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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 any 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,  
The willful, 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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## 2010 President's Report

It's an honour once again to preside over another exciting year of the Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards.

Entry numbers showed an amazing recovery after dipping slightly last year when the decision was made to take the competition online.

As always, we are most appreciative of teachers' support around the country – we simply could not run the awards without you. Your responses to our survey last year on the online entry process prompted us to make a few changes which have undoubtedly resulted in the entry surge.

Primary school poems this year could be submitted either online or written – an option which clearly struck a chord with teachers who were left the time consuming task of assisting younger students with their entries.

Members of the all-volunteer awards' committee are always humbled by the efforts of students, parents and teachers from all over Australia. The writing again was nothing short of inspirational or – to use student-speak – simply awesome.

Thank you to our judges Joanne Horniman and Dr Robert Kimber who have worked assiduously to sort through the thousands of entries, a task they assure me was more pleasure than chore. We are also indebted to our hardworking project officer Mila Stone.

The continued existence of the competition – now in its 27<sup>th</sup> year - is a miracle in itself. Funding for any volunteer organisation, let alone a project that involves old fashioned literacy and creative skills, is both competitive and difficult.

We are extremely grateful to our sponsors Gunnedah Shire Council, BHP Billiton, Whitehaven Coal, Qantas, NSW Community Relations Commission and Regional Arts NSW for providing our lifeblood. You are ensuring that creative writing and an appreciation of poetry is alive and well in our schools.

And to all those poets, many of whom spent inestimable time on their entries, we salute you and look forward to reading your work again.

Philippa Murray

President – Dorothea Mackellar Memorial Society

## 2010 Entry Statistics

Schools with submissions:	627
Total students:	7124

### Number of students by gender:

Male:	2528
Female:	4596

**Total submissions: 7904**

### Submissions by category

Lower Primary (Years K-3)	1340
Upper Primary (Years 4-6, inc 7 in QLD, WA)	4345
Learning Assistance Special Education Primary	96
Junior Secondary (Years 7-9)	1584
Senior Secondary (Years 10-12)	504
Learning Assistance Special Education Secondary	19
Community Relations Commission NSW Award	16

### Submissions by State

ACT	209
NSW	4729
NT	39
QLD	664
SA	266
TAS	297
VIC	988
WA	612

## Judge's Report

### Primary Categories

Last year's theme "Reaching for the Stars", yielded poems about the cosmos, material objects flying through space and human ambition. Poets wrote about their families, their friends and they had a lot to say about bushfire and flood. This year's theme, "I Hear Music" has given us poems which are quite different. Many of them have been lyrics because "I Hear Music" has given great focus to the senses, especially hearing and consequently listening. Young poets have continued to write about their family and friends but the broader concept has focussed their thoughts on the landscape, town and country, and for many on their fascination with the sea. This has produced a lot of reflective poetry. In doing this it has made our poets aware of the manipulation of sounds, the ugly and the beautiful, that confront them so insistently on a day to day basis.

Fine poetry is fine because it can capture the essence of the events that absorb a poet. In turn the writer uses rhythm and language to express that essence. Rhythm is a vital element in writing good poetry together with a detailed knowledge of the subject. That is how the writer of a lyric works, in reflecting upon and conveying a feel for the subject.

Rhythm can be found in the vast expanse of the ocean which may be turbulent, as in a terrifying thunderstorm, while at other times it may be limpid, as in the heat of the tropics. However, at all times there is a determining rhythm to that movement. As in the ocean, rhythm is ever present in good poetry.

There have been many very fine poems this year, some fascinating lyrics. There is one lovely line which has remained with me in particular. It comes from Charlotte Sinclair (aged 9) of the ACT who writes: "I hear music in the voices of my imagination." How true.

She and many other young poets have begun with their imagination. They have harnessed the essence of their subject and expressed it in appropriate rhythms and vital language.

And that is how it should be.

Dr. Robert Kimber

## Secondary Categories

"It should  
be a song - made of  
particulars, wasps  
a gentian - something  
immediate ..."

wrote the American poet William Carlos Williams in a poem about his poetry.

In this vein, the best poems in this competition were specific, rather than generalised - images and observations from life, a celebration of the beauty of the real, opening the reader's awareness to something universal. These poems were focused and intentional, well-structured, building to a satisfying conclusion. A sense of phrasing and rhythm, not necessarily regular, helps transmit emotion, the way music does. This ability can be fostered by frequent reading, especially aloud, of both poetry and good prose.

I was delighted by the quality of the poems submitted. Many were linked to the theme of music either directly or indirectly, but there was a range of subject matter. Often poems on worthy subjects were let down by a lack of awareness of the possibilities of poetry; the best ones showed that even a small, apparently insignificant subject could move the reader with new insights. I was often surprised by an original way of using words, or of looking at something. I found humour, and an enormous amount of energy and life. Some poems won me over with their panache.

There are obviously many schools and teachers for whom poetry is an habitual pleasure. Rather than mention specific schools here, I would like to congratulate all the schools and teachers who have contributed to the awards. Your students have put in some stunning work.

Joanne Horniman

**Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards**

**2010 Anthology**

**WINNERS AND RUNNERS UP**



## Winner Lower Primary

**Jack Ford, 7**

Sydney Church of England Grammar School  
NORTHBRIDGE NSW

### Forever Young

My great grandma rocks in her rickety chair,  
Smiling, at me, through her matted grey hair.  
"I can hear music, in all that you say.  
I can see laughter, just watching you play."

We hear the locusts and magpies cry,  
The wind rustles the leaves, beneath the dark sky.  
"I will never feel alone, in my old age.  
My soul is still young, like a bird in a cage."

Stripey, her cat, slinks up to her seat,  
Stretching out on the rug, under her feet.  
The kettle is whistling and the stew is warm.  
There's music in memories, though scattered and torn.

I only learnt to walk, after she died.  
I was unable to talk, and yet I had cried.  
There was always soft music, dancing in her face.  
The wrinkles had hidden all her beauty and grace.

I imagine her young, so quick and spry.  
Dancing, at her wedding, dressed all in white.  
And after the war, when grandad came home,  
He saw her there, just sitting alone.

The photos around her gathered dust and decay.  
But they carried the music of a far better day.  
She hid the tears, that remembered her past.  
She clung to the wireless, knowing nothing would last.

Seated, in the backyard, on her folding chair,  
She'd look at her grandchildren, so young and fair.  
She was happy just sitting, doing nothing at all.  
Sipping, at her tea, and enjoying it all.

She's in heaven now and always will be.  
If she was still here, she'd be ninety-three.  
She gave me a shell to remember her by.  
It sounds like the ocean, that never can die.

I imagine her young, so quick and sprite.  
Dancing, as a child, far into the night.  
She's not alone now and never will be.  
She's all dressed in white and totally free.

**Judge's Comment**

This is a fine poem - well sustained - consistent in form, showing a sensitive use of language. The rhyming is well devised.... Jack's response to the memory of his grandmother is rich in detail and deep in its love for her. The poignancy in the grandfather returning after the war to find her "sitting alone" is a gem of expression for what it implies. Such a simple thing as the "shell" provides a telling image of her memory. The poet responds to colour, the black and the white, the shape of things in time past. The opening play on the sound "r" launches into the poem and captures interest immediately... and much else could be said. He filters in the notion of music without seeming to force the theme....This is a mature work.

## Runner Up Lower Primary

**Connor Harrison, 8**

St Anthony's School  
SINAGRA WA

### Drowning

Splish, splash.  
Breathing, swimming, diving.  
Whistles blowing...someone's drowning...  
It's my little brother who was left alone!

The world goes black, I close my eyes  
And imagine my little brother drowning.  
What would I do without him?  
My heart is pounding.

I open my eyes and see Mum and Dad.  
The look they give...I'm crying.  
My little brother drowned  
And a part of me is dying.

Drop...drop...splash go my tears  
Leaving a puddle at my feet  
That grows so large...  
If I sat on it I could not cover it completely.

### Judge's Comment

This is a vivid account and shows a strong turn of emotion. The images are well presented. A lot of powerful, deeply personal material is covered in a short space by the writer.

## Winner Upper Primary

Lilly Hatwell, 11

St Mary's Star of the Sea Primary School  
MILTON NSW

### The Dressage Day

Beep! Beep! Beep!...."Ah the alarm" I think to myself  
As I glance at the blinking numerals on the tiny white shelf  
Then I remember the dressage day, it's on today.  
Mum flings the door wide and exclaims:  
"I'll help you get ready, you've got a big day!

And before I know it, I am in the car,  
Happily munching on a muesli bar  
I hear the horse float, rattling behind  
Knowing my pony is safely inside  
We bounce over bumps, but they don't bother me  
It's dark. I can barely make out the shapes of the trees.

Did you remember my music? I ask my Mum  
I don't want to forget..... be the only one .....

My freestyle to music , had been a labour of love  
Mum had worked the moves to fit like a glove

We arrive at the event and I look all around  
Fog is laying eerily, a mysterious blanket on the ground  
I see the competitors, as they get ready to ride  
There are butterflies in my stomach, I can feel them inside.

I'm now on my pony, the cold bites my face,  
The bunting is flapping all over the place  
I look over at the steward's mean cranky face  
And wish for a second, I was some other place.

I can feel my pony's legs warming up as I trot  
I try hard to sit still, so I don't bounce on top  
My name is called, my turn has come  
I grasp the whip tightly under my thumb

I make my way to the judge's car  
She winds down the window and says, " I know who YOU are"  
I now feel more confident and don't want to wait  
So I make my way to the entry gate.

My freestyle goes smoothly, I feel so proud  
I turn my head, then hear the crowd.  
I am so keen, I want to see if I've placed,  
So I make my way to the scoreboard face

I gaze at the scoreboard and then find my name,  
Could it be true? ..... a first?..... next to MY name!

When I return to the horse float, I ask my mum,  
To help me stand, as I can't feel my bum  
As I look at my pony, happiness and joy grow inside  
So I rest my head on her warm furry side.

Although my back is turned, I can feel Mum's pride,  
She is quietly crying at my wheelchair's side.

#### **Judge's Comment**

The writer captures the experience of the day very effectively. The images are pertinent and touching but not overstated - that is part of the strength of the work. The initial form could be a little more strict but overall the poem is worked out carefully. Its great strength is in the clear voice of the writer and her sharp pictures of the situations, her horse and the people she deals with on the dressage day. Well done.

## Runner-Up Upper Primary

**Alice Evans-Pyke, 11**

Ruyton Girls' School  
KEW, VIC

### Field of Flowers

Today we have art  
I imagine the inferno burning all ideas  
Drowning all uniqueness to be lost and forgotten  
Tossed away like a broken toy  
My mind left silent like the grave of a lost one  
I dawdle to the art room

In her eyes is pure fury like a cat about to kill it's pray  
She grabs me with her claws  
Huh, I feel the presence of another person  
I see a gob smacked face  
The principal...

She lets go  
Her burning eyes fade like someone's put them out  
The principal forces her out like a mother to a cheeky child ...

The next art lesson  
Fear prickles me like a rosebush  
I close my eyes imagining her glare  
When I open them  
I see a beautiful lady  
With golden hair flowing down her back like a lake  
I feel like I have been locked in a room  
And the door has opened to a field of flowers

### Judge's Comment

There is purpose in this dramatic piece - and some excellent imagery. The work is well-conceived and captures the personalities of the people involved. The language is used well. There is suspense caught up in fury .... The image of a "field of flowers" turns that fury on its head and concludes the poem with a great feeling of relief.

## Winner Junior Secondary

**Beth Downing, 12**

Campbell High School  
CAMPBELL ACT

### Night Song

The singing moon, a roughly polished silver sickle  
Bursts out a melody  
Of all that once was  
And all that will be.  
It knows.

The stars resonate;  
Their chorus,  
Their stories, their sights of the day and night.

Crisp rainy air,  
It sets the stage,  
Prepares the black, smothering curtain of midnight:  
As if the light has all but been tapped from this world,  
Sucked down the drain.  
For another miracle, a new sight.

An audience of birds, they wait  
In silence.  
They know the beauty;  
Unseen,  
Untouched,  
Ancient wonders,  
Humans have never seen; will never know.  
It is not for them to ruin, take.  
A secret, hush-hush,  
For all but the tyrants.

It is why I feel like such an intruder, breathless, out in the night  
Beneath the Milky Way's splendor.

### Judge's Comment

This is a quiet poem that needs to be read slowly to savour its depths . All of us have felt the wonder of the night sky, and this poem not only brings it to life in a fresh way, but brings us close to the mystery of it. But more than that, it positions us, the human race, as the outsiders. The final two lines are a perfect conclusion to this beautiful, lyrical, and thought-provoking poem.

## Runner Up Junior Secondary

**Jerick Esmundo, 14**

Redeemer Baptist School  
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW

### Saxophone

It brought quiet to their thoughts,  
the ignorant people,  
chatting and mumbling away from  
their sadness and pain.  
But am I an owl.  
Listened,  
captured,  
clenched,  
catch that phrase;  
Soared it in my mind  
Heard and saw a man.  
Played in all darkness, his sound heard;  
like an orchestra or band playing;  
His objection resounded,  
skipped,  
soared,  
tripped,  
Dressed in all its glory,  
Shining out from the rest.  
Seeing his Golden instrument;  
The keys and the bell it has;  
Bright and shiny more than gold,  
Or like heaven falling down;  
For I know I have listened  
And he now knows I am his friend.

### Judge's Comment

This poem, with its interesting use of syntax and beautiful and original phrases, is an unusual and compelling work. It evokes the sound of the saxophone, the darkness, the people listening and the way it takes them away from their worries and heals them. And finally there is the connection between the musician and the person listening, which is true of any work of art.

## Winner Senior Secondary

Jacqueline Krynda, 16

Merewether High School  
BROADMEADOW NSW

### The Sailing Club

The old clubhouse  
sits  
at the end of the lake  
elbows on its knees  
(peeling white through light blue)  
contemplating the water  
sloshing around its ankles.  
Inside  
the best place  
is in the corner,  
on an up-turned milk crate.  
Above, stairs murmur as footsteps climb them  
(up and down).  
Water runs under salty timber,  
tangled wires  
hang down to rest.  
Warm air finds its way in  
amongst all the odd shapes.  
Milky chalk has settled on the board  
(the same old course).  
Things are taken down then put back.  
Oh, sometimes they get repainted  
and renamed, and we shuffle them around,  
repair bits that fall off,  
track our wet boot marks across the floor  
at the end of the day.  
Hang gloves off the roof beams,  
fill the fridge downstairs with wine  
for the end of season party.  
Someone's soggy wetsuit is left and forgotten;  
the memories are not so good now.  
But they still know the way upstairs  
to salad rolls; beetroot, lettuce and tomato.  
Besides, there's ginger beer in the fridge,  
and bright-coloured lollies in jars.

The veranda creaks.  
It's made of old roof beams.  
And the wind gauge  
(although few know it)  
has been dropped,  
then put up again.  
Watching everyone examine it,  
frowning and nodding their heads,  
it's hard not to smile.  
The bell in the hall rings  
and oaky voices tell the same jokes.  
Rain scribbles itself across the water,  
so we strap up in red plastic jackets.  
Tell ourselves  
we're not getting old when  
they don't look so bright  
anymore.  
But sometimes  
there is money  
there is time  
gathered in the corners  
like shadows.  
Groups and boards and meetings  
Want more rent  
Want our land  
Want a restaurant  
Want  
    Us  
        Gone.  
And I wonder how long we will be here,  
and what it will feel like  
when this old building  
falls  
  
and is  
  
    gone.  
Below, the gentle heave and slap  
continues on and on, and out of reach.

### **Judge's Comment**

This poem is rich in feeling, conveyed with a natural, beautiful rhythm, absolutely unforced, but which takes great skill to achieve. In a tone sometimes conversational, and with affectionate humour, it reminds us of the beauty in our daily lives, the wealth in association and community, the way old communal pleasures are under threat, and the inevitable passage of time, for both people and buildings, with great tenderness and insight.

The elegiac final lines, alluding to the timeless mystery of the sea and things we cannot grasp, only makes the ordinary lives lived above, with their inevitable mortality, seem more precious.

## Runner Up Senior Secondary

**Emily Kane, 15**

Lanyon High School

CONDER, ACT

### I Hear Music

A crisp Sunday morning last week  
She said, "Let's go for a walk through Namadgi National Park"  
I didn't want to go  
It was cold  
And Rage was still on.

Our house is right next to the park  
That freaked her out when the fires came  
But now she wanted to go  
I liked it better  
When she was freaked.

So in four degrees of unhappiness  
We trudged down the street until I noticed  
She had stopped behind me  
Arms folded  
For battle.

"You are not listening to that" she said  
Twice, because I had my ear plugs in the first time  
And didn't catch it  
I didn't want to  
Not my iPod.

The prospect of a freezing walk without my iPod Touch  
Memory bursting with hundreds of songs of the music I love  
Was too much to bear  
And without the ear plugs in  
It got colder.

With no pounding rhythm to motivate my steps  
Only misery carried me to the top of a hill where we sat  
Up on a huge rock  
And looked out  
On forever.

At first I heard only the silence, and it was deafening in its magnitude  
No cars, no television, no people, no talking, no noise at all  
But there was sound  
My ears felt strange  
And warmer.

We sat on the rock for a good half hour and my ears began to adjust  
Beneath the wind I started to hear the sounds of the trees and the birds  
A gentle symphony  
A harmony  
Of living music.

A glossy bird with a blue-black head peacefully churred in a nearby tree  
While a black masked beauty whistled merrily along and a honey-eater landed  
And briskly  
Chip-chipped a song  
Right next to my feet.

A gentle tut-tutting sounded behind us and I turned to see a mother kangaroo  
With three young ones following her, rustling past the bushes while the honey-eater  
With its happy yellow face  
Stayed so close  
Still singing.

We talked intermittently about the birds and the animals and their songs  
But mostly we just listened to nature's music and all the way home I kept thinking  
About that little bird  
And the new song  
That I love.

### **Judge's Comment**

A fresh, appealing poem, nicely structured. Many entries in this competition spoke of the love for one's iPod; many were about the music of nature. This one combines both these themes, and more, in a poem that flows naturally, with wry humour. The depiction of the battle of wills, and its resolution, between mother and daughter is done superbly, with few words, and with affection.

This poem has a warmth that can't help being transmitted to the reader -  
it's pure pleasure.

## **Winner Primary Learning Assistance and Special Education**

**Lachlan Bolton, 11**

Redeemer Baptist School  
NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW

### **The Ride of My Life**

Wind rushing past my face,  
Going at a tremendous pace.

Dare not put on the brakes  
Afraid of slowing and losing the race.

Ditch coming up, what will I do?  
Power up the engine and charge on through.

Round the bend, over the bridge,  
As fast as I can along the ridge.

Rain coming down, mud all around,  
Slip, slop, splash, all is brown.

Bike jumping is what I love,  
Lifting my spirits high above.

### **Judge's Comment**

This poem moves along very well - like its subject. It has a strict form and good shape for the idea. The rhymes work and add a sense of urgency to the account. Congratulations.

## Runner Up Primary Learning Assistance and Special Education

**Dwynna Mallibirr, 11**

Ramingining Community Education Centre  
WINNELLIE, NT

I went with my sister  
we get  
water for kids  
she came  
to get me  
and we was so cold  
my sister came  
to cook my  
crab and fish  
and so  
she come to get me  
and we was so cold  
at Sandy Point  
and my sister got a fish and crab  
mum come and get me up  
so me and sister come back to home  
and we cooked the crab and fish

remember that  
I hunting with my sister  
and she always looks after me  
at sandy point  
I remember blue water  
and a big barramundi  
and we sat around the fire  
and we all felt better  
I felt cold  
and my body got cold  
because the breeze  
I saw a big crab I said to my sister  
and she was starving for drink  
and we did take water  
I went back home  
with truck

### **Judge's Comment**

This is a very good poem incorporating a series of experiences from which a story about crabbing unfolds. The use of language is unique with its mixture of patois and English. Time sequences are ignored but the writer's experience is fully covered. Well done.

## Winner Secondary Learning Assistance and Special Education

**Ben Kingston, 17**

Darling Point Special School  
MANLY, QLD

### I Hear Music

When I am in my world I can hear music

I hear it at night  
I hear it in people's noises  
I hear it in the places I go each day.  
When I talk to people I hear music  
When I sleep I hear music  
Music is my constant companion.  
My life is ruled by the music in my head.

Music is my friend but also my enemy  
When you can't stop the music it becomes an obsession  
I can hear the music now  
Playing, playing.  
Over and over in my head.  
Like the waves continually lapping the sand and then getting louder and louder as they crash.

Music is such a comfort.  
But it can be such a horrible thing.  
Music in my head. Playing over and over again.

People say that love is like a song.  
Not for me. Love is not about music for me  
Not a song, not a symphony, not a band playing, not a national anthem  
Music. Music. Always playing.

Such a distraction to a happy life.  
I wish the music would go away.  
But probably it never will.  
Music, music. Always there..  
I think music needs to become my friend  
as it's always my companion.

Like a companion who never leaves your side.  
Who stays with you everywhere you go.  
Day and night.  
Night and day.  
How can you become my friend?

Music in my head.  
Like a house is not a home  
Until you make it one  
So I must learn good things to do with the music.

Music, music.  
Please be my friend.  
I need you to be my friend.  
Like a mother needs her child  
after being separated at birth

Music, music.  
Please, please be my friend  
Music, music, music.  
Music in my head.  
Over and over and over again.  
I hear music.  
Music in my head

### **Judge's Comment**

This poem is a very personal response to music, and a reminder that music can be intrusive to some people's lives. In fact, many people could identify with this, as music IS sometimes an annoying distraction.

There is a development throughout the poem, where the writer realises he needs to somehow make music his friend in order to live a happy life. A poem that holds you with its honesty, effective images and comparisons.

## Runner Up Secondary Learning Assistance and Special Education

**Hannah Louise Toft, 14**

John Wycliff Christian School  
Warrimoo, NSW

### Friends

Your my friend, I love you dear,  
Your one that I can count on, that is clear

Your never far when I'm in trouble,  
helping me up when I seem to struggle.

I say some things we know aren't true,  
but I'm sure you know, I'll always love you.

I would not cope if you weren't here,  
my world would stop, I'd be filled with fear.

When lies come down to pull you apart,  
remember your beauty, your a work of art.

What brought us together as friends was not fate,  
It was your Father in heaven, that made you so great.

He feels your pain, sees what you do,  
He loves, made you special and wont leave you alone.

So when things get tough, just remember what I said,  
I love, I'll be near you until we both are dead.

### Judge's Comment

This has a sincerity that is very appealing - a pleasure to read.

## Winner Community Relations Commission (NSW) Award

**Benjamin Gibson, 14**

**Redeemer Baptist School  
NORTH PARRAMATTA, NSW**

### **This Great Nation**

I hear the shout of the darumbukah,  
I feel its lively pace,  
And join the crowd of dancing mirth,  
Laughter in Arabic face.

I hear the twang of the Chinese guqin,  
And ponder its lonely song,  
But its tune is snatched away,  
To the distant port of Hong Kong.

I hear the eruption of joyful noise,  
And turn to face the din,  
Then rhythms sweep me off my feet,  
On drums, boxes, cans of tin.

I hear the sound of the bagpipes,  
The Highland call of old,  
And note my Scots ancestral line,  
A people proud and bold.

I hear a quiet, thoughtful strum,  
On the old beat up guitar,  
And cannot help but reflect on  
'Just how Spanish we are'.

I hear the snap of the snare drum,  
And imagine years gone by,  
When Britain flew their August flag,  
How noble did it fly.

I hear the chant of the Warragal,  
Beneath the tall gum trees,  
Of those who lived before we came  
The old, wise Aborigines.

I hear this celestial music  
With culture at its core,  
And then I realize in an instant  
I haven't left our fair shore.

### **Judge's Comment**

It is said that music is an international language, and this poem aptly expresses that idea.



**Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards**

**2010 Anthology**

**HIGHLY COMMENDED ENTRIES**

**Lower Primary  
Upper Primary  
Learning Assistance Primary**

**Junior Secondary  
Senior Secondary**

## Highly Commended: Lower Primary

### Year 3/4 Combined Submission

Corowa South Public School  
COROWA NSW

### A Sense of Water

I see.....

shining droplets on a spider's web,  
beads of sweat on a jogger's head,  
steam rising up from a puddle in the heat,  
river mud mashed by cattle's hard feet.

I hear.....

the gurgling rush of a swift, healthy creek,  
Eucalyptus trickling from a koala's cheek,  
the steamy breath of a galloping horse,  
the tumbling current in a rocky water-  
course.

I feel.....

The humid heat in the bush after rain,  
dirty dewdrops on a gate's rusty chain.  
the squelch of muddy water in a shallow  
puddle,  
squawking cockatoos in a shivery huddle.

I smell.....

Melting raindrops on hot, dusty ground,  
the sharp, tangy smell of a bull ants'  
mound.  
the strong, tinny scent of rain on a roof,  
the dust swirled up by a woolly sheep's  
hoof.

I taste.....

Fresh warm milk, splashing from a pail,  
big, juicy apples battered by hail,  
crystal clear raindrops trickling down my  
face,  
stretching the spider's cobweb of lace.

I know.....

All things we've mentioned and many  
more, too,

Depend on fresh water . . . .

Rain, hail, frost, sleet, snow and dew.  
We need to save water and keep it clean,  
To protect wild creatures and keep  
wetlands green,  
Without your help and everyone's care,  
You'll look up one day and the Wild won't  
be there!  
Love our water - nature's special mortar,  
It holds everything together - special  
forever!

WATER! Who needs it?

For every living thing, on hoof or paw or  
wing,  
On scales or claw or fin, on feet for human  
kin,  
WATER IS LIFE!  
Every grain of wheat, and sheep and goats  
that bleat;  
Every tree on high, and butterflies that fly;  
Every flower that blooms, and the waterfall  
that booms,  
Depend on life-giving water!  
Every snail's silver trail, and ants on a  
rotting rail;  
Every koala chewing leaves, and a Golden  
Orb that weaves;  
Every platypus that glides, and a little joey  
that rides,  
Depend on life-giving water!

From a boomer to a flea,  
Every person, you and me;  
From an eagle to a bee,  
Every person, you and me,  
Can't live without life-giving WATER!

### Judges Comment

This is a capable piece of work on an important theme from the combined 3 and 4 classes. The statements are clear and the examples telling. While the rhythm is consistent in the opening five verses, the change to a more prose-like flow from "I know" tends to unbalance the rhythm, somewhat. The last five lines of the poem have a jaunty air in stressing "every person you and me" - which is good - but "life-giving" is awkward. That last line would work better if "life-giving" were left out altogether and a series of three dots put in its place. "WATER" would then get the stress it deserves.

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### Emily Penfold, 8

Miandetta Primary School  
MIANDETTA TAS

### The Music in My Feet

The dancers are all on their way,  
Hoping to do their best today  
To dance on stage it feels so great,  
Oh, I hope we won't be late.

The smell of hairspray makes me choke,  
Little girls, they share a joke.  
All the costumes are really nice,  
I put mine on it's as cold as ice.

Lots of sparkles on the floor,  
So much glitter but just a touch more.  
Happy laughter girls are giggly  
My tummy starts to feel jiggly.

I fix my lipstick, give a big smile,  
I'm ready now to show my style.  
I hope my practice gets me through,  
And I show the audience what I can do.

I wait in the wings and say a prayer,  
I imagine the people are all bare!  
I start to chuckle then to laugh,  
Perhaps they all should wear a scarf.

The music starts I'm ready to go,  
I swing my hips and tap my toe.  
I tap and shuffle and feel the beat,  
Can you hear the music I make with my feet?

I spin and I twirl, I turn and I glide,  
I stamp and I hop, I stretch and I slide.  
I feel so at home there is no better place,  
No one could wipe the smile from my face.

### Judge's Comment

A breezy little poem about a girl in a dance display. The form is consistent, the ideas flow nicely and evoke good touches of humour.

**Tahnisha Bayldon, 7**

St Gerard Majella School,  
WOREE, QLD

**Music Everywhere**

The kookaburras wake me from my dreams,  
With their loud laughing screams,  
And as the world wakes up and starts to play,  
I know that I'll hear this music all day.  
The kettle whistles an urgent tune,  
Some dog is still howling though there's no moon,  
Even my cereal sings to me as I fill my bowl to the top,  
As the milk pours in I can hear Snap, Crackle and Pop.  
The dishwasher rumbles to a steady beat,  
And I just can't help but tap my feet,  
Outside the garbage truck whines, wheezes and dumps,  
Inside my head I'm doing turns, kicks and jumps.  
I'm Michael Jackson in Billie Jean while getting dressed,  
And the jangling keys are warning me that Dad is getting stressed,  
The seatbelts clack, the tyres scrunch, the traffic drones,  
Breaking through all of this is one of dad's ringtones.  
Finally we're there and out of the car and through the school gate,  
It sounds like seven rock concerts all at once. It's great,  
I don't know how but this busy people music has its way,  
Of getting into my skin and carrying me through the day.

**Judge's Comment**

The poem makes a good use of language in responding to the sounds of a new day. It shows a good awareness of the people and the objects in the writer's experience.

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**Lachie Francis, 8**

Yunta Rural School,  
YUNTA, SA

**Field of Sunflowers**

Fields of yellow petals  
And black centres  
Green furry stems  
Thick, sandpaper-like leaves  
Little sunflowers  
Coming into growth  
And dying sunflowers  
With burnt, crispy leaves  
That feel like prickles

**Judge's Comment**

Well focused images, captured in a few words....The living and the dead sunflowers are neatly contrasted.

---

**Caylum Butler, 6**

South Wagga Public School  
WAGGA WAGGA NSW

**I Hear Music in the City**

I Hear Music in the City  
Lots of sounds, it's rather busy  
Cars screech and cranes hum  
Trains rattle, people come  
Walking fast down the street  
Hear the beat of their feet  
Choppers chew through the air  
All these sounds it's like a fair

Builders clank and trucks grind  
Revvng, revvng, bikers wind  
Ice-cream truck, a lovely sound  
Bringing kids from all around  
Planes rocket though the sky

Jets! Wow! Watch them fly  
Delivery vans, slamming doors  
People rush loading stores

Shopping trolleys rattle 'n' squeak  
Children play while people speak  
Buskers play, both good and bad  
Sometimes happy, sometimes sad  
Radio blaring, along they sing  
Horns honk, bells ring  
Sirens warn to move aside  
Screams, screams, someone died?

**Judge's Comment**

This poem has an onrush of sound that captures the feeling of the city. The imagery tumbles out and sustains a good rhythm with appropriate rhymes.

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**Anerin Gallway McLean, 7**

Firbank Grammar School  
SANDRINGHAM VIC

**Drum Samurai**

Silence.

Quiet, quiet, tap, tapping  
A falling leaf ballet  
Loud, loud, boom, booming  
Dinosaurs dancing the disco

Ribs shiver, hearts beat like lightning  
Musical warriors are furiously fighting  
They battle with drumstick blades

Loud, loud, boom, booming,  
Woolly mammoths stomping home  
Quiet, quiet, tap, tapping  
A tiny butterfly is flapping

Silence.

**Judge's Comment**

This is a good piece ; it has a mood helped by the careful use of sound effects and a consistent flow. The structure is well used to emphasize the fury and power of the drums, in the middle, to compare with the single word "silence" at each end.

**Charlie Kairaitis, 7**

Arden Anglican School  
BEECROFT, NSW

**Pat the Cat**

Once upon a time  
I met a great big cat.  
He meowed a little sentence  
That sounded like 'I'm Pat'.

I walked down to the shops  
The big cat followed too.  
A skinny young man passed us  
And Pat cat-attacked his shoe.

He shouted in surprise  
What, I couldn't figure out  
And I said to myself  
'Gosh – that was the loudest shout'.

Pat bounced off his shoe  
And started pawing madly  
He got a serious scratch  
And started bleeding badly.

I found a mobile phone  
And called the friendly vet  
I said to him in tears  
'Please can you fix my pet?'

He stitched Pat all up  
So he looked brand new  
Then I scolded Pat  
'Never cat-attack a shoe'.

This story is long  
And now is all told  
About the weird cat  
The one that was bold.

**Judge's Comment**

Here is a well presented poem with a good touch of humour; the notion of "cat-attack" is effective. The poet shows a real gift for telling a simple story in language that shows understanding and flair. The last verse is perhaps the least effective because it doesn't bring an original telling point to the whole story which is not all that long, really.

**Ava Lechner, 7**

Arden Anglican School  
BEECROFT, NSW

**The Music I Hear Throughout the Year**

I hear music in Autumn leaves  
I watch them fall then stomp on them on the ground  
The dry leaves crunch and get all messed about  
And when the wind blows I watch them twirl around

I hear music in Winter rain  
I like the clatter that falls on the tin roof  
The sound makes me feel sleepy and tired  
Later I wear gumboots that are waterproof

I hear music in Springtime birds  
They make nests to lay their tiny eggs in trees  
Then hunt for food to feed their hungry chicks  
Beautiful flowers grow that attract the bees

I hear music in Summer waves  
I like to splash in the cool water all day  
We climb over rocks and search for some shells  
We always have fun for as long as we stay

I hear music throughout the year  
In the cheerful laughter of my family  
As the year goes by we make memories  
We spend time together, always happily

**Judge's Comment**

This is a carefully crafted poem, well thought out, with a verse for each season and a concluding verse summing up the passage of the year and the presence of the writer's family. The source of the "music" is clear to her and she goes to some pain to explain that... which makes this a rare poem indeed.

**Clara Barcan, 8**

Newcastle East Public School  
NEWCASTLE, NSW

**Abstract**

Happiness, sadness, angriness too  
Abstract nouns are tickling you  
Love here, love there  
I hear music everywhere  
Angriness frowns, happiness crowns  
Sadness, sadness, madness

Fighting, screaming kicking too  
Madness is not good for you  
Love is better  
Like a harp  
Playing sweetly in the dark

Happiness is calm  
It doesn't harm  
Gentle, soft like a moth  
Flying through the air

Surprise is one, not always fun  
Are you ready?  
Be steady  
Boo ! Ha Ha!  
I scared you

Abstract nouns are here and there  
And in the world they're everywhere

**Judge's Comment**

This is a well constructed piece, thoughtful - with a certain fun. "Love"... "Like a harp/playing sweetly/In the dark" shows a good choice of expression and offers a neat comparison.

**Kyle Carter, 7**

Farrell Flat Primary School  
FARRELL FLAT SA

**Bushfire**

Hot, dry, windy day  
Smoke filling the air  
I can see flames coming  
Rumbling, crackling  
Sirens sounding,  
Animals scurrying  
People yelling, I'm scared!  
Fire truck rushing past  
Chop, Chop, Helicopters in the sky  
Fire hoses, rushing water  
Firemen yelling, giving orders  
Animals calling  
The sky is turning black  
Fire roaring behind me  
We are under attack!  
My gate is on fire,  
Parents yelling panic, panic  
What do I do I'm running, running  
My heart thumping  
I close my eyes...  
The roaring is getting closer  
Burning embers in the sky  
I can feel it hot on my skin  
Smoke up my nose,  
My mouth is so dry  
We are finally getting away!  
I'm safe I don't want to look back  
So many sounds of a bushfire  
I will never forget this day.

**Judge's Comment**

There is movement in this poem - driven by the short lines and the cryptic account of events. A line like "chop, chop, helicopters in the sky" works well in this context - a sense of panic greatly helped by the flow of present participles ...  
Well presented.

## Highly Commended: Upper Primary (Years 4-6, inc 7 in QLD, WA)

### Combined Submission

#### Year 3/4 Corowa South Public School

COROWA NSW

### I Hear Music

I hear music . . .  
in the song of a tree of beautiful birds,  
in the beauty of soft, encouraging words.  
from the mighty whales in the churning sea,  
from the rustling leaves on an Autumn tree.  
in the rhythmic spinning of woollen thread,  
in the exciting dreams inside my head.  
from the steady whirring of a favourite CD,  
from the busy hum of a tiny bee.  
Music, music, music!

I hear music...  
in the busy clucking of a coop of hens,  
in the whimpers of fox cubs in their dens.  
from the happy children playing a game,  
from the lilting syllables in my friend's name.  
in the whistling wind in a haunted house,  
in the tiny squeaks of a pink, baby mouse.  
from the cool raindrops splashing in a puddle,  
from the giggles of little girls in a huddle.  
Music, music, music!

I hear music...  
in the beautiful songs from a well-rehearsed choir,  
in the crackling and spitting from a blazing fire.  
from the throbbing throat of a purring cat,  
from the dirty shoes scraping on a mat  
in the perfect pattern of a tall giraffe,  
in the bright, happy colours in my grandma's scarf.  
from the chattering budgerigars high in a branch,  
from the excited whinnies of foals on a ranch.  
Music is everywhere!

### Judge's Comment

This poem shows a listing of images concerned with the meaning of music, a task which many writers have tackled in this Award for 2010. Here the form is consistent, the images flow easily, not a few of them are surprising and so doubly effective. While rhyming is integral to the form of the poem, those rhymes do not intrude, as can happen so easily, but add a songlike touch to the overall impression.

**Samantha Lagettie, 10**

Coffs Harbour Christian Community School  
COFFS HARBOUR, NSW

**The Skater**

I hear the music starting,  
a whipping, whispering song,  
A frozen land of wonder  
that stretches on and on.  
The magic in the music,  
it flows right into me,  
and as I move along the ice  
I find myself set free.

My skates draw forth the music  
an icy siren's call,  
inspired, I twirl faster,  
and dare abandon all.  
I am the composer,  
my movements sing the song,  
and now the rhythm plays again-  
the one I've loved so long.

The music plays inside of me,  
a labyrinth of notes,  
gently I glide across the ice  
as each new movement floats.  
I feel as if I'm flying,  
though I'm not up in the sky,  
but skating is my dream  
and it never hurts to try.

**Judge's Comment**

The remarkable thing about this poem is that the flow of the lines captures the movement of the skater across the ice. The poet maintains the flow as deliberately as she might be sweeping across the ice, swooping and spinning. Overall, the work is consistent and convincing.

**William Clifton, 11**

Valentine Public School  
VALENTINE, NSW

**He Hears Music**

The teacher yells at him, crimson faced.  
Leave this place of learning as it is better without you!  
He leaves  
walks along the cold asphalt,  
its rough surface molesting his badly worn sneakers.  
The side gate to his house appears at the crest  
as it has done for him for many years.  
It beckons him  
into yet another world of utter coldness  
and bleakness,  
far from the world of fire he has left down the road.  
Illuminated by a dish of white fire peering over the horizon,  
the gate comes up and takes him away from the light of today.  
He feels lost,  
empty.  
As the door creaks painfully on its hinges,  
shouting fills the already musty air –  
another failed attempt to speak to the thief –  
the father  
who had stolen his family's happiness and love.

Dumping his bag at the door,  
he retreats to his plasterboard cave  
and is absorbed by the flowing notes  
of Mozart,  
    Beethoven,  
        Chopin,  
Old LP's, picked up at the second hand store,  
played on the old turntable,  
the only things he holds close to his heart in this world.  
It lulls him away  
to another world  
into a deep sleep of no anger,  
no hatred.

**Judge's Comment**

This is a very interesting poem which captures a strong feeling ... the play on the double use of the word "fire" presumably for anger and then the sun is a nice idea. The title is ironic and well used as it stands.

**Kira Springall, 11**

Summerdale Primary School  
SUMMER HILL, TASMANIA

**Refugee**

The earth is shaking, it's angry.  
You can hear the ash spout out from a mile away,  
Hear the children scream in a merciless nightmare,  
The scream of terror and silent sobs of those with nowhere left to run.

I watch as the mountain erupts.

I glare at it.

The sound of screaming rings in my ears,  
The sound of the waves crashing on the boats,  
Threatening to plunge at them at any second,  
To tip them into the deep murky blue.  
It frightens me to the core of my being.

A storm approaches faster than a runaway stallion,  
Thunder claps echo in my ears.  
Through the dimming light, lightning forks just as angry  
As the erupting mountain.

More boats are arriving, more people rushing  
To secure a safe place on the boat.

The boats are full, they'll come back.

Won't they?

In no time at all, the boats come back, they come back for me!

I tug on my mother's sleeve; she looks down and smiles at me.

The sound of her sweet, delicate voice  
Fills my ears and satisfies my throbbing heartbeat.  
Her sudden chants of 'it will be okay' when I know it will not.  
Something terrible is waiting for me at the end.  
I knew it.

She looks up and cries my father's name,  
for he came back!

He had his boat waiting,  
Reserving a place for mother and me,  
The last group had sailed away.

We get on the boat  
And I stare back at the place my home used to be.  
Now I see, feel and hear that I'll never be back.

We reach an island, not too far away;  
I can still see where my home used to be.  
People cheer and cry, just because they survived,  
The sound ringing in my ears like a chiming of bells.

Mother tells me I am now a refugee.

### **Judge's Comment**

This poem gives a vivid account of a personal experience related to a volcano. The story is told strongly. The writer is well focused on the subject, making it dramatic and interesting. There is a good use of words. The matter of fact conclusion is very effective.

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### **Jessica Zuk, 10**

St Columbus School  
ELWOOD, VIC

### **Into the Distance**

Stretching, stretching over the horizon  
Cobble-stoned road, country lane  
Herds that graze, undisturbed  
Smaller, and smaller, vanishing away

Forever, forever, running ahead of you  
Lonely road, quiet lane  
Green grass grows on its own  
Further, further, shrinking away

Reaching, reaching into infinity  
Everlasting road, peaceful lane  
Glistening sun, shining on  
Enchanting, still, eternal way

### **Judge's Comment**

This poem is a quiet lyric on a thoughtful topic. It works very well. The ideas are carefully put together without any attempt to over-burden the imagery. The reader can see into the

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distance as a result of the imagery which the writer presents. The form is compact and the language unaffected. Well done.

### **Whole Class – Stage 3**

Richmond North Public School  
NORTH RICHMOND, NSW

### **I Hear Music**

Music is Memory, murmuring in my mind.

I dream the drumming of dinosaur days, dead now.  
Great, grey feet, pounding, sounding fierce.  
Dry desert.  
Sand drifts.  
Silence over rock-hardened bones.

I feel the echo of the didgeridoo, haunting, longing.  
White-ochre feet, stamping, spinning, spraying dust.  
Sticks tapping,  
Hands clapping.  
Shadows in the thin, damaged forest.

I learn the songs of the convict town, resilient, brave.  
New footprints in a new country.  
Hard years.  
Hard labour.  
Farewell to Old England forever.

Music is Memory, murmuring in the mist.

I sing the rhythmic songs of the Pioneers.  
Feet behind ploughs, shearing, riding.  
Golden land.  
Golden wheat.  
Clicking shears, Matilda and a quiet billabong.

I cry with the Ode to the Fallen.  
Boots marching, muddy, lines to Eternity.  
Farewell forever.  
Finally home.  
Slouched hat, poppies, white doves of Peace.

Music is Memory, melodies in my mind.

I laugh at my Grandparents' music.  
Bare-foot Hippies, protesting, flowers in their Hair.  
Groovy Psychedelic,

Sergeant Pepper.  
Remembered on records and round turntables.

I dance to the music of my time.  
Party feet, dancing with my friends.  
Friends forever.  
Sing together.  
My music will play in my mind forever.

Music makes Memory, and I am making mine.

**Judge's Comment**

This is a very good poem. It has an interesting structure, strict form and a fresh presentation of ideas - the opening and alliterative "M" sounds, later repeated, add interest and provide a rounding to the work as a whole. There is much variety in the treatment of the theme while the language rolls and stirs in Whitman-esque style. The aura is distinctly Australian, without being overtly so, which adds to its appeal.

**Bianca Lewis, 12**

Strathalbyn Christian College  
STRATHALBYN, WA

**Beach**

... a dream come true

Running along the beach,  
wind whirling through my hair.  
I'm free here,  
far from home in a remarkable place.  
Joyful water, as I dance through shallows.  
Everything's bright and cheerful,  
not like my desert home.  
I dread going 'there' tomorrow.  
Back to chores, mucking the stall.  
School, home work and assignments.  
Never ending, prison!  
But now, here, I'm free.

... the worst day ever

Walking along this dreaded beach.  
It's just waiting to gulp, drown another soul.  
How could anyone enjoy such a place?  
The abominable odour of seaweed lingers in the air.  
I hear the sudden crash of yet another wave.  
The dangerous sharks,  
maybe not right here, but out there somewhere.  
Going back home tomorrow, finally.  
Back to routine, pleasant odours,  
the freedom of home!  
Now, here, I feel imprisoned.

**Judge's Comment**

Here are contrasting interpretations related to a beach. Which version gives the true picture? This is a capable work using well selected images that suggest a fine range of thinking from a single voice.

**Portia Gallagher, 10**

Ramingining Community Education Centre  
WINNELLIE, NT

**The Sandhill Billabong**

Walking  
through scrub  
with little brother  
feeling the  
breeze through my hair  
carrying  
an empty basket  
for fish  
feeling hungry  
wishing the  
basket was full

We get to billabong  
feeling nervous  
about  
crocodiles  
I rest  
empty basket  
under old tree  
sit brother down  
and start  
to get  
spear ready

I hear splash  
on water  
I throw spear  
catching two fish  
at once  
saying wow  
two fish at once  
awesome  
come little brother  
we have fish  
to eat

I love billabong  
there's no more  
crocks  
in my head  
only wanting  
to fish again  
with little brother

**Judge's Comment**

This is a very good poem with a clear consistent style. The imagery is effective in its simplicity; the writer and her brother are clearly described. The conclusion is excellent. The writer has a distinctive voice.

**Georgina Singleton, 11**

Ringrose Public School  
GREYSTANES NSW

**Adagios in the Park**

I hear music  
in the sighing breeze  
and in the falling of a leaf  
against the crinkled, crumpled  
autumn ground.

I hear music  
in the tempo of the traffic  
with a rhythm of the rubber tyres  
going round and round  
on tar.

I hear music  
in the blast of horns and whistles  
and in the sound of laughter  
filled with harmony and  
love.

I hear it through  
the crackling embers of a fire  
and in the drumming of the rain,  
on an ancient, rusty  
roof.

I am the maestro  
in the early morning frost,  
while a chorus of birds  
sing to greet a glorious,  
new day.

I hear sonatas at the seaside  
by a screeching gull  
and crescendos in the waves  
as they crash against  
the rocks.

Yet sometimes I listen to a lullaby,  
While the water is lapping around my feet.  
Music takes me through life's adventures  
High and low, slow and fast.  
I hear never-ending nocturnes in the dark

Yes music is the key,  
night and day  
day and night  
For although I hear music,  
you know I cannot see.

**Judge's Comment**

This poem shows a lot of sensitivity, if the last two verses tend to let it down because they lose the form of the work and become too explanatory. "I hear never-ending nocturnes in the dark" captures so much on its own. That is a fine line. Interesting ...

**Ruby Mineur, 11**

West End State School  
WEST END, QLD

**Brass Band Phenomenon**

We sit there silently  
Still as statues, waiting, waiting  
But we know it won't last for long  
Sooner or later  
The conductor will decide  
That we have waited long enough  
And then the music will be unleashed

We are like tigers  
Creeping through a jungle of treble clefs  
We are ready to pounce  
Ready to blow the audience away

We wiggle our valves  
(As all brass players do)  
We read over our music  
Remembering that every  
Crotchet, minim and quaver counts  
We raise our instruments to our lips

And then, we play  
The sound comes so suddenly  
That the audience flinches  
Overwhelmed by the sound of the brass  
band

I hear the low, rumbling sound of the  
basses  
The soft, gentle horns  
And the bold, majestic cornets

I hear music, all around me  
In the beautiful hymns  
Bringing tears to the audience's eyes  
And in the ferocious marches  
Striking fear into their hearts

Music, filling my soul with joy  
My heart with love and passion  
Making my life worth living  
I hear music.

**Judge's Comment**

The poet is a member of a brass band. In writing about the experience he has a sense of drama and shows a knowledge of the power of the music which he is playing. This is an enjoyable work. The ending is the weakest part in being stuck with "I hear music". It should finish at "passion". The work shows a good use of language overall.

**Charlotte Spurge, 10**

Kununurra District High School  
KUNUNURRA, WA

**Sorry Day Poem**

Do you still cook for six  
When now there are only five  
Do you still sweep up the sticks  
That fall in my room over time

Do you reach for my hand  
As I reach for yours  
Do you sit on the sand  
With now only four

Do you make six beds  
When there are only three  
Do memories fill your head  
But you wish you could see

Do you wish we'd come home  
Like we wish you'd come here  
Do you wash six pairs of clothes  
With two you begin to fear

Do you make six presents  
When only one is needed  
We are treated like peasants  
No matter how much we've pleaded

Do you set down six plates  
When no one will eat at all  
Do you stand at the gate  
With no one to catch you as you fall

**Judge's Comment**

This is a very interesting poem. It uses a well conceived reduction of numbers to evoke the mood and to drive home the message. The first two verses are particularly good. There is a very good couplet in, "Do you wish we'd come home/ Like we wish you'd come here".... It hangs in the mind. While the poem ignores punctuation, particularly the question marks, this is not a problem because it helps to establish a bold, direct style suiting the theme.

## Highly Commended: Primary - Learning Assistance Special Education

**Krystal Cullen, 12**

Oakdale Public School

OAKDALE, NSW

### **I Hear Music**

Music is electrifying,  
It can be as soft as a marsh mallow.  
Loud and soft, clear or blurry.  
It can be as interesting as a warm blanket over you,  
Or as fun as playing in the pool with all your friends,  
Funerals, sad, lonely, soft music playing in the background,  
Children's parties, loud, kids screaming, happy upbeat and energising music,  
Piano playing, people singing, dancing, laughing, enjoying the rhyme,  
Flutes whistling, trumpets roaring, drums banging,  
Birds chirping, trees swaying to the music of the birds,  
Silly music makes you want to giggle,  
Alone in my room, playing loudly,  
Cheering noises going around as sweet as can be,  
Songs beaming out of the radio, until you can't hear any more,  
Blaring cd's all day long,  
People talking, screaming, fainting, clapping at the band,  
Exciting, jumping kids because there is a birthday party.

### **Judge's Comment**

The poem shows a good command of language and focuses the theme using a wide variety of examples.

**Amy Cashman, 7**

Holy Family Primary School  
MENAI, NSW

**I Am the Maracas**

When you shake my body around,  
I make a rattle sound.  
Shake me fast,  
Shake me slow,  
Shake me high,  
Shake me low,  
Shake me all around the world,  
Everywhere I go.

Rattle! Rattle! Rattle!  
It makes me want to jump  
Shake! Shake! Shake!  
It makes me want to dance.

Rattle! Rattle! Rattle!  
It makes me want to run  
Shake! Shake! Shake!  
It makes me want to twist.

Rattle! Rattle! Rattle!  
It makes me want to giggle.  
Shake! Shake! Shake!  
It makes me want to move.

Rattle! Rattle! Rattle!  
Shake! Shake! Shake!  
The maracas are fun to RATTLE and SHAKE.

**Judge's Comment**

This poem has the energy of a song. The theme is well focused and the sound effects are appropriate. The repetitions work effectively. The piece captures a lot of vigorous movement.

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**Cassidy Chow, 11**

Redeemer Baptist School  
NORTH PARRAMATTA, NSW

**Strange**

I'm trying to listen,  
I can't hear properly.

There is no such thing as a whisper to me,  
It's so strange that words fade.

Sleeping never interrupts me,  
Silent dreams — I cannot hear.

I'm trying to listen,  
I can't hear properly.

Hearing music in bits and pieces,  
Musical pictures left unfinished.

Confusing sounds in discussions,  
Having trouble — what do I say?

I'm trying to listen,  
I can't hear properly.

Another appointment, another test.  
Another subject I miss out on.

Excusing that I cannot hear,  
Succeeding well — because I'm heard.

For ...  
Instruments bring sounds alive for me,  
Making life sound right.

**Judge's Comment**

There's panic in the notion of not being able to "hear".... an intriguing piece - a disjointed quality adds point to the message. Concludes well.... Very interesting.

---

**Alan Li, 12**

**Carlton Gardens Primary School  
CARLTON, VIC**

## **The Floor**

The egg yellow sun came out from the  
Hot summer morning.  
I see the hotdog shops,  
They are making delicious hotdogs.

I look down beneath my feet,  
And I see the ground.  
I feel sorry for the ground,  
The rubbish all over its face.

The circus gives the kids fun  
The hotdog shops give the kids tasteful food.  
The floor lets them step on it, walk on it.  
But the kids put rubbish on the floor.

I can smell the lovely hotdogs smells.  
I can feel the floor is in the black sad background.  
I sit there eating my tasty hotdog,  
Looking at the kids peaceful faces  
I can see the floor's wistful face.

I always think: The floor lets you step on it, walk on it;  
Then you have to look after it.

### **Judge's Comment**

This poem offers an interesting perspective of the writer's vision. The floor takes on a personality as the writer examines how it should be treated. The ideas are well developed and provide a curious focus. Well done.

---

**Anthony Bolton, 9**

Redeemer Baptist School  
NORTH PARRAMATTA, NSW

**Worksite Melody**

Beeping trucks in duet,  
Cranes screeching,  
Staccato banging,  
Shouting voices,  
Metal tinging,  
Clanging hammers,  
Turning spanners,  
Boots plodding,  
Thumping, stomping,  
Solderers sizzling,  
Worksite melody.

**Judge's Comment**

This poem effectively captures the feeling of a worksite with some well chosen words. The ideas flow along with energy. Well done.

---

**Luke Bullen, 8**

Sacred Heart Primary School  
BOGGABRI, NSW

**Power Ranger's Rock**

Nothing can stop me  
For I am a Power Ranger  
Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha  
Power Rangers rock  
Nothing can stop me  
For am I a Power Ranger  
Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha  
I have a pair of dismissal spears  
Two yellow and red sticky webs  
Sticking out of my hard armoured gloves.  
A car helmet and two silver spy thistles  
Nothing can stop me  
For I am a Power Ranger  
Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha.

**Judge's Comment**

This strange poem reads like the lyrics of song. There is energy and strength in the writing and the whole work moves along with good momentum. Interesting...

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**Sabrina Willmott, 12**

Mowbray College  
MELTON, VIC

**Just Listen**

The wind, just listen  
The sound like strings strumming  
The trees swishing  
Like the wood wind band blowing  
Listen to the sound all around  
Music is not just drums  
Banging to the beat  
It's a feeling and it's all around you  
All you have to do is just listen

**Judge's Comment**

This poem is a well constructed, evocative little piece. Real instruments are "strumming", "swishing" and "blowing" giving the work its strength. There is some feeling in the writer's condemnation of the drums. The notion of "feeling" has merit, maybe also the repetition of "around" ....

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## Highly Commended: Junior Secondary (Years 7-9)

**Nicholas Stone, 13**

Bankstown Grammar School  
GEORGES HALL, NSW

### **The Final Days**

A bleak day  
The Cold biting me  
My heart is heavy  
I feel like lead, as I trudge up the hill.

They said they would cut it out  
but I can see his ribs now.  
Skin stretched tight over naked bones.  
Much harder to get up now, his eyes are all that greet me.

"We'll just get another one" they said.  
But there will be no other at the foot of the bed.  
This one will be the last.

Can't stand up, but the eyes still follow.  
One last walk and in the car.  
Never liked this trip.  
Just hold him now, just a few seconds.  
Gone and I couldn't tell him anything.

### **Judge's Comment**

This is movingly written, an effective and assured poem.

**Julia Nicholls, 14**

St Mary's Anglican Girls School  
KARRUNYUP, WA

**Carine Glades Cockatoo**

You, cockatoo  
are as pink as the clouds  
and just as feathered.  
You cock your head and shift your stance,  
beneath the sky's sunset dance.  
You, cockatoo, burst out!  
All your companions join you  
and fly out too.  
You coat the skies  
Cawing never-ending jolly cries  
People roll their eyes.  
A flock of feathers, soft pink marshmallows  
You circle, soar on downy wing  
You're the siren signalling  
The night is here!  
Cockatoo, you  
Are the perfect beginning to  
the night of deep blue.

**Judge's Comment**

A beautiful poem, cleverly worded, giving a sense of the irrepressible joy of cockatoos.

**Anna Wan, 13**

**Presbyterian Ladies College  
BURWOOD, VIC**

### **Moonbeams**

Oh moonbeam, did you miss me?  
Or did you skip me? Did you skip me?

Tailored jackets  
Strut high and tall, like peacocks on display.  
Heavy heads sleep slowly,  
Before time comes a-dreaming.  
Where harmonies spin his words to song,  
A sleepless melody, on repeat.

He feels the sound but hears the song,  
Slicing, sharp and clear.

Blurred with the distance,  
Where rooftops touch the starlit sky.

Like an artist with his paint,  
Like a soldier with his gun,  
Like nature with her beauty,  
His lyric is softly spun.

Of this broken city,  
- This home,  
He sees nothing.  
On the world against his life's tide,  
The winds will ebb away,  
The sea will ebb away.

Here's to sitting on the street corner,  
Stroking the air,  
Where once was a beloved,  
Where soundless chords are strummed.

Oh moonbeam, did you miss me?  
Or did you skip me?

...Did you skip me?

#### **Judge's Comment**

Melancholy and wistful, and the language is original and skilfully used, the refrain of 'oh moonbeam ...' beautiful and effective.

**Kaitlin Brindley, 13**

John Wollaston Anglican Community School  
WESTFIELD, WA

**Imagine**

The stroke on a page  
It slices and cuts away at the pure infinite white  
It destroys the old while it begins the new

The stroke on a page  
It creates a story with everything except words  
It sings a song but it makes no sound

The stroke on a page  
It means nothing as the single stroke it is  
It only has an image placed within its minds eye

The stroke on a page  
It is the start of a world  
One that enchants the maker, and captures the onlooker

The stroke on a page  
It is the most beautiful part of the world it creates  
For it branches out to form the unseen

The stroke on a page  
Is the longing of the paintbrush  
And the destroyer of the white

The stroke on a page  
Is the stencil for the maker  
And the cage for the starers

The stroke on a page  
Is the wondrous beginning of the imagination

**Judge's Comment**

This reminds me of Wallace Stevens' "13 ways of looking at a blackbird" - each little section complete and thought-provoking.

**Lachlan Lugg, 12**

Coffs Harbour High School  
COFFS HARBOUR, NSW

**Morning Surf**

Standing sleepily on the cold, soggy sand,  
A thin blanket of mist slowly lifting,  
Morning sun casting life upon the land,  
A perfect breeze with no hint of shifting.

Duck dive - icy trickle runs down my spine,  
My heart's pounding, I'm alive, and I'm awake  
I know that this morning is all of mine,  
I paddle out keenly beyond the break.

Waiting, I watch dolphins happily play,  
Glad I got up and faced the morning chill,  
The mountains glistening through the sea spray,  
Then they're there - steep lips beginning to spill.

Swivel, paddle, now the sea has control,  
Until I glide along and feel its soul.

**Judge's Comment**

This has such a sense of joy; well-chosen words, pleasing rhythm, and an excellent conclusion

**Stacey Hataier, 14**

Exeter High School  
EXCETER, TAS

**Blue Jumper**

Like a teddy bear it keeps my heart warm  
it is blue like the dark night sky after the sun begins to set.  
The cotton sleeves are tight around my wrists  
and I realise it will never be this tight again.  
This colour will never remain  
and as the summer returns after the past 3 months of spring, I see it fading.  
It fades away until it's no longer needed,  
the day is warm but the nights stay cold.  
And as the sun sets and I look at the dark night sky,  
I think of the warmth of my jumper.

**Judge's Comment**

An apparently simple poem that is redolent with the loss of one's childhood; I keep reading this with pleasure. It is understated and yet compelling.

**Zoe Lamond, 13**

Loreto Kirribilli  
KIRRIBILLI, NSW

**Flamenco**

Swirls of soft black hair spiral,  
Crimson dresses form a canopy,  
Over their bold black heels.  
They remind me that,  
To be beautiful is dangerous,  
But the dance is one of beauty.

In a world where women are weak,  
The slender dancers are stronger than men.  
The pale walls look pallid in the moonlight,  
Compared to our cocoa skin.  
But the world is one of contradiction.

The dance dissolves as the song softens  
And the dancers are again anxious girls,  
With dusty dresses and heavy heels.  
No one claps, no one cheers.  
The crowd begins to fade  
But the hope wasn't a facade.

When only the walls are left to judge  
I listen to the music.  
My dirty hair, dull dress and bare feet  
Embrace the splintered floor.  
Eventually I'm alone again  
But I'm already transformed.

**Judge's Comments**

Good images, the contradictions and contrasts are well observed, a very assured poem.

**James Langfield, 12**

Coffs Harbour High School  
COFFS HARBOUR, NSW

**The Tree**

I see you tree  
Standing there in the autumn breeze  
Taking the chill of winter  
Not complaining  
With your roots having to spread in the dreadful concrete  
Like a prisoner of war  
Being confined to a small space  
Taking the perilous pain of a million scars  
But still you spread life and beauty to this dark world.

**Judge's Comment**

There is a warmth and intimacy to this ("I see you tree") that is immediately appealing; it says a lot in a few words, compassionate and effective.

**Masina LuaLua, 13**

Blue Mountains Grammar School  
WENTWORTH FALLS, NSW

**Bagpipes**

She starts to cry, when she hears the bagpipes start up  
She doesn't know why, perhaps it's because she's Welsh.  
She feels it's not her crying, but her ancestors.

It's ANZAC day, and the bagpipes are still going.  
I turn to her, and offer a tissue.  
She refuses.  
And lets the tears come out.

I stand with her, and stare at the flowers, rested neatly on the memorial.  
The bagpipes are still going.

She feels comforted and understands when she hears the familiar sound.  
I know she's thinking of him, my grandfather.  
She knows he's here, listening to the bagpipes with us.  
Not just him, but all our ancestors.

I don't just hear music, I hear the music of my life.

**Judge's Comment**

This has such warmth and tenderness, along with acute observation, which makes the people, and the feelings real. And there is gentle humour: "She doesn't know why, perhaps it's because she's Welsh."

The understatement is effective - a lot is implied here, about loss, and family, and memory.

**Alessandra Giglio, 14**

Our Lady of Mercy College  
PARRAMATTA, NSW

**The Music of Time**

Where the scarce growth shivers as the wind snakes through  
Tenderly caressing their cold, frozen limbs. Yet a softness of stirring can be heard  
Amongst the spruces of the wildflowers  
But too early to yet rise, no, and the stirs cease as they curl back into themselves.  
Raindrops adorn graces of the great eucalypti's boughs  
And the still, still grass  
And the breathing of all trees are muted so low, and still  
If you listen, you may hear  
Their soft, ancient voices  
The knowledge of a ghost town, a deafening silence  
Music of still silence, one that speaks for itself.  
Rays slowly creep over the horizon, spilling over to fulfil a circle  
The circle of night and day, of seasons  
And of life  
And it spills like a pool of golden light  
Giving breath to the music of stillness  
And chime to their voices  
A stronger, sweeter breeze flows into the silence, filling it  
Up and over so droplets sprinkle down  
In all their chiming glory  
A song that is brief, but delightful and pure, and fresh  
It is gentle  
The music of innocence.  
Burrowed under the ground, in the low notes of soil  
And dirt of brown and ochre and sand,  
Under grasses that sway and bend as they may  
Up and out come first the nose, paws then head  
The leader, in eagerness, lumping happily along  
The song of the wombats, the music of plodders.  
Contrasting the height of the lords of the sky  
They who spread their wings to fly, away  
Into the distance, their feathers a rainbow reflecting the light  
And the call is a bell, the song that sings  
Of what below is, again, compared to the above?  
The kingdoms of clouds, and lands of afar  
Travelling away, to realms unknown  
The music of the birds, of the far flying wanderers.  
Time has a place, and whispers through ages  
The time-keepers have shattered, so now begins  
A new age that dawns, and the lights of dawn hits  
The grave spruce, sleeping amongst other day and night dreamers

And as gold hits the dark, the spruce, with a shyness of nature  
Peeks out through its petals, and slowly opens to reveal  
The unforgettable beauty of the wildflowers, who dance  
And they dance of their song  
The music of the lovely and carefree joys.  
And Time, which revels in basking glory  
The knowledge of all things, and their places in song  
And if ever a song was sung to weave the mysteries of country  
It is the music of Time, singing paths of fortune.

**Judge's Comment**

This has a lovely rhythm and lyrical quality. I like also the choice of words: e.g.: ' where the scarce growth shivers'. This is a poem that builds towards the end, very satisfying.

## Highly Commended: Senior Secondary (Years 10-12)

**Lana Young, 18**

The Hutchins School  
SANDY BAY, TAS

### **We Drift**

We drift  
Water plugging our ears  
And veiling our eyes  
We forget  
Water pours from lips  
And through our eyes  
This is the slither lisp  
We live contact to contact  
Whisper to whisper  
Lips bloated and parted  
Like the pleated Ophelia  
Who was stained kelp red in the river  
We move as frogs move  
We thrash as cats  
We guard the stepping stones with green teeth  
We twist  
The willow leaves move god-like above us  
When we speak it is with the whistle of the beer bottle  
And the reeds rush  
The flowers are ripe and melting  
We unfurl our white tails in the green musk  
We sink our Daphne jug heavy heads  
Our hair haloing like anemone tongues  
We shiver  
We flitter within the shadows  
We are a body awash on a gold blistered rock  
In orange daylight we may dissolve as flotsam dust

### **Judge's Comment**

The use of images and words is stunning - a very accomplished poem, one of the best in the competition.

**Elizabeth Kindred, 17**

Brisbane Girls Grammar School,  
BRISBANE QLD

**The Jacket**

Wrapped in it,  
I feel not felt but  
The lazy lines of  
Midmorning moments.  
Her child's neck arched  
And delicate  
Like a bird's wing,  
Or bone.

I still remember, too,  
How she stood  
On tender toes  
To the kitchen cupboard  
As I watched,  
Feeling blank against her  
Cacophony of colour,  
Her loud life.

Wrapped in some small  
Part of her  
I clutch at sleeves  
Too short for longer arms,  
At red fabric  
Angry against paler skin.  
My memory of  
The smell of Sunday sun,  
And the curve of a body toward me,  
A bleached mnemonic  
Of a faded friend.

She is gone from me now  
As the  
Feather soft  
Smell of her perfume,  
From cloth.  
Perhaps not expunged,  
But smothered  
By mindless miles,  
And the false fresh smell  
Of laundry detergent,

And yesterday's coffee.

**Judge's Comment**

Beautifully written, restrained,  
compassionate, an assured and  
accomplished poem

**Saba Vayani-Lai, 16**

Glenwood High School  
GLENWOOD, NSW

**Bird Host**

You drop a weak-tea kiss,  
The door cracking open like hollowed eggshell.

A whiff of suburban dream floods in with the light, almost  
Too bright –  
The eye-prickling sting of  
Shaven grass, the bittersweet undertones of singed tyres.

The car doors clench shut.  
You slide away.  
The day slithers on.

I catch a wisp of song, a blur of static noise:  
A crumpled train ticket rocking itself to sleep inside  
An old shirt.  
I spoon it out with a finger, smooth out the frail paper,  
This withered bird drowsy with shadows.  
The ink bleeds a half-hearted smudge,  
Feeble imprint before inevitable death.

It's so light, it could have caught  
The wind, a dandelion dream exploding in a puff.

Later, your shirt Napisanning in the sink,  
Stew bubbling dutifully on the stove,  
I decide to lie down.

The bed is deceptively quiet. I think about the  
Flakes of skin that have made their home there.  
Are they still alive?  
Little grey worms nesting in  
The sheets' valleys and creases, yearning for reconnection?

I lie back, think of England.  
I hear it's nice there. The birds,  
They don't sing, they yell. They swoop in jagged circles,  
Wings crushing the air furiously,  
Legs squirming at awkward angles against the wind.

**Judge's Comment**

The imagery used in this poem is outstanding and, as the poem develops gives a great sense of disquiet. An enviable use of language.

**Hollie Thwaites**

St Michael's Collegiate School  
HOBART, TAS

**Blood Road**

Shy, like the old lady down the road  
checking her mailbox  
I watch your body weaving  
the dry grassed grounds.

A fur like dry grass,  
where roots embedded  
shadow your pregnant belly.

Sharp sowing needles  
are threaded to your paws.  
Wounding the dirt as  
you scratch and slice.

The winters lumbering air  
is oblivious to you.  
You fight the battle, Colonel.  
The heavy weight of your  
body powering all.

Waddling through your kingdom  
the Australian bushes descend,  
the smooth eucalyptus gums and  
vibrant Banksias are your friends.

But on the tar

The lights pierce your eyes.  
Screeches scar the road.  
From kilometres away it is  
only a soundless gunshot.

And, all I see is red.  
Blood blankets the earth.

Tasmania's roads are no  
longer black or white,  
but a red melting  
into brown shadows

**Judge's Comment**

I love the imagery in this, and the compassion. An outstanding poem, one of the very best.

**Jack Burnham, 16**

Caloundra Christian College  
CALOUNDRA, QLD

**Washing Words**

I wash, then set each plate carefully,  
marshalling perfect rows of  
silent china sentinels.  
Moving between sink and cabinet,  
hushed in the night kitchen, measured  
paces as if walking a tightrope.  
Each bowl, each cup  
is familiar in my hands –  
gleaming, fresh, pure. Cool to my touch.  
The damp towel  
Snags my water-roughened fingers  
As I hang it to dry...

The forbidding dark  
crowds the lamp lit circle,  
leaves shiver anonymously, a lone gecko calls.

Could I wash words? Reclaim them  
from despair and dissipation,  
from apathy and lack of care?  
Wash them one by one, lay  
them to dry, then gather them in my arms  
and clasp them close.  
Could I do this?  
Could I use them to say  
what I mean?  
To say dream,  
to say live,  
to say love?

**Judge's Comment**

Love the concept, beautifully rhythmmed, an assured and successful poem.

**Sara Moon, 18**

The Friend's School  
HOBART NORTH, TAS

**Green-Eye Girl**

Green as pallet paint, encrusted  
just like yawning sea-green eyes: so private  
beneath a prim bob-cut hide lips lusted  
green as pallet paint, encrusted  
and covetous, a girl maladjusted;  
a comic chief, dormant eyes aestivate;  
green as pallet paint, encrusted  
just like yawning sea-green eyes: so private.

**Judges Comment**

A beautiful little poem, like a small, unusual painting, or a jewel (an emerald, of course), a delight to read, over and over.

**Elyse Miriam, 17**

Home School  
LISMORE, NSW

**Writing**

I pace around my room  
Locked in a desperate struggle with my limited vocabulary  
Out of a million words and phrases,  
I must choose one

I rummage through old poems  
I laugh at some  
And some, which I thought were par to Shakespeare  
I tear up in frustration  
Wondering if I will ever be like him.

I sit on the floor  
Trapped  
By a story I wrote years ago  
I didn't think it was any good then  
But in the muddle of amateur painting  
I see some lines, straight and true  
That make me love my story again.

I storm around the house in frustration  
Writer's block, and don't the whole family know it  
My inky people stubbornly refuse to move  
And when I force them,  
Their movements are jerky and hard  
And I delete the paragraph it took me an hour to write.

I curl up in bed  
My sister points out that it's the middle of the night  
But these words!!  
I have to catch them with paper before they fly away forever  
Never mind that I'm writing them on my Maths book  
And that my sister wants to sleep.

And in between these times?  
I write, my hand moving faster than a shooting star across the sky  
I cry, wondering if I will ever write something to be proud of  
I invent people and places that will never leave me  
I can create, I can destroy

I can be whoever I want to be, anyone  
I can go wherever I want to go, anywhere

I have a skill that has existed since the beginning of time

I have a story to tell  
That has never been told before

My words make people laugh out loud  
I watch their tears fall, yet I don't feel guilty

And I will, one day, succeed.

I am a writer.

**Judge's Comment**

There is humour here, and a bit of self parody, but also insight about the writing process. "I see some lines, straight and true/ that make me love my story again." This poem has an energy and lack of affectation that give it great appeal

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**Costyn Koutelas, 15**

Warners Bay High School  
WARNERS BAY, NSW

**Peace**

If I ever saw true peace  
Complete harmony among the universe  
I see it now, in this still winter morning  
Where the dew drips of the ripe tomato vine like a waterfall of crystals  
Where the sounds of a world bursting with life can be heard as soft whispers  
Where the slowly moving breeze takes the cool night air away  
Only to be replaced by the warming rays of the sun pulsating down gently upon the land  
Where the slow climb of the koala leaves no sound only a slight rustle of green eucalyptus leaves  
This world is different to that of the city  
Overrun by order and time  
This land is at peace

**Judge's Comment**

There are some beautiful rhythms in this poem: ...'this still winter morning/Where the dew drips of the ripe tomato vine ...'; this is a beautiful, lyrical poem that lingers in the mind.

**Maroeska Mandl, 15**

St Mark's Anglican Community School  
HILLARYS, WA

**Imperfect**

I sit in amongst tall strands of thorny, uncut grass; it digs under my shirt and into my back. The grass is patchy; large gaps of hard, dried earth provide little comfort, but the huge car at my back compensates for that. I'm leaning on a white, unused car in the middle of my front yard. Every passerby could see me, if not for that big, plain hedge obscuring my view of the street. Everything seems lifeless, until you close your eyes and listen. A jazzy symphony awaits; the first summer cicadas hum a toe-tapping saxophone solo; an occasional passing car keeps the beat, an industrial double bass. The voices of children playing and adults talking are accents; reminiscent of a trumpet and trombone, they blast a brassy duet. Then the vocalists come into play, and the cicada-solo dims before them; hundreds of little honeyeaters singing in perfect harmony. A crow caws loudly, and the song is finished. I jolt erratically out of my reverie, and the jazzy song shatters into simple white noise. I'm sitting here, my back against that old unused car, in the stunning light of the first spring sunshine I've seen in months. It's beautiful here; the sky is a creamy, flawless blue, and brilliant light tosses everything into a lazy haze. There is a smell in the air, a weird mix of petrol and other pollutants and sweet frangipani. To anyone else, it would smell strange; a foreign, tropical smell mixing with the industrial odours of the city? Impossible. Yet, to me it smells like a balance of two opposites; like home. It's oddly beautiful. In fact, everything about this place has a strange prettiness to it that you can only see if you're paying attention. I've never paid attention before; not until now. The distant moan of a lawnmower joins the host of other noises, but the only thing that is holding my attention now is the sun. I haven't seen it in so long; its natural warmth on my skin feels unusual. I'm leaning back on that old, unused car, its metal exterior still cold from the wintry months, and in this new, lazy heat, I daydream. I daydream of being in a prettier place; a perfect place, with not a shred of grass out of place. The tree grows tall and proud, and there is no petrol; only sweet frangipani and roses. The scene is perfect, and yet.... something is missing. I snap my eyes back open, back to the hard patchy grass, the wonky tree, the unusual tropical pollutant smell. Imperfect. In a strange, twisted way, in my yard it is the faults that make it beautiful. I'd rather have my yard with all its faults than some dreamt-up perfectionist's fantasy.

**Judge's Comment**

Full of originally observed detail and with a good sense of rhythm, this is personal, engaging and pleasing.

**Kai Wang, 18**

Ashfield Boys High School  
ASHFIELD, NSW

**I Hear Music**

I wake up in the night  
the moon is pale  
who is playing the koto in the summerhouse?

Slowly moving finger  
smooth melody  
telling sorrowful stories  
word by word

Like a spring lashing stones  
a swan moaning in clouds  
raindrops knocking ground  
jade breaking

Listen  
full of sorrow

I sit under the moon  
the moonlight is bright and clear

The music stops  
all of a sudden  
like it has never been played

**Judge's Comment**

The clear, precise images, and the sense of loss and ambiguity make this poem rewarding to read many times. It's beautiful, with an elegant simplicity.