

The Inverawe Nature Poetry Competition 2009 Judge's Report:

Student Edition: Nature Poetry

It's been a joy and a nurturing experience for me, both as a person and as a poet, to judge this competition. It was quite revealing of the creative process to see poems from kinder through to grade twelve. I was impressed by the nurturing and guidance of teachers as shown by the sensitivity of observation and poetic structure in their students' entries.

The quality of the entries is very good and the students have responded well to the nature theme. The nature theme has a double bonus for young people as it gives them the opportunity to write about what they know and can easily experience, as well as giving them a starting point that can be developed many ways.

A good poem:

- is like having a conversation with a friend
- leaves something with the reader (a gift)
- benefits from being read again and again
- has something to say
- shows instead of tells
- engages the reader as an equal
- makes an experience real, especially by using the senses
- makes the ordinary seem new
- has a sparkle of originality
- plays with language
- has a structure
- has an intensity of language
- has a natural flow when read aloud and sounds good

Check-list

- Read your poem out loud to see if you have your line breaks in the right places. If you stumble somewhere when you read it out loud, then that area probably needs some more work.
- Check for unintentional repetitions of words or meaning.
- Check your poem with spell-check.
- Ask someone to proof read your final copy.
- Always keep a copy of your work.

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K –Y3

Many students in this section used their imaginations to place themselves in a natural setting and described what they saw and felt using their senses. Other students used the word 'nature' to write an acrostic poem; the most successful of these had a cyclic pattern beginning with 'n' is for nest, and ending with 'e' is for egg. The choice for 'u' was 'us', which was particularly apt.

Y4 –Y6

This section had the highest number of entries and the highest number of commended entries.

The commended entries vary greatly in structure. 'The Tree' begins with the idea of God's creation, moves to the universe, and the reader's focus is guided like a google earth search to a tree in Franklin Square, then to a nest, then to an egg, then to the life within the egg – managing an ending that is both cyclic and opens out once again. 'Dusk' is a very atmospheric, Tasmanian poem showing the connection between nature and people. 'Water cycle' convincingly travels through a cycle of water.' A day at the beach' will take an adult back to their own childhood beach memories. 'Hail', 'Leaves', and 'Snow' are all short poems whose word choices and imagery are particularly accurate and memorable. 'Leaves' is also a meditation on movement and has makes good use of word sounds.

The two encouragement awards are awarded to poems that show a high level of craft for this age group. 'A storm' has a narrative structure with an inventive rhyme scheme, and a surprise ending that is particularly engaging. 'The rainforest' takes the reader on a journey within the forest, and the language is particularly evocative with excellent word choices that make beautiful sound echoes.

The winning poem for this section is a three-line, haiku-like poem that encapsulates many students' concerns about mankind's impact on the natural world. In this case less really is more. Many students expressed such concerns, but they often left an aftertaste of futility, and having been preached at. The winning poem lets the reader draw his/her own conclusions, and the silence left by the poem is haunting and full of questions.

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Y7 –Y9

The commended poems 'Power of nature' and 'Night time' are both mood poems. 'Power of nature' reflects on how our inner clocks and feelings are affected by the cycle of day and night. 'Night time' is a meditation on the sounds of night, the emotions they evoke, and the meaning of silence.

The two encouragement awards are awarded to the narrative driven poems 'Wave riders' and 'The storm'.

The winner for this section is the poem 'Dark'. This poem takes risks that are exciting to read and make the poem stay with the reader. It's a playful poem, clever in its rhyming, and an exploration of nature in an urban setting. It also explores the nature of night in our myths, storytelling, and superstitions. Its many associations and contrasts of ideas lead to a visceral effect that is difficult to logically explain, but leaves a pleasantly full feeling.

Y10 – Y12

The commended poem 'Sacrifice' has been soundly researched, is beautifully descriptive and has memorable images.

The two encouragement awards are awarded to the poems 'Chops' and 'Major Mitchell's Cockatoo'. Both are convincing soliloquies.

The winner for this section is the poem 'evening reflections'. The natural cadences of its language entice and excite the reader through a journey of mind and body. It's a poem that is striking both for its imagery and the journey of ideas. This is a very accomplished poem with an arresting voice.

It has been an honour to judge this competition. I'd like to thank Margaret & Bill Chestnut of Inverawe Native Gardens for making this competition possible; with the support, of course, of the Kingborough Council, and the schools and teachers who encouraged the students to enter. I'd especially like to thank the students who have entered for the privilege of reading their poems.