



mosman  
**Youth  
awards**  
in literature  
**2017**

# Winning Entries

A collection of award winning short stories and poems from the 2017 Mosman Youth Awards in Literature



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As part of Mosman Council's Centenary Celebrations in 1993, the Mosman Youth Awards in Literature were inaugurated by Helen Egan, Marie Pitts and Cheryl Thomas, three friends who shared an interest and background in the education of young people.

These Awards, encouraging excellence in writing, have been made possible through profits from *Ferry to Mosman*, a book of black and white photographs and descriptive text, depicting the suburb of Mosman in the 1980s. This was a local bicentennial project. In recent years the Awards have been supported by sponsorships from local individuals and organisations.

The Ferry to Mosman Committee retired at the end of 2009 and handed over the organisation and running of the competition to Mosman Library Service.

Entry forms and information are available at the beginning of each school year through schools, libraries and Mosman Council's website at [www.mosman.nsw.gov.au](http://www.mosman.nsw.gov.au)

Two judging panels, whose members vary from year to year, generously give their time and expertise in deciding the winning entries. Certificates and monetary prizes are awarded at Presentation Night, held in August at the Mosman Youth Centre. All shortlisted entrants, families and friends are invited to attend.

Since its inauguration in 1993, this competition has become a fixture in Mosman Council's calendar of events. Entries are received from students attending local schools in Mosman, the North Shore, the Northern Beaches, as well as country regions in New South Wales. Its aim has always been to encourage young people to be interested in writing prose and poetry.

## Acknowledgments

### 2017 Judges

Deborah Kalin, Carol Jenkins, Jenny Rudd O'Neill, Zena Shapter and Michael Sharkey

### 2017 Sponsors

Lions Club of Mosman, Rotary Club of Mosman, Mosman Community College, Café Moby and Oracle Books Mosman

This contest is organised by Mosman Library Service.



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# Winning Entries

A collection of award winning  
short stories from the 2017 Mosman  
Youth Awards in Literature



# Paper Circle

Iona Gait  
Winner – First Prize  
Primary Prose

*"My competition story".*

I've been left with those three words to read again and again for a week, while I have been stuck in this cluttered drawer with creepy bugs, old books and snapped pencils. She never finishes her stories. At last, here she comes.

*Egypt, 121 BC*

*Anat crossed to the other side of the busy Egyptian road with a load of washing that her mother had asked her to wash in the River Nile. Suddenly someone right next to her called her name. She turned around and the squat shop keeper called Zaid was standing behind her with a small purple package in his hand. This surprised Anat because purple was an expensive colour and Zaid wasn't rich.*

*"Give this to your Father to give to the Pharaoh!" he said sternly.*

*"Ok". She said. Oh so the package is for the Pharaoh, thought Anat. That must be why it is purple.*

Hmmm. Zaid? I've never heard that name before and I didn't know purple was expensive.

*When Anat got home her mother was cooking bread in their special stone stove and her brother Ode was looking after their grandmother.*

*"I have a package for Father to give to the Pharaoh. The shopkeeper Zaid gave it to me".*

*Anat's mother looked worried for a fraction of a second. Then her smile returned.*

*"I'll give it to him when I see him tonight. Now, I have good news for you. You are allowed to go and play with your best friend Issa. How would you like that?" Anat's mother said.*

*"That would be brilliant!" Anat cried happily and skipped out of the room. Her mother's smile dissolved.*

Oh no, she's stopped! Don't put me in the drawer again.

Finally, she has taken me out again after one hundred years! Well maybe not, but it feels like it. Ah, how nice it is to lie down flat again and be written on. Wait a second, is that the rubber? Not the zebra-striped rubber that has rubbed me out so many times? She has got to finish the story, I really want to know what was in that package. I can't believe she has rubbed it out. Oh look, she's going to write something else.

*The water. The water. The freezing cold water! I can't go back. The howls are getting louder and longer. It's so dark I can't see the other side of the river.*

What an angry face she's got. Ouch! Why are you scrunching me up and .... whoa! Why did you throw me into the bin? This bin is full of cardboard boxes and cereal packets which have mouldy bits of cereal on them which stink. I'm all scrunched up which really hurts. I am going to wait here until someone takes me out. Well? Is someone going to take me out?

Three days. Four days. Five days. Phew, finally it's Monday and I think that's the day when the rubbish gets collected. Yes, my facts are correct, the rubbish truck is here. I can hear the rumble of the bins and the beep-beep of the truck. I can't wait to be collected because it means I can get out of this horrible bin.

Okay, now I regret saying that I want to be in the rubbish truck because it is even more stinky than in the small rubbish bin and it moves.

Oh well at least the truck has stopped. They've opened the door of the truck. The only good thing about being in this truck is that I can hear all the bickering going on inside and outside. I can hear people bickering right now. I love hearing other people bickering.

*continues on next page*

I have been in here for five hours and finally they have let me out but they have put me in a big black sack. Daylight is shining through a crack.

Hold on, has gravity reversed? Ouch! Why am I moving without meaning to on a knobbly surface? I am out of the sack but am I on moving ground? What's that big pot of Witches' Brew, with soapy bubbles on top of it?

PLOP.

Eww. I'm wet. I'm melting. I'm disintegrating.

PLOP PLOP PLOP.

I'm being attacked! There are grains rubbing against me which is very uncomfortable.

GWONK.

Ow. That hurts. I feel as if someone is squashing and squeezing me as though they want to kill me.

ZHEEEEE.

I am back on the bumpy moving surface but this time I'm being blown with hot air.

SS SS SS SS

I'm not in that factory thing anymore which is a relief. Ah, it is so nice to be almost like I used to be again. Well, apart from the fact that I'm not as smooth as I used to be. I've got new blue smart lines, but I think my dream of having a story written on me will never happen now.

Ding dong. I can see the peeled brown door of the shop slowly open with a loud creak. Finally someone has come into the shop. A lady with blond hair and a kind smile. She is holding a pencil. Does she want paper? Pick me, pick me please! She is coming my way and.... she has picked me up!

I can feel the beat of a train. There is the hand coming to grab me. I have no hope any more that someone will write a brilliant story on me. It's more likely that I'm just going to become a boring old shopping list. The pencil is coming down now like it always used to.

*"stick out your right hand over your broom" called Madam Hooch at the front "and say UP!". "Up" everyone shouted.*

*Harry's broomstick jumped into his hand at once, but it was one of the few who did. Hermione Granger's broom had simply rolled over on the ground, and Neville's broom hadn't moved at all".*

The End

# The Bee

Maria Smith  
Winner – Second Prize  
Primary Prose

## Honey, Honey, and What Do You Know About Bees?

-1-

Most people think that bees are little creatures that fly around all day and collect pollen. Well, they're wrong. Bees live just like us and did you think that dressing up was something only we do? Well, again you are quite wrong. Bees can dress up in school uniform if they want to! It just has to be mini, that's all. Now, moving on...

## THE STORY OF THE STORY OF THE...OH, FORGET IT!

-2-

Remember that fact back on page 1? That bees can dress up and live like us? Well, this is the tale of one. . . . . One day, a little bee woke up in her leaf bed, pulled back the petal covers, and flew out the bedroom door, to go and collect the morning's dew so she could wash her face. After, she made her way down to the kitchen.

This little bee's name was Heidi. As I think you can tell she was the sort of bee you could be<sup>1</sup> friends with. So, as I was saying, she was eating her honeycomb-honey-drizzled-toasted-cereal, when she realised she was late for school. She went to the local primary school, because that was the one that specialised in honey-collecting. So, Heidi rushed out the house, five minutes late and as she got on her scooter, she met a butterfly.

## THE ACTUAL STORY OF THE STORY OF THE...LET'S START, SHALL WE?

-3-

The butterfly (whose name was Vine, by the way) said, "Would you like to walk together?"

Heidi, surprised by all this, said, "Um, sure!"

So, if you were walking by as it happened, you would see quite an odd sight. It would be a bee and a butterfly holding hands as they flew along. You would think to yourself, "Why, what an odd pair they are!" Well, that's exactly what they thought. Heidi found herself thinking, "How odd we must look!" And Vine did the same. So they just walked and thought for a while, when Heidi said, "You know, we really are sort of friends now."

"Yes, I suppose so. I hadn't really thought about it till now," Vine laughed.

"Oh look, we've reached the school now," Heidi said.

Vine said, "I'm new here. What lesson do we have first?"

Heidi said, "Well, we have roll call. And then we start honey collecting."

Vine replied, "Cool!"

So they walked into the school.

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<sup>1</sup>like, a joke as in bee and be!

## WHAT HEIDI AND VINE SAW IN THE SCHOOL

-4-

They sat down on the floor for roll call. It is needless to say what the teacher called out in that roll call and I'm not going to because you will fall asleep and this is supposed to be an exciting book, so there. I will instead tell you a few names of her class. One was an ant called Anna. The second was a dung beetle called Jack. Third, a worm called Apple. Fourth, a cockroach called Charlie (her actual name was Charlotte, but she was too much of a tomboy to be called Charlotte).

Then, the teacher announced that they would begin their first lesson which in case you forgot was honey collecting. They flew out the school and buzzed around from flower to flower collecting the honey. For worms, because of course they couldn't collect honey, they and dung beetles would collect dirt. Before the class knew it, it was break time. And the class rushed out to play where they liked.

Heidi said to Vine, "Come with me, we can play together."

"Thank you," replied Vine. "Let's sit here on this flower."

"Good idea!" said Heidi. "Would you like to have some of my nectar juice?"

"I'd be delighted," replied Vine.

"Well here you go then," declared Heidi.

As they shared the nectar they saw quite an odd sight. The worm, Apple, was trying to climb up a flower (not their flower, another flower). Heidi tried to shout, "Hey, don't climb up there, you can't, you'll fall off, you'll hurt yourself!"

But Apple was determined - she climbed and inched, climbed and inched. But as Heidi had mentioned before, she did fall, and if it wasn't for the heroic deed that Vine took on she would have landed on her bum. Vine acted in this heroic deed by (I'm just going to say that she was inspired to do this by the worm's name) shoving an apple under the flower and when Apple fell, because she liked apples so much, she drilled holes in the apple with her mouth.

"Mffffg, mffffg, mffffg," Apple said, through mouthfuls of apple.

"You're very welcome," said Vine, who seemed like the only person who could understand what Apple was saying.

"Wow!" said Heidi, "I never knew you had such witty brains!"

"Well, thanks!" blushed Vine at the compliment.

And Apple said (she had finished chewing her mouthful now), "Thank you for saving my life and my lunch!"

## HOW IT ALL ENDS (THE ENDING OF OUR STORY)

-5-

I'm sure you want to know what happens in the end. Now listen up...

Heidi knew Vine had no friends and was hoping to spend the after school time with her. Heidi understood her feelings and invited her to have a playdate and teatime at her house after school was over. Vine was so happy the rest of her lessons whizzed by. And the time to be with Heidi soon arrived. Heidi took her and showed her the way to her house that she had flown so many times. In Heidi's kitchen they had smoothies and nectar-chip cookies. Sadly, I know you want to read more, but we have to leave them there, enjoying their tea. Good-bye to Heidi, Vine, Apple, Jack, their teacher (who was called Ms Comb, by the way), Heidi's mum and Heidi's dad, Heidi's house and even Vine's house. Good-bye little bee world, and have fun.

**The End.**

# The ANZAC Story

Emma Comerford  
Winner – Highly Commended  
Primary Prose

The early morning sun shines down on the massive, wooden boats  
Anxiousness floats throughout the air  
For the battle that lies ahead

Commanders shout instructions to us  
We fling ourselves into the long boats  
That carry us to the cove

Suddenly,  
The air is on fire with the horrid smell of gunpowder  
Everyone around me falls victim to small bullets  
That snuck through the air

“The enemy has attacked!” Many soldiers shout  
We see the Turkish,  
Shooting bullets down to the beach

Crunch!  
Soldiers’ boots hit the coarse sand  
Hurling up the hill with backpacks and rifles  
Loss and pain is everywhere  
Dirt filled with blood pours down on us  
Cries fill the air  
Dead bodies lie on the mud  
Death is taking us by surprise

I am now on top of the hill  
We throw ourselves onto the blood and dirt  
Digging for some shelter  
To save ourselves

Bones scatter the ground  
I can feel the panic pulsing through our bodies  
The most horrific images I have ever seen are forced through my eyes

I remember my life before the war  
Running through the green grass on our farm  
Summers like a boiling kettle  
Winters turning us into stone  
Playing with my mates  
The country that I loved so much  
Now I am risking my life for it

As I lie on the bottom of the trench  
Violence surrounds me  
Injured men cry in pain  
This immense conflict swallows us  
Some of us will never escape

Why is war like this?  
This pointless, conflicted game?  
Humanity has come to a stage  
Where enemies don't negotiate  
But kill each other for power  
Why are we so cruel?

Distracted by my thoughts,  
A cold bullet plunges through my chest  
I close my scarred eyes  
I take my final, frightened breath  
I am now gone from this war-stricken world  
This cruel, cruel world

# *The Story of Jack Burns*

Isabella Baker

Winner – First Prize

Junior Secondary Prose

It was dawn when the colours first came to him. They arrived in shades of ostentatious yellows, quaint blues, indignant reds and plangent greys. They weaved their way through the streets like needles through tapestry. The colours tumbled down from the sky, pirouetting on window sills and cartwheeling up walls. It was that morning, the sky an array of diverging colours, that Jack realised he was destined to show colour to the world.

At just eleven years of age, Jack Burns knew he wanted to be a painter. He was mesmerised by the wide golden land, and the classic Australian landscapes. He wanted to capture them forever and savour the bliss of the Australian bush. First he painted what he knew. Landscapes of swaying eucalyptus trees against the blazing sun. Endless deserts and rivers that snaked through the land. It was Saturday evening and Jack was at the trunk of the old gum tree in his front yard. The sun was melting into the horizon, bathing the bush in shades of pink and gold. Its rays brushed against rooftops and spread across the sky like crimson tentacles. He reached for his note pad and started to paint.

At first, the colours were unsure. Jack was hesitant with his ability. But as the paintbrush felt more comfortable in Jack's hand and he started to understand the colours, his painting intensified. It was not long before he dreamt of kissing the canvas with colours, tending to it like a child of his own. To feel the gentle stroke of the paintbrush in his grip was everything to him. They say he had a gift with colours. He said the colours chose him.

As a teenager, colours followed Jack around the world. They hid in corners of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, danced in the Russian Hermitage Museum and played hide and seek in the Museum of Fine Arts in Buenos Aires. People marvelled at his deep understanding of colours.

Years passed and Jack's love and passion for art and colour grew. He broadened his horizons, the sun never set without its rays touching an artwork of Jack Burns. His name was known to all, but for him, the pleasure of creating art was more than anything he could imagine. A humble, country-town Australian boy had given the world just a taste of what he could do.

And then came darkness. Jack lost the most crucial thing that a painter needed: his sight. The wind screamed and cried tears of loss and frustration. The most precious thing to him in the entire world was no longer at his fingertips. The specialist had made it clear he would no longer see again. It was a distant nightmare brought to life by reality. He missed his colours.

He longed to melt colours together on the canvas and watch them seep into the fabric. No company could heal his pain. Weeks turned into months and still Jack stayed in his room. He insisted on listening to the radio, where he would hear newly renowned artists talk about their latest artworks. One day he heard a familiar name of an artist he once went to school with. She was talking about how originally she had trouble with colours. It was that moment a small animal began to scratch at the walls of his stomach and gnaw at his conscience. The small animal grew bigger and turned into an uncontrollable beast. It was unstoppable and it fed off jealousy and hostility.

A few days later, he heard a tap at his bedroom door. He remained silent. The voice introduced itself. It was the artist he had heard on the radio.

"I heard what happened. I know it is hard for you. But it is time to move on. You need to find something else to lose yourself in. A new hobby."

The voice was sweet and soothing. He thought about this and smiled. Maybe he could overcome his loss and learn to love something greater than his colours. The sound of fading footsteps put him into a deep sleep. Later that night, Jack woke and pictured a starless sky, draped over the city like a velveteen blanket.

He dreamt of Cusco in the Peruvian Andes and its vibrant markets. He dreamt of intricate hand painted clay pots and watched the rhythmic pattern of potters hands tending to their clay. Just like he tended to his colours. His colours then whispered:

“Jack, you must let us go. We are no longer of any use to you. Let us be free and find your passion in another form of art. For truly, we are hidden everywhere. You can find us in the pens of writers, the shoes of dancers, the hands of sculptures and the instruments of musicians.”

The dream left him with a colourless sunset. Transparent, empty, invisible. All the colours were gone.

The next morning, Jack got up and walked into his studio. He sat down and placed his hands on the table, where they met a swab of clay. His fingers moulded the clay for hours. He was mesmerised by beauty of its resilience. It was colour in disguise. When he closed his eyes he saw forests and rivers following the horizon. Volcanos sending plumes of smoke drifting across the sky. Giant creation spirits striding across the land in the form of strange white spectres, shaping and emerging the landscape as they went. He saw the golden barren land, stretching endlessly over rolling mossy hills. He saw the Australian bush, swaying in a crimson red sunset. Jack realised he didn't need to see his colours. They were inside him. And so was every detail he had ever seen and that was enough for the famous Jack Burns. He had seen enough to give the world a taste of him. Pottery had cured him and the world was at his fingertips.

# The Haze

Alyssa Chen  
Winner – Second Prize  
Junior Secondary Prose

There used to be a girl who would stand by the cottage with the blue door and take out her trumpet and conduct the sky. Her music was sad and lonely, but it was also warm, and that made me want to cry. At the intersection where each day collapsed into another, our eyes would meet, and the music would break the haze. I would tip my hat toward her, and she would wink at me with her left eye, and in that one moment, the world would move on without us. We stood; a boy and a girl enveloped in music, against a swirling and restless red sky, on the derelict streets of a wet and snowy London. We stood; as the sound of her trumpet stabbed into the haze.

After a particularly cold morning in the June of 1988 she vanished- but by that time she had already mended the broken crevasse of my mind, and the black dog, for the black dog was really the start of it all, never came back again.

Let's go back to 1986.

Before the dog left me and before I heard the music,  
in the dark that is before, there is haze.

There is quite a lot of it; thick and sticky, and damp, and the colour of lead.

The haze is not particularly unpleasant but there is no

no

*anything* in it

In the end, there is only haze.

Sometimes the haze almost fades,

*it fades but it never disappears it never goes away it's always there*

and there is a dog. The dog, like the haze, is the colour of lead. But it is a thicker, swampier lead; closer to a black than a grey, and it is colder. The dog behind the haze cannot simply be described; it has to be seen- and it can be seen, if you look hard enough past the haze and if you really want to see it. Like the haze, the dog is always there.

Sometimes the dog growls at me, and in that growl, I hear something that is almost human. That something- it doesn't quite talk to me, but in the same way that a picture says a thousand words, the something in the growling still *speaks*, and it makes me feel scared and sad and lonely. The voice that is almost human wraps and dances around me in the haze and it makes me scratch myself into nothingness. It is this voice that erodes me and scares me the most: a voice that might not even exist, except for in the darkness of the haze.

(But in the haze, the voice is very real indeed, and it corrodes my mind into a place where nothing can go in through colour tinted spectacles of joy, only through a lens of grey.)

That is before.

But then- the trumpet.

The trumpet floods the world in colour.

And as the player- the girl- as her life flows out of the end of the bell, the world stops moving.

And everything else goes silent.

And everything else disappears.

Even

Even the haze disappears. It doesn't move away gradually, it vanishes all at once- it is blown into the sky and then it is gone. There is no longer only the haze. There is only the sound. Twisting and writhing and deliberate; still wet with lost dreams.

A little bit lonely; rusting.

Lost somewhere between the very folds of its own noise: that is the sound.

Yes, there is something alive in that sound, something not just human but something *humane*.

There is something in this sound that can control the black dog. Something sad, and sweet, and almost scary, something that is on a scale beyond which words can even begin to describe.

There is something in the sound, most of all, that makes me want to live, and I think that is what scares the black dog the most.

Overhead, the sky continues to tumble and fall. But it is a different sky beside the sky of before, for it is a sky infused with colour, and it is mystical, and it is magical, and it is swirling.

Somewhere behind it, the black dog runs away.

I play the trumpet only for one reason.

I know what it feels like to be held captive by the black dog, and I want no one else to be crushed by its grip. I want to make people know what it feels like to live; what it feels like to want to live.

Even if it means bearing a million black dogs on my own, I want people to see colour again. I want to tell them all that through my music. I want them to know. I want to tell them that their dog doesn't have to be scary; it doesn't have to be the colour of lead. They can make their black dog any colour they want it to be.

A boy tips his hat at me and I wink at him and somewhere nearby a white dog barks, and then the world continues to stumble onwards, into the haze.

According to The Oxford Dictionary, the 'black dog' is:  
*A metaphorical representation of melancholy or depression*

# The Other Side

Ella Egan  
Winner – Highly Commended  
Junior Secondary Prose

I shook the torch, exasperated. "Come on you stupid thing!". Zoe looked up from the binoculars, frowning. She handed me the binoculars with a sigh and took the torch. "Let there be light" she said, lightly tapped it and it flickered on with just enough light for us to continue.

We walked along the shadowy street, our boots scuffing and scratching along the uneven pavement. Every now and then I had to turn around to assure myself that nobody was following, as if we were spies on a secret mission. Although we weren't spies, we were on a mission; a mission to find out what was on the other side of the wall. Why they kept us in this city? Or what they were keeping out?

It was a small city, the type where everyone knew everyone and everyone knew the place intimately. However, the city was laced with secrets, through the winding streets, the broken telephone lines, right to the very top of the wall.

The city was surrounded by a thick brick wall, too tall to climb over and the ground close to the wall was rock hard, so no-one could be bothered to dig under anyway. Nobody seemed to wonder why the wall was there, nor what was on the other side. It had never occurred to anyone that there might be a whole other world waiting to be discovered. But then, I guess you don't ask the government questions.

I think Zoe and I were the only ones who ever wanted to escape the city, explore, and discover what secrets the government were keeping from us. We thought we'd explode if we didn't leave soon, our two brains hungry for the knowledge of what might be on the other side. We'll never know if we were the only ones who knew about the rusty metal ladder in the very corner of the city, surrounded by thick forest. The government told everyone that there were dangerous creatures lurking in it that could kill a human in seconds. We knew that was a lie. There weren't even animals in the forest. The question I continue to ask myself "Why did they even need to lie?".

We walked until we reached the outskirts of the forest then stopped to eat some food I'd packed. The bread was warm, I shared it with Zoe. We sat on a log to eat and watched a vermillion, purple and orange sun, set over the wall.

"What do you think is really on the other side Tegan?" Zoe asked. I thought for a second. What really might be there? "No idea but I hope it was worth walking this far and risking getting caught." I replied.

As we walked on through the forest, I thought I could hear whispering behind me and the whistling wind gave me chills down my spine. Any slight movement of a branch in the breeze made me jump. Again, I checked behind us. *Was somebody following us on our journey to the truth?*

The low branch of a tree reached down poking me in the eye and it stung with pain, but I knew we couldn't stop now. I looked over at Zoe, who was a blur through my bung eye. She hadn't noticed the incident so I just kept my mouth shut and we kept moving.

My legs were jelly. We had been walking for over three hours. It didn't seem that long when you thought about it, but my tough, leather boots were starting to give me blisters and despite the freezing temperature, my sweat was starting to seep through my thick, woolly jumper. Zoe was breathing heavily, her face red and her legs wobbling along. But she still looked eager, eager to find the truth. The truth that was now so close we could almost touch it.

After ten more minutes or so, we got to the ladder and instantly collapsed to the ground, our muscles aching. No need to talk to each other, we both knew we needed some time to take it all in. Time to actually realise how dangerous what we were doing may be.

Zoe broke the silence. "I'll go first Tegan, OK?" "You go girl!" I said trying to lighten things up. She stood, took a deep breath and started climbing the ladder, smiling when she reached the top. A good sign. My heart was beating so fast I thought it was going to explode out of my chest. I started climbing.

The view was amazing, a fairy tale world. There were little cottages in rows with white picket fences and roses in the gardens. Perfectly paved footpaths and roads looked like they went on forever beyond the horizon. "Should I jump?" Zoe asked. "Jump" I said. So she left me alone, on the wall.

Zoe landed on her feet, but fell leaving her knees grazed. Suddenly, the magical world turned black and the ground turned to liquid. It was like a mask had been removed, revealing the ugly truth. She let out a blood-curdling scream the liquid swirled her round and round. She was struggling to breathe and the colour and oxygen had been sucked out of her. She finally disappeared and there was a deep silence. I just stood there, not quite believing it.

Why were we surrounded by this? Where are all the other people? Seemed like we were the only town for miles that had life. The land on the other side of the wall seemed to have the life sucked out of it and anybody who went there had the life sucked out of them too. I never saw Zoe again.

From this experience I learned to be careful what you wish for, yet everyday I wonder about that place on the other side of the wall and I long to escape this city and explore the dangerous lands beyond. But I might need more than a torch.

# *The Old Man*

Nanki Soin  
Winner – First Prize  
Senior Secondary Prose

There was a kind of ancient timelessness living between the rustled folds of his face that could have indicated an age of forty or one hundred. His cheeks were slapped into ruddy pinks by a jealous gale, craving the anchorage of the ground.

His eyes were the grey of the clouded heavens, and they saw.

A little girl ran in a sunshine-yellow dress that flew in the breeze, smiling at the solitary figure on the bench as she skipped ten paces in front of a boy. Neither of them could have been older than eight. His face was flushed and he wore a t-shirt the colour of summer berries. He caught up to her and their heads tumbled together in the act of secret-sharing that only children will ever know, two shards of colour under the drab skies. They ran on, and the old man pulled his worn jacket further over himself.

His eyes were the dark green of the rustling trees, and they saw.

The boy and girl were measuring themselves, back-to-back, strands of yellow mixing with shorter, darker curls as they stretched themselves as tall as they could. The girl leapt away, calling out jubilantly, as the boy tried to frown with smile-stained eyes. She pulled him towards her, still beaming, walking onwards to where a tall woman was calling their names in the distance. They were on the edge of twelve, and the old man remembered.

His eyes mirrored the blue of the distant sea, and they saw.

The boy was taller now by almost a head, and his freckled face was split in half by a grin as the girl danced with him down the street in a chequered uniform, hair whipping behind her like spun gold. They stopped to adjust their schoolbags, waiting for the rest of the teenagers in the same long shorts and chequered skirts to catch up. Her eyes rested upon his face long after he had turned to talk to another girl in the group. His eyes lit up and he smiled, and the light went out in hers as she dropped her head and sent a despondent smile towards the old man on the peeling bench.

He had eyes like the stormy sky, and they saw.

The girl was arguing with the boy, his hands outstretched and brow furrowed. Their bodies had filled out, spanning the in-between connecting childhood and adulthood. They stopped, and the boy dared to reach forward and wipe a water droplet off the cheek of the girl. The old man watched as she fractured, cracked open, fell into the boy as he caught her and held the shattered pieces together as best as he could. They stood like that, her shuddering in his embrace, until the light was gone and the streetlights sent their misty glow twining across the road. The girl was clutching a picture of a woman who looked vaguely familiar, and they were both wearing black.

The old man had eyes of glass and forgotten treasures, and they saw.

The boy was with another girl with fire-touched hair, and she was crying. This time, he was both comforter and perpetrator, and his face was pain and grief layered with relief as he rested his head on a shaking shoulder and let her walk away.

The old man watched and waited for the girl with yellow hair and a sun-speckled smile, but that day, she did not skip down the waiting pavement.

He had eyes the colour of the pebbles rubbing against his boots, and they saw.

The girl was there again, and so was the boy. They were walking slowly, laughing, but they were coated with the tear-tainted stench of goodbye. He was pulling a case on wheels behind him, and his shirt was the colour of summer berries. His cheek clumsily slipped against hers, the whisper of a kiss staining her forehead, before he left. A single drop of regret breached the wall of her eyelashes before she crumpled into herself.

She was wearing a yellow sundress.

The old man still sat. His eyes changed with the seasons and the heavens and the girl who now walked before him as a woman. She walked, but her smiles were few and far-between, and rarely reached her eyes. Even her hair, bound by a rubber band, did not dance alongside the tendrils of wind that teased it.

The old man saw, and there was a trickle inside the weathered crevasses of his heart. A pull, a push, an ache.

He had eyes the shade of winter and autumn and spring, and they saw.

It was long after the sun had ridden off into the horizon toward its nightly death, and the woman was murmuring into the little black box pressed so tightly into her ear. Her hair was down, and there was a promise of that once-rampant freedom in her face as she tipped her head skywards. The old man did not know who the woman talked to, but he had a vague impression of brown hair and freckles, summer berries and smiles. Perhaps it was something about the cracks appearing in the woman's visage, letting the girl-who-had-been glimpse through.

The old man saw.

The girl ran. Her feet were bare, and they tattooed a wild beat into the pavement. Her pace did not slow, and her eyes were the eyes of an eight, twelve, fifteen-year-old again as she skidded before a sprawling and sun-kissed boy with a head of dark curls.

A heartbeat of hesitation, and then they collided.

Tangles of brown and gold, a story of joy and loss and happiness and a journey from one type of love to another, they stood in a cacophony of brilliant silence until the sky opened up and they were intertwined in a web of rain and mist.

A tear fell down the old man's face as he watched the children finally break apart. Their faces were inches from one another.

And they saw.

# One

Claudia Hayman  
Winner – Second Prize  
Senior Secondary Prose

Five little girls watched as she played.

There was something about this girl. Something...odd. Off. Not quite right.

There was a tentative whisper.

"Do you think she likes being alone?"

"Well, I've never seen her play with anyone else" a voice responded matter-of-factly.

"Yeah, and today in class she shouted 'NO! DON'T TOUCH MY TOYS'"

The girl's lip trembled in recollection. "It wasn't very nice".

Four sympathetic sighs escaped and dissipated.

Two eyes saw. Two ears heard.

One mouth quivered.

Five little girls watched as the teacher approached the object of their curiosity.

"Are you ok there, sweetheart?" The woman was six feet tall and rather large. Her shadow engulfed the small girl and her neatly organised dolls. Hundreds of kids and decades of snotty noses had been seen by those two decaying eyes. The little girl before them now glanced up. Her comparatively thin face was imploring, curious yet her figure withdrawn, almost afraid. Two lips opened, zero words exited. A timid smile was accepted instead. The shadow moved on, and the girl was alone once more.

"My mummy says she has something called as-per...gers...as-par...gers. Yeah, asparagus." The redhead stated matter-of-factly.

"Like the vegetable?" uttered an astonished voice.

"Ewww" came the collective outburst of children who pushed anything remotely green to the sides of their plates.

Ten minutes later, the phenomenon had almost but fled five little minds.

It remained in one.

The bell shoved lunch out the door, squealing and laughing with hordes of kids. The Year Three boys raced to call dibs on the handball courts. The Year Six girls ambled over to their favourite shady spot under the eucalyptus. The teachers on duty made chit-chat about last night's 'Bachelorette' over steaming cups of much-needed coffee. A little girl sat down by the bubbler, opened her lunch box and chewed on her sandwich and her thoughts. All was well.

Until reality stole serenity.

Five little girls waltzed towards the bubbler. They muttered in a huddled circle.

One uncertain voice sounded "Asparagus!"

Silence.

It only takes one

An explosion of squawking and flapping possessed the rest of the seagulls, unresponsive to the two active tear ducts and one drooping mouth.

Five little gulls cackled with their new-found power. Sheer exhilaration. Utter oblivion.

Startled by the bell, they flew off as quickly as they came. Two eyes watched. Five fingers opened. One sandwich fell. Unheard by anyone, its floury crust accumulated a few specks of dirt, a piece of cheese bent a little at the corner and the small bite marks became distorted as the bread separated.

The playground had emptied, the last stragglers had scrambled off to class. The wind breathed a sigh of relief. In...out...in...out... The clouds followed, chasing every breath, clambering over each other to reach their elusive prize. The trees brushed shoulders, telling tales of old. A little girl paused, wiped her face, got to her knees and stood. She picked up the sandwich and left the clouds and trees to be.

It was not the first, not the last. The shadows of the gulls screamed for their turn in the spotlight. Lack of empathy ruled the day. One word played a thousand times, rattling within the parameters of her skull. Fantasies were chased away by fear. Five exhales for every inhale, a suffocation of individuality. An eternal lapse of freedom.

Doubt, doubt, doubt. Self, people, dreams. It was certainly not the last.

But even the last runner must eventually cross the finish line. Several months later, one slightly calloused, stronger girl watched as the gulls played with their new toy, a little boy. Five squabbles and cackles echoed empty across the playground. Torment smashed the boy's joy. A sandwich fell. A tear glistened.

Two eyes saw. Two ears heard. A painful memory re-kindled.  
One resolution was made. One girl stood. One mouth opened.

It only takes one.

# *The Hollow Men*

Grace Hu

Winner – Highly Commended  
Senior Secondary Prose

It had been a Tuesday when it happened and 72 days after she had left. Jennifer woke to a dry throat and a damp camp bed. She marked a tally on the scrap of paper weighed down with a rock she kept on the sand floor.

There was a shape in the blurry dark. An animal maybe. She crept towards it and killed it with her hatchet. A hiss. It was a snake. She grabbed it and drained the blood into her bucket, She put her pink sweat bands on, then her hat and backpack. She grabbed the bucket and eased herself through the dodgy bark door of the hut. It was still cool outside.

She poured the bucket contents into the tin box and lined the jug up with the dent in the lid. Then she put the lid back on, checked that she had her backpack, bandanna and water bottle and started to run. She started working her way through the cactus to the north east from her hut. She ran from one group of cactus to another prising open the slits she had made in their trunks and scooping a ball of flesh with her melon baller from each cactus and dropping it into her bucket.

She slowed down her pace at noon. The grotesquely blue sky beat down on her like a predator. The sun's white heat dried her out like the cactus balls she extracted water out of. She stopped for a drink of water. The grey dirt in it stuck to her tongue. When she stopped to drink again she ate a dried lizard. There wasn't much meat on it. She tore its flesh off with her teeth, gulped down the leathery insides, gnawed at its bones. Then she kept running and scavenging. When she reached the boob tress, she saw a flash of light in the distance and felt the ground tremble.

She watched red, blood red, leech into that absurdly blue sky and invade it. She felt a sense of relief as she watched the last bit of sky go red. When she tapped the first tree she realised it was hollow. She had taken too much water from it. She tapped a little water from two other trees and started to run back. She watched the sun setting, massive and black, as she jogged back to her camp. In the day the low sky pressed down on her shoulders, vicious and blue, but at dusk she was running across the horizon. The red surrounded her and made her dizzy. The gawping black hole of the sun followed her as she ran.

When she returned to her camp, she knew it was supposed to be night. The stranger-sun had set. But the sky was still red and the air was still warm. She wondered if they had lied about nuclear winters. She filled her water bottle with the jug in the tin box, where the water had evaporated from the cactus and liquids and collected. She felt around in the tin box. She cleared out some of the shrivelled-up cactus balls that had dried out completely and poured the new cactus balls in. Then she went back into the hut and closed the door. She put her bucket down, took off the sweat bands and bandanna, and lay down to sleep. The blood red glow poured in through the gaps in the hut slabs. She'd do the north west tomorrow. Prickly pear. They were called prickly pear.



# Winning Entries

A collection of award winning  
poems from the 2017 Mosman  
Youth Awards in Literature

# *Your Shadow*

Jazz Williamson  
Winner – First Prize  
Junior Secondary Poetry

A shadow casts the darkness  
That comes from the brightest light

Your shadow that escapes from the body  
Like a caged animal

Your shadow  
The darkest part of the brightest person  
A figure that follows you around

Your shadow is a part of you  
That can never be escaped

Your shadow is a sly silhouette  
Creeping up on you

Your shadow is something that cannot be caught  
It will always be there

Your shadow may not be something daunting but not something comforting  
A mix in between

Your shadow is a figure without feelings  
Sometimes in the back of your mind and sometimes pushed to the front

Your shadow  
At times it may scare you

In the dark of the night  
When it seems as though  
Another's shadow is there

Your shadow  
A terrifying form  
Who must be there to get you

But as the pale moon shines  
You will be reminded  
That it is only

Your shadow  
That it is only you

Only you  
You who can be  
The most terrifying

# *Untamed*

Amy Jones  
Winner – Second Prize  
Junior Secondary Poetry

Frigid drops pattern skin,  
Ashen clouds no longer thin.  
Air seems a drawing,  
Harsh tears failing.  
Scores of feet dance  
On ceiling's expanse.  
Sweet sapid smell,  
A hoax of the swell.  
Gurgling drains  
Run through earth's veins.  
For friend or foe,  
Heaven lets go.

Pirouetting gust,  
A tornado of dust.  
Banging on doors,  
Creaking wood floors.  
Thief of prayer,  
Billowing hair.  
Tireless wheeze,  
Tossing trees.  
Breathing through windows,  
The hoarse whistling grows.  
Tempest unchained,  
Yield to its reign.

Eerie light,  
Nature's blight.  
Shattering dark,  
It makes its mark.  
Tumultuous rumble,  
Ground seems to crumble.  
Splintering sound,  
All noise is drowned.  
Fork of the sky,  
Echoing cry.  
The world's deadly game,  
Gone as swiftly as it came.

# *I Remember*

Jess McCann  
Winner – Highly Commended  
Junior Secondary Poetry

I remember the dusted grey skies hanging over my head  
I remember the air that I inhaled tasted like charcoal scratching against my throat  
I remember thick drops of rain falling without halt  
I remember sunshine peeking through the clouds and clearing the bay

I remember waking up to the arrogant feathered birds  
I remember the scent of the ferries coming through the harbour, like the engine of an airplane  
I remember feeling lifted as my eyes met the dusted grey sky  
I remember the skies turning to the deepest blue

I remember standing on the flat, golden sand, feeling the icy water wrap around my toes  
I remember being entrapped in the ocean's most compelling spell  
I remember feeling the cold bliss as I propelled myself through the water, diving under and over the crashing waves  
I remember seeing the lustrous sunlight reflecting on the rippling surface

I remember floating up towards the light, anticipating the fresh air to come  
I remember looking up and seeing a tidal wave ready to break over my head without a breath  
I remember tasting the bitter salts in the water as they began to choke me  
I remember being consumed by the ocean

I remember the silence being so much louder than I imagined  
I remember trying to holler at the arrogant, silent nothing  
I remember silence flooding my mouth  
I remember darkness crawls in through the corners of my eyes

I remember a cyclone of bubbles surrounding me, the waste of my breath  
I remember being pulled deeper and deeper by the firm grasp of the current  
I remember being pulled up by a familiar human grasp  
I remember feeling alive

I remember...

# *The House: In Three Parts*

Xanthe Muston  
Winner – First Prize  
Senior Secondary Poetry

## I. The Dying Room

Here, they come to drift before stepping off into whiteness. It is the kingdom of decay,  
where wrinkled bodies sink and swell in the December sun, shrivelling  
like last week's peaches. Time has arrested them, and now they must  
vanish into the territory of loneliness, fade into the in-between,  
and feel their skin peel as they shed their younger selves.  
The walls mould in this cupboard where old fruit is kept,  
as they sit in a purgatorial wait, and in dusk's false light  
of bruised lilac. Between the world's jarring breaths,  
the weary spirits have sought a great expiration.  
They turn into ash at the sun's heels, scattered  
and lost in the bronze corridors of evening.  
Children have come and gone. Young hands  
have cleaned out old pockets. And now,  
left desolately alone, they will watch  
distant scenes from their window.  
They will stir as they watch out  
there. Out there, the world  
beyond The Dying Room,  
the living brightness  
that is awake, that  
is blinding.

*continues on next page*

## II. The Verandah

He had left the human humming of the home  
And stood and shook against the cold of Night.  
With nothing between him and the burning light  
but there, waiting below the sky's dark dome;  
The Garden of Earthly Delights, where mounds  
of dirt had looked like open wounds and mist soon  
ignited under that unflinching eye, the moon.  
It made him stir, the lunatic, moved by sounds  
And light, that flowed in rivulets to cut the veins  
of night open and reached below to lift his skin.  
And from his bones he felt great feathers unpin,  
Pulling his ribcage open, folding like white wings.  
He felt it, then, standing on the house's decked shelf.  
A release. Felt beyond the margins of himself.

### III. The Living Room

Here, they stand  
in living brightness,  
the space within the  
Living Room that is awake,  
that is reimagined in the soft  
ambience of whispering worlds,  
the careless breathing of the earth.  
And from a dream in which they wake,  
they will not remember the aching walls  
and throbbing doors of the house's brick cage  
once touched by the slight half-light of dusk.  
Now, they live in the blinding brightness of the day.  
They've vanished beyond margins into something greater,  
Those feverish spirits, with wings folding out of their bones.  
The house is growing, taking its first painless breaths as walls  
push against the timber beams of its once sunken ribcage. A glass  
blizzard uproots the house into the air so the earth becomes the sky.  
Beyond gutters and frames, past margins and maps they are expanding—  
Their dreams are awake and pull out one by one all the splinters of the home.

# *Dee Why Main*

Byron Edwards  
Winner – Second Prize  
Senior Secondary Poetry

Black dried bubble-gum  
Stamps the floor  
Of those who dwell In  
This obscure cave called 'The Main'

Black dried bubble-gum  
A fingerprint,  
Pressed by the Infamous  
Artists of 'The Main'.

'The Main' both North  
And South poles.  
Opposites attracting,  
The young and old, the homeless, the businessman, the lads and the innocent

Those outsiders look  
Down on them with a grimace.  
Not understanding the people with the  
Systematically unstable brain.

Not understanding what's under  
Their second-hand suits,  
Not understanding that  
Problem child.

'The Main' understands.  
Giving back a second home  
So they can all share  
That one common goal

That is  
To wait.

# *Enough is Enough*

Amy Layton  
Winner – Highly Commended  
Senior Secondary Poetry

*She's got such incredible hair,  
You think as you pass her on the Street,  
I wonder how she does it.  
The answer is this:  
She doesn't care.  
    For years she straightened it,  
        Combed it, gelled it, ruined it.  
But then she decided to stop.  
Enough is enough.  
Why waste time on something that doesn't matter,  
Something you should be proud of?*

*He's got such a worried look on his face,  
You think as you pass him on the street,  
I wonder what's bothering him.  
The answer is such:  
His sister needs him.  
    She's just woken up somewhere strange,  
        No memory of the night before.  
They're terrified of what happened.  
Enough is enough.  
How could we let this happen,  
And why is this a normal occurrence?*

*continues on next page*

*They've got such a cute dog,*

You think as you pass them on the street,

*I wonder how they got it.*

The answer is such:

It's the only family they've got.

    Their family kicked them out of home,

        So they're building a new family.

Yet they still cry over it everyday.

*Enough is enough.*

*How many more kids will be disowned,*

*Before parents realise to love their children in whole?*

*She's got such a pretty smile,*

You think as you pass them on the Street.

*I wonder if she knows.*

The answer is such:

Men tell her that almost every day.

    They call out to her across roads and out of cars,

        So much so she's now afraid of her own smile.

It's been happening since she was 14.

*Enough is enough.*

*Why do people think this is fine to happen,*

*When it hurts people so much?*

*He's in such a hurry,*

You think as you pass them on the street.

*I wonder where he's going.*

The answer is such:

He's going to his 8th job interview in a month.

    If this one doesn't work out,

        He won't be able to buy food for the week.

He'll be starving out on the street before long.

*Enough is enough.*

*How is it that people are allowed to starve,*

*Whilst others bathe in wealth every day?*

*They look hard done by,*

You think as you pass them in the street.

*I wonder what went wrong.*

The answer is such:

We turned a blind eye.

    We allowed problems to fester and grow,

        Until they affect almost every single person.

Every single person you pass on the street.

*Enough is enough.*

*We will not let this destroy each other.*

*We will learn, and we will put an end to this.*

# *Europe After the Rain*

Grace Hu  
Winner – Commended  
Senior Secondary Poetry

What trick was had by the Oracle of Delphi?

This is the question we must ask ourselves:

If there was no Apollo and the earth had no belly button but is only barren rock,

Then what kept Delphi's scam running for so long?

The dried out ashy bones, marrowless are dun.

They're piled high and bleached in the sun

The mangled shelters they form are sanctuary for travellers

Who take a moment to touch dead bone to their own.

They come from the mountains

They come from the hills

They come from hollowed out cities

They come from bleeding seas, glens, meadows, slow villages,  
cottages-near-forests, farms covered in morning-dew

They come from the places they called home.

Croesus, King of Lydia, was told that if he crossed the river Halys an empire would fall.

The Pythia never said that it would be his own.

Now Croesus is just a heap of bone.

The travellers see the sacred sights and search for their answers.

Stark low skies press on their shoulders, burnt red earth,

Writhing ruins of dead pagan temples ever changing but never changing like a forest full of trees.

Then they find their answers and give up their search.

They return to the mountains

They return to the hills

They return to the hollowed out cities where abandoned cars have empty tanks,  
they return to seas bleeding incarnadine but lifeless, glens, meadows, slow  
villages, cottages-near-forests, farms covered in dew.

They return to the places they called home.



