on the dusty marked paper,
Depicted and portrayed by the point of his rapier.

With shaky gasps and ailing arm,
The words ran like blood from the tiring palm.
Now the seal of the scroll drew a last, staggered breath,
And he turned, with a smile, to the coming of death.

Judge's Comment

This poem is amazing and incredibly mature for a 12 year old. The poet has extended his vocabulary and laced his poem with challenging and uncommon words to tell this engaging story of regret.

Lower Primary

Taj BERI, 6

Individual Entry
CASTLE HILL NSW

frozen

She has a coat to keep her warm
She has gloves
She has fire to warm her feet
But she is cold because no one loves her

Judge's Comment

So simple, but so complete.

Rosa BLOWES, 4

Binda Public School
BINDA NSW

What shall I Tell You?

I can swim ...
on my own
very well
but not very far.
The water splashes around me.
It gets up my nose.
It gets in my eyes.
But I can swim

Judge's Comment

The strength of this poem is in its simplicity. A very young poet is honest about her abilities 'but not very far' but finishes with the final important line - 'But I can swim.' That's all that matters. It has also used the competition theme for this year in an interesting way.

Emma O'NEILL, 9

*Hartwell Primary School
CAMBERWELL VIC*

Howling Wind

In the darkness of the night,
When shadows creep and witches hide in the gloom,
The wild wind howls.
It howls for everyone lost when dark magic enfolds the forest,
It howls in sorrow and repentance.
It howls until the day when it is allowed to blow in happiness,
And as a light breeze, not a horrific terror of the night.
The bent trees cackle and talk of their wicked plans,
But the wind longs for better times.
He has an evil enchantment bound to him,
Declaring that he cannot leave the cursed forest,
Put upon him by an enchantress that they call Morgan La Fay.
The wind dreams of the day he can break free.

Judge's Comment

There is such wonderful imagination in this poem and great opening lines which really grab hold of the reader. 'The bent trees cackle and talk of their wicked plans' is this reader's favourite line.

Ethan ROGERS, 5

*Fitzroy Community School
NORTH FITZROY VIC*

Balloons

I wish I lived
In a multi-coloured world
Where balloons never popped

Judge's Comment

What a lovely poem, good work for a 5 year old especially and it sends such an important message - straight from the heart.

Tabitha STINTON, 8

Individual Entry
CREMORNE NSW

Sweetyland

The teacher's voice murmurs on and on ..and ...on..

Dust floats through the sunlight.....

Against the window a sleepy fly

Buzzes ..

Buzzes...

Zzzz....

I look through the window and see

Sugar sticks gleaming like crystals

Under the fairy floss clouds.

Through marshmallow mountains

The slow chocolate rivers flow

Down to the chocolate sea.

Jelly babies giggle and hide

Behind the liquorice vines

That hang from the lollipop trees

While sugar mice skitter and scutter

And gummy bears tumble and tease..

Sugar.. sugar

Sugar land

AHEM?

WAKE UP! WAKE UP!

THIRTY TWO TAKE AWAY TWENTY

NOW QUICKLY THE ANSWER PLEASE

Judge's Comment

A very clever poem using great imagination. It makes you wonder how many students, over the ages, have imagined and dreamt wonderful things when they are supposed to be concentrating on maths. I wonder?

Angus WYLES, 9

*Chatswood Public School
CHATSWOOD NSW*

The Wolf

Grey-dirt fur,
Thundering through the trees,
Hunting its prey.
Gnashing serpentine,
Lamb chattering with fear.
Roar, snap! Roar, snap!
Howling night,
Prickly tail,
Jaws widening..

Judge's Comment

A poem with wonderful contrasts and the last line is so final, without any detail. 'Gnashing serpentine' is so descriptive. Great work.

Ted WATERMAN, 7

*Sutton Primary School
SUTTON NSW*

Living on the Road

A bird on a bank looking for fish
A crocodile waiting swish, swish, swish
Bird comes closer and what does it see
OH NO Crocodile DON'T EAT ME!

Hello Dingo at Jabiru
What are you doing with my shoe?
The bins are there to store our trash
Not for you to steal a stash.

Barramundi hides in the sea
Why don't you come out for me?
I am hungry and want to eat
Grab my lure so I can catch my meat.

Judge's Comment

This poem gives a lovely glimpse, a snapshot of some parts of Australia not necessarily seen by all Australians. A sprinkle of dialogue is effective and moves the poem along.

Amelia WHELAN, 6

SCEGGS Darlinghurst
DARLINGHURST NSW

CLOCKS

When I close my eyes
I can hear the clocks all over the world.
 One looks old
 Another looks new
But they both still keep time.
 The places where they live
 Are not the same.
 But they still keep time.
The people who read the clocks
 Look different.
But the clocks still keep time.
 All of the clocks of the world
 Know that it doesn't matter
 If we are different.
 To the clocks
 We are all the same.

Judge's Comment

The strength of this poem is in its wonderful, understated message, especially for such a young student and the final line is perfect.

Assisted Learning Primary

Baiza AKELE, 10

*Redeemer Baptist School
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

Tortoise Shell

Attention army soldiers, battle formation,
With helmet on and shield raised,
The Roman army is ready for battle.
The patterns and tessellations of the tortoise shell,
Defend them from attackers.

But wait, what do I see?
It is a tortoise in its shell, not an army.
The shell protects it from the attackers,
And it defends itself from battle.

Judge's Comment

Such imagination and a wonderful comparison with battle and the tortoise shell.

Marcus PORTELLI, 13

*Redeemer Baptist School
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

Darkness

A furious beast
Devouring the light
Its anger consumes the colours
Its fury overwhelms the shadows
Like a room full of nothing
Like a dream full of fears
Darkness

Judge's Comment

This piece is very powerful in what it says and doesn't say. There are words in the spaces. 'Like a dream full of fears' gave me shivers.

Thomas PORTELLI, 11

*Redeemer Baptist School
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

LOST

Gone never to be seen again
Misplaced I put it there.
Wasted I could have used more
Squandered till it was spent.
Forfeited it should have been
Confiscated from me.
Unsaved by anyone,
Ruined it was.
Helpless without it
Missing it could not have been.
Confused I was about it
Befuddled I am to see it
Destroyed it was taken from me
LOST!
I want it back.

Judge's Comment

An interesting and different poem which leaves many questions unanswered. Great imagination.

Maryam SATHAT SOBHANI, 12

*Footscray North Primary School
FOOTSCRAY VIC*

Happy Birthday

What if they do not like me
Or they don't come
Or they destroy my cake
And I need to sing Happy Birthday to me
Or sing and laugh for myself
Or eat ice cream all by myself

Judge's Comment

There are words in the spaces of this poem. Its strength is in those spaces which make the reader pause and wonder. This poem speaks to me, makes my heart ache for all the children who have ever worried and wondered if they will have to eat ice-cream alone.

Luke POSSI, 10

*Chatswood Public School
CHATSWOOD NSW*

Night

The night is a monster of the sky.
Chasing you,
Stalking you,
Waiting for the right moment to strike.
Eating your fear to stay alive.
Picking people off one by one.
No hope,
No time,
No chance.
Whispering death flows over you,
Panic when night falls.
But...
Hours later,
Strangled by dawn.

Judge's Comment

A very powerful final line is what takes hold of the reader in this piece. I would like to think that night is not always a monster though.

Shane RAJARATNAM, 11

*Redeemer Baptist School
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

Tell Me a Story...

Tell me a story, a legend, a myth
Something with mystery from ancient Greece
Tell me a story that's filled with surprise
That I can see when I close my eyes

What about the centaur, so bold and strong?
And what about the wars he has fought and won?
What about the heroes he has fought beside?
And what about the villains he has laid aside?

Is he the greatest warrior of them all?
Did he lead armies through dangerous wars?
I want to pretend he was my warrior and friend
That we rode all night and it would never end

Judge's Comment

There is good rhythm in this piece, with many questions and great use of imagination.

Senior Secondary**Aloma BLACK, 13**

*St Micheal's Collegiate
Hobart TAS*

Ode to a Window

Eye of the wind, you
were once a mere hole in the wall.
You are a gateway between comfort
and the harsh rawness of the elements.

What great wisdom you possess,
drawn from the great many things you have seen.
The solitary observer,
ever present and always watching.

Which is the real you?
For you take so many forms.
Are you the morbid splatter of torrential rain?
Or perhaps you are the jagged blades of crisp morning grass?

The plane between two worlds.
At times, a face of unmatched beauty,
a bridge presenting the unhindered chaos on the other side;
the transparent canvas that seldom receives recognition.

An image suspended in your frame.
The power to encapsulate emotion.
Paying homage to what is both inside and out,
while you are unnoticed and overlooked.

You provide a passage of luminance,
far greater than fluorescence.
Few recognise your value.
You are humble about your unapparent existence.

To have so many see right through you,
only appreciating what lies beyond.
A complacent acquaintance.
So empty. Perspicuous and lucid.

Judge's Comment

An amazing description of an ordinary thing that delivers new insights about the way we perceive our world.

Hannah DAVIS, 17

*Cape Byron Steiner School,
Ewingsdale NSW*

Armistice

I love numbers.
I hoard them like my brother hoards chocolates
I keep them in notebooks,
in lists and columns
I look for them in the music I sing,
in the papers I read,
in the labels of all I eat.
With a mathematical precision
with a calculated indifference
I evaluate for today
how much space I deserve to occupy.

100 -
The devils in those digits
alight on my shoulders and flick their forked tongues in my ear
waxing as I wane
but bathroom scales don't teach you how to love.

Your hunger is not my hunger:
I feed on subtraction, division
decreasing, negative, under
forty five, forty four, three, two...
Once
I drew scarlet ribbons in the ivory
to see if I could find a path through the labyrinth
sketching a twisted freedom in slowly countable ribs
Four.
Eight.
Twelve.

Those days I wanted to shed my skin like my school dress
and delight in my transparency as I let go
of my earthly form, but romanticising a
disease:
will not make us happy.

When I sneak to the kitchen to steal sips of almond milk (15)
or three green grapes (2 each)
sustenance I never felt that I deserved,
That moment of blind panic
when someone offers a food

for which the numerical price is a mysterious x --
It feels so permanent I want to gun it down

But our bodies are not a war zone
nor is our worth calculable
by numbers and digits and reflections of light on glass which hold
no tangible value:

I am calling for an armistice.

Judge's Comment

This is a most extraordinary work. It is beautifully constructed and conceived and written so succinctly not a word is wasted - again, echoing the theme. Truly brilliant.

Sam CRIMMINS, 15

*Ascham School,
Edgecliff NSW*

Sonnets are Hard

My lazy pen barely touches the page,
I beg it to write something, anything.
My head swell, my eyes burn with rage
As I stare at the accusing nothing.
not a thing, not a line, not a word.
The accusing blankness adds to my fear,
My thoughts becomes both jumbled and blurred.
Movement is so slow; this could take me a year.
Why does my pen seem to refuse to write?
No 't's' to cross, no 'j's' and 'i's' to dot
Still no letters on the page; just blank white.
Nothing, zero, silch, nil, naught, nada, not
Now I'm almost done, only one line to do.
What to write about? I still do not know.

Judge's Comment

A well-constructed poem constructed of carefully selected words that allow us to dawdle along with the poet. Well done.

Annie LORD, 17

*Hobart College,
MT NELSON TAS*

What's in a Box?

If childhood could be captured in a box
unused balloons would lie
awaiting the innocent breath
of those who awe
at the sight of full bloom
If childhood could be captured in a box
a ballerina would stand
toe hooked
wound tight
released to dance
If childhood could be captured in a box
dust coated novels
would hold a flower
once picked from its bed
pressing its scent into the air
If childhood could be captured in a box
all empty gaps would fill
as endless possibilities
as sepia light
carried in the air
If childhood could be captured in a box
space would be infinite
wooden edges
would cradle dreams
awaiting the day
they become the future

Judge's Comment

Beautiful images beautifully written. The words build a slow rhythm so there is time to enjoy one. And then the last lines lift our gaze upward, from the box, and forward. Lovely work.

Sarah ETHERIDGE, 16

*Hobart College,
MT NELSON TAS*

Road Kill

You stood there
Eyes reflecting
Like a possum
in headlights

You were a possum
they were my head lights

the sound still lingers
In my mind
Like the blip
Of a heart monitor

Judge's Comment

So few words and such a powerful delivery all of it made possible by that wonderfully selected last image. Not only is it the perfect metaphor but we are forced to share the agony of what has happened. That one syllable, one word, 'blip' . . . there is nothing left to say.

Rhyannah MACRAE, 17

*St Micheal's Collegiate,
HOBART TAS*

How To Be Peaceful

First, I would recommend you begin with a thought
One that provokes your mind to succumb
To an empty cloud as if you feel sleep taking over

But do not get me wrong,
This thought must not bore you to sleep
The cloud should be a feeling

That can only be associated with the action
Of your breath easy against your ribcage
Your eyes not wide nor drooping nor tightly shut

But resting in a happy medium in which
They can absorb the world around, free
From the distractions of disorderly thoughts

You must find a relaxation in your bones and
Muscles so that they are neither light nor heavy
But have an undeniable presence of support

Your limbs are allowed to be controlled by
By a playful inner character jumping to the music
Of that oh-so-important thought.

By now you must be anxious to know
What this magical thought could be,
And how it could be so powerful

To so effortlessly tear you away
From the rollercoaster of plans
And pandemonium to rather provoke a state of ease

Where nothing in the world can distract
From natural ecstasy of mindlessness
And rest that slows the heart's race

And softens the drum-like thud of our pulse
To a steady tic of a metronome
Regulating the rush of hot blood

However you should know that
Nobody except for yourself
Has witnessed its undeniable beauty and demure

Judge's Comment

'And rest the heart's race' - just one of the descriptions of the journey to relaxation so masterfully written. The intention of the poem is cleverly held back until we have been coaxed by the gentle pace of carefully selected words, to receive it. Lovely.

Jehannah MAY, 17

*Hornsby Girls High School,
HORNSBY NSW*

Collapse

The stars are closer tonight,
Brush past the kaleidoscope of false intimacy
Woven by my binoculars.
They flicker and hum behind my eyelids,
Oscillating pinpricks of asterisked pretenders.
A microcosm of stars subsumes me
Until I am cosmically devoid of
Darkness -
Supernovas stitched into the fabric of my skin
Exploding convulsively
Until my heart shatters in a cataclysm of coloured confetti.
But it is relatively common knowledge that supernovas do not burn
forever
Before they collapse.
And soon they collapse
And I am riddled with ruins,
Dilapidated craters carved out with remnants of stars -
Canyons of memory.
My skin is one-directionally porous
Light enters;
Inside dead stars summon spiralled tongues of it into their centres.
They feed ravenously
And I bleed blackness
Leak charred dusty fragments that serve as
Inexplicable
Incontrovertible proof
That the stars are closer tonight -
And that I am collapsing

Judge's Comment

The change of rhythm halfway through this poem shifts us from a metaphysical journey to being earth bound and then we find ourselves drifting skyward. On every level words and images have been chosen to connect the underlining themes of magnificence and decline.

Shirley NG, 18

*Ascham School,
EDGECLIFF NSW*

On being an introvert and proud of it.

my voice may not be a siren, but at least it sure as hell
isn't a bullhorn that could rupture eardrums in a split second.
i will never be able to talk about my feelings
the way a trail of bloody footprints leads to the crime scene
of a murder victim: clear and full of proof,
or carry my body and presence like an exclamation point.
i will always be a comma instead, a pause
full of silence for someone else to fill.
for me words are like coins tossed into a fountain:
you only use them when you have a wish,
when you know they'll be put to good use.
and just because i'll never be the first to raise my hand
to respond to a question doesn't mean the answer
isn't already written in my bones.
i fall in love with my hands first, not my voice,
quietly but as passionately as the strong of constellations
that form orion's belt: they make no noise at all,
but they still light up the entire sky.

Judge's Comment

How clever is the use of lower case letters all the way through to enhance the feelings of 'introvert'. They make the images even louder -another device to bring this poem into brilliance.

Jakob PETERS, 15

*St Paul's College,
WALLA WALLA NSW*

ALMOST

The light of dawn.
The way it shines through the leaves,
And changes their colour to a light gold.
The way it brings out the warmth in the area,
It's comforting.
It's almost an escape,
Almost an escape from the never ending cries of death
And the shattering of the bullets,
Almost.

Most mornings I sit down and feel the warmth on my face,
I almost forget.
I try and bring myself back to how I once was,
I try and imagine that things were actually normal.
I try so hard to pull the pieces of my old self back together,
The life I lived when I was so ignorant and naïve.
I knew nothing.

Nothing of how life really was,
Of course, how could I?
I followed the system, I pretended,
I lived in my cosy, boxed-up little world.
I know now, and I know that I will never be the same.

People will often talk about a "near death" experience,
And how it changes them in ways unimaginable.
However, when you are the one,
The one on the supplying end of that bullet or bayonet.
It destroys almost every human part of you that ever existed.
When you watch the life fade away from a man's face.
When you see every part of him disappear,
His thoughts, his family,
And his existence.
I try, and almost, but never.
I can't forget.

Judge's Comment

It is a rare experience to read a poem so well written that I am forced to endure emotions that, thankfully, are not of my experience. As with all fine poetry, we are challenged to fathom new insight into our understandings and beliefs. Whichever way we interpret this, we are left in no doubt, that being the victor can lead to being a victim. A great piece of poetry.

Paige SPENCE, 16

Santa Maria College
ATTADALE WA

Marked

If I get forty-nine I
failed I am a
failure
and I reach out these swirling words to the
masses of friends
acquaintances
in the hope that
pity, laughter
will raise me above the bar I'm under
trapped, the frozen ice unbreakable for
a drowning student's poundings
the hands marked by ink stains

But

If I get fifty I
passed I am
worthy
and I walk with this glowing pride
giving out
to those
others
sighs of pity, laughter
still joyously stepping over
the solid ice, duly noting the
hands knocking, those shadows beneath
and the water staining blue

Judge's Comment

Surely the giftedness of a poem is in the way it can pitch us into experiencing emotions. How vividly these images and construct bring back memories and reveal insights into successes and failures.

Junior Secondary

Kimberly ATTENBOROUGH, 13

*St Patrick's College
SUTHERLAND NSW*

Goodnight Malaysian Three Seven Zero

What shall we tell you?
Your loved ones are gone.
Disappeared without a trace like innocent bubbles.
The eyes of the world are watching you, watching us.
To hear the fate of the powerful bird we lost.
Flight MH370
Millions of unanswered questions are floating in the air.
You sit and wait for hours on end.
Tick tock, days drag by.
Wondering what happened to your family on that flight.
What shall we tell you?
That the eagle became sick in flight?
But that no remains of it's torn wings are found in oil-slicked
oceans.
What shall we tell you?
That terrorist wanted to steal hundreds of lives?
Maybe just maybe it was the result of an alien attack.
Now you sit, listening to the deafening silence of your loved ones.
What more can we tell you?

Judge's Comment

Treating a contemporary incident as poetry is a challenge and, in this case, the choice of words has delivered a successful poem which dwells in tragedy. Beautiful analogy to an eagle and its torn wing's.

Emily BATT, 12

*James Meehan High School
MACQUARIE FIELDS NSW*

Forest

With the forest walk
It smells like pure freedom
The trees are breathing

Judge's Comment

The few words suggest a shared secret - there is a lovely smile-in-your-mind feeling captured so innocently.

Christopher BREEN, 14

*St Patrick's College
SUTHERLAND NSW*

What should I tell you?

I sit down at my chair,
Lay my pen on the page,
The Deafening silence swallows me whole,
And suddenly, ever so suddenly,
You pop into my head.
And what should I tell you?

Yes, you, the one staring at paper.
This poem is about you,
About **what** you want to see.
You're pretty annoying,
Always watching over me.
So tell me this;
Why in God's name should I tell **you** anything?

I've done so much for you.
And you nothing for me.
It's a give take relationship between you and me.
And this job is so tiring, exhausting, a drag.
You think; write a poem? Pfft, in the bag.
Though it's harder than you think, always making up stuff.
Trust me, I know, It's really really tough.
So ultimately, the question is '**how** would I tell you?'

Yes I know what you're thinking,
 What a waste of your time! And the time is ticking, ticking, ticking...
 Is it not a great time? Should I come back later?
 Actually, I can't, this **is** a piece of paper.
 So the actual question should be '**when** should I tell you?'

I know this is boring (and this, from me)
 Do you want honesty?
 Is honesty enough?
 But **why** should I tell you?....JUST KIDDING!
 No more stanzas,
 A couple more lines...nearly the end.
 Where was I? The truth! O yes, no more lies...
 Dorothea Mackellar, that is her name.
 She asked me a question that could lead me to fame...
 And I guess it worked now that you're reading this,
 So What should I tell you? (I'll let you reminisce)

Judge's Comment

A fresh approach between poet and reader - rhythm used effectively to build and slow pace, font used to increase volume and importance and continue the effect of a conversation.

Amelia BAXTER, 14

*Loreto Kirribilli
 KIRRIBILI NSW*

You kill flowers because you think they're beautiful,
 but you kill yourself because you think you are not.
 You paint a picture because you crave creativity,
 but you paint your face to conform.
 You give a pillow to the homeless,
 but you deny yourself of comfort.
 You look at so many things,
 but you see nothing at all.

Judge's Comment

A beautiful statement of fact. The way the poem is constructed visually to a diminished shape containing the impact of the final line and further enhancing its impact are commendable.

Isobel CRABB, 13

*St Mary's Anglican Girls School
KARRINYUP WA*

What Shall We Tell You

Lights. Go. Out.
See the world in new colours.
Objects swallowed by crushing yet familiar,
Darkness.
Time slows to a stand still.
Deny the black and we'll invite the madness.
Swim little child, swim.
But you'll only drown in your sheets.

Screams are sorrows,
Mirrored by moonlight.
Slicing through the night.
They will fill your ears.
But only your ears.
Open your mouth,
Your voice will freeze in your throat.
Mum and Dad are stolen by slumber.
And only Bear will heed your cries.

Intrusion. Intrusion.
Scratching of window panes,
Like fingernails upon slate.
Tapping on doors.
Knob turns, *Creak*.
Sheets are pulled to chin.
Bear clutched to chest.

"Teddy, Teddy.
Help me."

Obscurity slithers closer,
Nearer, dearer.
Intrusion, Intrusion.
Three presences,
Boy, Bear and Bogey.
Intrusion Intrusion.
Boy buried by sheets,
Bear guards.
Intrusion, intrusion.
And then,
Silence.

Sound escapes the Boy child.
"Under the bed, under the bridge."

Stories always remind us of him.”

Teddy bear smiles sagely.
“Sleep on Child.
Your parents aren’t here,
But I will be.
Darkness is only fearful
of bravery.
Things we have,
You and I both.

Hold me.
Squeeze me.
I won’t flinch.
But the darkness will.
I will stand guard little one.
Sleep, child.
Sleep.
Swim in the pleasures of sweet dreams.”

And eyes grow heavy.
And Then. Close.
Eyelashes tangle in syrupy apathy.
Stolen by oblivion.
Patter begins yet again.
We slink yet closer,
Intrusion, Intrusion.
But boy is untouched and free
from them.

Free from us.

What shall we tell you
little child?
He scatters us from your imaginings.
He’s your protector,
your bear.
Keep him by you forever.
He’ll protect you
Always.
He’s watching.
Always.
No matter the remarks.
No matter your age.

Bear and Boy are brothers.
Bound in innocence and
Courage.

Judge's Comment

There is excitement, fear, terror and peace all captured with so few words. The use of personification 'drown in your sheets' brings images of feet tangled in sweat and hands beating to free a trapped face. And all the time the image of Bear is stoic and strong. He has not been personified but is seen as a protector which is further enforced by the child's appeal to 'Teddy'. Very clever.

Nicholas DELUCA, 14

*The Kilmore International School
KILMORE VIC*

My Town

I come from
Winter rain,
The chilling wind,
The morning frost
And frozen paths.

I come from
Busy roads,
Worn out tracks,
Fallen trees,
And burning leaves.

I come from
Housing estates
Brand new streets
Featureless houses,
And empty shops
That lick away
At nature.

I come from
Deserted playgrounds
Owner-less buildings
Trampled garden-beds
And graffiti covered alley ways
Scrawled with love and hate.

I come from
The never-ending need for energy
The growling saws,
Rolling logs
The infinite bruises on the shin.

I come from
The scorching summer sun
Merciless on the grass
Wilting the petals.

I come from
Wallan.

Judge's Comment

Such a simple description that brings a breathing, living experience of place. 'Empty shops that lick away at nature' - words that say so many things. 'Graffiti covered alley ways scrawled with love and hate' - a dual message resulting from word placement.

Harrison FISHER, 12

*Dubbo School Of Distance Education
DUBBO NSW*

Stuck

Crispy bacon is crunchy,
Eggs are tasty.
But together,
they are forever.

Judge's Comment

It says it all in so few words. I can almost feel the smile as they disappear into foreverness as I eat them together. The poet has been successful in turning his feelings about eggs and bacon into a poem that is meaningful to others.

Uyen DIEN, 13

*The Knox School
WANTIRNA SOUTH VIC*

Somewhere in Wonderland

Long long ago
Alice left me in wonderland
I will never overlook that
Wendy believes in magic
And that
Peter Pan tells the truth
It is false that
The lost boys
Are
The unwanted
I am positive that
Reality
Is only an escape from
Fantasy
'Villains will be defeated for good'
I will tell the world and object that
'Dumbo shouldn't be able to fly'
In fact
Fairytale are real
It is not true that
Adventures aren't worth voyaging
I would rather believe
My prince is at the end of the journey
It is preposterous to ever think that
There is no happy ending for anyone
And that
Fate is cruel

*Please note: Poem can also be read backwards.

Judge's Comment

Fun - great play on words and messages which is not easy to accomplish. It is especially difficult when images and messages that are selected are precise in their presentation. 'Reality is only an escape from Fantasy' becomes 'Fantasy is only an escape from Reality'. All the images work within the structure of the larger theme - wonderland - and each image builds towards the whole intent of the poem - that this is 'wonderland'. Ha! I love this!

Teresa NURDI, 13

*St Ursula's College,
KINGSGROVE SYDNEY NSW*

You were like an avalanche that swept me off my feet,
 Into a world where looking pretty was my main priority.
 You were like the pouring rain keeping people in,
 That made me hide my true self; in order to please.
 You were like the dust storm never failing to stop,
 destroying everything in your path,
 until there is nothing.
 Your mood changed like the weather, and my heart became your
 dart board;
 Targeted by every one of your poisonous arrows.
 And somewhere under my blind love, I forgot to be myself.
 Forgot to laugh, and smile, and talk with my mouth full.
 Forgot to fidget, and sing, and dance around the room.
 I hid behind the mirror and cried myself to sleep.
 Because on top of everything you made me forget,
 You made me forget to love me.
 You made me forget how wonderful I really was, behind makeup
 and false smiles.
 And even though you fell for me, you fell for my made up version.
 And when I showed my true self, you wondered where I'd gone.
 You looked for me in models and magazines, but I was never going
 to be there.
 For I was waiting for someone to look at me, and tell me I was
 beautiful.
 Waiting for someone to hear my laugh, and say it's the cutest thing.
 Waiting for someone to open their arms and accept my scars,
 And hold me through the pain.
 And even when things go bad, I'll wait for him to fight for us,
 Because there's nothing more beautiful than the way the ocean
 rushes back to the shoreline,
 no matter how many times it's sent away.

Judge's Comment

There is such a soft lyricism to this work. This doesn't change even when the love dies, making it more remote and lost. A wonderful work. Brilliant analogy in the final two lines.

Orr LEWIS, 12

Individual entry
DALKEITH WA

The Orchestra

Blemished with bouts but heads held high,
Top bellies gleaming and wood varnished dry,
The string family entered with swagger and strut,
With F-holes and C-bouts most cleanly cut,

"Where are the children?" said Double Bass to Cello,
"Viola's all hyper, but Violin's gone mellow!"
"Well, sadden him up," bellowed Double Bass back,
"For we crave the lugubriousness that other things lack!"

Next came the woodwinds, all buoyant and sunny,
With clarinets hooting and finding flutes funny,
For the woodwind crew are the humorous bunch,
The group that dithers and has weird things for lunch.

"I've lost my barrel!" cried Oboe, distraught.
"Well," said Piccolo, "There's food for thought;
In finding a way in which we all can be free,
From your complaints of lost barrels which you fail to see!"

Third came the brass, all ordered and drilled,
Gleaming rigid, and arranged, and confidence filled.
For the brass band posse are the most stuck-up of the lot,
They're coated so much in polish they're starting to rot!

"Trumpet and French Horn!" hooted Trombone with glee.
Stand to attention when I count to three!"
But with a blaring cacophony of unnatural noise,
His children ignored him and kept playing with toys.

Last, but not least, came the percussion gang,
With racket so loud; an ear-splitting clang,
For a rumpus and tumult of pianos and drums,
Turned great antique mansions into pitiful slums.

Out thundered the Gong, "Hey tambourine crew!"
"Stop jingling about like you haven't a clue!"
"You as well, xylophones, and glockenspiels too,
You'll stay quiet if you know what's good for you!"

At last they came, as an orchestra, as one,
Putting differences aside to start having some fun.
Led by the baton, the swing and the swirl,
The pure beauty of music they began to unfurl.

Judge's Comment

What a treasure. So much knowledge shared in a delightful way that it makes me want to sing with it. Great jaunty rhythm that keeps it moving along and then, the final verse slows us a little making us ready, creating a small silence before the last line swings us into action again. Ah, I want to illustrate this book!

Assisted Learning Secondary

Hussain ALKABI, 16

*Montague Continuing Education Centre,
SOUTH MELBOURNE VIC*

More Beautiful Than The Northern Lights

There was this girl I had a crush on
Since 3rd Grade.
I couldn't tell her how I felt.
It's like we were in two different worlds.

Then in sixth grade
She got boyfriend.
He was one of the bad guys.

Then in the 7th grade
I kept looking back in class
She was behind me.

She was more beautiful
More than The Northern Lights
And the night sky
Could not even come close.

In 8th grade I moved
And I told her on Facebook.
She said 'I have a boyfriend'.

Judge's Comment

There is an amazing economy of words used to deliver such a factual sadness. We are made to feel that, in facing the loss of this love, he has won. We are reminded that she was never worthy of his affection. Indeed, he states 'she was behind me' - a great work. Clever in so many ways.

Katherine ALLEN, 15

*Redeemer Baptist School,
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

KISSA - the Blind Cat

She lazes in the sun,
Stretched full length
In the warmth.
Her eyes are shut
But ears twitch at minute sounds.
Mouse scampering, moth fluttering, curtain breeze-drifting,
But she lies motionless, untempted, wrapped in her doze.
A foot scuffs and scrapes - she springs up in fear.
Footsteps following - she runs for refuge.
Do sightless eyes remember?
Once bright, piercing and golden-green,
Now dull, staring and cloudy black.
The world all dark, hollow with sound-fear?
Yet voices known
And sun warmth
Comforts Kissa.

Judge's Comment

Such clever contradictions of words to paint the picture of this cat and her life. It reveals so much about how sensitively this poet feels and how insightful her perceptions. A beautiful work.

Lachlan BOLTON, 15

*Redeemer Baptist School,
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

THE TERROR OF CABBAGE TREE BAY

1. The swimmers woke at dawn to swim
The crimson sunrise drawing them in.
In winter, they're covered from head to toe,
Except for the stoics — unafraid of water like snow.
2. Daily the goal is Shelley and back.
Are they bold and beautiful, and yet no brain.
Nothing will stop them, stress is their food,
Their muscles are jelly, sheer exhaustion is good.
3. Obsessed with achievement, like Hercules of old,
"Stay clear of the rocks", they were always told.
Sam left his loyal friend, in four-legged stance
Faithful to stay, with impatience he panted.
4. "Let's go", cried the leader, turning around,
The aroma of coffee in their heads starts to pound.
Five swimmers rise, only four came down,
Rumour arose, unexplainably he drowned.
5. It slipped and slithered, from centuries gone,
As old as the rainbow, by most unknown
A victim of cruelty so legend tells
Banished itself to the ocean deep
Revenge was its mission, but violence never
Lurking in darkness, stealthy in chase.
6. Beware of the terror in Cabbage Tree Bay,
Veiling malice with shadows grey.
Beware of its claws equipped to slash
Its power so great it cannot be matched.
7. You'll fight like a tiger, that won't do the trick,
There's naught you can do, to prevent your death trip.
Quite painless it so, so elders tell
Never hear again, the old Manly bell.
8. Nothing deters the Bold and Beautiful
They still swim eagerly every day.
The terror of Cabbage Tree Bay before them
Fooling themselves allows them their play.

Note: The Bold and Beautiful is a squad of voluntary swimmers who either swim daily or at weekends from Manly beach to Shelley beach in Cabbage Tree Bay and back. It operates winter and summer.

Judge's Comment

I absolutely love this story - such action, such pace, such melodrama. There is everything here that a good ballad should have - rollicking rhythms subtly turning to become softer, threatening... slipped and slithered! Great construction, great word choice.

Soobin CHOI, 14

*Redeemer Baptist School,
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

The First Time

The First person,
The First of culture,
The First of food,
The First is always unfamiliar.

The First bicycle,
The First school,
The First is always in a flutter.

Everyone has a First time,
Because of the First time, we often make mistakes.
Because of the First time, we fall down.

We pass this process,
We can be more experienced.
We will become a better person.

Judge's Comment

This almost playful structure of innocent pastimes leads us effortlessly to the complexity of the theme of the poem. A wonderful piece.

Trinda CHAPMAN, 16

*Montague Continuing Education Centre,
SOUTH MELBOURNE VIC*

For No Reason

You hit me for no reason.
You punched me for no reason.
You yelled at me for no reason.
You insulted me for no reason.
You sent me to my room for no reason.

Why are you treating me like this?
Why are you always angry with me?
Why must you hurt me?
Why do you hate me?
Why can't you just be nice to me?

Don't you love me!
Don't you care for me!
Don't you understand me!
Don't you want me to be safe!
Don't you want me to be your child!

I'm only six years old.
I'm not a bad kid.
I'm trying my best to please you.
I'm always crying.
I'm not safe here.

What did I do to you?
What is the reason I'm here?
What did I do to deserve this?
What is wrong with the way I am?
What shall I tell you?

Judge's Comment

This clever work is built around word and repetitive construction. By employing such simple language magnifies the enormity of the message. An excellent work.

John MAXWELL, 15

*Redeemer Baptist School,
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

Love

No matter what happens,
No matter what will happen,
I will always think of you through the good and the bad times.
If I had to do it all again, I would, with no regrets.

When you smile, I see something more beautiful than the stars,
And I love your red cheeks and elegant hair.
I will love you the same at any time,
Every time I look at the stars in the sky,
I match them with reasons why I love you.

If the only way I could be with you is in my dreams,
Then I want to sleep forever.
You make my life complete.
You mean the world to me.

Judge's Comment

How very, very beautifully this poem flows to its succinct, dynamic final lines. Fantastic connections of image use - stars and reasons for instance. A wonderful effort.

Tristan FORRESTER, 16

*Redeemer Baptist School,
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

THE FOX

As hard as I try
No animal appears
In my consciousness
How can I explain?
Or dream ...
When poetry is my medium
With perseverance
And persuasion ...
Arr ... I'm no poet

A fox appears,
Is English merely talking of a fox?
What does the fox say?
What does the fox feel?
As a conjunction it merges with my reality
Giving personification to my nightmare
Like the Visual Arts vampire it analyses me
Find me wanting
Arr ... I'm no poet

OK, for the task at hand
What does the fox feel?
Hunger, fear, hate?
Hate, that is a strong word
Can one allow an animal to own it
Or is it merely a word linked to poetry
Ooh ... that was strong
Rather I dislike, no, unable
Arr ... I'm no poet.

With this thought pattern coming to an end
Words escape me,
What have I missed?
Feelings...
Poetry is my avenue,
No, my gate
Ooo how have I mistook
My thoughts for a fox ... A poem
So alas ... I am a poet
Yet I still don't know it.

Judge's Comment

This is a glorious miasma of interconnecting ideas that reveal to poetic of the non-poet. Clever juxtaposition of simple questions with complex answers leads us to wonder about making poetry. Great stuff.

Kaan GULASI, 13

*Redeemer Baptist School,
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

The Clock

Clock watches furiously like a hawk,
Watches and watches and watches.
In that same spot just sits there and ticks and ticks and ticks.
It learns from us while we sit in class, it absorbs from us.
Then it strikes at 3:00pm.
The clock is alone, it's still ticking and ticking.
When will its time end, when will it stop?

Judge's Comment

The idea of a clock watching and learning and absorbing lend a menace to something inanimate. A great concept well constructed.

Billy MOORE, 17

*Montague Continuing Education Centre,
SOUTH MELBOURNE VIC*

Mind Your Own Business

Mind your own business.
But out, of my life.
It's not, your life.
It's my life.
Get a life.

Mind your own business.
It can cause trouble.
You can lose good friends.
Relationship may suffer, it can cause stress.

Mind your own business.
That my advice.
I love a good gossip.
But it can cause strife.

Mind your own business.
People can suffer.
Why are you obsessive?
With what it is on my mind.

Judge's Comment

The directness of the first stanza hurtles us into the poem while the clever use of first person accents an emotional connection to the poet. Excellent.

Cayleb SENICO, 13

*Redeemer Baptist School,
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

Five Minutes More

Eli, it's bedtime now
Can I stay up five minutes more?
Eli, it's 2:00 am
Please? Mum please?
Alright, then be in bed by 2:05 am.

Eli! It's 2:05am now
Mum, I'm almost finished
Eli, bed now!
It's the last level, please?
Okay son, this is the last time I'm letting you stay up
Thanks, Mum!

Eli, it's 2:10 am
But Mum, it's almost...
Eli, BED NOW!
Yes, Mum.

Judge's Comment

Constructing a poem that relies totally on direct speech to imply place, setting, character and inferred respect, tolerance and love is no mean feat. Here it is done superbly.

Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards

2014 Anthology

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Upper Primary

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Noam ANTONIR, 11

*Moriah College
QUEENS PARK NSW*

I Am A Caged Bird

I am a caged bird
Who longs to be free.
My keeper says this is good for me
But I long to be free.

My keeper's love is like an iceberg
Cold, harsh and unforgiving.
I sit on my bench and howl at the wall
For I am a bird who longs to be free.

I look through my prison bars
And see my brothers happily chirping in trees.
I chirp to them but they cannot hear me.
I long to be free.

My owner comes out with that God dam stick.
Bang Bang.
My brothers fall down
And yet I long to be free.

My heart beats faster
Every time my keeper comes near the cage.
In hope he will set me free
For I am a bird who longs to be free.

I just have one question for my keeper
Will thy free me?
For I have seen the world outside
And I know that is where I should be.
For I am a bird who longs to be free.

I have seen the sun shine,
But never felt its rays.
I have seen the wind blow,
But never felt it bristle my feathers.
I am a bird who longs to be free.

I know my fate
This is where I will stay.
But yet
I am a bird who longs to be free.
Lives in people's hearts

Judge's Comment

The words in this poem kept drawing me back, speaking to me and painting a picture. The repetition of 'I am a bird who longs to be free' works well in holding on to the reader and not letting go.

Phoebe BATES,

*Mount Claremont PEAC Centre
MOUNT CLAREMONT WA*

I Am Free

Journey to the sun,
Skin warmed by its radiant glow,
Balloons in hand,
Gentle array of colours,
red, purple, orange, green.
I am free.

Winding track to independence,
Running toward tomorrow,
Away from yesterday,
Feet pound on the highway,
Future is in sight,
I am free.

Stairway to heaven,
I escape by brewing troubles,
The worries that once controlled me,
I say goodbye to storms and rain,
Make way towards the sun
I am free.

Judge's Comment

This piece really caught hold of me. It says much in its stillness and it embraces its title with every word as well as delivering an important message.

Nicholas ARMATAS, 12

Footscray North Primary School
FOOTSCRAY NORTH VIC

Insanity

Insanity
It's perching over me
Waiting for me to crack
My mind is going to break, slowly
It's brain washing me
To change...
I refuse
Screams
Screeching
Pain
It's making me do things I
don't want to do
It's telling me
"It's okay I'll treat you well"
It's demented
Madness
Is
Running
Through
Me
It's tempting me
It's showing what will happen
Sometimes you got to make a decision
I made one
Give up...

Insanity
It's perching over me
Waiting for me to crack
My mind is going to break, slowly
It's brain washing me
To change...
I refuse
Shouts
Screeching
Agony
It's making me do things I
don't want to do
It's telling me
"It's okay I'll treat you well"
It's a Psychopath
Madness

Is
Running
Through
Me
It's tempting me
It's showing what will happen
Sometimes you got to make a decision
I made one
Fight back...

Judge's Comment

The two parts to this poem make it intriguing and the contrasts of 'giving up' and 'fighting back' give a feeling of looking in a mirror. Great writing.

Bethany BRATUSKINS, 10

Mentone Grammar School
MENTONE VIC

What is Poetry?

Poetry comes from the deepest of dark.
Or the lightest of light
Comes from the love of a heart.
Or the horror of illness
Makes you laugh like a joker
Or cry like a baby
Causes an eruption from the heart
Then rises with emotion
Flows like water in a lake
Then crashes like waves at the end.
The words slip into each other like a hot knife in
butter.
And match like salt on popcorn.
Can be long like a fence
Or short like a pencil
This is what I believe a poem to be.

Judge's Comment

Very well said. Poetry is and can do all of these things. Looking at these poems from so many talented students is evidence of that. Great work.

Mariska COPPING JAMES, 11

Stirling East Primary School
STIRLING SA

Uncertainty

Anxiety is as green as a murky pond.
It tastes like a stale dry biscuit
and strongly smells of acetone.
Anxiety appears pale and sleepless,
listening for unforeseen strange sounds.
Anxiety creates negative thought cycles
and slowly drowns out any happiness.

Judge's Comment

There is such maturity and understanding in the descriptive words in this poem which is very thought-provoking.

Taylor DAVIS, 12

Stirling East Primary School
STIRLING SA

Isolation

Loneliness is dark blue.

It tastes like old dog bones

and smells like the rotten odour of cigarettes.

Loneliness looks like a dark bare cupboard.

The sound of footsteps walking down a gloomy street.

It feels like greasy hair that has not been washed for years.

Loneliness alarms me!

Judge's Comment

This poem has a distinctive style and shows writing maturity. The opening lines are strong and will compel any reader to continue. 'It tastes like old dog bones' . . . how real is that?

Laura DRAKEFORD, 10

*Melton Christian College
MELTON VIC*

My Place

My chosen and special tree
The one I call my own
The giant, old tree by the creek

It's a river red gumtree, they say
But I know it's no ordinary tree
It's sacred and special

The thick patterned brown bark
Peels like sunburn in summer

The green leaves and brown branches
Make shelter for me in the rain
And shade me from the sun

The tree speaks its secrets to me
And when its quiet, I whisper mine

In the moonlight, the tree shimmers
Like light on water

My place, my tree

Judge's Comment

I love the images these words portray. My favourite line 'Peels like sunburn in summer.' Perfect, and 'The tree speaks its secrets to me' - I can see this poet cares deeply about her place, her tree.

Mackenzie DAWSON, 10

*Hastings Public School
PORT MACQUARIE NSW*

Shadows

Shadows...
Orphaned and forlorn
Irrevocably connected to everyone
One exclusive job:
Follow, conceal, accompany, mask
Yet no compensation, no reward
A perpetual, daytime companion for better or worse:
Tranquil, serene, curious, affectionate
Yet no thank you
A best friend
Shadows...

Judge's Comment

A thoughtful piece about something we all often take for granted - shadows. Robert Louis Stevenson's 'My Shadow' will always be one of my favourites!

Migali ENNIS-SHORT, 11

*The Cottage School
BELLERIVE TAS*

Bound to Nature

Feel nature's pull
Through the water, sleek dolphin,
Feel nature's pull
Through the buzzing bees,
Feel nature's pull
Through the snuffling echidna,
Feel nature's pull
Through the flitting parrots,
Feel nature's pull
Weaken,
for every step towards a city.

Judge's Comment

I really like the understated message in this poem and the repeated line 'Feel nature's pull' is used perfectly. The final line speaks volumes.

Esaias FENG, 11

Dural Public School
DURAL NSW

My Gallipoli

I used to loiter in a country town,
Growing corn and herding cattle,
Never thought of fighting battles,
The humdrum of farm life, occupied my thoughts,
Until the war broke out.

I enlisted confidently, with the thought of a great life,
Adventure and profit, wrapped into one,
When we landed on the rugged shores,
I realised the reality of it all.

They were sending us to hell on Earth,
Snipers fired at our landing crafts,
Shrapnel spewed violently,
The landing was a catastrophe.

Confused troopers littered the shore,
Lost and disorientated, abandoned,
Climbed steep hills to reach the battlefield,
The Turks were waiting.

Hopelessly charged at trenches,
We were only following orders,
Machine guns fired as we ran our fastest,
Many fell that day but I lived on to suffer.

As we evacuated, I paid my last respects,
To all who remained in Turkish soil,
As we were hoarded onto crafts,
I made my final wish,
Farewell Gallipoli, Farewell.

Judge's Comment

I am very impressed by this poem which I only needed to read once, such is its power - wonderful insight and expression for an 11 year old. Far beyond their years.

Taryn FURLETTI, 10

*The Kilmore International School
KILMORE VIC*

Endangered

Chop, chop!
The axe hits hard
Destroying my habitat
Wood flies shard by shard

I dash for cover
But there's none in sight!
I sprint on,
As my friends take flight.

Through remaining trees,
We run and run
It hurts my legs
This isn't fun!

I wish it was over
I wish they'd speak up
It's just getting worse,
We can't keep up!

We reach a large town,
There's lot's of people down there.
Cars slam on their brakes
They point and they stare.

They're the ones that could help us
They'd make it stop!
All this chopping and cutting
But of course they do not.

We turn back around
Hear the bulldozer roar
There goes our forest,
Our sadness soars.

But towards us comes our saviour,
Screaming at the dozer.
Some forest still remains,
Perhaps this isn't over!

They raise money for us,
They set up the cause

We might not speak,
But we can bow on all fours.

Judge's Comment

The poet obviously feels very strongly about her subject and I like the way it is written from the point of view of the animals. A vital message.

Lucia GELONESI, 9

SCEGGS

DARLINGHURST NSW

Ballet Lesson

I can't honestly say I enjoy it
The constant correction
The agitated adjustment
It doesn't have to be perfect!
Well, actually, yes it does
Straighten up! No banana backs!
Lengthen your neck!
Shoulders down!
Eyes up!
Point harder!
Lift but do not clench the muscles in your
Feet!
Thighs!
Torso!
Try again!
And again!
Someone said
Ballet is the body on its best behaviour
But it is a strain
To be aware of every line, every curve, every angle
Every second
Then, like a gift, there is the rare moment
When being mindful of everything
You become conscious of nothing
Spellbound
You truly believe
You can fly

Judge's Comment

I really enjoyed the contrasts in this poem - a lovely snapshot of a young dancer.

Will GRANT, 12

Weetangera Primary School
WEETANGERA ACT

Sometimes

Sometimes, it rains
Droplets fresh on my face
Or, sometimes, I'm thankful
For all of your grace.

Sometimes I'm stopped
Like a dead battery on a clock
Sometimes, I need something
Like a key needs a lock.

Sometimes, home,
Is like an empty space
Because, this time
I can't see your face.

Sometimes, life
Is down right so rough
Because, without you
Isn't enough.

Sometimes, just sometimes
Because yesterday,
Nothing's the same
When Grandpa passed away.

Judge's Comment

This young poet is sharing a precious part of his life, a personal response to something he cares deeply about. I hope that writing about it has helped Will. Lovely, caring words.

Venus KANG, 10

*Waverley Christian College
WANTIRNA SOUTH VIC*

Midnight Snack

Creak! Creak!
Goes the door
Sally creeping on the floor
Whisper! Whisper!
Sneaking by
The children creep
To get some pie
Shh! Shh!
Don't make a sound
Or mum will hear
And we'll be found!

Judge's Comment

This is such a happy memory-of-childhood poem, fun to read and lovely rhyme. Well done.

Annabelle KOINIS, 11

*SCEGGS Darlinghurst
DARLINGHURST NSW*

Bullying

Immensely frightened,
Feeling small, insecure, lost.
Don't know what to do...

Judge's Comment

These few words say so much.

Ava LAMBIE, 10

*Bowral Public School
BOWRAL NSW*

The End of Winter

Ice crystallising on the window sill
Melting
Twinkling jewel-studded dewdrops
Evaporating
Creeping fingers of harsh frost
Retreating
Watery morning winter sun
Rising

Judge's Comment

Lovely images. A well-crafted and spare poem.

Brinett LAZAR, 9

*Nakara Primary School
NAKARA NT*

Lunch Time Break

A'ring, a'ding, a'bing went the loud bell
blah, blah, blah shouted the kids
shhh, shhh, shhh cried the teacher
crunch, crunch, crunch goes the kids eating their red apples
weee, weee, weee cry the transition kids falling off the spider web
chatter, chatter, chatter go the children dobbing on each other
right, right, right says the teacher trying to solve the problems
ladi, dadi, da, da goes the bell
Lunch is over!

Judge's Comment

This made me smile. It is so real and honest and I felt like I was there.

Pia NIELSEN, 11

*Cherrybrook Public School
CHERRYBROOK NSW*

Winter Night

On this winter night.
The wind is a howling wolf
Keeping me from sleep.

Judge's Comment

Perfect in its simplicity. Lovely example of Haiku.

Myra PALEOLOGOS, 10

*Bolwarra Public School
BOLWARRA NSW*

What Shall I Tell You?

Should I tell you about the war
And the men who've lost their lives?
About the open blood-shed,
the guns and the knives?
How 'bout the families,
Who've lost fathers and sons
And never seen them again
Due to all the guns?
But still those brave soldiers
Stand proud and tall,
they fight to the death,
they don't hesitate nor stall.
What should I tell you?
it might break your heart,
To know what's going on out there,
So where do I start?

Judge's Comment

Spoken from the heart. Excellent and well-constructed poem capturing the theme What Shall I Tell You? Where do we start? Indeed.

Annabelle PEARSON, 11

*St Michael's Grammar School
ST KILDA EAST VIC*

The Best Dog In The World

Those big eyes
like flying
saucers buzzing
around the moon.
Her long ears
cascading down her face, a waterfall
of beauty trickling down into a lake
of loveliness. Her kind heart and
cuddliness. Snuggling into you
whenever you're feeling down. She's
cheeky and playful. Always eating
eating everything she shouldn't.
Never too tired for one more game of
fetch. I have the best dog in the
world.

Judge's Comment

This is so heart-warming and it's lovely to read such special words about the poet's special pet.

Tara PEEBLES, 10

Eumundi State School
EUMUNDI QLD

Craftsman

The silky string
Cradled between trees
The bright beam of light
Reveals the night's work

Droplets of rain
Through delicate veins
There's nothing to fear
So strongly held

The shimmering sparkle
Shines within
The maze of jewels
Suspended mid-air

An arachnid crawls
So cautiously onto
The silky string
And into its home

The eight-legged master
With his delicate kingdom
He will cherish and protect it
Until he spins his last thread

Judge's Comment

Excellent poem. Such delicate words for a delicate subject.

Jasmin SELIM, 11

*Pymble Ladies College Junior School
PYMBLE NSW*

Reading

Books fall open,
I fall in.
Delighted where,
I've never been.
Hear voices,
not once heard before.
Reach world to world,
through door to door.
Find unexpected,
keys to things,
Locked up beyond,
imagining.
True books will venture,
dare me out,
whisper secrets,
maybe shout.
Tickets not needed,
for any girl or boy.
Pages are beckoning,
for all to enjoy.

Judge's Comment

A delight to read. A clever and well-constructed poem and lovely to see a poem about reading.

Rose SPEAKMAN, 12

Fahan School
SANDY BAY TAS

My Nanna

Nanna you were always there
You helped people without a care

Nanna how I love you so
That's why it's so hard to see you go

I still remember the things you gave
And those things we'll treasure and save

Some days were good
Some days were bad
But you never showed it, you were never sad

You taught me not to be angry and not to grieve
Because of you I believe

So rest in peace my loving nan
Because of you I am who I am

Judge's Comment

This poem is honest and from the heart, to me the most important ingredients. A beautiful finish too.

Joon YOO, 10

*Dural Public School
DURAL NSW*

Fly agaric

Let me tell you my story
So you know who you're messin' with,
This may get a little gory
Just to show I'm not a myth,

(in a beat)

I'm a big mushroom,
Alive as can be.
I have spots and freckles,
Colour red on me.

Don't cut my head off,
And try to eat me,
Cause ya' really gonna hate it.
As I'm kind o' toxic

My scientific name, is
Amanita Muscaria,
What was that you say?
Let me say it slow

Am an I ta
Mu sc a ri a
Just call me fly agaric
And I won't poison ya.

Yea, yea, yea, yea

(out of beat)

You know who you're messin' with yet?

(back on beat)

Oh, oh, oh, oh

(out of beat)

Let's go again
One more time

(back on beat)

Let me repeat my story
To show you I'm for real
You know you shouldn't worry
For I'm the real deal.

Oh, oh, oh, oh
Yea, yea, yea, yea

I'm a big mushroom
And that's all for me.

(bow)

Judge's Comment

Gosh this made me smile. I would love to see this creative student perform his work. Commended for wonderful imagination.

Joannes YOSAVIERA, 11

*Redeemer Baptist School
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

Sinkholes

Sinkholes...
The most inadequate name
Hellholes more like it
Nature at her most frightening
Opening anytime, anywhere
Swallowing anything, everywhere
Like a monster grumbling
Craving for more
Without warning,
Rocks dissolving
Water seeping
The earth eating
Beneath our feet

Judge's Comment

This poem stood out because it's different and well written. It creates a sense of movement, urgency that a sinkhole is happening here and now.

Lower Primary

JAKE ALEO, 6

*Hilder Road State School
THE GAP QLD*

CORAL POEM

Wavy, dark shallow water.
Empty
Big.
Coral garden,
little trees,
huge kelp forest.
Shark hunts.

Judge's Comment

This young poet has taken the reader to a peaceful place then with a final line of two striking words that safe feeling is shattered. A short but effective poem and something different.

Thomas ANDERSON, 8

*Cherrybrook Public School
CHERRYBROOK NSW*

Friends

Friends make you glad.
They never make you sad.
Friends are people who care for you,
Sometimes they might even share with you.
Friends give you a lift,
Other times they will give you a gift.
Friends are always there for me,
They always make me happy.

Judge's Comment

There is a lovely message in this poem, an ode to friendship and its importance at all stages of life but especially to this young poet.

Amia BEASLEY, 8

*Gunnedah South Primary School
GUNNEDAH NSW*

Amia

Amia
Short, nice, crafty, dancer
Sibling of Indie Ellie Ruby
Lover of ice-cream
Who fears snakes
Who needs to be patient
Who would like to see snow
Resident of Beulah Street
Beasley

Judge's Comment

The honesty and warmth of this piece spoke to me. The poet shares her loves, fears and strong qualities as well as recognising, that perhaps she is lacking in patience.

Harriet BERRY, 7

*Stirling East Primary School
STIRLING SA*

Happiness

Happiness is as gold as precious jewels.
The sight of friends and family.
Hearing bees buzz in the cool breeze.
The smell of freshly mowed grass.
Touching new born fluffy chicks.
Creamy chocolate that melts in your mouth, giving a gush of joy.
Happiness is wonderful!

Judge's Comment

This poem has a lovely, happy feel about it as it captures the senses. It makes the reader think about real and happy everyday things.

Noah BURR, 7

*Saint Mary's Catholic College
KINGAROY QLD*

The Lego Man

My lego man is small
I can build him on my own
I can make him stand, sit or fall,
I can write about him in a poem,
I can put him in a racing car
and make him go really far,
But most of all I love my Lego Man
because I got him from my Nan.

Judge's Comment

This poem touched me in its personal response, all summed up in the last line - special, because his Nan gave it to him and the unstated inference - and she's special too.

Paige CHAN, 7

*Chatswood Public School
CHATSWOOD NSW*

King Kong

In Hong Kong I met King Kong.
He was very strong and was wearing thongs.
He walked to the left and walked to the right and came out at night
to give us a fright.
During the day he stayed away and waited until it was time to play.
When the sun went down it was time to rise and give us all a big
surprise!

Judge's Comment

What a fun read and a great effort for a 7 year old. It made me laugh at the thought of King Kong wearing thongs. Great rhythm.

Abigail CARR, 9

Tamworth Public School
TAMWORTH NSW

The Sounds of Summer

A butterfly fluttering daintily for shade
Ants crawling along investigating everything
The sound of the sun creeping along, sneaking
to catch me
The sound of heels click clacking with happiness
Grass slowly shaking in the wind
A rose stuttering, beginning to open
Children chattering in wonder
A small bug scraping, seeking for shade
Wind whispering secrets I want to know
Trees climbing to the sky
The sun beaming without resting
My imagination whirling
The clouds slowly creeping
Birds quarrelling in the afternoon heat
A spider catching prey it's waiting to eat
My hair swishing in the wind
A paintbrush gently brushing
Pencils writing good thoughts
Libby's mind walking with a lyrebird
The wind trying to win the day
The hiding stars shining
Max calling in wonder.
Birds flipping through my mind.
It's summertime.

Judge's Comment

This poem has some lovely lines 'Wind whispering secrets I want to know' and with a little more work and editing it could be even stronger. Well done.

Josephine FAHEY, 6

*Grimwade House
CAULFIELD VIC*

What Can I Say?

When I was born,
I had so much to say
But my words sounded like wah-wah
And I drank milk all day.

When I was one,
I just sucked my thumb
I said mama and dada
And slept in the sun.

When I was two
I jumped in puddles and got cuddles.
I danced all day too
What about you?

When I was three
I sat on my dad's knee
We read fairytales and giggled
I loved being tickled.

When I was four
I played on the shore
I listened to the sea
Will you come with me?

When I was five
I disturbed a bee hive
I was stung by a bee
Mum made me some tea.

Now I am six
And I will be seven in May
I laugh and I read and I play every day
What more can I say?

Judge's Comment

A joy to read - especially as it's written by a 6 year old sharing her experiences of life. A great example of a happy, funny poem which makes you feel warm inside. Indeed, what more can she say?

Matt ELKINS, 8

*Lue Public School
LUE NSW*

Haiku for Uncle Sid

I am Sidney's badge
I was found on Sid's body
at Gallipoli

Judge's Comment

In three lines, twelve words, this student has taken us on a journey in Haiku.

Danielle GIBSON, 8

*Redeemer Baptist School
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

WATCHING

I watched a bug upon the ground
And wondered what it was I'd found.
For he was pulling a boulder twice his size
What was that special thing he had for a prize.

I saw second little ant try to take his treasure.
He kicked and fought but still held on as if it were a feather.
He walked for a mile and then he walked for two.
Never rested, never stopped but kept on pushing through.

The boulder did not weigh him down,
His head held high and did not frown,
Then down he went into a hole.
I was sad to see him go, that tiny, tiny soul.

Judge's Comment

This student obviously worked hard on this poem. Reading it gave me a warm feeling.

Caitlin JONG, 9

Palmerston Christian School
PALMERSTON NT

Eagles

Let me tell you
about the eagles:
Soft,
Sleek feathers
Like a carpet of snow.
Chestnuts eyes
Like an
Earthly rock.
Flying gracefully
Like
A thousand doves.
Their beaks as orange
As the golden sun.
Eagles are
as brave
as a female lion.
That is all
I have to say.

Judge's Comment

This student has worked hard to use similes and metaphors in her writing. The last line really made me smile.

Alexander PHAM, 7

Randwick Public School
RANDWICK NSW

There is a Cat

There is a cat.
He sat on the mat,
And then he found a rat.
The cat chased the rat.
The rat had a bat.
To be exact, a baseball bat.
Now the rat chased the cat.
The cat is now flat,
On the mat,
By the baseball bat,
And of course by the rat.

Judge's Comment

Words that make you laugh are always good words and this poet has achieved that. The final line sums it up nicely.

Shabih HAIDER, 8

Bankstown Public School
BANKSTOWN NSW

WARS

With blood and violence
When peace is gone.
With sorrow people
And broken hearts.
Soldiers fight
For our country.
But sometimes i wonder
Why can't the world
Have peace.

Judge's Comment

There is a simple but heartfelt message in the words of this young student. Something for all of us to think about - 'Why can't the world have peace?'

Luke SUTTIE, 7

*Gib Gate
MITTAGONG NSW*

White is.....

White is the paper that you use a lot.
White is the flower that you plant in a pot.
White is the snow on a cold winter's day.
White is the pony that eats all the hay.
White is the glue that you paste in your book.
White is the hat that you wear when you cook.
White is the tissue when you need to cry.
White is the cloud floating high in the sky.

Judge's Comment

This young student shows how effective two repeated words can be as a device in a poem with perfect rhyme.

Bridget LITTMAN, 8

*Hawkesbury Independent School
KURRAJONG NSW*

Deadly Danger

Deadly danger
Teeth sharp as a knife
Waving tail
SNAP!

Judge's Comment

A wonderful example of how much can be said in a few words which gives the reader such a clear image of a crocodile.

James TOOHILL, 8

Individual Entry
KHOLO QLD

Ghost Shadows

Bam!
The door shut.
The light blinked.
The chandelier smashed.
Goosebumps ran up my arms.
I was starting to feel like this house is haunted.
OOOOOAAAAHHHHHH!!!!
What was that?
A ghost shadow?
But they don't exist.
It was coming closer and closer.
I said to myself, "Where do I go now?"
The light went out.
It was quiet.
Suddenly, a shadow grabbed me and took me into the dark.

Judge's Comment

An imaginative piece with a strong ending which also leaves the reader wanting more. Also a great title.

Alice WAKE, 9

*William Clarke College
KELLYVILLE NSW*

'Uluru'

It's still dark.
I wait for the moment to come.
The sun just peaks over the horizon
warming my body after the coldness of night.
I look back at the rock and there it is.
The huge rock hangs over the sand and
gives the dead grass a shadowy green.

Its violet colour enchants me
after the darkness.
I feel as small as a grain of sand
When I can see this
giant rock.

The sun is climbing.
It is halfway already,
giving the rock a deep orange glow.
Its beautiful colour changes once again to a
dazzling ochre.

The sun has now passed the halfway point.
The heat surrounds me.
This is the time when little creatures
scurry away to the cool.

The day settles,
I look more closely at the rock.
Its breathtaking designs are peeling back
And the rock has turned a ghostly blue.

I wish for the rock to stand firm, high and
Proud forever.

Judge's Comment

This is a lovely personal response to a student's experience of her visit to a special place in Australia. It makes the reader feel they are there with her. An important final line too.

Cailyn YUAN, 8

Chatswood Public School
CHATSWOOD NSW

The Crocodile

Whip tail,
Razor teeth.
Swish, snap, swish, snap.
Mountain-snapping mouth,
Rope long body,
A killing machine.
Spines like broken glass,
Speeding through deep waters.
Furious hunger.

Judge's Comment

Great use of simile and metaphor with strong short lines for both beginning and end. 'Mountain-snapping mouth' is such a wonderful description.

Assisted Learning Primary

David KANG, 9

*Redeemer Baptist School
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

Engine Number 3

Silver stream of water,
Thru the dirty pipes,
Huge tank filling,
Hot coals burning,
Steam pressure building,
Puffs of steam,
Rolling past,
Endless tracks ahead,
Lights shining the way.

Judge's Comment

There is movement in this poem which suits a steam train beautifully and the image of it traveling along endless tracks with lights shining the way is wonderful.

Jerusalem AKELE, 9

*Redeemer Baptist School
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

Little Mouse

Hiding cunningly,
Sniffing carefully,
Nose twitching,
Creeping silently,
Running hurriedly,
Looking, seeking,
Finding, snatching,
Grabbing food
While nobody is looking,
Scurrying quickly,
Shivering violently
Back in his hole.
Heartbeat slowing,
Eyelids drooping,
Sleeping peacefully.

Judge's Comment

What lovely images of a mouse. Great descriptions presented in a clever way.

Abdullah ALOFAN, 11

*East Preston Islamic College
EAST PRESTON VIC*

Lost & Cold

Gallipoli
Quiet, Dark
Waiting, fighting, shooting
Trenches, guns, soldiers, troops
Damage, injured, died
Lost, cold
ANZAC
ANZAC

Judge's Comment

Very powerful in its simplicity. This poem takes you there. Well done.

Bella COLLISHAW, 10

*SCEGGS Darlinghurst
DARLINGHURST NSW*

WHAT THE TREES TELL US

Tell us the seasons
Reach high for the storms
Elm, Elderberry and
Empress trees.
Trees give us shelter when its
Raining
Umbrella leafs
Never
Cut down trees
Kookaburras, magpies, possums and parrots
Sit in the trees safely.

Judge's Comment

There is a simple but impressive message in this poem about the importance of trees, which so many of us take for granted.

Veronica BLEAKLEY, 7

Cherrybrook Public School
CHERRYBROOK NSW

Pink

Pink
Pink is the colour of rose flowers
Pink tastes like fairy floss
Pink is the sun setting in the sky

Judge's Comment

This poet has shared some lovely images with the reader and great contrasts.

Jade DHARMA, 11

Our Lady Of Mount Carmel
WATERLOO NSW

The Silence

As I watch the tiny waves climb up the cliff
They slide back down into the crystal clear ocean,
And continue on their journey.

The sapphire coloured sea washes back to the shore,
As the bulky cliff reflects like a mirror into the sea.
The waves and the cliff play together
Day vanishes
It becomes darker and darker until...
It is pitch black.

As I watch the cliff,
It stands alone in the ocean
Crying into the sea
The water calms the cliff with its singing.

The only thing I can hear is silence.

Judge's Comment

This poem is individual and different and shows that the poet cares deeply about the sea. 'Crying into the sea' is a wonderful line.

Rose DAVIS, 12

*Gowrie Primary School
GOWRIE ACT*

Watermelon

I see a juicy watermelon
I feel it's green edge
I sniff it's juiciness
I taste it's cold yet satisfying juice
I hear a crunch as I bite it

Judge's Comment

Great use of the senses in an effective way. Makes me want to eat some now.

Zoe FOGARTY, 11

*SCEGGS Darlinghurst
DARLINGHURST NSW*

Loneliness!

Falling into a dark hole, no one to help,
I yell but no one hears, no one sees,
A huge dark hole that I can't escape from,
Isolated from everyone, everything,
Running away but there is nowhere to go,
Loneliness burns a hole in me, no one to help,
My world turns, I can't move,
No one comes, no one helps, no one hears,
I try to get out but I'm stuck in a dark world,
Wonderful colours run but I can't get to them,
The dark hole I'm stuck in keeps on going.

Judge's Comment

Loneliness is a challenging subject to write about and this young poet has described it very well.

Pierre HUGHES, 9

*Redeemer Baptist School
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

MY DAD

I love my Dad
His cuddles are warm and strong
He talks to me, listens to me
In his family I belong.

Judge's Comment

This is another short poem written totally from the heart with a strong message of love. What could be more important?

Emre GEZER, 8

*Redeemer Baptist School
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

BUTTERFLY

Beautiful colours.
Under the clouds.
Teach me how to fly.
Teach me.
Everything is beautiful
Red, yellow, green in the
Forest
Let them live in the
Yard forever.

Judge's Comment

A lovely read, butterflies are beautiful and I also wish they could teach me how to fly.

Jayba HALABI, 10

*Redeemer Baptist School
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

My Parents

Through my tough times,
They are always there to help.
My forever-loving parents,
Are constantly reaching out to me.

When I go to bed all so cosily,
They let me read for a minute or two,
They say goodnight after I read,
But after all that I sleep snuggly in peace.

Judge's Comment

This poem is Commended because it is written straight from the heart and is so totally honest, hiding nothing.

Stella MIDDLEDITCH, 10

*SCEGGS Darlinghurst
DARLINGHURST NSW*

Baby Bird

I am crunched up
My wings are eager to burst out
Muffled sounds surrounds me

Feathers are sticky and clumped,
Hard to move anywhere.

It's time to go.
Using my miniature, sharp and weightless beak I peck a tiny hole in
the crystal white shell.

A speck of yellow
I can see daylight.
Like a seed sprouting out of the earth pushing and scrambling my
little wings and claws.

Clambering out I see vivid colours, animals.
The smell of fresh Eucalyptus hangs in the air.
It feels tremendous to stretch my elegant wings.

My mummy carries a delicious fat worm in her beak
 The clouds drift like fluffy marshmallows
 I am a free bird.

Judge's Comment

This student has been courageous in using some challenging words while describing the hatching of a tiny, free bird.

Maryam SATHAT SOBHANI, 12

*Footscray North Primary School
 FOOTSCRAY VIC*

Maryam's Memories

It is the only chance
 Playing with your life
 Giving up
 You are left over
 There is no reason to be alive
 but you're there
 blinded by a red light
 then locked up in a cage
 Making you go, to a new world
 Your life has been destroyed
 Blood in your heart
 Now you're there
 Coming out of the plane
 Everyone is staring at you
 With your arms folded
 Taking you to another, new cage
 Feeding you.
 Waking up every day and doing the same thing
 Giving up
 No more chances
 Everything that you have been waiting for is dead
 Killing people in front of your eyes
 Blood and tears
 It is time for you to go
 But no one cares
 Because their heart is dead
 And everyone have given up

Judge's Comment

This poem has such strong messages and images and it has touched my heart. If the poem is from personal experience, I hope they are now memories and the poet has moved on to happier tomorrows.

Senior Secondary

Madeline BAILEY, 17

*Hobart College
MT NELSON TAS*

The Ward

This institution is an envelope:
Compressing – white,
Inside, I am effaced.

City shuffles thick outside,
Buses circle smokers and cement.
Normality revolves beneath my palm;
Through glass and frame
It is nearer to artwork.
I am a gallery-goer
In a paper gown.

The other patients rotate.
My corner is defined
By pallid blue of cotton curtain.
It is the shade of soft, crisp sky,
Without the luminosity.
There is no weather,
No watercolour dawn or dusk –
Just a nurse's finger on the light-switch
To flicker this fluorescent cosmos
In and out of days.

The doctors come with pens.
They watch as detached authors
Whilst the creases in their faces
Pattern pages: sculpt my being.

Psychiatrists bring coffee cups
And lose their lipstick on the cardboard rims.
They leave me without gravity,
The dormant objects in my house
Cease being weighted moons.
Beside my bed a daffodil
Distends from porcelain:
The last possession left in orbit.

Now - on the outside,

I am encased by the absence
Of these obliterated days.

They are not memories
But files. They live inside flat sheets
Of checked ink boxes
And patchwork handwriting.

My mind is a glass bowl,
Thoughts batter inside like misplaced fish,
Propelled by their perpetual
Ignorance of imprisonment.

Sometimes, at home,
Or in crowds –
I am effaced again:
Hope is fluorescent,
Sky is crumpled cotton.
The scattered window world
Falls to abstraction,
I only understand my daffodil:
We have no roots in white ceramic,
We float severed.

Judge's Comment

Engaging different fonts and using different rhythm patterns contrast the drudgery and depression of the ward from the manic airlessness of the outside world. Fabulous images add accent to propel us from one state of mind to the other. Excellent.

Annaliese BAKES, 17

Wycliffe Christian School
WARRIMOO NSW

Family

there are a tumble of words and a litter of uncertainties
tangling a family, making a people together,

this one we call our own.

each of us carrying a piece
of family in the place we cry,

safe.

how many hearts can you hold

before it's too many,
and that's the thing about love they say,

it just keeps on growing.

the shape changes, lengthens,
manifests and carries a string you find

tied around the beating parts of you.

a hemmed house cannot split at the seams,
and there's something to be told

about a string woven into a web,

a safe place to land on.

this thread starts and spreads

and finds a softness with
eyes broken up like blue bird shells

and hands grabbing to be held,

because even then in the deepest parts,
you're born with a knot wrapped tight round home.

Judge's Comment

Beautiful metaphors. Even the shape of the poem accents the interconnectiveness and woven images of family.

Liberty CHERRY, 15

*St Philip's Christian College,
WARATAH NSW*

Most Girls

And as the shadows shift o'land,
The pretty young girl, a pen in hand,
Presses ink to page, lips curled in contempt,
And pens, oh she pens, on how heaven has sent,
An angel she screams!! a gift of above,
Who is far too divine for mere humans to love,
Who pens and she pens, hair careful messed curls,
Who pens, oh she pens, she is not like most girls.

It is she that stumbles, grasps madness below,
But paints over terror, her skin cracked and sewn,
She grasps through her library, all fresh from the store,
And she stabs into tumble, on how she needs more!
More the romance, the drama, the anguish, the death,
Of marked and fine literature, worn from old breath,
And dry-eyed, she sits there, Wikipedia scant,
And she preaches to Facebook: oh she honestly can't!

And then the sky trembles, a rippling light,
and the sun rears, raged-filled over cold night,
and the fish from their bowl, raise heads ever small,
and the choir falls downward, faces enthralled.
And the girl, oh she cowers, as the angel's in swirls,
Inform darling child, she's *just* like most girls.

Judge's Comment

The vanity within this poem is accented by the flippancy of the rhyming couplets and frivolity of repeated words. Lovely little scraps of humour are captured in the counterbalance of aged and new language. Brilliant.

Sylvia BARNES, 16

*Elizabeth College,
HOBART TAS*

The Missing

It comes from beneath the ground;
A forlorn wail,
Muted by the dirt,
Only just heard
In the quiet,
As though the earth is moaning

I cry for my mother
Standing nearby, scouring
The yard with her torch;
She scrabbles towards me,
Her face haggard, and sallow in
The moon's luminescence

Her mouth opens--
A tunnel of black,
Then she is running
Towards the house,
The light of the torch tripping
Over the uneven ground

The wailing keeps me still
As I wait, tears brewing,
In the creeping cold,
Until they come running back,
Spade and saw in hand, and behind them
A silhouette rushes from the house

The edge of the spade slices
Like the Grim Reaper's scythe
Through the earthen mound;
The moaning is quashed
By the thud, thud of dirt,
Then the spade cuts white plastic.

The saw comes out and scrapes through
The tube, as through brittle bone;
A desperate mewl is heard, as
Black and mottled white fur
Straggles out,
Then two topaz eyes shine.

The bundle of muck
Is extracted, wrapped
In a towel and whisked
Away inside where
The whole ordeal is washed
Down the laundry basin

But the pipe's hostage will not be forgotten.

Judge's Comment

Oh what an imaginative way to capture the horror of a missing pet. Images that terrify and expressive words build the tension which is so beautifully and peacefully, and thankfully for everyone, eclipsed in the last stanza and the delicious understatement of the last line.

Gemma CHRISTENSEN, 17

*Oxley Christian College,
CHIRNSIDE PARK VIC*

A Call to the Sea

The sea is a prison, invasive and cold
A body without borders that hands cannot hold
As alive as a man but as dead as can be
It moans and it groans with a fierce subtlety
And I know that it beacons for me when it cries
For it seeps through my soul and turns black my blue eyes
How can I not answer when it calls me by name?
To its depths I am shackled and to its life I am chained
A sealife is not for an ordinary man
Neigh, your comfort and warmth must be left on the sand
For my watery Queen seeks to build a fine crew
And only the loyal and lost and desperate will do
To this master of men you must show deep devotion
For in her hands is your life, and her hands are the ocean
In this life I am trapped yet I've thought not to run
For I swore oath to stay here till my time is done

Judge's Comment

It is impossible to read this without hearing the intensive, insistent menace of the sea which is the result of carefully constructed and well-chosen language and images. A marvellous experience to read aloud. It begs performance.

Jacob DOOLE, 17

*Hobart College,
MT NELSON TAS*

Football with Dad

The swarming mass of flesh
moves at a snail's pace.
My face is forced into
the strange buttocks in front.
The pilgrimage ends.
I slide cardboard gold under the scanner.
It cost Dad an arm and a leg
and an extra day's work a week.
I'm hungry. We sacrifice
a few more limbs to eat.
Warm Coke, cold pie,
pre-soiled napkins.
I can just make out the bathroom
from our camp a mile away.
The boy three up the queue has an accident
that wafts in our faces.
We finally reach our seats;
Row 397, seats 1 and 2. The ants emerge
onto the field, as seat 3 roars, arms raised,
flabby stomach pressed against me.
Sacrificing wealth, good health, patience
to watch 80 minutes (plus time-on) of men
chasing a ball, grabbing each other, when we could be
achieving for ourselves.
'Thanks Dad, this has been
the best day ever!'

Judge's Comment

What a wonderful analogy for love! Each image is cleverly underscored with a satirical truth of the experiences described and all of it obliterated by the ultimate truth revealed in the simple structure of the last line. An absolute treasure!

Joshua DUNNE, 16

Individual Entry
DALKEITH WA

A Trojan Elegy

Upon the earth the broken bodies lie.
 Scattered like leaves after a storm,
 As an unbroken, noxious swarm
 Of insects `round their bodies fly.
 And there you are.
 These were the finest of men, the very best from either side.
 They lived and fought with honour and with dignity they died.
 And with dignity they strove and with dignity they tried
 To right the wrongs committed years ago by you, undignified.
 And there you sit.
 Will you be king now, little child, will you be king now for a day?
 Will you rule over those who, for your lust, such sacrifice have
 made?
 And was the blood of thousands yet enough to wash your guilt
 away?
 Or must still more and more be sacrificed?
 Is the ransom still not paid?
 And here we lie.
 How strange, that you, the only one whose life should surely end
 Have yet survived. I would have hoped some justice would this
 wrong amend,
 And yet – nothing. No justice here is found, as good men bury
 friends,
 Their children weep. You soundly sleep.
 You, who men died to defend.
 And here we cry.

Judge's Comment

This poem is perfectly titled to reveal and capture the poet's feelings. It is connected at every level to the messages so succinctly captured in each image and with each word. An excellent structure.

Ellen FRODSHAM, 17

*Presbyterian Ladies' College,
PEPPERMINT GROVE WA*

two wholes only make a half

i heard you still have
that heart that beats in halves –
i waltzed with weeping rain
to its quick witted quavers
when i thought i was alone.

i bet you've tried to dislodge
that anchor tattoo docked on your chest –
we both know it's settled too deep to fathom.
you're still one thousand leagues under my skin,
and the siren in me always loves to see you sink.

a little bird told me
your lips still set a secret bear trap
thirty two pearly points, prime lupine -
oh what big teeth you have, that musk deer perfume,
silky smooth. the kill's always easier *sans* the struggle.

i cried when i found
your brain was a coffin, your body a mausoleum.
all those words the tongue denied – trapped inside, buried alive.
screaming six feet under. i hope they fester there too,
a myriad of maggots, a devouring decay from inside out.

enough to turn your stomach
is that once you were life's newest masterpiece -
brought into being a blank canvas,
but god's decrepit hand is unsteady,
he ruined you with a spasm of the brush or two.

Judge's Comment

The metaphors in this poem work brilliantly to illuminate the depths of feeling being expressed. The harshness of the final stanzas is a stark contrast accented, in part, by the brutality of the chosen words.

Rani JAYASEKERA, 16

*Girton Grammar School,
BENDIGO VIC*

In Response to John Keats' "On The Sonnet"

We have lost the language of yesterday.
No longer does eloquence fall from lips
That shape the silver-tongued words of a thief.
No longer do the people of today
Appreciate the elegance of scripts;
Beauty revered since is lost in ignorance.
Poor Shakespeare in his grave would turn with grief,
Should he ever see how men of this day
Write luv and h8; defiling words in skips
And bounds. What else is lost in History's sheaf?
Perhaps the iron-clad shackles have broke
And freed us all from grammar's rigid rules.
Alas, none of this freedom is bespoke
In language that now be discourse of fools.

Judge's Comment

Suh-weet. The clever use of traditional language interspersed with new spellings and the sonnet form accent the poet's feelings and thoughts. Shakespeare, I believe, would applaud.

Madeline MATHER, 15

*Bacchus Marsh Grammar,
BACCHUS MARSH VIC*

Fifteen Reasons to be Afraid

Fifteen

You are four years old and
your mother grips your hand with a hold like steel
When you cross the street

Fourteen

At six they warn you not to speak to
strangers
Not even if you are lost or alone or scared

Thirteen

At the train station you stand on the platform in the midst of
a crowd that has swallowed your father whole.

And a thousand people move around you - they can see the
tears that well in your eyes but it is too dangerous for them
to reach out with a smile and say
"It's okay"

Twelve

Innocently you merge from the sandbox,
Proud of the buried treasure you have found,
Mama slaps your fingers; they sting

You do not visit the park again.

Eleven

There is a homeless man on the street and he smiles at you.

Ten

You must not pet strange dogs.

Nine

You attend your first party and *nobody* tells you to have fun
They say,

“Don’t leave your drink, don’t give out your name.”

Eight

Your skirt is too short.

Seven

That is too much makeup.

Six

You take pepper spray to college.

Five

The streets at night make your heart beat faster than any horror movie.

Four

You wear only one headphone when you go for a run.

Three

He’s sweet, but the number you gave him was *fake*.

Two

You asked for it.

One

You hold your daughter’s hand
Extra tight
When you cross the street

Judge’s Comment

The visual placement of the poem from a wandering, meandering flow to the same words captured formally in the last stanza bring additional delight to this work. It is a beautiful connection between sound and structure.

Jehannah MAY, 17

*Hornsby Girls High School,
HORNSBY NSW*

Beautiful Things

Beautiful things are sometimes broken.

Leaves shredded into Salvador Dali-esque
dripping strings of smudged colour
bleeding onto pockmarked pavement like liquid
autumn.

The final faltering
kiss bestowed by sinking sky onto dying
horizon. Gusty breath of kaleidoscopic pastels then
gone.

A paper plane spiralling ineffectually downwards
wings dented and
construction crude
stuttering to a
stop.

Crooked curves in flawless mirrors.

Crooked branches jutting out jerkily like
children proffering arms bedecked with
christmas tree decorations and
plastic jewellery and
mismatching material,
asking if they look pretty with devastating
solemnity.

A boy with fingers splayed,
poised across taut strings,
reluctant to rupture stillness with
self-conscious sound. Expectant
silence perforated by hesitant
exhale.

A girl crying freely for
undisclosed reasons
on a crowded train platform.
Her sobs are
zigzags of sound
which do not go unnoticed just
unacknowledged.

A man stretched out
on a lawn chair

in front of a grave marker
like he goes there
often.

People are rare and usually
broken. But then,
so are beautiful things
sometimes.

Judge's Comment

There is a lovely development, through careful phrasing and images, leading to the portrayal of beauty of broken things. A clever way for the poet to share her convictions. Excellent.

Mitchell MCTAVISH, 17

*Scotch College,
SWANBOURNE WA*

Midnight Streets

Grimy midnight streets and dull alleyways,
Police sirens, car horns, and nightclub crowds.
At half past eight, catch the finest screenplays,
At a quarter past twelve, the darkest clouds.

Cologne covered men track innocent prey,
Like some black panthers, arrogant, stalking,
Groups of glamorous girls, garnished in grey,
Vodka, pills, do they know what is walking?

Hooded shapes, shady people and gunmen,
Carrying pistols, knives, parcels and weed.
Packages are exchanged for cash, but then,
Gunshots with no thought, a broken life bleeds.

The grimy midnight streets, mainlining drugs,
Society's manacles, culture's thugs.

Judge's Comment

Aaagh! Such images. Such captured moments of movement in cleverly selected words and metaphor. The final line is so well crafted. A gem.

Ellen MORRIS, 15

*Campbell High School,
CAMPBELL ACT*

One must at all costs

What shall we tell you?

That it was an accident, a slip of the finger, unintended?

That is was forced, that she wasn't in control?

The truth?

Perhaps...

Yes. The truth is the only way to understand the pain

She was sad, so despairingly sad. It led to this accident, no... mistake. This was not an accident, she intended for this to happen, it was not a random act; premeditated? Perhaps...

But the act is not what matters now... what matters now is that one remembers, loves and supports others, always.

One must frequently recall her beauty, wisdom, and kindness. One must strain to understand her motives. One must love her eternally, or she will pass all over again.

If one struggles, they must bring this to mind: she was, is, a beautiful human, she left imprints on humanity, her heart was a massive lifeline to those around her, beating for the world it had to leave, and we LOVE her eternally, no matter the circumstances, no matter that she's gone.

Infinitely? Yes.

One must not force guilt, she was abandoned, and no amount of company could have helped her feel less alone.

This is no persons fault.

THIS is no persons fault.

THIS IS NO PERSONS FAULT.

What shall we tell you?

Judge's Comment

A fine example of prose poetry which uses a well chosen repetition of words to deliver the final message.

Ali NEJATI, 16

*Holy Cross College,
RYDE NSW*

Survival

My consciousness is flooded with thoughts.
Streams, flowing through pipes. Too fast.
The drains are blocked and nothing escapes.

Loading... Loading...

Loading... Loading...

Everything begins to slow down,
Computing takes longer as exposure grows.
The forges of chaos overwhelm all else,
And nothing but time proceeds.
Mangling my actions and leaving me bewildered,
Making two and two, five.
Everything fades, and nothing is clear.
I begin to shut down without chance of survival, trying to stay alive
but never succeeding.

Rebooting... Rebooting...

Rebooting... Rebooting...

The new dawn is brought upon,
But the troubles still remain.
I may never escape.

Judge's Comment

The hopelessness of the theme is trapped in the last stanza. The metaphor of rebooting is perfect for describing the veneer of a life shaped by survival.

Connor MUNNINGS, 18

*Elizabeth College,
HOBART TAS*

Alone

Alone, surrounded by millions of people,
Yet forlorn and neglected by the masses.
Alone, crowds of people walking by,
Brushing against my lonely shoulder,
Yet not one of them acknowledging or forgiving.

Not one person dares look up
Into the bottomless abyss of my brown eyes,
Filled with sadness and despair.
The despair of the thousands
Of my people, slaughtered and stolen.

My face, darker than the night's sky,
Gazes towards the shining, shimmering stars,
Wishing that I could shine just as bright
And not be isolated by the impending darkness
That threatens to close in upon me.

I look upon my hands, dark as soot,
Stained with the blood of my people.
The blood of my brothers and sisters
Who had fought for their rights and independence.
Who had fought for recognition and individualism.

Fighting a never ending war,
A war for my people,
A war that I cannot win,
A war that is destined
To last an eternity.

And here I am,
Half a century after gaining recognition as a citizen
Of this beautiful and bountiful nation,
Yet still discriminated and categorised
By the colour of my skin.

And here I am,
With the belief that one day
I will not be judged by my pedigree.
With the belief that one day
I will be accepted into society.

And here I am,
Alone, weary and fatigued from my eternal campaign.
Alone, bound and defined by my heritage.
Here I am,
Alone.

Judge's Comment

This is a wonderful example of how poetry can deliver such strength in the careful selection of the best words in the best place. Those last few lines, their visual shape and lovely repetition, push the halting, lonely rhythm.

Harry OLDMEADOW, 18

*St Micheal's Collegiate,
MT NELSON TAS*

Spinning Steel

-An ode to the metal lathe-

Peeling back the layers of solid steel.
Once, two separate elements, forged together
iron and carbon crushed under great heat
now ripped apart in showers of minute razors

A game of strength between two metals

The hardened tool carving a flawless circle upon
man's most useful resource
like a knife on flesh

Handles of speed order the motion
separating a light touch
from a momentous gouge

Friction dominates

Thunderous resistance
crying out like children in a storm.
Chunks of shrapnel fly in all directions
burning comets trailing coiled smoke

Metal conforms to the greed of the machine

Always subtracting

With every gyration
mass is stolen away

Circular shapes forms under pressure
raw steel moulds into beauty
perfectly round, marvellously smooth,
destined for a critical role
in a complex invention.

Judge's Comment

This refreshing description celebrates a modern image. The hunger and threat of molten steel is beautifully captured using a contrast of words selected to accent a difference . . . light touch ...momentous gouge ...
Wow!

Alessandra PANIZZA,

*St Catherine's School,
WAVERLY NSW*

In this hall

In this hall
The sea of red and white
Matches their mouths
Loud and proud
Singing songs
Of self-praise and immodesty
Triumphing the day
They were all in tears
Rejoicing in their security
Their sense of belonging
As if to spite my lack
Celebrating loudly
But celebrating nothing
No great victory
No endured hardships
No joyous moment
Just a cut
A snip
A segregation
That left them, floating
Like a speck of dust
In a sea of blue
I have never felt so different
So confused
So jealous
So alone
I have never felt so garish
So multi-coloured
So green
So blue
In this sea of red and white
I hug my knees
And hide my head
To stop the celebratory noise
To stop them seeing my tears
To block the pain
And to hide my proud
Misintentioned
Rebellious
Glow of green and gold

Judge's Comment

I love the intensity of this work. Wonderful words, in the best place make me feel rebellious along with the poet. A commendable result.

Johanna PATERSON, 15

*Ogilvie High School,
NEW TOWN TAS*

Time's Pocket

Somewhere
Beyond the rivers and waterfalls of our wildest dreams
There is a secret pocket in Time's waistcoat
Where the ticking stops.
When Time slips you into that pocket
You can do anything.
You can go back
And study for that exam
That kept your future
Locked away.
You can move ahead
And put down that cigarette
Before it reaches your lips.
Yes, when you are dropped
Into Time's pocket
Every moment of your life
Is right before your eyes.
You're breathing it,
You can see it,
Every piece of you, suspended
Like the whitewash spray
Of the sea
On the rocks.
Time is all around you, it is everything,
But you'll never have it.
Choose carefully,
You can change something,
Anything,
Here.

Judge's Comment

A masterpiece of poetic advice. How beautifully the metaphors have been used to deliver this message. An excellent work which creeps up on the reader in that last, threatening stanza. Wow!

Eric QIAN, 17

*Sydney Grammar School
DARLINGHURST NSW*

we'll go fishing

We'll go fishing.
The morning air
Will part before us,
the lake untouched.

You will be seven and three quarters,
and I will be fourteen and a half.
The boat will slide onto the water,
bend its glassy surface.

The fog will stir, rise to leave,
you'll be sad to see it go.
It's as though the world
when lost in fog
sings of possibility,
brighter than when clear.

The fish must be sleeping, you'll whisper.
Of course not, I'll say,
Fish are always awake in the morning.

Is dad still sleeping? you'll ask.
I checked before we left, I'll say,
The day's barely touched six o'clock.

Did you bring the bait?
It's here. In this rusty tin.

We'll cast off, then
cast our eyes to the horizon.

You'll feel the tug:
pull, don't let go.
a string
extends down into the water and
then: the surface breaks.
a silver thrashing

Did you bring the bucket?
I forgot, you'll say.

Never forget to bring the bucket.

The silver shape slaps
the bottom of the boat.
Water! Water! it cries
Till off he flings into
chilly freedom.

I tell you again and again. Never forget to bring the bucket,
Attach the bait so it won't fall off.
Learn to tie knots, as
Untying knots takes too much time.
Fingertips rubbed raw, nails
picking away
and away.
Tie the proper knots, and you won't have
wasted minutes you can't get back.

Now when I call you at five o'clock in the morning
And I need you,
you are sleeping
with your husband or wife
in the house with your sons or daughters.
Your phone pierces the morning air.
You do not answer. But

We will be on the lake,
the air the freshest you've breathed.
Where the minutes are swift as fishes:
We will catch the biggest trout you've ever seen,
and lose more than we'd hoped.
And I will tell you how to do it properly,
the proper knot to tie, and to bring the bucket every time,
and you will never learn from your mistakes.

Judge's Comment

This is reminiscent of Michael Rosen. Here, in this fine tradition, we have a masterpiece so well developed that we embrace the joys of a simple moment in life. It is a celebration of a second. Perfect.

Laura SANTUCCI, 16

Mary MacKillop College
KENSINGTON SA

The Disappeared

I wouldn't call it running away
That sounds immature
It's more like a full stop. A turn of the page and a pen to the paper
A new chapter, a new beginning, a new life
A backpack, an empty road and a clear head

I wouldn't call it abandoning
That sounds heartless
It's more like venturing into the unknown
It's more like allowing space
It's more like relieving you of me

I wouldn't call myself missing
Because I'm not
I'm merely a shadow in the dark
The white in a spectrum
And the colours in the wind.

Judge's Comment

What a beautiful image. Words so well chosen to show how life is a cruel, necessary separation.

Nadya SHTURMAN, 15

*St Leo's Catholic College,
WAHROONGA NSW*

Fallen Angels

We are the fallen angels
We are the chained beasts
Shackled down
By the false cross
Trapping us, Alas!
Our once God-fearing voices, when
We grieve together
Are demonic and hollow
As mindless, controlled marionettes
Or a phantom's silent howling
In the depths of damnation

Second-rate souls tarnished by sin
Sowed by the seeds of retribution, an eye for an eye

We who have guarded
For millennia the
Mortal flesh and blood
Will be proclaimed - if not accused - as the
Infernal
Diabolic
Satanic reverends
Not as the devout.

Judge's Comment

What amazing descriptions to accent the intent of the poet. How wonderful . . . 'second-rate souls' . . . so sibilant and menacing. An excellent piece.

Byron SMITH, 18

*Hobart College,
MT NELSON TAS*

Stage Lights

Not once did I question how magic worked,
little legs pausing, eyes peeping, chin resting
atop the stage, pushing my grin even higher;
when the show begins, nobody lacks vigour.

Planned events, orchestrated lines,
performed, whispered, in one's natural breath –
as time passes, patterns emerge,
the absence of the players' joy

illuminated by stage lights.
Nevertheless, the audience, placed perfectly
In neat rows, instinctively applauds –
the plot was thick, the lives well lived,

missed, perhaps, was uncertainty,
the safely cushion of knowledge provided –
robbing one of falling in love,
stealing the risk of failure away.

No road is worth the fall of feet
if not perilous to the walker
and no education greater
than learning not to slip and fall;

safety cushions, easy answers,
false promises, comfortable living.
I twirl, in this matinee of pain –
no more answers can be given.

Judge's Comment

This careful commentary on life is exquisitely captured in the metaphor of a stage play. A wonderful piece which is developed through capturing exact images to portray the poet's intent.

Desiree SMITH, 15

*Applecross Senior High School,
ARDROSS WA*

I Go Tick-Tock

I'm always there
You either love me or not
I decide your fate
I go tick-tock

A procrastinator's nightmare
Making others scream with joy
Keeping the world moving
Without missing a beat

I observe pain, I move on
Never look to the past
Searching out the new
I sound tick-tock

Separating the best from the worst
I keep you on your toes
Anxious, impatient or
Excited beyond belief

I can never stop to
experience everything twice
I can't speed up
Every second counts

I speed by when you're running late
Go slow when you want the moment over
24 hours, 60 minutes, 60 seconds
Repeating a pattern over and over

A new day begins,
You only get a moment
To make a difference
Indifferent I move on.

I go tick-tock

Judge's Comment

What a wonderful comment on consistency captured through well-chosen images to illuminate the experience of being a clock. The final line - such an understatement of importance.

Esther STANTON, 16

*Elizabeth College,
HOBART TAS*

Trapped in a Double Walled Cell

We're trapped in a double walled cell
One of wire
One of flesh
Seeking asylum in a country of hope
With sea spray through our hair
And sun light eating at our skin
Our spirits rise away into the clouds
When a rocky shore meets us
hope
Men in uniforms are ready to welcome us
But that is not the bitter truth.
For now we are the enemy

Trapped in a double walled cell
One of wire
One of flesh

Send them back to where they came
But
They don't understand,
Why we left in the first place.
We cannot go home
But we cannot make one here
So we're trapped in this detention
A place of sickness, death and
fear.
Now we're trapped in a double walled cell
One of wire
One of flesh
Children dropping like flies on a window
Youth washing away in waves of salty tears.
Sadness
beyond
sadness.

My mind is a battlefield
Here I am trapped
Smoking memories is all I have left,
And all that keep the room alight
Are the remains of that one great idea
hope
Maybe life would be better not lived
Trapped in a double walled cell
One of wire
One of flesh

Judge's Comment

How cleverly we are led from beginning to end and then back to begin again . . . the perfect metaphor for the work. So well-constructed!

Samantha SUBAAHARAN, 15

*John Paul College,
DAISY HILL QLD*

Guilt

Knock-knock,
knock-knock:
In the dead
of night
you slip
down the corridor
Passing
through the walls
Emptying
the emptiness
Stealing
from the vacant
spaces
between
life
and death
Breathing
in the air
of the suffocating.

You are guilt;
and you are unforgiving.

Judge's Comment

The clever use of simple, quick lines and simple quick words lend terror to this reading. The opening lines, so simple, are in contrast to the awful truth, equally succinct, waiting in the last lines.

Jarrah TOKOVIC, 16

*Girton Grammar School,
BENDIGO VIC*

A Clock

Cool rays from a parchment face
Doomed forever, the lovers chase.
Golden tendrils glimmer over horizons vast

For a brief moment their gazes lock
The more he reaches, overwhelmed she fades
Following follower, follow night follows day

For one to exist, the other must be
Trapped in pursuit for all eternity

But every so often the lovers shall meet

And when in passing their love burns true

Joined together in celestial climax

They keep on wandering, day to night through

Judge's Comment

A lovely analogy to lost lovers. Its melancholy is partly due to the selection of soft sounds and gentle phrasing, to say nothing of the images painted so poignantly. A beautiful piece.

Lena VAN SWINDEREN, 15

*Kenmore State High School,
KENMORE QLD*

STRANGLER FIG

I know why the strangler fig
seems so true- a metaphor rooted in forest floor;
why it creaks and calls me home to lose
my cringing step and
clicking mind in the
thick life-death-rot-bloom scent of
fallen glorious and the glorious fallen.
I've watched it twine around those
too assured, too strong
to notice a softer breath
among their own, a fluttering pulse
a waking murmur.
(and it whispers: when your heart stops
mine will begin
until then we are
intertwined in craving for light-
and what better way to live, to die, in desperate reaching?)
Each day I think we begin anew - another vine,
another tendril that makes the difference between
then and now.
There is a strangler fig inside of me-
consuming who I was yesterday
and creating something new as it climbs ever higher.
A hundred leafy moments reaching
for the
light.

Judge's Comment

There is such a depth to this poem as the metaphor is revealed. The words are lush, the shape of the work meandering and the last word, alone, creating a lovely contrast. Wonderful.

Lena VAN SWINDEREN, 15

*Kenmore State High School,
KENMORE QLD*

Mango Summer

under the casuarina tree
your body is alive and flicker-dappled with
the shifting shadows
of feathered leaves that
frame a burning blue, slow-dancing
in the dusty dreaming summer
breeze.

with your arms flung wide,
you have left your heart exposed;
a mango glimpsed
hanging in the foliage.

here – you seem to say
here is my heart; it is yours
to scoop out.

let it linger on your tongue, a promise
that i was never anything more or less
than an endless road to
finite summers.

Judge's Comment

Aaaah. An essence of dreaming - what a glorious selection of words and images to build the pace of summers. Mangoes and hearts . . . brilliant.

India WYVILL, 15

*Individual Entry,
RANDWICK NSW*

There is no happy ending in life

There is no happy ending in life
And I will never believe that
There is true love on earth
I would rather believe
Cinderella loved prince charming for his money
It is not true that
The world spins around love,
Instead of money
In fact,
Fantasy
Is only a hiding place from
Reality
I am sure that
Fairy tales are false and disappointing
There is no way
Dreams can come true
I will never forget that
Alice left me in wonderland
Once upon a time.

(now read it backwards line by line)

Judge's Comment

I love the playfulness of this poetic form and have huge respect for poets who employ it. Wish I could do it as well - we are literally dragged down and then . . . voila . . . bounced back up. Love, love, love it!

Junior Secondary

Piper KING, 14

*Genesis Christian College,
BRAY PARK QLD*

Witness of a Tree

How can I tell you in a way you will understand?
How do I tell you? Show you? I don't know if I can.
Come here, my friend, through a story I shall tell,
Through a story I shall show you, come closer.
In the yard of a house, not any particularly special house, stood a tree.
This is not just a tree though, no longer a young sapling just planted, green in its innocence and youth.
You must realise my friend, that this tree is a history in its self, carved, weathered and old, it is a book.
If only one would take the time to read the words, and flip the pages, they would see the stories of many lifetimes, the sole foundation of childhood tree houses, and the gravestones of loved hamsters and goldfish.
One would see the marking of young summer love, forever ingrained into its skin.
One would see the shade used to sit under and read, escaping present worries and frolicking younger siblings, to a wild fantasy on the back of a dragon.
One would see the stories of old friendships breaking, and new one forged.
One would see the story of a wonderful picnic, which ended in a proposal of love that would last forever.
One would see a joining in a simple wedding, the uniting together in front of the one thing that matter most in the life of a young girl, up until the until the very end.
One would witness the birth of life, the care and love and the passing.
One would witness the life of someone they never knew.
They would witness and understand that it is not always money, vanity and friendships that are a key.
They would see that the key to happiness and peace, the key to many lifetimes, can be something as simple as a tree.

Judge's Comment

Well-chosen images and language to grab the immediacy of a secret. Fantastic concept.

Olivia KINGSTON, 13

*St Michael's Collegiate,
MT NELSON TAS*

Rain

A soft mist, sprinkling droplets of moisture
over everything in sight, the tulips, the windows, the shed,
the pathway, the watering can, the shoes,
the house.

A pleasant shower,
drops falling like tiny crystals,
one by one,
the faint sound on my window sill,
pitter patter pitter patter
a calm and soothing lullaby.

The gentle drizzle,
patches of rain falling endlessly from the clouded sky,
dampening the washing that hangs
on the line, swaying in the sea breeze.

A sudden change,
the pouring begins,
hammering

down to the earth,
destroying
everything in its path.
It flies in swift,
controlled
movements,
it's in a hurry.

The downpour turns cold,
and sleet plummets
freezing the meadows,
scaring the flowers,
the grey gravel path turns to mud
as I watch from the old glass window.

Spheres of ice,
knock on my door,
slam into the roof,
tap the windows,
impatiently.

The ice slowly melts, starts pouring . . .
drizzling, showering, fading,
softer and softer,

a smooth gentle mist,
rain.

Judge's Comment

A beautiful description which uses so many images to take us through the cycle of water. This is further enhanced by the constructed cycle of the poem. Well done.

Kirrah MCLENNAN, 14

*Ogilvie High School,
NEW TOWN TAS*

What shall we tell you?

What shall we tell you?
Shall we tell you how skinny you're getting, how gaunt you've become?
Shall we tell you to eat more, shove food on your plate?
Demand an answer while you play dumb?
Intrude, hastily retreat, an inward debate?

Or shall we skirt about it, hoping not to offend,
Wondering if you'll still be here tomorrow,
Feeling awkward around our dearest friend,
Whose words should we use, whose can we borrow?

No! We shall tell you you're loved.
You are!
You are!
You are!
We love you.
Don't forget.

Judge's Comment

Such a wonderful explosion of words in the final stanza achieved by that repetitive use of language and short, sharp forms. Well done.

Jim KRETSCHMER, 14

*Campbell High School,
CAMPBELL ACT*

Tune in

Tune in at 7PM,
But what would you like to see?
Would you like to see the triumph
of a centennial man,
the blood of doomed men, fighting for peace
or the novelty of some dog,
who just learnt to ski?

Tune in at 11PM,
you'll be the only to get their feed,
you're all in bed while children are dead,
because their religion set them free.
We hold the power to choose,
we aren't journalists we're entertainers,
So how about you tune in.

Tune in at 7AM,
no idea of the struggle overnight,
you'll see ads,
stars,
politics,
cars,
and Joe Bloggs will win his share.

Tune in whenever you want,
a slide and a tap and you'll see.
See what you want, out of Group A of course,
Because Group B must not be seen,
Group B will give you dangerous ideas
from far behind countries
that are further ahead than yours.

For we hold the power to change your mind.
But we don't need a machine
strapped to your head,
just a box,
in your living room, bedroom, family room,
with an opaque haze covering your eyes.

So what shall we tell you?
Give you the illusion of choice,
so you're satisfied with your perfect world,
so you don't look past the puppet show.
It's not about who pulls the strings,
but who we pull.

Judge's Comment

A sardonic look at the way of the world. The clever device of turning words back on themselves in the last line adds enormous impact. A great piece of work.

Keelin MAILEI, 13

*Mercy Catholic College,
CHATSWOOD NSW*

Mindset

I

An aroma of coffee and cigarettes circulate.
Half of me hangs off the end of a stool,
Staring blankly into nothing,
Waiting.
Sharp air spills from the sighing vents that line the walls
Like jagged pieces of glass; stinging my skin
And leaving tiny mountains up my forearms.
The hunger that I followed has become restless.
It tears at my insides with a yellow flame,
Making me long for the perky waitress
That usually works the night shift.
Instead I am submerged into a deafening silence,
Unknowing of her whereabouts,
Left with no one but my thoughts.

II

People are strange, I decide as I sit there.
If you listen
You can hear their roars of red and blue
As loud as thunderclaps
Which take your ears by storm.
They are like the long lights that blink above me,
Every four seconds.
The dark makes them nervous,
And they fear the day it becomes all that is left.

Individuals are the ones that fill the gaps in my mind,
The characters of my black and white films;
Mending the burned out holes
With their peculiarity.
Like the perky waitress
(Where is she?)
And the priest who teaches my brother how to read
And play blackjack;
And him who I've only met

On posters
Flooding my ears with colourful guitar riffs.
And my father
Who I haven't met.

III

It's been quarter past nine for an hour
And the perky waitress is still not here.
Leaving me to indulge in slow conversations
With my empty coffee cup.
Dark shadows capture my bad posture.
Elbows rest on the bench,
Fingers framing my face.
And my insides groan in agony;
An earthquake only I can feel.
The sting of flowing thoughts that had overthrown my reality,
Broken,
Now several scattered strands
That are difficult to twist back together.

But I can hear footsteps approaching,
My chest plays jump rope:
Fast-paced double Dutch.
And she pushes the door, but it stays ajar.
Both of us,
Frustrated at the sign that says
"pull".

Judge's Comment

A lovely ramble which has been constructed by using word flows and drifting images and linking them to capture the immediacy of thought. Brilliant.

Ziree MAOUCH, 15

*Mackellar Girls High School,
MANLY VALE NSW*

What Shall I Tell You?

What shall I tell you child?

When you ask why mother hasn't come back?

It's been two months my dear, I know

But I can't ruin your innocence yet my dear

I can't

So, my dear child, how will I tell you that you will grow and blossom

Bare of a mother's tender love and embrace?

How can I tell you that? You'll wake up hungry tomorrow,
Or have to work for so little that it is a struggle to even breathe
Or my dear child, that you'll watch all that you have left
Perish in front of the windows to your old and tired soul,
So young, yet left to face the raging storms and torrential rains,

Alone.

My dear, I can't.

What shall I tell you my love?

When you are left to continue the horrific battle for freedom handed
down

from your ancestors.

My child, you will be stripped of your culture, identity, language
memories,

love, faith.

You will be denied the right to look, see, hear and think
You will be degraded, called less than an animal,
Left bare and naked.

You'll witness countless massacres, persecutions and apartheid.

Based on what, my dear?

Difference?

So tell me my dear, my love, my darling
How do you manage to carry on?

Battered, Bruised, Broken

With love in your heart and a smile on your face.

You are **strong, forgiving** and **faithful**,

My dear child.

Judge's Comment

This work touches on so many emotions. The clever use of a child and mother to develop the themes are very successful. Fine work.

Yasmin MCWHIRTER, 14

*Oxford Falls Grammar School,
OXFORD FALLS NSW*

Frost

It hides its evil persona,
Under a sheet of soft, white innocence.
I hear the trees try to stifle a scream,
As it strips them of their leaves and dignity.

It cages warmth and joy like a poacher,
And preys on happiness.
Rather than consume its victims,
It preserves them as a trophy.

This bitter daughter of winter,
Has a hunger for pain and hurt.
She grins as she bites onto my hand,
Watching as my skin slowly ices over.

The pain that her cold heart has put in me,
Is like a stab to my palm.
I try to breathe through frozen lungs,
But it seems that they are against me.

Remember her evil persona,
Under the sheet of soft, white innocence,
For she is not even slightly fazed,
To use her icy daggers.

Judge's Comment

Oh, such menace achieved by personifying frost. Clever images carried successfully are carried successfully through the work and peak in the clever construction of the last line. A chilling piece.

Katherine MISKIN, 15

*Merewether High School,
MEREWETHER NSW*

The Twelve Dimensions of Dust

The Twelve Dimensions of Dust

1.
Maybe in twelve years
I could fathom the cause of
miraculous dust
2.
She lifted her hands
to the sky in praise, but all
she received was dust
3.
He fears that one day
he'll be nothing but dust swept
out from the corners
4.
Some words you could mix
up, and it would be okay –
words like "dusk" and "dust"
5.
They love the dust, they
like to believe that their kids'
future can be held
6.
There was once a bird
who thought that fire was beauty –
until he saw dust
7.
I'll nourish my sun
flowers, and watch them grow from
a bed of coarse dust
8.
I like to believe
there are dust-cats who keep my
secrets in boxes

9.
You said hi, but you
know your words fell like dead dust
on my wounded ears

10.
When all the dust of
the universe has been found,
cup your hands; receive

11.
If I wrote sonnets
they would be about the world's
living dust layer

12.
Open your mouth to
the glorious rain, let it
soak away your dust

Judge's Comment

I love this celebration of a household nuisance. It explodes with ideas carried on clever word pictures and minimal language. Brilliant.

Annie PATERSON, 13

*Roseville College,
ROSEVILLE NSW*

The County by the Ocean

The girl with hair swept by Nature's
Keen and hurried breath
Stood by the water, waves foaming
Eyes stormy and glistening
A curiosity not slaked by regulations
Or restrictions or rules
Her woolly coat was knotted
By worn and calloused fingers
Around her neck
A hood, a loose-knitted poncho
Her mother's work, no doubt
Fingers that were used to the
Pricks of unsupervised needles
Skin broken and scarred
Mouth occupied by frothing yells
And accusations, thrown and hurled
Ears; barriers; built up by flawed wood
Bound by fragmented rope
Where she was, she was not supposed
To be

But, yet, she sang straight from her heart
The tune carried by the barebacked, rural
Wind – like a tethered brumby set free
Hooves pounding and eager
Her voice, crystal and sweet
Sparrows swooned
And dipped lower to her
Offshore breezes gamboled;
Urging her on, teasing her
"Go on, sing longer! Go on!
Let not the angered voice of your mother
Stop you from being free!"
Her mellow tune wafted from chapped lips
Teeth and tongue that have never tasted
Sweetness, but only
Metallic, bitter blood
Hands that swoop and strike
Her greatest menace
Tears that flooded straight from her eyes
Fear that flooded straight from her heart

A rebelliousness pulsed through her veins
New, strange and powerful
Something that snorts
With frantic eyes
White clouds of breath hover
Hooves that pound and dance
Her song was of freedom
Her song was of limitless skies
Her song was of gossamer wings
Her song was of loving embraces
That she dreamed and hoped of
One day sharing

She sang straight from her heart
The tune pulsed and grew
Within her
It could not be contained by
Her mere chest alone
A tune so rich and wonderful
That it just had to be let free
It just had to frolic, to feel
The air whistle between its toes
She thought not of the consequences
She thought not of what horrors
Home held for her
She thought only of the tune
The glorious tune
The tune that rang straight from her heart

Judge's Comment

This work contains some lovely metaphors and well-chosen words to paint feelings. Personification of actions lend further accent to the whole poem. Lovely.

Madison PLOMPEN, 12

*Mentone Girls Secondary College,
MENTONE VIC*

What shall I tell you?

What shall I tell you,
Little old friend,
About how life will go on,
Or about how it will end.

Your time will be finished,
Not long from now,
This is hard for me to tell you,
But you were bitten by a cow.

Surprising you didn't remember,
Especially the pain,
It must have been terrifying,
Damn,
What a shame.

The cow had rabies,
And infected you bad,
Tomorrow you will dead,
See ya dad.

It wasn't the cow,
That's just what I like to think,
Cancer is way worse,
It kills you in a blink.

What can I tell you?
You are dead as dead,
No more tomorrow,
Sleep time instead.

Judge's Comment

The use of a flippant, nonsense style through the first few stanzas as a contradiction to the true seriousness of the subject is an excellent way to connect with the reader. Great work.

Phoebe RILEY, 13

*Upwey High School,
UPWEY VIC*

Reverse

I can live without you.
Please do not believe that
I need you.
It was all a lie.
When I pushed you away
I said I would be happier
And this is still the truth.

I told you long ago that I need you
I remember
Your silence.

I don't want
Forgiveness,
I never asked you
To embrace me,
I want you
To stay away from me
I will never again tell you
I love you.

Judge's Comment

This is such a clever way to play with words and messages. Well done.

Alexa SCHNEIDER, 14

*St Mary's Anglican Girls School,
KARRINYUP WA*

Beauty or Brains?

Let's not pretend that society imparts;
like you can have both,
That the world will take a bleached blonde;
with a fake tan and blue contacts,
and welcome her in the senate.

As *if* a girls' mascara has glued her eyes shut;
so tight she can't read a word of Jane Austen, Shakespeare,
Dickens.

As *if* a girls' lipstick has trapped the words from being spoken,
opinion shared;
spell illiterate.

Her heels halting her,
from climbing the ladder to her freedom of running;

Running for the entitlement:
To be able to enter a respected office in genteel apparel,
Without being a reviled catcall.

Without a girl being prejudiced,
based on her choice of style, appearance.

Without women becoming a pointillist,
an abstract piece of art, puzzling to understand,
the once clear image,
now distorted.

It is *not* a dichotomy.

Open your eyes. *Look closer*, they say.

It is *not* black or white;
it's 7 billion shades of grey, each woman, man and child, different.

Beauty or Brains?

As if that's all that matters in a person.

Judge's Comment

Using language more associated with fashion magazines in the first few stanzas is extremely effective especially when contrasted with the language of the later verses. Clever constructions.

Adrianna RIVERA, 12

*Methodist Ladies' College,
CLAREMONT WA*

Fake Reality

Fake's the only way to describe what I've seen,
The beautiful sky is just a screen.
The shadows are only painted for show,
The true disguise of everything you know.
The grass on the ground is made of plastic,
The vines on trees, they're made from elastic.
A river flows by, it seems so real,
But its water's a hologram, and the rocks are made of steel.
I realise I suffocate in this air,
Everything's so fake, now that I care.
The dirt is sand paper; it's been sprayed brown,
Electronic birds fly all around.
The sun is projected into the sky,
The stars aren't real and I wonder why.
Digital animals hide away,
Behind trees that are made of clay.
The wind blowing is just a fan,
I hold a paper leaf in the palm of my hand.
I guess what I thought I knew was a lie,
Because now I watch as reality crumbles them dry.

Judge's Comment

Such feeling captured in the contradiction of images. Describing natural beauty as technology exaggerates the experience. Fine work.

Annie SWEENEY, 14

*St Michael's Grammar School,
ST. KILDA EAST VIC*

Ballad of the bike

All wrapped up in vibrant paper
Christmas morning's joy
she stood apart from other presents
calling to the boy.

A leather seat and 16 gears
-a cut above the rest
no training wheels to hold her back
let's put her to the test.

They wheeled her out onto the road
mounted that new ride
she steamed along so mightily
no cars could match her stride.

The little boy yelled out with glee
not shy to push the pedal,
people on the footpath gawped
that bike could win a medal.

They soon approached the sheerest hill
within a 1,000 k's,
and still the pair could lose no speed
her wheel spokes were ablaze.

She took control, moved faster still
the boy applied the brake,
she would not heed his caution though
as she raced towards the lake.

She raged, possessed that evil thing
the boy still perched on top
he flailed and fought so gallantly
but still she would not stop.

It was later that they found the wreck
of metal, flesh and oil,
the legend of the bike gone wild,
the unlucky child's toil.

It was a Christmas tragedy,
the boy they could not save

and now both boy and bike
together share a watery grave.

Judge's Comment

Telling this rollicking ballad using a Banjo Patterson style is hugely successful. The humour is vividly captured in wonderful metaphor and personification. Great!

Amy TRAN, 13

*Copperfield College - Kings Park,
KINGS PARK VIC*

Panic in the Shower

The dreadful moment
When your window is open
And you are singing

Judge's Comment

So few words but so well chosen. The feeling explodes home in that last, simple line. Love it!

Mia TODA, 14

*Loreto Kirribilli,
KIRRIBILI NSW*

Not Forgotten

They waft by.
Not only the clouds,
But the souls too.

Sitting with them,
It makes me feel sad.
There's nothing I can say,
Or do,
To help them.

There's a longing,
A want inside,
To let them know,
They are not forgotten.

No matter how small they seem,
Or think they are,
Or feel,
We're always there.

No matter how rich,
Whether in money,
Or life,
Or love,
We're always there.

The pat on the back when you are down,
The voice who listens.
Or whispers.
Or sings.
Quietly.

Judge's Comment

A very beautiful poem constructed with soft words which fall into a gentle rhythm. The final line carries additional strength in its solitude and simple language.

Catherine VAN DER MERWE, 14

*Clarence Valley Anglican School,
CLARENZA NSW*

Creatures

What creatures are we,
other than the words we speak
or the things we do?
How are we different from each other?
We all follow burdened paths
trodden underfoot by many beings.

We are a species who follow history;
no one is special,
We say we're unique
but each and every person
follows in someone else's footsteps.

Judge's Comment

This insightful work is driven by the clever use of questions in its beginning. The soft rhythm and the underscored tone used to bring the poem to fruition add great impact. Well done.

Bec VASSALLO, 13

*Copperfield College - Kings Park
KINGS PARK VIC*

A DEMOTIVATIONAL MONOMETER

One day
I thought
"I'll change
the world."
Then I
went back
to sleep.

Judge's Comment

Here is a truly wonderful example of saying a great deal by saying a little. What a gem of a way to reveal character! Brilliant.

Jessie URE, 15

New Norfolk High School,
NEW NORFOLK TAS

What is it with you?
You claim that you are doing the *right* thing
You say it's all for the *greater* good
But you steal innocents through *pain* and *scarlet* - *flowers*
You *rip skies apart* with your myriad of incendiary devices
You stain seas with your *wounded death* - *vessels*
Without you,
I'd like to think that maybe,
Maybe the *clouds would dance* for different reasons
And the sun may even *sing*

But you persist
Staying the corners of men's minds,
Lurking in the shadows
And every time we think it's safe,
You explode into being
Why do you do this?
Can't you see what you are doing?

Yes.
You do.
You always know,
and you don't care.
You *enjoy* it.
If tears stream down a child's face,
You're there.
If a mother screams in anguish over her lost sons,
You're there.
Every time, you swell a little more
until you dominate *everything*

We hate you.
We want you to go away.
We need you to leave.
We look around, and see their eyes,
hopeless
We can plead,
We can bargain,
We can fight.
But we never get anywhere.

That's why, when a thread of hope is just beyond reach,
We *jump* with all we have,
Stretching our arms into the stained air,

Clinging onto anything that will destroy you for good.

Goodbye, war.

We've won.

And this time, *we're not letting go.*

Judge's Comment

Wow! Such well selected language to deliver the harshness in the first stanzas so it contrasts well with the final words. Such a different pace lends real impact to the work. Well done.

Dayle WADDINGHAM, 14

*St Mary's Anglican Girls School,
KARRINYUP WA*

Look

I can see her.
She's standing over there,
by the lockers.
She's talking to her friends.
She smiles,
and it's like a break in the clouds
on a cold winter's day.
It lights up the world
With very little effort.

Who knew
that a love like this could exist,
in a world
like this?

Life is like a novel,
and I'm dyslexic.
But love is like a game
of hide and seek,
And I'm the master.

I hide
I deceive
I lie.
Because I have to.

She walks over here
My heart rate quickens
It hammers
To the beat of her footsteps.

She smiles again,
And my palms become twin waterfalls.

"Hi Jane," she says.
And I can't reply.

Judge's Comment

Ah - this is exquisite! How cleverly the relationship and love is revealed. How cleverly we discover the nature of the love. Such a fresh, innovative work. A special favourite.

William WRIGHT, 14

*Oxford Falls Grammar School,
OXFORD FALLS NSW*

Speeling

You make the English language so simple
What would I do without your brilliance
You are used by many of my pupils
What on Earth would I do with your absence

You have helped me with many a problem
That I may have encountered while spelling
You make my life so simple and awesome
As far as simple goes you are a king

As I talk and text you're necessary
Or should I say txt instead as it's right
Who needs whole words, they are not right to be
When I see a long word I get a fright

Y hav the stress of speeling words corect
As long as my teetcher does not inspekt

Judge's Comment

Wow! How well oral language and visual language is used here to develop the theme. This is an excellent way to celebrate new forms of communicating. Terrific.

Amy WALLACE, 13

*St Michael's Collegiate,
HOBART TAS*

The Knife

The knife is inkwell black,
dark, deep, strong,
menacing, like a black cat,
a vacuum, swallowing light.

The blade is like an animal's foot,
smooth top, jagged edge,
hooks, talons, claws,
with a riverside pebble face.

The knife is weightless,
helium infused, lighter than air,
a dangerous feather,
airy, but stronger than steel.

The hilt hides in plainness,
metal, grey and dull,
worthy of a thief,
until more closely observed.

The knife beats like a heart,
pulsing, steady, mesmerising,
a menacing clock,
that ancient magic gave life.

The reflection is distorted,
misty, dreary, lonely,
remembering cloaked faces,
who searched for power in that blade.

The knife was made for stealth,
silent, secret, gone,
stab smoothly, turn, grab, pull,
the victim now as silent as its killer.

The story's marred with rumour,
speculations, claims, accusations,
what really happened so long ago,
before the world learnt to walk?

The knife is born from stardust,
converted to inkwell black,
ancient beauty, smothered,
by greed, jealousy and ignorance.

The knife is filled with knowledge,
history, legend, myth,
consumed with stellar light,
overthrown by human nature.

Judge's Comment

Such terror and menace are developed through this work by the use of clever metaphors and personification. Lovely use of reflections and mythical images. Great.

Lewis WEEDA, 14

*Scotch College,
SWANBOURNE WA*

Lone Figure, Lake Monger

The dreamtime Wagyl serpent on the journey to the wide endless
ocean,
Burrowed from the dry crusted earth,
Elegantly and freely made its
Home, where it laid its watery eggs.

From there grew reed and plants,
Turtles and birds greeted the land,
People grew their roots,
With broadened smiles,
Baime walked the land,
Told the life he created how to live,
What to eat and how to eat.

Then they came,
In numbers far ponderous,
They chewed the food,
Lunged on the land,
Fashioned the shore with construction,
Large hard hulls sailed across the still water,
With capacious cloth-like wings,
They swallowed the land like a hankering plague,
They bounded in like a pouncing fox,
They came from another place.

The wind tingled my face,
An old forgotten dust.
The carp below slid upon the tracks of the Wagyl snake,
A swan glided past with a sense of distinction,
Its black feathers plastered together in a
Finicky manner, the land nursed by many,
A bird sang an aria in my ear,
All this beauty,
Formed by a perilous Wagyl snake.

Judge's Comment

'People grew their roots' - this clever, wonderful line provides a hinge for so many other concepts. The transformation from 'dreamtime' to 'perilous' is well developed and provides insightful final thoughts. Fabulous construction.

Grace YONG, 13

*Mount Waverley Secondary College,
MOUNT WAVERLEY VIC*

Survival

Survival is like the wind.
Turning and twirling,
With no way to control it.
It picks leaves up,
Higher and higher,
Choosing whether they drop,
Or live in the breeze.
No one knows when it'll come,
Nor knows where it lives.
Just that survival,
is a much wanted thing.
The will of survival,
Is the rewards that it brings.
But there is one,
That threatens the wind.
Its name lurks in the darkness,
And makes many fear.
Its name is death,
Like a dark thunder cloud,
It rumbles and shouts,
And zaps you down.
It brings you to a place
where of no return.
It brings sadness and fear.
Not even love can triumph,
That dark, lurking ghost.
Only survival can fight it,
Bringing hope in its stead.
When all is calm and trouble is far,
Many desire riches and love.
But when in trouble,
Survival is their only wish.

Judge's Comment

The description of survival by personalising it and developing very successful metaphors makes a very sophisticated complex subject easy to appreciate. Remarkable work from such a young poet.

Caleb WU, 13

*St Andrews Christian College
WANTIRNA SOUTH VIC*

Life

Mother dying
Children crying
Full of worry
Full of doubt
Water dirty
Food is scarce
House is falling

We are leaving
Brother clinging
Hunger
Thirst
Cold
Wet
Sister's dying

We are climbing
We are fleeing
They are coming to get us
No will left to mourn
Mother dead
Sister buried
No time for crying, no tears for weeping

They are coming
We are hiding
Despair
To death we go
We have no hope
Exhaustion take us
Life is fading

We are risking
Father assuring
To the ocean
To the sea
Brother weak
Almost there
We are hoping
Hoping

Judge's Comment

What profound feeling captured so beautifully, so succinctly in such a simple, elegant structure. The final words reveal the basic human condition – hope – which turns the work into a very, very powerful message. So amazing!

Olivia YOUNG, 13

*A.B Paterson College,
ARUNDEL QLD*

The Truth

It's simple discovering things on the surface
You'll find anything in space
But underneath the surface is what can be hard to find
As the truth can be hard to face
But what if along the way the truth was misplaced
You'll need to dig deep through all the jumbled scenes
As it's not easy to find something you've never seen ...

Judge's Comment

An amazing appreciation of a difficult topic. It is well developed through the use of a very appropriate metaphoric structure. Great.

Zoe YUNK, 14

*Scotch Oakburn College,
NEWSTEAD TAS*

Polaroid

An eye,
focusing on a single memory taking shape.
Looking closer, watching.
Silently sitting staring at a single space.
Looking closer, watching.
Click.
The eyelids snap shut then open in a split second blink.
An instant memory etched in your mind forever.
Every detail, every line, every emotion caught on the film of the brain.

Judge's Comment

A photograph being compared to 'a single memory taking shape' is such a powerful description. A short work which captures, like the camera, so much detail. Wonderful work.

Sarah ZEIGMAN, 13

*Moriah College,
QUEENS PARK NSW*

Everything is amazing and nobody is happy

And we live
On technology
That doesn't exist
And we still complain
To the company
That hasn't made the technology
That we live on
And nobody is happy

And we never saw
The world before
Because we live
On technology
That doesn't exist
And we still complain
To the company
That hasn't made the technology
That we live on
And nobody is happy

And how quickly
We spoil our mind
With the future
But we never saw
The world before
Because we live
On technology
That doesn't exist
And we still complain
To the company
That hasn't made the technology
That we live on
And nobody is happy

And we reinvent
The things need not reinventing
Such as our culture
Our family
And ourselves
And how quickly
We spoil our mind
With the future

But we never saw
The world before
Because we live
On technology
That doesn't exist
And we still complain
To the company
That hasn't made the technology
That we live on
And nobody is happy

Yet we still believe
Not in ourselves
Not in our culture
Not in our Family
Not in our teachers
We believe
That the world is amazing
And we reinvent
The things need not reinventing
Such as our culture
Our family
And ourselves
And how quickly
We spoil our mind
With the future
But we never saw
The world before
Because we live
On technology
That doesn't exist
And we still complain
To the company
That hasn't made the technology
That we live on
And nobody is happy

Judge's Comment

Just, just wonderful. The 'House that Jack Built' was never so clever or so insightful - or so truly succinct at nailing such an astute observation. Clever, clever, clever!

Anni ZHANG, 15

*Ogilvie High School,
NEW TOWN TAS*

Red

It's a colour of dimensions,
a chameleon of vibrant emotions.
It's a regular, frequent visitor,
Either invited or unwelcome.
It's a veil across the plush grass,
Where warmth melts the cool,
The burst of colour in the heart of leaves,
radiant upon the forest floor.

Red is rare like a hidden gem,
A paint stroke from God's palette,
The darkness fades and dusk dominates,
Spills life across the blank canvas.
The attention-seeker as the curtains rise,
Red lives on the lips of performers.
The stage shines bright and the lights flash blind,
Dappled by kaleidoscope reds.

Red is love,
A blazing fire,
In the depths of the bottom of my heart.
Full of passion,
Full of dreams,
Full of the sweetest Valentine memories.

Red is love,
The lively fire,
reduced to lifeless ashes.
Once thriving and intense,
Now a savannah gripped by solitude.
The dull black coals flicker,
As few sparks resurrect,
The dying fire blowing out,
accompanied by a bleeding heart.

Red is sacrifice in the time of war,
Hot blood runs through youth's veins.
The sweeping grief,
The echo of hope
And the fire of burning red.
The ground is stained a tint of crimson,
blood ravages through the air.

Loyalty,
Anger,
Love,
Warmth,
It's a colour of many dimensions.
One million emotions and stories,
Captured in an essence of red.

Judge's Comment

Red is so cleverly described that this poem could be read in the dark and that colour would still be experienced. A wonderful work.

Assisted Learning Secondary

Mert AKGUN, 14

*Redeemer Baptist School,
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

Lightning

The lightning hits trees
Like a thunder storm
The lights go out in everyone's house
No electricity for a long time
Enough for you to get scared.

Judge's Comment

This work pivots on that last line. It is so full of atmosphere and so well placed.

Daniel ARAS, 14

*Redeemer Baptist School,
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

School

In the school we play,
At our breaks during the day.
We play to have fun,
To pass, dribble, kick and run.

One day a boy came along,
But no one thought that he belonged.
So we all ran away from him,
And left him out on the rim.

Wait! This should not happen,
If someone did it to me, I could not imagine,
The loneliness and pain,
Tears would fall like rain.

So we let him rejoin our group,
Now a part of our playful troupe,
To pass, dribble, kick and run,
Now we can all play to have fun.

Judge's Comment

Neat. The rhyming couplets in this poem work to bring an uplifting feeling which reflects the intended message.

Sam BELDEN, 18

*Montague Continuing Education Centre,
SOUTH MELBOURNE VIC*

I Met The Premier

I met the Premier of Victoria
Denis Napthine is his name.
He asked me lots of questions
About the activities I do at school.

I told them about my school based apprenticeship
And about my school.
I'm happy he liked our school.
He thinks it's a good school.

I've heard they are going to build a train station around here.
It's good that the Premier came to look at the school.
He was amazed that I go travel so much.
And he asked me were all students live.

They loved the Hip Hop.
The Premier was dancing to.
He was wrapped with the skills of the students.
And were learning to dance.

They wished they had more time.
To spend with us.
I invited him to the end of year Formal.
He was a nice man.

I hope he talks to the Government
And continues to support
Students and schools with disabilities.
We now have more hope for the future.

Now the Premier knows about us
After visiting our school.
Thanks for visiting and hope you enjoyed it.
There's a lot more I can tell you.

Judge's Comment

There is such a feeling of pride captured in this work which stems from the simplicity and honesty of the language. Great stuff.

Anthony BOLTON, 13

*Redeemer Baptist School,
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

Jake the Window

I get to look outside,
When they open the curtains.
I get knocked on every day,
Just to say 'Hi'.

I get annoyed when they use
the
windex.
They spray me,
They wipe me,
And then do their hair
For me.

But there was one day,
My last day at the house.
The boys were playing
Football.

They had a very good game,
Until a stray ball slammed into me.
Everybody gasped at me,
My body was smashed.
And that was the end of my
stay at the house.

Judge's Comment

This clever personification of a window brings delightful moments of insight and feeling. Clever.

Kai EVERETT, 16

*Montague Continuing Education Centre,
SOUTH MELBOURNE VIC*

A bad Poem

This is my bad poem and I will tell you why.
I like cartoons and they make me laugh.
I like video games and they're good fun.
I like collecting old video games and that's my hobby.

I like the internet and it's full of funny things to see.
I like sleeping, it makes me relaxed.
I like eating because of the flavours.
I like vintage stuff because of the design and they're cool.

I hate boring stuff, it's just no fun.
I hate racism because everyone is the same.
I hate sexism because everyone should be equal.
I hate mean people because everyone should be nice.

Judge's Comment

I like the bad poem. It reflects the mood of the writer extremely well. A fine effort.

Evan FENG, 14

*Redeemer Baptist School,
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

Get Ready

Get Ready for Alice
Get ready, man.
Get ready, Ma'am.
Get ready, boys and girls.

Oh, here is Alice!
The little girl with long blond hair
She is Alice!
She is so beautiful!

Alice is everywhere!
In your soul, in your heart, in your mind
She is in your eyes,
Alice is everywhere
She is beauty!

Judge's Comment

Wow! The celebration of Alice is perfectly captured in the great repetition of the text. An excellent work.

Alpay FILIZKOK, 13

*Redeemer Baptist School,
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

George the Door

Good morning my friends!
It's finally morning,
Here comes Gabe,
That noisy baby.
I hope he doesn't slam me,
He did it again.

He opens me then closes me
Do you know how much it hurts
He does it millions of times
I'm sick of it,
Just stop already!
I can't take it...
ANYMORE!!!!!!!

He is finally gone
Now I can relax.
Ohh! Wait! Is that his brother?
NOOOO!!

Judge's Comment

What a great way to describe an ordinary daily action - an excellent use of personification. Well done.

Alpay FILIZKOK, 13

*Redeemer Baptist School,
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

Rare and Precious

You won't believe what I saw today

One of the rarest animals in the sea
A whale shark
Its body is blue and white
With white spots
How amazing
You should have seen it
It was spectacular!

Judge's Comment

A beautiful picture captured in simple, well chosen words. Not only do they describe the whale shark but they reveal the feeling of the poet.

Tannara GREY, 18

*Montague Continuing Education Centre,
SOUTH MELBOURNE VIC*

My Future

Five years from now,
I will be twenty years old.
Living in an apartment
In good old Ballarat.

Working away in a job I dream of.
A chef, or maybe
Fulfilling my dreams.
Of being a singer
Would give me good means.

Maybe get some time off work.
Go to Paris and walk the broad walk.
Living with my boyfriend.
Or maybe I'll make him my future husband.
What a dream?

Judge's Comment

Aaaah, the last line enables us to dream the dream as well. An excellent way to complete the journey of this poem.

Haoren GUAN, 14

*Redeemer Baptist School,
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

My face

My face is a beautiful face.
Two small eyes,
looking everywhere.
A big nose,
smells everything,
whatever is scented or fragrant.
Two big ears,
Listening to everything,
sounds of nature or sounds of noise.
I have a big mouth,
that keeps me speaking,
Never stops.
This is my face!

Judge's Comment

What beautiful sentiment is expressed through capturing the beauty of the way things behave.

Rachael JONES, 13

*Redeemer Baptist School,
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

On and Off

They use me every day.
Every morning and every night.
I have to squeeze, squash, steam and
make the loudest noises in the world.
First, they turn on my steamer and make me so hot,
And then they don't even let me have a break.
Then, they make me break and squeeze all the juice
Out of these beans.
I am about to explode because I am so hot.
So I steam and scream and make drinks.
I boil milk and then I make coffee.
Because, I am a...
Coffee machine!

Judge's Comment

What an extraordinary way of looking at a machine. So much information revealed by personification. Great stuff.

Amina HASSAN, 15

*Montague Continuing Education Centre,
SOUTH MELBOURNE VIC*

What Shall I Tell You?

That I am angry.
That I am sad.
That I am depressed.
That I am always on the lookout.

That I am always looking behind me.
That no one believed me.
That I have cut myself.
That I am afraid.

That I have cried myself to sleep.
That I talked about the problem.
That I took control.
That I am better now.

Judge's Comment

This work makes me breathless with despair and hopelessness and then, oh then, that lovely, lovely last line. It is a triumph of a poem.

Brady HARRISON, 16

*Montague Continuing Education Centre,
SOUTH MELBOURNE VIC*

An amazing day

An amazing magician.
Did some unbelievable tricks.
Got his thumb out of chains.
By dislocating his thumbs.
The cracks could be heard.
Thought the whole room.

Our dance class followed.
And it was great.
Everyone was energetic
And so pumped.
We learnt lots of new moves.
The pregnant teacher was so flexible.

We had fun playing basketball.
Then had a great chat.
What can I tell you?
I'm no dance but
I gave it a go.

Judge's Comment

Such honesty brings its own emotion. We feel joy and delight at the same time as we experience the defeat of not dancing. A clever work.

Rachael JONES, 13

*Redeemer Baptist School,
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

What is it?

We see it as just blue.
Just another place in the sky.
What does it look like?
People say it is paradise.
Maybe it has streets of gold.
I know people up there,
And I don't know other people up there.
I know people up there that I've never seen.
I know someone, who went up there just this year.
I know many that have nearly gone there many times.
So, is it just another place in the sky?
Is it really paradise?
Does it really have streets of gold?
Or, is it HEAVEN?

Judge's Comment

Such a profound work expressed so simply in language that reveals such feeling. A great work.

Cody KERR, 18

*Montague Continuing Education Centre,
SOUTH MELBOURNE VIC*

I don't know

I feel sad.
I feel confused.
I feel grumpy.
I don't know how to feel.
I don't know what's going on.
He went to hospital on Monday.
He died on Tuesday night.
They won't tell me anything.
I don't know why.
He was a good bloke.
He was my uncle.
He was good to talk to.
He was a good brother and mate.
Kids don't know yet.
How am I going to tell them?
What am I going to say?
Why me? I don't know.

Judge's Comment

The repetition within this work sets up a steady, regular pace which reflects the confusion and turmoil of the subject. Excellent use of language.

Brendan LAMONT, 13

*Great Southern Grammar,
ALBANY WA*

The Bluegum

As they soar in the wind,
You put on a grin,
As the scent of bluegum is in the air,
As refreshing as it seems,
It will make you have lovely dreams.

How nice it would be,
To be soaring so free,
To see all the land around,
Up in the sky,
So say goodbye,
To the earth below.

But it will never last,
As the tree farmer past.
One-bye-one,
He chops them down,
As you're going in to town,
They're horrid and deceased,
For the brown dirt that is left,
The farmer was a theft,
For the beautiful trees are gone.

As young ones regrow in their place,
As you try to retrace,
All is restored-and the forest is blooming.

Judge's Comment

There is a sense of hopefulness in this poem, revealed in the last stanza. Without it the work would have been lost - an excellent piece of construction.

Jose MARCHANT, 14

*Redeemer Baptist School,
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

Horseback Riding

As you get on the back of the beautiful horse,
You become relaxed,
When you start off.
Going faster and faster,
You feel free, free as flying birds in the sky.
You see little bunnies bouncing around the bushes,
With their bushy tails one thing you will always hear,
is the clickety click, clack and clunk of the
horse feet.

Judge's Comment

This poem reflects the movement of a horse in the rhythm that has been constructed as well as the joy and delight of the rider. Great!

Phillip PEARSON, 17

*Montague Continuing Education Centre,
SOUTH MELBOURNE VIC*

What shall I tell you?

Phillip is my name.
Happy memories are made in my huge family.
I like the Sydney Swans.
Love my shows especially THE BLOCK.
Lost lonely and confused am I.
I'm on a journey to adulthood.
Please wake me up if I fall asleep.

Judge's Comment

So much depth to this work is captured in that last line. Brilliant.

Gabriel PSAROUDIS, 13

*Redeemer Baptist School,
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

My Day

I am the most boring clock,
Thinking why Broncos lost.
And why I am in the most boring spot,
And thinking about what I have to do,
Thinking about how I do my job,
Keeping time with my hands.
Why can't I be like a normal person?
Just like you sitting in the room.

Judge's Comment

It is almost possible to hear the tick-tock and the monotony of this life - an excellent choice of images and words.

Toni PEZZIMENTI, 17

*Montague Continuing Education Centre,
SOUTH MELBOURNE VIC*

She Was There When I Woke Up

She was always there for me.
She was beside me all the way.
She was there when I six months old.
She was there when, I don't remember.

She was there when I realised.
That I was different.
She was there when I had my operation.
That lasted a very long time.

She was there time after time.
She was there when I was scared.
She was there when I was anxious.
She was there when I was angry.
She was there when I was frustrated.

She was there for the tears.
She was there when I didn't know what was going on.
She was there to hold my hand when I was going under.
She was there to encourage me.
She was there to support me.
She was there when I woke up.

Judge's Comment

The last line in this work suggests a past and a future. It is a lovely work revealing dedication and love in the clever use of repetitive language.

Tirza RAMBITAN, 12

*Redeemer Baptist School,
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

William the Warmth

It is very cold
And I can't hold on
Give us some warmth,
Oh William...
The desperation
And the certainty we have
That you can give us,
Warmth
Please, oh William...
Give us the warmth that you have.

Judge's Comment

Such despair is captured in this simple work. Words are chosen to express the need so succinctly. Well done.

Dergam SALAH, 14

*Redeemer Baptist School,
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

Trapped

I was trapped,
about to die.
Surrounded by wild animals.
About to be eaten alive.
Until I grabbed some wood,
On the ground it was laid,
A fire sparked,
Making a weapon to keep them away.

Judge's Comment

A galloping, rollicking narrative complete in such a short space. Words well chosen, matched by an excellent pace. Brilliant.

Macy TAAPE, 10

*St Benedict's Primary School,
EDGEWORTH QLD*

What Shall We Tell You?

Roses are red
I am blue
Because my dad is gone
For me and you.

He fought for our country
He fought for our flag
He made us all happy
He made us all glad.

Five years later
A letter came in the post
It said "I'm so sorry, but Jarod Hensley has died.
Sorry for your loss".

Mum and I were shocked with disbelief
I said to mum, "His death is a great grief.
Should we go and tell Nan?"
Mum said, "Say no more".

And now I remember him
I'll never forget
My dad went to war
Lest we forget.

Judge's Comment

The horror of war is captured so well by bringing it into the safety of a home. It is a subtle contradiction which is very successfully used here.

Community Relations Commission Award

Suzanne JONES, 12

*Redeemer Baptist School,
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW*

Where?

Where in this dry and wary land can I find,
Someone who is generous and kind?
Where in this cruel world will I find a face,
That does not care about my colour or race?

Where on this exhausted and ancient earth,
Are there those who believe every human has worth?
Where in this greedy and selfish land,
Are there those who live for their fellow man?

Where can I find a person today,
Who listens to what I have to say?
Where in this carefree generation,
Can I find a soul who will change our nation?

Where is there a heart that is willing to share,
And serve and give and comfort and care?
Where is it? Oh, where is it? Where could it be?
Maybe it could start first inside of me.

Judge's Comment

A notable accomplishment from a poet so young; an appreciation of what it means to be a refugee and a philosophy to develop understanding and inclusion.

Anna DODSON, 12

*St Ignatius' College,
ADELAIDE SA*

Migration of the Senses

I see a lot of big suitcases,
More than I've ever *seen* before.

I *smell* a lot of strange new smells,
None that I've ever *smelt* before.

I *taste* a lot of weird food,
Food that I have never *tasted* before.

I *feel* a lot of excitement in the air,
Something I have never *felt* before.

I *hear* an anxious family waiting to get on the road,
But I have no idea why?

Judge's Comment

In a few simple words we are made to understand that, for young children, the decision to leave their country is not always their own.

Aisha IMTARNASAN, 11

*SCEGGS Darlinghurst
DARLINGHURST NSW*

Peace

Harmony, justice
Feeling that you belong here
Smiles seen worldwide.

Judge's Comment

Few words saying much. The last line brings a gentle landing and wonderful image.

Anhaar KAREEM, 7

*Marie Bashir Public School
SYDNEY NSW*

Three Places To Call Home

I was a young Kiwi,
Living with mum and dad,
In lovely Aotearoa,
The land of the long white clouds,
A green land of wavy hills,
Dressed in white fluffy sheep.
What a peaceful land I was in,
I still dream of it in my sleep.

Up on a plane I flew,
Flew to a land with green fields,
That grew in golden soil,
With beautiful flowers too.
Spending time with my family,
Learning new Aussie words,
Like g'day mate and fair dinkum,
Oh yes, I was enjoying my time.

With Egyptian heritage I went to see,
where my father grew up.
I saw a plain land of yellow sand,
And a sun that shines so bright.
Famous for its ancient pyramids,
And the longest river Nile.
The people were so kind,
I would love to go back anytime.

I have travelled to many countries,
And met different people on the way,
And learnt one important thing,
It doesn't matter where you are from,
But it matters who you are,
And I'm glad to be me.

Judge's Comment

While this young poet tells us of the places she has been and lived in, I believe the final stanza summarises cultural diversity very well and what an important and wonderful thing for a 7 year old to know.

Jeanne NG, 10

*Chatswood Public School,
CHATSWOOD NSW*

Forgotten

Grass begging for water, shrivelling in the dusty soil.
Moaning trees treacherously moving in the wind.
Bare, naked roots shrinking in the dusty soil.
An eerie suspense hidden in the souls of the bark,
groaning, suffering, begging, searching.

They watch the other trees in jealousy,
whose branches burst with scarlet autumn ornaments.
Flourishing grass with honey-dew sparkling in the sunlight.
A glowing soul lit by the warmth of angels.
Warmth, water, wealth.

A tear trickles down those who are forgotten.

Judge's Comment

What amazing imagery has been used to convey the heartache of those who have been, or chosen to be, left behind. Such sorrow expressed so well.

NOTES