



mosman  
**Youth  
awards**  
in literature  
**2018**

# Winning Entries

A collection of award winning short stories and poems from the 2018 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

### 2018 Judges

Carol Jenkins, Deborah Kalin, Linda Lokhee, Zena Shapter and Michael Sharkey

### 2018 Sponsors

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

This contest is organised by Mosman Library Service.



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# Winning Entries

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# Tobias

Jemma Simpson  
Winner – First Prize  
Primary Prose

The quizzical looks on the people's faces surprised me as I paraded down the street. There were open mouths and laughing smiles, concerned faces and video cameras held up high. They had obviously been expecting my companions, the soldiers, but I assumed that the confused looks were for me. I suppose it wasn't that surprising when you remembered that I hadn't gone, only come back.

My little legs, emaciated by lack of food and long stretches of time without exercise or water, nestled down in the arms of Major Lim, those kind, strong arms that had first picked me up in the war zones of Afghanistan.

My time around the war zones was devastating. Originally I had had an owner but we had been separated, fleeing for our lives amidst gunshots. We were kindred spirits. It was probably the saddest day of my 3-year life.

Ameena had been a dutiful owner and I still miss her. We enjoyed hours of fun and games, inside the house, and on the crowded city streets. They were the best times of my life, just us two, finding bliss even among the hustle and bustle. Just one small dog and his beloved companion.

I ran for my life and never looked back, and in the flood of people I lost her. For months I lived off the land, slowly becoming thinner and thinner until it was all I could do to drag myself to water and pick at the scarce scraps of food that I found ... until one quiet day I heard the rhythmic beat of marching break the silence. Marching past here was a regular occurrence, but this marching sounded different to military marching. I could see feet - and it wasn't the monotone boots of the military - and my hopes started to rise. *AMEENA!!* I thought. She might be here!!!

My ears flapped in the gentle breeze as I ran toward the sound, suddenly filled with new life, hope and urgency. I kept on running. I was blinded by love, blinded by the thought that my long-lost owner could be here. Many others streamed past me, surging toward the sound. We rounded the corner as one, more excited than we had ever been before.

And then we saw them.

It wasn't a group of long lost, refugee owners.

It was soldiers.

Suddenly, as we realised who the strange group of people were, we stopped. All life drained from the pack, and all hope went with it. The anguish of the moment was unbearable. And just like that, every single one of us seemed to accept it.

Our owners were never going to find us.

Some of my pack mates went back into our secluded home, some walked up to the soldiers and began sniffing around them and others walked off to their own spots, silently trying to accept what they had realised.

But I stood firm and defiant. A soldier came up to me and crooned softly, "Hey buddy, what's your name?"

"Tobias!" I barked.

"Well, I guess you can't speak, so I'm going to call you Timothy", the kindly man said. "My name is Major Arthur Lim and I think you deserve a good home. The hardships of war are no longer for you and I." I could sense the anguish draining from me, and the prospect of a new life shining bright on the horizon.

Could Major Lim be another kindred spirit?

I took my chance and trotted along by his heels as they marched along the barren desert road. It was hard to leave my pack to suffer more hardships, but the new home beckoning eventually won out.

Maybe there was life without Ameena after all.

# Summer's Daffodils

Imogen Clayton  
Winner – Second Prize  
Primary Prose

“Can I have a patch of land?” Summer’s voice rang, bouncing off the hall walls, “as long as it’s not wanted of course.” Her father barely looked up from his work. “Very well, if you can find some land that nobody wants, then you can claim it as your own.” That was how the secret garden began.

“Sunflower seeds, bluebell seeds, rose seeds, marigold seeds, watermelon seeds, honeysuckle seeds, violets, daffodils, a rake, a spade and a watering can. Did I miss anything?” Summer didn’t the lady at the desk, who acted like a queen and was still able to pile a substantially large amount of sarcasm in her voice. “Yes that’s it,” “Then scram.”

The garden was planned perfectly: roses in a round bed in the middle, honeysuckle climbing near the door, bluebells bordering the path. The seeds had just been sown and the dirt was lifeless. Summer wondered why her father had a large clearing surrounded by a tall stone wall behind their mansion, but never seemed to use it. Anyway, it was the perfect place for a garden.

Small stalks and tender leaves dotted the otherwise plain dirt as Summer strolled along the cobbled path, inspecting their scraggly roots and stroking the dirt off their leaves. They were growing strong and soon the garden would be beautiful. Summer promised herself that she would love these plants with all her heart.

The plants were now as tall as Summer herself. Their tiny buds, which poked their heads out from behind the leaves like cheeky children, were half unfolded. Flashes of colour could be seen inside them. They were almost ready.

One day, Summer caught a servant boy admiring the daffodils. His name was Marcus. He had climbed over the rough stone wall, to see what was inside, he even had the grazes to prove it. Daffodils were his favourite flowers, they were Summers favourite too.

Summer and Marcus would meet in the garden every day, they would sit by the daffodils and exchange their secrets.

They didn’t tell anyone of their meetings, Summer’s father would certainly not approve, yet they still acknowledged each other in the corridors and smiled when they met in the grounds. Summer liked Marcus. She ‘like’ liked Marcus. Summer couldn’t imagine a life worth living without him.

On a sunny day, one year after they first met, Summer and Marcus shared their first kiss. They held each other in their arms and kissed behind the daffodils. As his lips met hers, Summer felt a sudden thrill jolt through her body. She knew that her world was about to change forever.

When Summer was fifteen her father said she was going to marry a lord. Summer didn’t want to. She wanted to marry Marcus. A week later, Summer met her future husband for the first time. He had a small mouth with thin lips and a sour expression, Summer felt that he was just as unexcited about this match as she was. When the lord and his family left, Summer fled to her room and cried for the rest of the day.

When Summer met Marcus in the garden, he told her that she could do whatever she wanted. Summer gave him a hug and went to confront her father. He said yes! Apparently the lord had already said no and the marriage was off! When Summer told Marcus he spun her around and celebrated until the sun went down.

A few years later, Summer told her father about Marcus. He smiled and asked what he was like. When she said he was a servant her father went hard and coldly asked her to leave. When she ran to find Marcus he kissed the top of her head and told her not to worry.

When Summer was twenty she married Marcus. They were united by the daffodils, and they kissed at sunset. Summer laughed with the guests but she didn't laugh with her heart, for her father was not there. Summer could sense him by the window, staring down at her but she couldn't raise her head to meet his eyes.

At thirty years old, Summer had a child. Her name was Lily. Summer thought she was the most precious thing in the world, and Marcus agreed. Lily got a large room with blue walls painted with yellow daffodils. Lily giggled all the time and whenever she was naughty nobody could stay angry with her for long.

Summer's father was dying. Summer perched on the side of his bed and ran her fingers through his silver hair. He apologised to her and said he wished he'd been a better father. Summer shushed him mid-sentence and said she wouldn't want him any other way. As his life left his body, Summer ran to the daffodils and cried with an aching heart.

Summer was 83. Her life was slipping away from her. Lily was crouched by her bed, with tears glistening in her eyes as she placed some daffodils in a vase on the table. Summer told Lily to always move on, and to enjoy her life. Lily said she would.

Summer now lies in the earth, with Marcus at her side. The dew drops glisten and the sun shines on their graves. They're buried in the secret garden. Where they met, and kissed for the first time. The place where they mourned losses and the place where they married. Summer and Marcus now lie together. In the secret garden. Among the daffodils.

# A Spoon's Diary

Maria Smith  
Winner – Highly Commended  
Primary Prose

Once, inside the cutlery draw, there was a spoon family. And that spoon family were Tea Spoon (the little sister), Soup Spoon (the dad), Dessert Spoon (the mum), and Table Spoon (Tabby for short). Now to begin...

*1 March, 2018, aged 10&1/2*

Dear diary, Dad just said that we're going to a home. A real place. In a kitchen where we'll be USED. Not just lying around in a musty, dusty and CRUMBLY old cutlery shop! Eeeek! Time to go. I feel us being picked up.

*2 March, 2018*

Dear diary, wow! So much has happened. I have a bit to write before breakfast, so I'd better hurry. They picked us up, then put us in something, and took us home. YES. Finally I have a home. And they're called the Browns. Time for breakfast. Write later.

*3 March, 2018*

Dear diary, that tasted sooo good! Don't tell the Browns, but I ate some before they used me. It was pancakes. Anyway, now I'm going in something called The Dishwasher! I hope I like it. See you later.

*4 March, 2018*

Dear diary - can I stop saying that now? It's so annoying. Oh yeah. The Dishwasher! Thanks for reminding me. It was sooo much fun. Let's just imagine a warm bath, now mix it with gymnastics, then mix it with aerobics, and you get the picture, right? SO. MUCH. FUN. In other news, an evening three-course dinner party's on, and miracle of all miracles, we're being USED! It is going to be so much fun, but Appleby's scared so she's only going to be in the after-dinner coffee hanging out with the coffee beans. I think she's lucky. Why can't I be used? Because I'm a 'table spoon'? Awww! Now we're out of the sink we need to get dried. Catch you later.

*5 March, 2018*

I can't believe it. Finally, it's here. THE day of the dinner party. It's going to be—hang on, I can hear people talking. I wonder what they're saying...

Person A: "You have the arsenic, right?"

Person B: "Yup. In my pocket. I can't wait to kill that \_\_\_\_\_"

Person A: "Me too! You mustn't lose it, or they'll run free again!"

Person 13: "Gulp! I won't!"

*Person A's prolonged \_\_\_\_\_ fades into the background...*

Gasp! That's terrible. That sounds like Mr. and Mrs. Andrea from up the road. Wait—to kill SAMANTHA? NO ONE, ABSOLUTELY NO ONE IS ALLOWED TO KILL MY THREE-YEAR-OLD SAMANTHA! ESPECIALLY THE PEOPLE UP THE ROAD WHO I HAVE NEVER LIKED.

Whoa! Calm myself down? Did they even say that? Okay.

Three...two...one... phew! Much better. Anyway, I HAVE to stop this, but how? I know. Yes. That'll work. Okay, here I go. I sure hope this works...

*5 March, 2018 midnight*

I can't sleep, so I thought it would be just the time to write up what happened...

I had polished and put on my best pastel pink ribbon dress, before going into the dining room for the dinner. I scoured the room looking for the poisoners, and found them. I waited until the mains were served, then catapulted myself towards Person A. I mean, Mr. Andrea. I knocked the poison out of his hands and went flying. I banged the wall, shouted "Ow!", checked no-one was looking, and scurried back under the table to my soup bowl. Mr. Andrea was so surprised that he didn't even speak. Then he started laughing, and laughing, and it seemed he couldn't STOP laughing, but finally he did. WHAT IS SO FUNNY about a near murder mystery ANYWAY? I soon found out.

"Who flicked (*chuckles*) that spoon (*guffaws*) at my (*giggles and wipes his tears*) rat poison in my pocket I was checking? *Ohhhh!*"

He makes a noise like an aeroplane there—wait and hold it! Rat poison? Checking? Flicked the spoon? How?—ohhhhhh. (Me realising something, not making an aeroplane noise.) They weren't poisoning *Samantha*, it was the *rat*. They're not poisoners! Wow. I can't jump to wild conclusions like that I have to have *proof*. Now I think I have to go in the Dishwasher for last night. Yes! See ya!

*6 March, 2018*

Um. Er. Oh, yes! We're going on holiday! And the Browns, of course. I think we're going to Cococabana? Copacabana? Um... something. Anyway...agh! The Browns are packing us now. I can't wait to see our cousins in the Copacabana cutlery drawer.

*7 March, 2018*

We've just arrived and the Browns have already dumped me and my family in the drawer.

"Hi!" Says Catie, my 13-year-old cousin.

"Hello..." says my 3-year-old cousin, Gwen. She's a little shy. So is Emma. (5 years old)

"Uh...hi." Very shy.

Their mum and dad are usually there, but I can see a note that that says "We will be back soon and have gone surfing but your cousins will be there." What we do next is THE best fun I've ever had. We go white-water sud rafting, handle-rock climbing and ceiling-light abseiling!

Hey, what's that sound? The drawer's opening. Oh no, not a Spoonue! Please, please, please, don't turn me into a bloodsucking soul who has to do a thousand good deeds before going to the Other Side. Oh. That was dumb of me. It's just Craig and Fora, back from surfing. Well, what I think is next is now that it's nearly dark, I'm going to bury my face in my pillow and be embarrassed until morning.

*8 March, 2018*

So.....right! We're going home tomorrow. We *were* going to stay a while, like two weeks, but then there was a hurricane back home, so we have to go tomorrow. Packing bags now. Byeeeeeeeeeee.

*9 March, 2018*

Phew. So tiring. It is just soooo messy here. Our house is destroyed. We have to MOVE. Who knows where our next adventures will lead.

# The Arena

Christian Tripet  
Winner – Commended  
Primary Prose

It was a cold windless night the moon was full but little light came from it as it was mostly blotted out by the clouds. It was June in Dragonvil village, but there was no one to be seen at two in the morning. The game trail that led into the woods was small, but well used by the woodsmen of the village. But it was no hunting party that came out of the woods and silently crept into the house where a 15 year old John slept unaware of the man in black armour with a helmet like a skull standing over his bed carrying a morning star (a mace with a chain and heavy steel ball on the end). John woke up to the sensation of being jolted up, down, up, down as someone carried him, he looked round frantically as he saw Dragonvil his home and life disappear over the horizon. He realised that they were taking him over the border of Arune and into the land of the Vonmores.

John woke up from nightmare that had plagued him since it had happened a month ago. He had been captured by the Vonmores who were ruled by the Vonmore Lord. He stood up from the rug that was his bed. Today was the day he remembered with a thrill of fear, the day he and the other prisoners would live or die. They had been told by the guards that they would face two challenges, if anyone survived they would receive a prize, their freedom. But what puzzled John was why give the prisoners a chance to live? He got dressed in a rough leather jerkin and pants, put on some boots and was escorted by two guards to a room with many other boys his age sitting on the floor.

A muttering went round the group as the man with the skull helmet walked to the front of the room, a kind of dais that made John think that this wasn't the first time that this room had been used to address and intimidate prisoners. It was black wood with cruel looking weapons dangling from the wall behind. The skull man spoke a deep cruel voice that made John feel like he was in a living nightmare. "Citizens of Arune today you will die for the entertainment of the arenas, first you must fight soldiers, traps and beasts through corridors and in broad daylight of the first arena and make it to the entrance of the second. If you make it that far, you will face the beast."

From then on time seem to rush by, he was given a leather chest plate, an iron helmet, a small shield, arm and leg guards and finally a sword about seventy centimetres in length. After this last piece of equipment John was escorted to the entrance of the first arena, where he stood next to 45 other prisoners as the iron gates swung open and they stepped into the first arena. There were hundreds of Vonmores sitting on benches behind the fence waiting for them to die.

The prisoners ran out on the arena ground meet by five arrows fired by some of the warriors they were about to face. Two prisoners fell down and never moved again, one clutched at an arrow sticking out of his shoulder. The other two arrows thudded into the ground. John ran past soldiers dodged the bite of a giant black snake as it struck up at him. He was one of ten boys using the tactic of just running past the soldiers, traps and monsters. Only two other prisoners and John survived.

The rest of the prisoners took a slow methodical approach, no one survived. Many were shot down by guards or fell into pit falls though several were killed by a giant panther with blood red eyes and spikes on its back. John and the two other surviving prisoners face one last challenge before the second arena. The man with the skull mask helmet stood before them, holding a morning star and a shield with the symbol of the Vonmore army.

John watched then followed the two other prisoners in a charge at the knight in black. The prisoners in front of John swung their swords at the knight. With ease, the knight swung the chain left then right. The leather chest plates were never designed to take the force and power of the heavy spiked steel ball. The prisoners fell to the ground. John had no time to stop. He slid under the legs of the knight then ran into the next arena. There was a massive creature in the middle of the arena. At first glance, it looked like a dragon, with leathery wings but no limbs. It sent a massive burst of acidic spray right at John. He dodged it and saw it melt a massive hole in the fence. He also saw the crossbow men at the exit. They had lied to him. There was no freedom if he defeated the beast he would be shot down.

He made his choice, lifting his shield up to deflect any crossbow bolts, he ran for the hole in the fence. He ran through the fence and out of the arena, arrows and crossbow bolt whizzing past his head. When he was almost out of bow range he felt a massive jolt in his upper arm and a burning pain seared through his shoulder, he stared at the arrow embedded in his arm in horror and fell to the ground in a daze of pain. Then the sound of hoof beats drowned out the yells coming from the arena. He at first thought that the Vonmores had come, but then he saw that they were Arune knights, they must have found the location of the arena. Two of them saw him and veered off towards him, he would have his freedom after all.

# A Man

Emma Comerford  
Winner – First Prize  
Junior Secondary Prose

In a painted wooden hut on the edge of the bush lived a man. He had lived there for his whole life. He would sit on the veranda in a rocking chair, sipping his tea and snarling. He was never happy. He hated everyone. Nobody ever came over to see him. Nobody knew his name. He was just a man.

One day, a young girl with curly red hair came zooming past on her scooter. She had never been past the man's house before. As she went past, she saw out of the corner of her eye the man. He was old. He had grey hair and was wearing a dirty yellow jumper and a pair of beige pants.

"Hello!" she called out. The man grumbled. He did not know what to say when someone said hello. He continued to drink his tea while he stared out at the busy bush and the glistening ocean far behind it.

The next day, the girl with the red hair came up to the front door. She held a little tin of biscuits in her tiny pale hands. She knocked. The old man shouted some nonsense and stomped towards the brown door.

"Hello. I have brought some biscuits for you," the girl said joyfully.

"Oh. I'll take them." The old man reached out for the tin with his gnarled hands and grabbed it.

"Enjoy! My mum made them last night. They're the best biscuits in the world!" the girl exclaimed. The man slammed the door. He walked into his living room and sat on the musty lounge. He put his hand on his wrinkled forehead. The little girl had just showed more kindness than that old man had ever shown in his life. The old man didn't know what to do. He sat for a while, appalled at himself and shocked at the little girl. He decided to prick open the lid of the tin. He grabbed a crumbly orange biscuit and took a bite. He nodded. They really were the best biscuits in the world. He continued to eat until he had finished all of them. He made himself a cup of tea and sat outside on the rocking chair. The man thought about the little red haired girl, her huge smile and her kindness for the rest of the day.

Bang! Bang! Bang! The man woke from his sleep. He quickly turned on the lights and ran to the front door. Standing there was the little red haired girl and a woman with smooth black hair.

"Dad," the woman said. The man jumped. He had a daughter? After a moment he remembered that he did have one. The woman peered into the dark, smelly house.

"Dad, this is Samantha, my daughter. She came to see you yesterday. Do you remember?" she asked.

"Uhm, yes. Yes."

"Samantha and I have come to help you. To clean out your house and repair broken items. You need it Dad." The woman stared at the man with her piercing black eyes.

"Get out of here!" he screamed. "Never, ever come back!" The woman and Samantha ran down the wobbly stairs and into the street. The man slammed the door and stumbled onto the lounge. Tears poured down his eyes. How could he forget that he had a daughter? Who had a daughter herself? He felt so guilty for locking them out for all those years, for locking himself out from the world. He stayed on the lounge for the rest of the day, sad and guilty, crying and weak.

The man got up. He peered out of the blinds that he hadn't pulled up in years. The sun was starting to rise. He got changed and turned the lights on. He grabbed a few dusty pans from the cupboards, washed them, and tossed some oil into them. He chopped some brightly coloured vegetables up and threw them into the pans. He stirred. He boiled some pasta. He found a jar of tomato paste in the pantry and stirred it through the vegetables. Lastly, he poured the chunky red sauce onto the pasta and tossed it through. It was ready. He opened the door and savoured the light that was coming through. He grabbed the pot full of the pasta and sauce and walked onto the veranda, down the rickety stairs and onto the street. It was wonderful to be walking on something other than wood. The man enjoyed the crunch of the gravel as he stepped on it, the birds swooping through the air and the smell of the vibrant wattle. He enjoyed every step of the walk. He came to a stop at the driveway of the newly renovated house. The man couldn't believe that a house could look like this. He took a deep breath and approached the front door. He knocked.

"Mummy! Mummy! Someone's at the door!" a girl shouted.

"I'll get it!" someone answered back. A few quiet steps. The twist of a door handle.

"Oh, Dad! What are you doing here?" exclaimed the man's daughter. She jumped with surprise.

"I've made some lunch for all of us to enjoy," the man beamed.

"Dad! That's so kind of you." The daughter hugged her father, her black hair spilling all over his dirty grey jumper. The man smiled. He had finally felt happiness.

# The Husk

Eden Russell  
Winner – Second Prize  
Junior Secondary Prose

They said this would happen. We didn't listen. We didn't take care of our environment, and thus global warming melted the ice caps. It's 3045. A couple of hundred years ago the world was consumed by water. 'The Great Collapse' they called it. The sea practically came alive and consumed most of the world's land mass. Most of us thought it was the end - whole cities submerged in water, buildings destroyed and thousands of lives lost all around the globe. Eventually, we did rebuild. It took years before most places were liveable again, but we did it.

My name is Alvor. I'm 20 years old and live with my wife, Holly, in the city of Blacklight, the world's new capital city built over the ruins of what was once New York City. I was born into this world and have never known the 'Dry Days'. The new buildings of the city stretched high above the water, and the tunnels that connect them sit submerged beneath the surface. I work as a scientist, and every day is a struggle to find new ways to work around the water and make life easier.

"It's a brand new way of life! We have struggled against the water for centuries, trying to find new ways to rebuild in a submerged world, new ways to live in this environment - and I believe we've finally found it," announced Dr Salazar, head scientist and representative of the Biological Committee, in his speech to the World Council.

"Go on doctor," replied President Snow, anxiously.

"We've recorded various studies and experiments, testing a new vaccine that will reconstruct human lungs, giving them the ability to filter water through the skin, giving humans the ability to survive under water!"

It was a truly revolutionary idea. We'd been trialling the vaccine for years, and finally President Snow had allowed human experimentation. After seeing it work before our very eyes, the vaccine had been globally distributed. That was six months ago.

I'm not sure how many of us there are left now. A few of us didn't buy this new 'miracle' vaccine. I'd had my doubts, of course, but none of us were prepared for what came next.

At first the vaccine had worked according to plan. People were able to discard their oxygen tanks and could actually breathe underwater. It was only when the side effects started appearing a few months later that we realised we'd made a horrible mistake. Those injected started to fall into a fever, before becoming delusional and aggressive. They started frothing at the mouth, and their eyes burned a deep bloodshot orange. Very quickly they became less human, growing immensely strong and fast, losing the ability to speak and violently attacking any creature on sight, ripping it to pieces and gorging themselves with as much flesh they could fit into their mouths. Their limbs grew thin and long, their necks conjoined with their torso, and their teeth grew sharp and jagged with gums rotting to a grotesque black colour. They drooled uncontrollably from their fat mouths which grew to take up a third of their oval shaped heads. We tried to quarantine these creatures, but they broke out and occupied cities around the world. We refer to them now as "The Husk" for they are only a shell of their former human hosts.

"We can't stay here," Holly whispered to me. It was just me and her left as far as we were concerned. Everyone else had gone — either turned into the Husk or consumed by them.

"I know" I replied, "but where else can we go? It's gotten so bad out there, I don't know what we can do!"

We'd been hiding out, locked in my apartment for weeks and we were running out of food and water. We had to do something.

"What about the transport depot?" she suggested.

"You don't mean... leaving do you?"

"Yes. I believe it's time. I don't think there's anything left for us here."

It was a good few minutes before I replied. "I guess you're right... Maybe we can make it to the colony on Mars and begin anew."

We'd been planning this for weeks. Reach the depot, take a ship and travel to the colonies on Mars leaving this apocalyptic wasteland behind. We packed our bags with as much food and water as we could carry, grabbed the guns we'd found on our last hunt, and set out. We took the elevator down to ground level, Tunnel 3, which led straight to the shipping depot.

The tunnels were dark and quiet. The silence was deafening and stank of rotting flesh. We crept along, fingers on triggers, dodging and weaving around decaying bodies. Suddenly we stopped dead. In the darkness ahead we heard the soft noise of scampering feet against the stone of the tunnel. There, between us and the doorway, was a Husk chewing on the remains of an animal. It was blocking our exit, unaware yet of our presence as we stood frozen in horror. That was when Holly leaned over to me and whispered quietly in my ear, "I love you. See you soon."

As I sit here writing this, I can still hear her final words, over and over again in my mind. The last time I heard her beautiful voice. Then screams of agony as the Husk leapt on her and began to rip her limb from limb. The awful sound of her bones cracking as it tore them apart to get at the marrow inside. She'd sacrificed herself so I could escape...

Events of that night will haunt me 'til I die. Which will probably be soon as the ship I escaped in was low on fuel. As I write, I'm floating powerless through space. Her sacrifice was for nothing. I just hope this message reaches the colony in Mars and serves as a warning to never return to Earth.

This is my dying wish.

# Coco: A Short Story

Luca Vincenzo  
Winner – Highly Commended  
Junior Secondary Prose

Coco woke to the smell of sour breath.

“Come on Coco, wake up.” Said an uninspired voice. Coco’s eyes shot open. She got up off the grimy plank she called a bed. Her roommate Asha was standing next to her.

“We’re going to be late” Said Asha.

“I know, I know, I’m getting up.” Groaned Coco. She didn’t have anything to change into; so she reached over and grabbed her sack and machete from the floor.

She passed slaves and guards alike as she treaded towards the cocoa trees, her machete weighed her down slightly as she walked unwillingly towards the cocoa trees, as she was walking she noticed something peculiar about the wall that bordered the slave plantation. One of the panels of wood was loose. Adrenaline coursed through her veins as she walked over to the board. She gave it a small push and it almost gave way, however a small plank was still holding it steady. Coco drew her machete to strike it.

“I wouldn’t do that if I were you.” Came a sad voice behind Coco. Excitement turned to panic as she turned around and saw a guard standing behind her.

“I wasn’t, I was g-going t-to cut pp-pods.” Stuttered Coco. But the guard just looked sad and walked away. A wave of relief washed over Coco as she quickly scampered back to a cocoa tree. She began to climb up it, machete in her belt, when she reached the top and drew her heavy machete she saw a massive spider climbing on her hand. Clinging with one arm to the tree, she swung her other arm down to squish the giant arachnid, when suddenly a searing pain erupted on her arm. She screamed as her arm let go of the tree. She was aware of falling and then she landed with a thud on the ground.

“Hey!” Someone yelled from overhead.

“Get up! What are you lying down for!?” And suddenly someone’s face swan into view. It was a guard she recognised, Lucius.

“Hey leave her alone!” She heard someone call from above her. Lucius drew his gun and turned to point it at Asha, whom was standing there clutching her sack of cocoa beans heavily. Coco heard Lucius threatening Asha and cursing her. But all Coco was focused on was her machete, lying a few feet away. She started to crawl over to it.

“Hey what are you doing!” Said Lucius, noticing her. But Coco’s hand was already around the cold metal of the handle. And with all her strength swung it into Lucius’s leg. He screamed out in pain, flailing wildly he fired his machine gun. He hit Asha’s leg and the already cracked wooden wall. The walls wood splintered and the panel broke down. Slaves were starting to notice and were charging at the gap Coco jumped up.

“Come on, lets go!” Yelled out Coco as slaves charged past her.

"Asha, Come on." Said Coco desperately. Asha was on the ground, trampled; another slave rushed over to Asha and started carrying her to the breach in the wall. They rushed past Coco. She looked around and saw Lucius charging at her. He smashed right into her and took her to the ground. She screamed out as pain erupted from her already injured hand. She felt Lucius's warm breath on her face as he grinned a three-toothed smile.

"Time to die!" He yelled maniacally, as he took his pistol from his waist. Coco was too weak to fight against his weight, she closed her eyes and waited, she heard the bang. But there was no pain, instead she felt the weight of Lucius lift off her. A wave of relief washed over her, she gingerly opened her eyes and saw the guard who had told her not to break out, standing there, with his gun levelled at Lucius's head.

"Come on" He said grimly as he reached a hand down to help her. Coco was too surprised to tell him how grateful she was. His hand was rough as she grasped it. He pulled her up off the ground and started guiding her after the other slaves.

"Who are you?" Managed Coco.

"Someone who regrets their choices of action" Was all he said.

Coco was still confused, but as the warm sun fell on her face and she smelled the fresh air, all she could think about was that, for the first time in her life, she was free.

# *What Happens at the Everton Pier*

Sophie Sheppard  
Winner – First Prize  
Senior Secondary Prose

The arrival of the 1st of March grows more horrific as I get older. Last year's Annual Genocide of the Weak (or the AGW) was the worst to date. My father and my sister. My mother went the year before. It's a televised event. I watched my family die on the entertainment channel. They, the government, take those who could be easily defined as 'incapable'. With my unsteady hands and my back that aches viciously all night long, I am a prime victim for these murderers, or their formal title: The Superiors. Capitalised and everything. It's their job to hand-pick the weakest links of society. They line them up at the Everton Pier (a fitting location considering its ever-grey skies and its persistent cold embrace) in a single-file line, weighted chains connecting each person's neck to the person in front of them. They walk towards the ocean to drown.

I am 54. You would think I was having a laugh if you took even one glance at my weathered face and leather skin. I look old. I feel it too. I bring myself to the kitchen, my filthy, empty kitchen. I take a bowl out of the fridge that is half covered in aluminium foil and unwrap it. Yes, cold and wet macaroni pasta. A delicacy. My dusty floral couch welcomes me as I turn on the television, only to see a documentary about the advancement of medicine in the past twenty years. Two hours of boasting and brainwashing. Humans live too long now, we become weak but do not die, thanks to science. That is, after all, the reasoning behind the most horrific day of the year, the AGW. Population control or something.

I am 68. I have not been chosen yet. My consciousness and my happiness decay more and more each day, let alone year. I find myself having anxiety attacks more often than not, for simple reasons unworthy of such commotion. The other day I watched a leaf fall from a tree. It left me shaking for the next hour and a half. I walk to my bathroom to take a piss. I stand one foot on either side of the toilet base and stare at the mould growing along the grout between the discoloured tiles and before I knew it, my head was inside my toilet bowl, a mere inch away from the water. I had slipped. I clutch the sides of the toilet and push upwards, activating muscles in my arms that I was unaware of until now. I manage to get myself into a seating position on the bathroom floor and I remain there for a good ten minutes before I can muster up the energy to stand. I hobble out of the bathroom towards my couch and slump into the tough, dusty pillows that lay upon it. As I sit and ponder over my joke of a life. I realise I still need to pee.

I am 75. It is the 1st of March and I am at home, very much alive regardless of the fact I consider myself dead. I finish my cold, tasteless oats and lug my body from the kitchen to the couch. This is not a way of life, this is imprisonment. My days are spent struggling to decipher the exact reasoning for this fault in the system. Why would they allow someone so fragile to continue? They know who I am, they know of my existence. I am not the first of my family to be killed off, of course they know me. I am exactly what they want, the feeble, inadequate excuse for a human being. So why would leave me to ache for so long?

As I contemplate, I find myself staring at my feet. There is not much else in this house to look at. As I stare, I imagine my feet running how they used to. Continuous movement that carries me gleefully through the air, through a garden or a field, a road or a castle. And as I imagine, I find myself standing, then walking at a reasonable pace for someone of my stature to the door, continuing towards the main road I live on. Cars stop for me. I feel myself speed up a little, but not enough to exhaust myself. I am taking a light jog. I am running. All the way to the Everton Pier.

The Superiors are here, lined up on either side of this lifeless pier, facing each other. I see the film crew, the cold white lights are hard to miss. I plod down the wooden boards as The Superiors sustain a haunting gaze upon me, all the way towards the death row. I see their backs and chained necks, each individual's head hanging far too low to be seen. As I look back, The Superiors smile at me, almost as if they were expecting me. A disgusting concept.

As I wearily grasp the unoccupied iron collar at the end of the line, I whisper to the woman before me. "They didn't even choose me." I made sure to keep my voice low. Retaining her hunched position, she whispers back. "They didn't choose any of us."

My heart beat faster than it had for years. It had awoken. This made sudden sense. A trickery of humankind, a cruel prank. I had finally understood: there was no such thing as being selected for the AGW, you volunteer. That is the fate of a human being, to sit around for what feels like an eternity, praying they will take you soon, but they never do. You are awaiting a destiny that never arrives, and in the process, you lose yourself. By waiting, you are murdering time you could have used drinking coffee, or watching a film. Petting an animal, or just talking to someone, anyone. I was frail but no matter my physical strength, I was always unknowingly capable of life.

My death was quick. The water was cold.

# *Bad Luck*

Bruna Gomes

Winner – Second Prize

Senior Secondary Prose

The fear on the Captain's face would've almost been amusing, were it not for the ropes tied around our ankles and the rags in our mouths. Who knew a bunch of women could make a man so sadistic, so vulnerable. He spat at the rest of his crew to hurry up; he did not want us women on his ship for another second. The scrawny men tightened the ropes and fastened the rags. We did not panic. We were women, we were strong, there was no need to panic. The Captain muttered under his breath in an aggressive turmoil, cursing whoever's idea it was to bring women on board. What stale luck we were, is what he spluttered, such potent, stale luck. I did not want to spend my last seconds alive in fruitless tears; I let the chaos take place. I watched as the Second Mate grabbed Lady Amarilla, and she screamed and kicked and cried. And then he threw her overboard, petticoats and all. I did not look over in fear of crying out in weakness. The Bosun's Mates picked up a lady each, throwing them over in fear of any more wretched luck, the waves drowning their wails as they hit the surface. Suddenly, a man's hands lifted me up, and I elbowed him swiftly. He dropped me onto the floorboards and cried out in discomfort. Someone offered to throw him overboard if he were to complain any longer, and with that, he hauled me up and over the beam. My body slapped the dark grey waters, coldly, fiercely. I closed my eyes as I sank lower and lower to the seabed awaiting me.

The air was slowly being dragged out of my lungs, pulling my confidence with it. Suddenly the air was cuffed right back in, hitting my chest hard and fast. I was no longer struggling, no longer dying. The skin on my neck pulled itself apart, and as I brought my tied-up hands to touch it, I felt tiny, thin slits. I gasped, then gasped again, for it's impossible to gasp underwater, is it not? As I brought my hands back down, the ropes came loose, as did the ones around my ankles, and my dress somehow managed to come away from my body and join the currents. My petticoat and corset followed, until I was wearing nothing but underwear. I continued to breathe. I continued to remain sunken. Then the most bizarre thing occurred; shimmery, iridescent teal scales shot out from the skin on my legs and adorned my whole lower body, until I had - and I say this without a single ounce of fraudulence - the tail of a fish. My hair loosened from its pins until it fell long below my shoulders and danced with the cadence of the water. I had heard the rumours of mermaids and sirens that roamed the deepest of oceans. I did not believe those rumours until now.

In the inky distance, I made out Lady Amarilla's face, her hair fanned out around her and her wrists untied. As she got closer I realised that she, too had a scaly tail, though hers was a deep blue colour. "Dorinda!" she called through the icy water. "Dorinda, what in God's name has happened to us!" She reached out to touch my tail, and in doing so I noticed her webbed fingers. I looked down at mine to find the exact same thing. I reached forward and touched her hair that billowed out like a blonde halo. I touched her pointed ears. Her ears were not pointy before, were they?

"I think we might be mermaids," I whispered. At the sound of this she smiled, and I almost swam away in terror. Thin, pointed teeth as sharp as a machete filled her mouth, replacing her perfect, straight teeth I had once been so jealous of. I ran my tongue over my own set of teeth. Mine were just like hers now. "Damn those beasts for turning us into monsters," I muttered, "damn them all!"

By the time the sun had set and the moon had risen, Lady Amarilla and I had finished marvelling at our new fate. As we stared up at the moon that shone in silver slivers through the dark waters, a ship, or what looked like a ship, blocked our precious view. "Men," I spat. Lady Amarilla and I swam up to the surface, only letting our eyes appear above the surface.

"Let's teach them something about luck," she snickered. We approached the rowboats smoothly, slicing through the water like Satan's knives. Lady Amarilla began to hum softly, her voice sweet and alluring, like candy. I joined in, the both of us humming a tune that could've been lovely were it a lullaby for a little babe. The heads of the men spun in search of our bonny voices. One man spotted us and pointed, "Over there!" We continued to sing, swimming closer and closer until we were right beside a little boat. Other mermaids emerged and joined us, some faces recognisable and others new. The men peered down at us in awe, in disbelief. We swam further up so that our shoulders were exposed, so that our shimmery faces were barely centimetres from the bearded ones. I had picked my target; I stared right at him, and he stared back, my sweet voice beckoning him closer still. He stumbled in the boat as he vainly brought his lips closer to mine. As soon as we made contact, I grabbed him by the ears, grinned my piercing smile, and hissed. I pulled him from the safety of his boat into the deception of the water, and dragged him with me as I swam to the sea floor. By the time we reached it, the life had been sucked out of him and washed away with the seaweed. I lay his body on the sand, limp and lifeless. Men are fools.

# *Pink*

Layla Zak-Volpato  
Winner – Highly Commended  
Senior Secondary Prose

Simone grimaced as the bulb in the photographer's camera flashed, the muscles in her cheeks twitching against the smile which she had plastered to her face. She was genuinely happy, there was no doubt about that, the fanfare of weddings simply made her queasy. Bradley had organised everything, the flowers, the seating, taking her thin hands into his tightly and peppering her fingers with kisses in the weeks leading up to the big day, telling her not to worry. Now he was her handsome spouse, his arm around her waist pulling her close, his open palm cupping the top of her hip.

From their proximity she could study at liberty the fine details of his profile, the healthy glow of his skin and clean, soapy smell of his hair; to her he smelt immaculate, organised and he wore the staged smile with so much more authenticity than she did. The photographer ceased his frenzied clicking.

"He's done" Bradley whispered, leading her by the hand to their bridal podium. Simone felt acutely aware that they looked like one of those stock photographed couples used as place holders in store-bought picture frames, a niggling, annoying thought burrowing its way through the romanticism of the moment. Seated, Bradley traced a line of delicate kisses along her cheek bone, drawing her close with an air of masculine possession, in to a bubble of intimacy, free from the prying eyes of their guests. Simone sighed, half in annoyance, half in relief, allowing herself to melt into his embrace, which was when she saw it.

At the back of his neck, at the place where his shirt collar lay snugly against his sun-tanned neck, a pink stain. Ungracious it was, offensive to the eye among all of the crisp linen, a pink stain, bright smudge on starched white cotton, to her, a red flag. In the pretence of returning his caresses, a façade which she knew the romantic in him would gobble up greedily, she reached a languorously draped arm around his neck and felt the pink residue, oily and pigmented between her fingertips. Pink had never been her colour, too bright, too garish for her fine complexion. Pink belonged to the younger, bouncier girls, those in the night clubs and the flouncing, pleated tennis skirts. Pink was a simply carnal colour.

Simone inhaled deeply, a breath which she had expected to steady her resolve. Where she had expected to see stars, however, her vision was clear; her pulse beat steadily beneath her cool, white wrists, she wished she was surprised. The moment was almost comical and beneath her calm she could feel a bubbling, ludicrous laughter, maniacal, growing in her chest like a balloon ready to burst. She saw her future before her eyes, quite literally, from the bridal pedestal.

The country club ladies, tapping tattooed staccatos with their acrylic talons against the arms of their chairs, their laughter was grating, exaggerated, tinkling like the gold on their wrists and necks and ears, presents from guilty husbands, bribes more like. These women were no strangers to the pink stain, for each had one of their own with long legs and alluring eyes, young and animated, chipper in their arrogance. These women were no strangers to the pink stain, the tell of a husband unfaithful.

Simone would, like many before her, wear her gold, parade her husband (or allow herself to be paraded), be wife in whatever capacity she wanted because now she had leverage, houses by the seaside, trips to Europe; all instalments in the great bribe for her silence and compliance. Trophy wife indeed.

Sitting back, she stared calmly into the face of her beloved, what a man. As she gazed into his blue eyes in her pretence of adoration she felt something inside her shrivel and die, giving way to something new which coiled tightly in her gut, her rage solidifying into cool, impenetrable marble. She stood, this time not needing the stabilising breath for she was steady, raising her champagne flute high so the diamond ensconced in the ring on her fourth finger caught and refracted the light, sparkling brilliantly.

"To my Bradley" she proclaimed, allowing a warm smile to spread across her face which came with surprising ease. "May our life be full, our gifts be many, a life full of discovery stretches ahead of us"

A pearly tear slid down her cheek, well done, she thought to herself, the coiled thing within her gut purring contently; a perfect façade, she was a quick learner.

"Time holds great surprises" and with a kiss her future was sealed.



# Winning Entries

A collection of award winning  
poems from the 2018 Mosman  
Youth Awards in Literature

# *The Heat of the Flames*

Sophia McKay  
Winner – First Prize  
Junior Secondary Poetry

The fire burns orange, red and yellow, igniting the land.  
Trees turn to charcoal and bushes burn,  
Sparks fly above the searing mass,  
The inferno cleaves a path of destruction,  
Animals flee and birds fly.  
The flames turn white and blue, spreading like a waterfall  
Scorching the ground as they blaze by

Smoke races and dances through the air for miles  
Clouding the sky, shrouding the sun.  
Ash erupts from the burnt bodies of trees  
Like rain, it showers down  
Covering all in sight.  
Wood crackles in the flames.

The heat intensifies, shrivelling shrubs  
And burning trees black.  
Every twig, every stick fuels the flood of flames,  
Feeding the greedy tongues, who crave ever more.  
The fire towers higher and higher  
Torching the world;  
A literal fire wall, but no one gets through this one

As the flames waltz away, the landscape is still and silent.  
Skeletons of trees stand tall and straight,  
Blackened earth with no green in sight;  
A graveyard of bushes, trees and sticks  
But a ground for new life.

# Tick

Vera Verbina  
Winner – Second Prize  
Junior Secondary Poetry

My life is a timer,  
Counting down  
To exams,  
Milestones,  
New responsibilities.

My mind is full,  
No space,  
So I put the dates,  
Each new deadline,  
In my diary.  
In my brain outside my brain.

The pages  
Warp  
Beneath the numbers,  
Drown  
Beneath the swirls of ink  
Suffocate  
Beneath the squiggles  
That tell,  
That yell  
That time,  
Is  
Running  
Out.

Tick.

My diary has become  
A reflection  
Of myself  
Of what I am becoming.

Numbers,  
Dates,  
All swirl  
Gathering pace  
Wrap together  
Like dark clouds before a storm.  
NOTHING MAKES SENSE!!

Every happy thought  
Stutters for breath  
Beneath  
The darkness  
That curls  
That calls  
That beckons  
That sucks me in.

Every part of me  
SCREAMS.

Time  
Has  
Almost  
Expired!

Tick.  
Tick.

My mind is ripping  
Itself apart  
Fabric stretching  
Seams giving way  
To thoughts of  
Darkness.

My mind is heavy:  
Dark clouds  
Pools of ink  
Deadlines deadening my will to do anything.

EVERYTHING  
is falling  
apart.

TIME  
Has  
Run  
Out.

*continues on next page*

Tick.  
Tick.  
Tick.

**KNIFE**  
                            **GUN**  
**NOOSE**  
My mind  
Circles  
the around  
inevitable

Tick.

Tick.

Tick.

Tick.

**BOOM!**

# *Beauty fades*

Chloe Entwistle  
Winner – Highly Commended  
Junior Secondary Poetry

The sun shrivelled their scented petals  
and they fell... down...  
onto the concrete pathways  
where now they lie.  
Trampled.  
Forgotten.  
Beauty fades.  
like the skin that sags  
on sunken cheekbones,  
like the skeleton of a once beautiful city  
now crumbled into dust.  
But maybe...  
Maybe  
we can find beauty in the old and faded,  
in the still sweet scent of the flowers,  
in those timeless eyes,  
in the new life borne into the cracks of the ruins.

**Maybe.**

# Bang

Tara Seymour  
Winner – Highly Commended  
Junior Secondary Poetry

The clock ticks  
On  
And on  
And on.  
Time slows, trapping all.  
Forever, it seems.

But then suddenly,  
Time speeds up once more.  
Bang.  
Bang.  
Time stops for one  
For two  
For three  
And it goes on.

Bang.  
Bang.  
How they wish they were anywhere but here.  
How they wish the clock would slow once more.  
But it doesn't.  
Bang  
Bang  
Another scream, another lost dream

Now.  
Finally.  
Silence.  
All you can hear  
Is longing for the fallen  
And the ticking of the clock.  
On  
And on  
And on.

But  
In the distance  
You can hear us.  
Steady, slow,  
Strong.  
Coming.  
Stopping at nothing.  
To stop the bang  
Forever.

# *On the Ellipsis*

Stephen McCarthy  
Winner – First Prize  
Senior Secondary Poetry

*For E. T.*

What actually is an 'ellipsis', anyway?  
I often get it and 'ellipse' confused:  
One is a mark of grammar that is used  
For ... something; one's an oval — couldn't they  
Just use the word 'oval'? Then that way  
The two would not get mixed up and misused  
As they are now — although, you'd be excused  
For doing it — I do it every day.  
Use it, that is, though why I cannot tell,  
It's simply ... easier; it gives my words  
A naturalness, authenticity,  
A pleasant sound, the chiming of a bell,  
Classical music, or the calls of birds,  
That gives my thoughts a fine simplicity.

Why does an ellipsis have three dots?  
I don't think anybody knows for sure.  
Was it random? Did someone think, 'One more,  
And then another,'? Did they start with three spots,  
And say, 'What can we use to fill these slots?  
Quotation marks? Although, when they're before  
Another thing, it could confuse us. Or  
Something else?' And tie themselves in knots?  
Did someone want to indicate a break  
And, not knowing another way, decided,  
'I'll just add two more, and that'll do,'?  
Or did they add just one, and then, to make  
It clearer, one more? Or are we misguided,  
And, purely by mistake, it's what we do?

*continues on next page*

Was there only one full stop at the start,  
And then another, seeing it alone,  
Came over, kept it company, was shown  
The way to end all things, that was an art?  
And over time did they grow much apart  
Until a third, who was to them unknown,  
Seeing them, and shaken to the bone,  
Joined them, to form a crowd, and warm their heart?  
Or was the first to signify the end,  
And then it called another in regret  
To try and take it back, and when this failed,  
A third, as if the extra one would mend  
The situation? Did they think they'd get  
Back what they'd lost, before the ship had sailed?

Why does it matter what I make of it?  
In any case it's three dots on a page,  
Followed by a blank space: why the rage?  
It matters not even a little bit  
If it was, first used here, and was not fit  
For publication, in a work for the stage,  
Or whatever the case may be: in such an age  
None of that matters, so long as it is writ.  
Its use may always carry with it doubt  
As to what is meant: is someone trailing off,  
Or was a phrase suppressed? Or just for show?  
Authors may want readers to find out,  
And they may try, give up, admire, scoff,  
Or ignore it altogether — I don't know.

# Metaphors be with you

Victor Dumas

Winner – Second Prize

Senior Secondary Poetry

Australia, why are our libraries so full of tears?

Hell. What do I know?

I'm splattering more tears for you,

As a shaking comrade on his debut,

A man who's not hot in the sense that ice-cold words pump through his veins,

He learnt all the lingos, that were only meant for the original gringos,

Leaving his home, a mosaic of words *bleu, blanc et rouge* diffuse into oblivious corners of his brain,

He performed autopsy on the words splattered in novels de l'amour, yet these words, crashed the windows of his skull and flooded profanities into the only vacant fissures of his mind,

The circadian spectre of an eukaryotic pen waddling around and misspelling a word haunts him, the thought follows him around wherever he goes,

Helpless jargons slouching in insouciance, punched out of his ear by words that dance - belligerently drunk - that were absorbed in the *Cote d'Azur*,

Ten years he has toiled and dissected this humble lingua franca, a frank linguistic hijacker, but it boomeranged and only brought him onto his feeble knees,

He's shackled in the lines of this despotic leader,

The English language.

But he *c'est la vie*,

English is elaborate,

It is about as straight as a roundabout,

It is the breath of god,

It is subtle creak on a stair,

It is smell of the pancakes your mother is making you after a revolutionary night with your girlfriend,

It is the detached earlobe of the dead man which Siddhartha Gautama gazed upon,

It is the zipper that you wish you unfastened on the diaphanous dress of your prom date,

Language is the first downy growth on the upper lip of a Mediterranean boy,

Yet this boy is incarcerated by the dominating grid lines of his paper,

He is a thorn in the side of a grammatical error,

He is the keeper of the keys, the guardian of words,

He is the strange fruit that grew too ripe for the eucalyptus tree,

Yet he has a pen empowered with unsparing verbosity,

Jumping back and forth over the hurdle of real and surreal,

Like your girlfriend when she puts on her makeup.

# *A Timeline*

Amy Layton  
Winner – Highly Commended  
Senior Secondary Poetry

3rd of March 1913 —  
Women's Suffrage Parade.  
8,000 people in attendance;  
It is heard of worldwide.  
One of the first major gatherings  
For the rights of women,  
And paves the way for many more.  
Around the world  
    People cheer,  
        Attitudes shift,  
            A revolution comes to life.

28th of August 1963 —  
The March on Washington.  
300,000 people in attendance;  
More watch on television.  
'I Have A Dream' speech delivered,  
And hope along with it,  
For the dream to be realised.  
Around the world,  
    Ears listen,  
        Hearts are lifted,  
            As the dream is spread and fulfilled.

28th of June 1969 —  
The Stonewall Riots.  
Police raids a known gay bar;  
The people fight back.  
Tensions were at an all time high,  
Until this broke the floodgate,  
And the demand for rights grew.  
Around the world,  
    Being gay  
        Begins to be  
            Recognised as- no, just recognised.

1st of April 2001 —  
Netherlands legalises same sex marriage.  
The first country to do so;  
Slowly, others follow suit.  
It has been fought for  
For over 3 decades;  
I hope Marsha is proud.  
Around the world  
    People think,  
        Governments think,  
            Maybe it's time for change, for love.

9th of August 2014 —  
Michael Brown shot by police.  
He was 18 years old;  
Protests ensued for 6 days.  
Not the first unprovoked death  
By police that year,  
And very far from the last.  
Around the world  
    People frown,  
        And shake their heads  
            At the twenty-one deaths that year.

12th of June 2016 —  
Shooting at Pulse Nightclub.  
Man fires on gay bar In Orlando;  
49 dead and 58 injured.  
One of the worst single shooter mass shootings  
In history;  
Victims as young as eighteen years old.  
Around the world  
    Tears are shed  
        For the victims  
            And for the queer community.

7th of November 2016 —  
US Election Day.  
130 million votes;  
The world holds its breath.  
Donald "Pussy Grabber" Trump  
Wins the presidency,  
Instead of having the first female president.  
Around the world  
    Heads are bowed  
        In pity and fear  
            For women, and all those he hates.

So when you say to me,  
"It's 2018!  
We don't need these marches anymore!  
You're equal now!"  
Just remember this:  
Around the world  
    Everyday  
        Someone else mourns,  
            Because the fight is not over.

# *Dreamers*

Sreya Vt  
Winner – Commended  
Senior Secondary Poetry

Once, we were all dreamers  
Full of aspirations and passions  
Hopes for the future  
Wishes to fulfil  
A longing to spread our wings

But now we're all the same  
Writing test after test  
Until our fingers bleed  
And the colours in our mind  
Are dulled to greys and blacks

Who were we  
Before the world tried to tell us  
who we should be?  
Before our imagination was locked away  
Into a web of conformity

But once, we were all dreamers  
We danced under the full moon  
We sang under the stars  
We laughed in the golden rays of the sun  
We had a lust for life

Once, when we were all dreamers



