

2021 DOROTHEA MACKELLAR POETRY AWARDS

Rich AND *Rare*

Presentation

BOOKLET

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Pips Murray

Dare we say that poetry among school aged children is alive and well? We have a great reason to think so after the fantastic response to this year's competition.

Despite the adversity that continues to disrupt everyone's lives, entry numbers in this year's poetry competition have held firm.

The organising committee was just a tiny bit excited to see that entries again totalled more than 7500. This is an incredible achievement given the chaos that this unpredictable pandemic has caused.

This year, we were also chuffed to see a healthy geographic spread among the prizewinners and we congratulate those students and their families and the teachers who provided the impetus and encouragement to make that happen.

If anything, this year has been trickier than 2020 with lockdowns effecting more states and school closures and home schooling becoming the norm.

I like to think that times like these favour creative and poetry writing - it is an outlet for students that can be immensely rewarding and allows for plenty of headspace and thinking time.

This year's presentation ceremony will again be a virtual event - albeit slightly delayed from its usual first Friday in September - as we believe it is



important to salute those young poets who have put their heart and soul into writing.

Production of the video ceremony has been interesting to say the least with all our amateur film making skills drawn upon to pull the ceremony together! We hope you enjoy the production. Not only does it present the poets reciting their work and telling a little about themselves, it also provides a wonderful showcase of the country which was so familiar to Dorothea Mackellar herself. The Gunnedah landscape in northern NSW has never looked better. After a three year drought, quenching rains have brought the country alive in a riot of colour.

Please enjoy the video on social media or look for it on www.dorothea.com.au and share it far and wide. We want poetry to stay on the agenda!

Thank you all for your outstanding response. You can be very proud of your efforts.

OUR PATRONS

SUSAN DUNCAN

Susan is a strong supporter of the poetry awards and an advocate for Australia's literary heritage. After 25 years as a successful journalist and editor of The Australian Women's Weekly and New Idea, Susan turned her hand to writing best-selling fiction, including Salvation Creek. Several of her books are set in Pittwater, north of Sydney, where she formerly lived with her husband Bob at Tarrangaua, the house built by Dorothea Mackellar in 1925.



THE HONOURABLE MARK VAILE AO

During his 15-year parliamentary career, Mark served as Deputy Prime Minister and leader of the National Party, as well as minister for both Trade and Transport. As chair of Whitehaven Coal, he is a frequent visitor to Gunnedah and surrounding districts in north west NSW. Whitehaven has been a long-standing sponsor of the awards and is the custodian of the Mackellar family's homestead Kurrumbede near Gunnedah.



Kurrumbede 2021.



Kurrumbede, circa 1948.

A YEAR OF ACHIEVEMENT

Poetry will always be at the top of our agenda but the committee has had a jam packed year with associated activities.

The Dorothea Mackellar Memorial Society has notched up a couple of significant achievements this year - most notably the painting of an imposing silo mural in Gunnedah and the staging of an inaugural Open Day at Kurrumbede, the former Mackellar homestead.

The mural on the historic Brunton's mill can be clearly seen from various vantage points on the northern side of town. In attractive sepia tones, the work was painted by renowned Melbourne artist Heesco Khosanaran and depicts an historic harvest scene together with Dorothea and a verse from her iconic poem My Country.

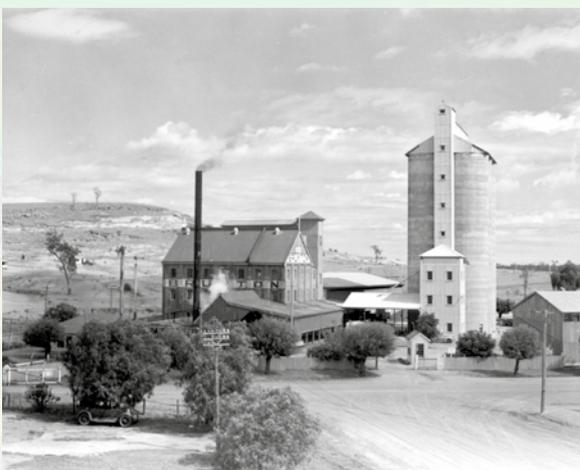
The silo art, brought to fruition through a federal government grant, was initiated by the society and has attracted many visitors and publicity in just a few months.

The gates of the Kurrumbede homestead complex were opened to the public for the first time on the



June long weekend. Hosted in conjunction with property owners Whitehaven Coal, the event drew more than 1000 visitors and included a full music program, shearing demonstrations, a vintage machinery display, pony rides and children's activities around the homestead.

It is hoped to be the first of many such gatherings at the homestead which belonged to the Mackellar family for almost 40 years from 1905 and to which Dorothea was a frequent visitor.



Brunton's Mill, circa 1946.



The Dorothea Mackellar silo mural.



ABOUT THE TROPHIES

Maree Kelly

It seemed only appropriate that artist Maree Kelly, whose colourful work was used to illustrate this year's theme *Rich and Rare*, was also commissioned to make this year's trophies.

The trophies continue a long tradition by the Dorothea Mackellar Memorial Society to commission trophies by local artists.

Born and bred in Gunnedah, Maree has forged a reputation as one of the leading landscape artists in the region with her work represented in numerous collections and garnering awards at exhibitions in Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong, Scone, Armidale and Tamworth.

Maree paints with a deep environmental conscience - her work reflects her passion for the country where she was raised. Its seasons, soils, trees and rivers feature across the body of her work. Water and its critical importance to our landscape is a subliminal theme in many of her paintings.

Her preference is to work in oil but Maree is equally at home painting in acrylics which she has used in this year's trophies together with mixed media including gold, silver and copper foil.

"I've focused on landscapes in the Gunnedah area featuring the light at different times of day and incorporated other media to give added interest," she said.

Maree works in a studio perched high on a hill on her family property outside Curlewis, south of Gunnedah. Panoramic views of the plains framed by rocky ridges provide endless inspiration for her work.

Later this year, Maree will stage an exhibition of 30 works inspired by Dorothea Mackellar's poem *My Country* in Gunnedah.

The show will represent a significant milestone, she said.

"I feel I will have come full circle. I have had a long connection with all things Dorothea Mackellar. As a schoolgirl, I sang in the choir at the opening of the Dorothea statue in town and in my graphic design practice, I have had the pleasure of designing the website and presentation booklets in past years.

"Painting inspired by Dorothea's poetry is fulfillment of that and also investigating my strong sense of connection to this country."

www.reasydesign.com.au

PRIMARY JUDGES' REPORT

Michelle Taylor

Wow! What an incredible ride it has been judging close to 5000 poems written by young people of primary school age from across the country. You have offered insights into each and every one of your worlds. Topics included the inner worlds of identity, self acceptance, belonging, fear sadness and courage.

There were poems on first nations culture, the pandemic, drought, fires and farming. You questioned, expressed outrage, confronted difficult truths, called for equity, peace and greater care for our climate and environment. You made this judge laugh out loud. You made me feel concerned for you. You took my breath away. You helped me see the world differently. Thank you to each and everyone of you who entered.

I was impressed by the quality of the poems and choosing the winners was a difficult task. Poetic elements were on display and deftly employed. There was stunning imagery that allowed me to feel and experience along with you. Repetition and rhythm buoyed the reader along and embedded themes. I have taken away metaphors, similes and symbols of incredible beauty. You offered every style of poem - free verse, sonnet, villanelle, cinquain, haiku, narrative, pantoum, diamante, reverso, pensee, acrostic, limerick. Your abilities to offer profound insights made me pause and wonder how a seven year old could write that!

What I want from a good poem is to be moved in two ways. Firstly I want to be taken away, to

imagine or think differently, to see the world from another perspective. Secondly I want to be moved emotionally, to feel something. Then the poem must be original and creative. It must make me stop and think, I've never read anything quite like this before! and I can't stop thinking about this poem! The crafting must be there. Each word has fought for its place on the page, placed and spaced with care. Poetic elements are skilfully used in the right measures to good effect. Then editing is done to ensure grammar, spelling and punctuation are correct and consistent. When it is

“Remember your poem does not need to be published or in the prize lists to be important.”

read there is no 'clunking', the rhythm works and the voice of the poet comes through.

There were many poems that came close to achieving all of these things and showed great promise. To all those who entered, remember your poem does not need to be published or recognised in the prize lists to be of importance. You might carry those words with you always, or perhaps it was something you needed to express at a certain time. Ultimately the poem is yours - something only you could say. I hope poetry continues to be important in your life and encourage you to enter again next year.



PRIMARY SCHOOLS' JUDGE

Michelle Taylor writes for children, young adults and the young at heart. She's published seven books of poetry including 100 Ways To Fly, If The World Belonged To Dogs, If Bees Rode Shiny Bicycles and The Angel Of Barbican High, and is the recipient of numerous awards and grants. Michelle is a mum and an occupational therapist, and reckons being a writer makes her braver and more creative in all the other jobs she does.

www.mudanca.com.au/author

SCHOOLS' AWARD

Primary

PRIMARY SCHOOLS' AWARD WINNER:

Redeemer Baptist School, North Parramatta NSW

COMMENDED:

Ascham School, Edgecliff NSW

Mercy College, Koondoola WA

Gunnedah South School, Gunnedah NSW

Acting Up Drama Academy, Cordeaux Heights NSW

All Hallows Primary School, Five Dock NSW

SCHOOLS' AWARD

Secondary

SECONDARY SCHOOLS' AWARD WINNER:

St Thomas More College, Sunnybank QLD

COMMENDED:

St Dominic's Priory College, North Adelaide SA

Hobart College, Mount Nelson TAS

Randwick Boys' High School, Randwick NSW

Scotch College, Swanbourne WA

St Gregory's College, Gregory Hills NSW

SECONDARY JUDGES' REPORT

Sherryl Clark

It is such a pleasure to read poetry written by young Australian writers, and even more so when they are high school students and keen to write. It can be easy to lose the enjoyment of reading and writing poems when you are deep into the demands of high school and homework.

So I approached the judging of my senior categories with great anticipation, and was richly rewarded. So many different topics, with so many different voices speaking out using imagery and language, and expressing ideas and passions. Perhaps not surprisingly, there were few poems about Covid-19. On the other hand, there were many about the environment,

“I wish I could gather up all the poems I have read about (the environment) and force every politician to read them.”

reflecting what we have seen in the past few years with protests by young people.

While 2019 saw street marches, in 2020 the protests moved to their bedrooms and online networks, and then, for many, to writing poetry. I wish I could gather up all the poems I have read about this issue and force every politician in Australia to read them. The voices I heard in these poems are angry, passionate and devastated at the lack of action.

There were poems about drought, bushfires, dying wildlife and destroyed landscapes. Some poems about life on the farm were also reflections on the changes that have taken place, with dust storms and dying crops. As always, poetry allows us to express ourselves in the sharpest, most evocative ways.

However, other topics emerged as well – relationships, the importance of family, school, and simply how people treat each other, with love or with painful

disdain. Some poems told stories, some happy, many sad. The loss of life, the loss of a mind, the loss of a family elder to dementia or illness. All of these are experiences that are part of life, and many of these poems touched me – some made me catch my breath.

The variety of poems was part of the reading pleasure. I never knew if the next poem would be rhyming or free verse, or whether a brave young poet would have a go at a complicated form like a villanelle or sonnet. Sometimes, funny poems made me laugh out loud (a few poets seem to have very low opinions of having to go to school!).

While the speed of today's world, thanks to technology, can lead us to think a poem is a fast read, long experience has taught me that the best poems are the ones you read several times, and are rewarded with more discoveries each time. So it was with the winning poems. Some I read more than six or seven times, coming back to them over and over, until I had made my decisions. This was truly rich and rare and totally rewarding – to discover young poets whose work could stand beside any published poems I read elsewhere.

Special congratulations go to those poetry-hearted teachers out there who continue to encourage and assist young writers with their poem making. It was clear those teachers also encourage rewriting and tweaking and polishing as well to create the gems that were entered.

My thanks to all of you young poets who wrote poems and made the effort to send them in this year. Sometimes the sending is the hardest part, putting yourself and your words out there for others to read. Keep reading and writing poetry. It will always reward you and enrich you, in ways you may not expect – it is a way of both finding your own voice and truly hearing that of others.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS' JUDGE

Sherryl Clark has been reading and writing and loving poetry for more than 30 years. She has two collections of poems for adults published, as well as five verse novels for children. Her latest verse novel is *Mina and the Whole Wide World* (UQP). Her verse novel, *Farm Kid*, won the 2005 NSW Premier's Award for children's books and "Sixth Grade Style Queen (Not!)" was a CBCA Honour Book in 2008. Sherryl teaches poetry writing to all ages and also edits and critiques poetry manuscripts. Her website is at www.sherrylclark.com



winner

LOWER PRIMARY

Dihansi Amarasinghe, 8. Caulfield Grammar School, Wheelers Hill VIC

When I Went Walking

When I went walking,
Two sailors untied their boats,
They were casually talking,
As they put on their coats,
Stray cats roamed around,
The foamy waves were crashing,
The cats' ears perked up with every sound,
The lighthouse was brightly flashing,

An old man fully hunched his back,
I rushed over to assist him,
He had to carry a lumpy and heavy sack,
His name was Kim,

Suddenly a bomb landed on a house,
The war had just begun.

JUDGE'S COMMENT

Imagery and rhyme used to great effect in this poem that takes us by surprise, in the same way that war and a bomb interrupts ordinary lives.

runner up

LOWER PRIMARY

Aleigha Mudd, 7. Stanford Merthyr Infants School, Stanford Merthyr NSW

The tip of the feather

The tip of the feather
smoothly
gently
drifted down on the breeze
and landed on the baby's nose.

'A-choo!'

The baby's wish
smoothly
gently
drifted off on the breeze
and the moon shone more brightly that night.

JUDGE'S COMMENT

A simple observation worked into a poem, offering us a metaphorical narrative, a lullaby of great beauty.



winner

UPPER PRIMARY

Allegra Clarke, 9. All Saints Anglican School, Merrimac QLD

Kombumerri dreaming

For 40,000 years, our culture has survived.
The oldest known people on our prized planet.
Surviving through stories, through music, through dance.
Dreamtime weaves itself into our beings.
Ancestral songs flow through our veins.
Numbin janigam.

Custodians of country, we respect and protect the surrounds.
The animals, the landscapes, the language, and people.
Past, present and future.
From the *ngarehr* screeching in the sunny sky, to the *nguhnybah* slithering beyond our feet.
We cherish them all.
Garihmalaga gali jagun

I stand a proud *Kombumerri* girl,
Committed to my culture, my connection to land, and Dreaming.
Yet, my reflection speaks a different truth.
Sapphire eyes and paperbark hued skin contrasts that of my father's elders.
Flowing locks, not dissimilar to an ancient ghost gum, portray my mother's heritage.
Jundi wunjar-jam

Displacement. Disillusionment. Disenchantment.
Dreamtime remains within my soul, yet a larger dream calls.
A dream that celebrates differences.
A dream that unites our nation.
The dream of acceptance for all people.

Note: Translations from Yugambeh Language

Numbin janigam The house is strong

Nguhnybah Red belly black snake

Kombumerri A clan of the Yugambeh people

Ngarehr Black cockatoo

Garihmalaga gali jagun Respect this land

Jundi wunjar-jam Speak truth

JUDGE'S COMMENT

Skilful use of poetic elements explores time, language, country, culture of the Kombumerri people, and brings hope to all who read this poem.

runner up

UPPER PRIMARY

Kathy Luo, 11. Sutherland Public School, Sutherland NSW

Betrayal (villanelle)

You gave a sly innuendo.
Emerald, green grass rustled in the gale.
Betrayal often disguises itself as a fellow.

Buttercups, a beautiful golden yellow.
A field of delicate flowers with spots of hail.
You gave a sly innuendo.

Behind every tree lurches a shadow.
As I run, along it will tail.
Betrayal often disguises itself as a fellow.

I'd never thought you'd stoop so low.
Unlike me, the darkness never misses a detail.
You gave a sly innuendo.

I trusted you so.
You gave me your word, looking so frail.
Betrayal often disguises itself as a fellow.

Your betrayal pierced through my heart like an arrow.
It always starts with trust, betrayal.
You gave a sly innuendo.
Betrayal often disguises itself as a fellow.

JUDGE'S COMMENT

A finely crafted villanelle using nature to deftly unpack betrayal.

winner

LEARNING ASSISTANCE - PRIMARY

Cooper King-Seach, 11. Curlewis Public School, Curlewis NSW

My Aboriginal Teacher

Story teller, Aboriginal teacher, Aboriginal storyteller
Didgeridoo player - "Yaama, ganu, hello"
All maarubaa thanks Gamilaroi people, Dhawun
He teaches us the language, how to play didgeridoo and about our land.

He is fun and teaches us aboriginal history
Maarubaa Gamilaroi people
He went through ceremony and found out his totem is the brown snake
He has lots of tattoos they mean special things to him.

Maarubaa Gamilaroi people, Dhawun
He is rich, he is rare, he is Frog!

JUDGE'S COMMENT

An important poem honouring an Aboriginal teacher. The poet skilfully weaves languages and culture, and uses repetition to great effect.



runner up

LEARNING ASSISTANCE - PRIMARY

Grace Jiang, 11. Chatswood Public School, Chatswood NSW

Unerasable Memory



The house stood in a heaven of bees and butterflies
Flowers bloomed relentlessly, yellow and blue
In this garden, I carefully planted a seed in soft soil
Hoping it would grow.

The shed was as cool as an ice block during summer
Birds sang brightly in the crest of emerald trees
I wore yellow and blue - like sand and sea in the garden



Autumn was my favourite
The backyard engulfed by orange leaves
Those leaves rustled beneath apples
That hung like lanterns from above.

A snow blanket covered the grass
Pine trees stood like soldiers in frigid wind
Branches of those trees lowered and broke

Winter has gone and another year begins
Nothing has really changed
Now I have left this house
But these are my memories
That will never be forgotten,
Never be erased.

JUDGE'S COMMENT

Stunning imagery evoking memories of a special place through the seasons.

winner

KURRUMBEDE AWARD - PRIMARY

Eileen Murphy, 11. Fairfax Public School, Maules Creek NSW

Sponsored by



Namoi Menagerie

Below the Namoi's murky depths
A Purple-Spotted Gudgeon swims alone,
Clusters of duckweed she weaves on through
Avoiding each embedded river stone.

The snaking river is showered with orange, pinks and reds
With the sunset glow changing the murky theme,
Sitting underneath the ancient gums
I listen to the nearby, bubbling stream.

The tall, gnarled gum trees
Stand proudly on the river's brink,
Swaying silently to the tune of the wind
Thick, thirsty roots digging deeply to drink.

The ivory moon rises above the ghostly gums
Bright light glistens on the water's edge,
Namoi River bathed in eeriness
A tangle of vines dangling from a moonlit ledge.

At the waking of a new day
The morning rays of sunlight filter through the trees,
A crackle of black cockatoos erupts from the dawning sky
Noisily squawking their wants and decrees.

The vast array of flora and fauna
Feasting from above and under,
Rich and rare in all their splendour
How blessed are we to share their wonder.

JUDGE'S COMMENT

A beautiful ode to the Namoi River employing stunning imagery and rhyme to great effect.

winner

DAVID MAHER AWARD FOR SMALL SCHOOLS

Paddy Harris, 10. Rowena Public School, Rowena NSW

Planting

Lying in bed, rain pouring,
Water laying everywhere.
It's gonna be a good one this season.
Finally, the sun comes out and we're ready to go.

Checking oils and tyre pressures,
Full of fuel, ready and rearing.
Turn the key and the engine comes to life,
The planter's arms are folded tightly.

Pushing the gear stick up,
Slowly the tractor idles forward.
The orange glow of flashing lights,
And music blaring from the radio.

Expanding the width of the planter's reach,
Fan turning on the back of the air cart,
Checking the seed boots, all good.
The tractor screams as I drop the planter into the ground.

Turning hard, the whole rig shifts,
Up and back the endless runs.
"BBBBBRRRRR" the tractor yells for help.
Spinning tracks and moving nowhere.

One more try, but alas it doesn't budge.
It may be here for a while,
Waiting patiently for the paddocks to dry.
Sorry old girl, we were too impatient for a crop.

JUDGE'S COMMENT

A narrative poem with wonderful turns of phrase and imagery bringing to life the story of a tractor at planting time.

winner

JUNIOR SECONDARY

Olivia Campbell, 14. Presbyterian Ladies' College, Burwood VIC

Revels with Ravenous Ghosts

Little girl, you know nothing of hunger.
We have eaten ourselves for a hundred years,
scoffing our own fat and muscle and bone.
We have regurgitated life and swallowed it
till it became all bile.
It is time to feed us.
Burn your bitter flowers and sawtooth stones.
Smash these rotting caskets,
push away this icy soil,
curse your tears and their false syrup!
We want to schmear greasy salmon across our tongues
and juice the flabby flesh of the moon.
To guzzle the froth of the snow,
sweet and sharp, burning our throat.
Robe us with down of peaches and silk of corn.
Bedazzle us with fat yolk pearls, golden and gleaming.
Let them grow old and rank as we waltz on our graves.
For what is life if not eggs - if not sulfur?
Whisk the sun into an omelette
and wrap us in its flowing folds.
Crack our teeth on chicken cartilage,
smooth and iridescent, meaty mother of pearl.
Spin our blood into ruddy candyfloss
that stains your fingers pink.
Let it rain wine - may we drown with bloated bellies
and slurred laughter. Sew us a skin of dough,
wring oil from the Eucalyptus
and grease our creaking joints.
Feed us a flask of mackerel eyes,
vulgar in their stare, so we may be all seeing.
Tongues, hooves, tails, breasts, legs, udders, all!
But please, no wings.
We need not be reminded of lost promises.
No, we do not crave your pity.
Fill our hollows with malawach, rugelach, challah,
hamentaschen, halva, blintzes, matzos,
more, more, more!

But what's wrong, little girl? Why do you shake?
Where is the flavour of adulation on your tongue,
why is there bile? Do you hate your history?
Or have you... forgotten? Yes.
The Shabbat candles have never glowed in your eyes.
You have never seen a shofar or spun a dreidel
or smelt your grandmama's latkes.
Bony brittle babe. Now we see you -
the lack of you.
Little girl, you know too much of hunger.

Come down. Do not be afraid.
Let us teach you, feed you,
for you are too young to be hollow.
We will braid challah with your hair.
We will flambé the Iron Age, or frost the Renaissance,
or give you whichever time is most delicious.
We will grate our bones into latke dough,
for you, little girl. We will deep fry the sky
and serve it to you in sweet puffs
that taste of perfumes, of generations of a mother's kiss.
You will taste everywhen and everywhere
and understand that all of it is home.
This is how to measure oil in eggshells,
this is how to stamp grapes to wine,
this is how to remember.
Together we will build a hut of charoset -
honey mortar and apple bricks.
We will brew back our history
and we will stack together our stories
and we will all be finally full.

JUDGE'S COMMENT

This is such an impressive poem - rollicking and dark at the same time, with so many great words and startling images. Still, it controls the narrative and comes to a strong conclusion. Read it more than once.

runner up

JUNIOR SECONDARY

Esmé Tew, 14. Ravenswood School For Girls, Gordon NSW

Moving On

Every morning the sun rises.
And every morning I wake older than the night before.
These are the only known constants in my life.
That time will continue, the seasons will change and the days darken.
And that my face will look more and more like that of a stranger.
The drought will persist upon this land. This land of towering trees and summer skies.
Covered in a haze of heat and red dust.
It still feels like home.

There is no water and my throat has become parched from unsaid words.
What can I say to make you understand?
The rivers have stopped flowing and the creek is littered with corpses.
I am feeling every single emotion all at once
But never to a great enough extent.
Will you understand if I tell you of empty swimming pools and sunburnt backs?
Or show you broken puzzle pieces hidden under damp carpets?
The eucalyptus tree's shadow on the fields and my cousin's cramped apartment.
Look at my mother's scrawl of a signature on the coffee stained page.
Smell the chlorine burning your nose and the freshly picked flowers.
Do you understand yet?
Maybe it will make more sense when you see the crumpled wrapping paper,
Or hear my aunties laugh in the hallways.
Will you listen when the wind calls your name and sprinkles ash in your eyes?
I remember dancing free and naked under the lawn sprinkler
If you closed your eyes, it felt like rain.
And on summer nights when cicadas became louder than thoughts
And the only answer to my questions was 'yes'
Do you feel my pain yet?
Do you understand that I can never go back?
Being a child is a familiar song that I can no longer sing.

I am made up of dead dreams and forgotten memories.
There is an aching in my soul, which feels too known for a young body such as mine.
It hasn't rained in so long. And I am so thirsty.
I have no clue how to exist as a human in this cruel world.

My heart is so fragile and i, so full of love.
But the door to home is locked and the key is forever lost.
Pain is no stranger to me, but perhaps this knowledge is the most torturous in the world.
I don't recognize the face in my mirror anymore.
My tongue speaks a hostile language.
Everything has changed and yet nothing is different.
But I am so tired. Even laughing is exhausting.
Carefree joy has a price and I don't trade in that currency.
The land has become dry and barren, riddled with insecurity.
It has not rained for so long.

I miss home. I miss cobwebs and spiders.
I miss cracked walls and days wasted at the beach.
I miss sunlight and fire. I miss darkness and rain.
I miss looking at the stars and realising how small and unknown I was.
At that time, a lamplight could have been the moon.
And life unending.
In my veins flow millions of ideas and cities,
Every house I have slept in,
And every tear I have wept.
It is not enough.
A storm approaches on the horizon.
Time has become my enemy and my lover.
It places its hand on my shoulder and tells me it is time to go.
Memories slash through my heart and tears gash in my skin.
It's time to go.
As I leave, I have an epiphany.
I am real, I breathe, I live.
And I must move on.
It starts to rain.

JUDGE'S COMMENT

A terrific poem that manages to be both universal and intensely personal at the same time. It is full of strong sensory details and is very evocative.

winner

SENIOR SECONDARY

Pippa Attwell, 16. Presbyterian Ladies' College, Peppermint Grove WA

Creatures of digits

Zero bones

I dance with the thickness of time in fever dreams
a steady seep of oily tendrils.
My lithe and boneless body
finds sanctum in a glazed glass jar
or untenanted crevasse.
I am the drifter of Davy Jones' Locker.

One beak

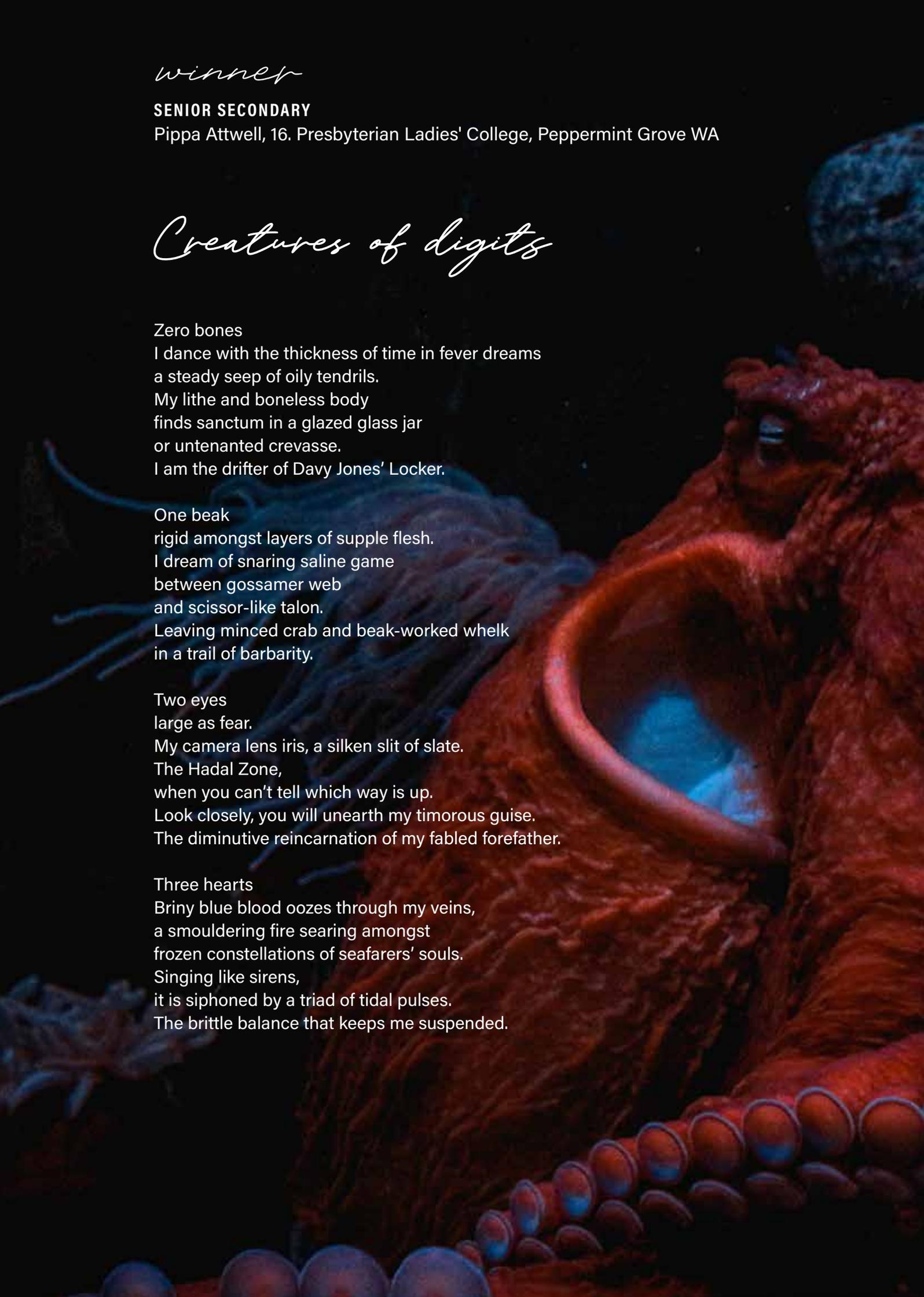
rigid amongst layers of supple flesh.
I dream of snaring saline game
between gossamer web
and scissor-like talon.
Leaving minced crab and beak-worked whelk
in a trail of barbarity.

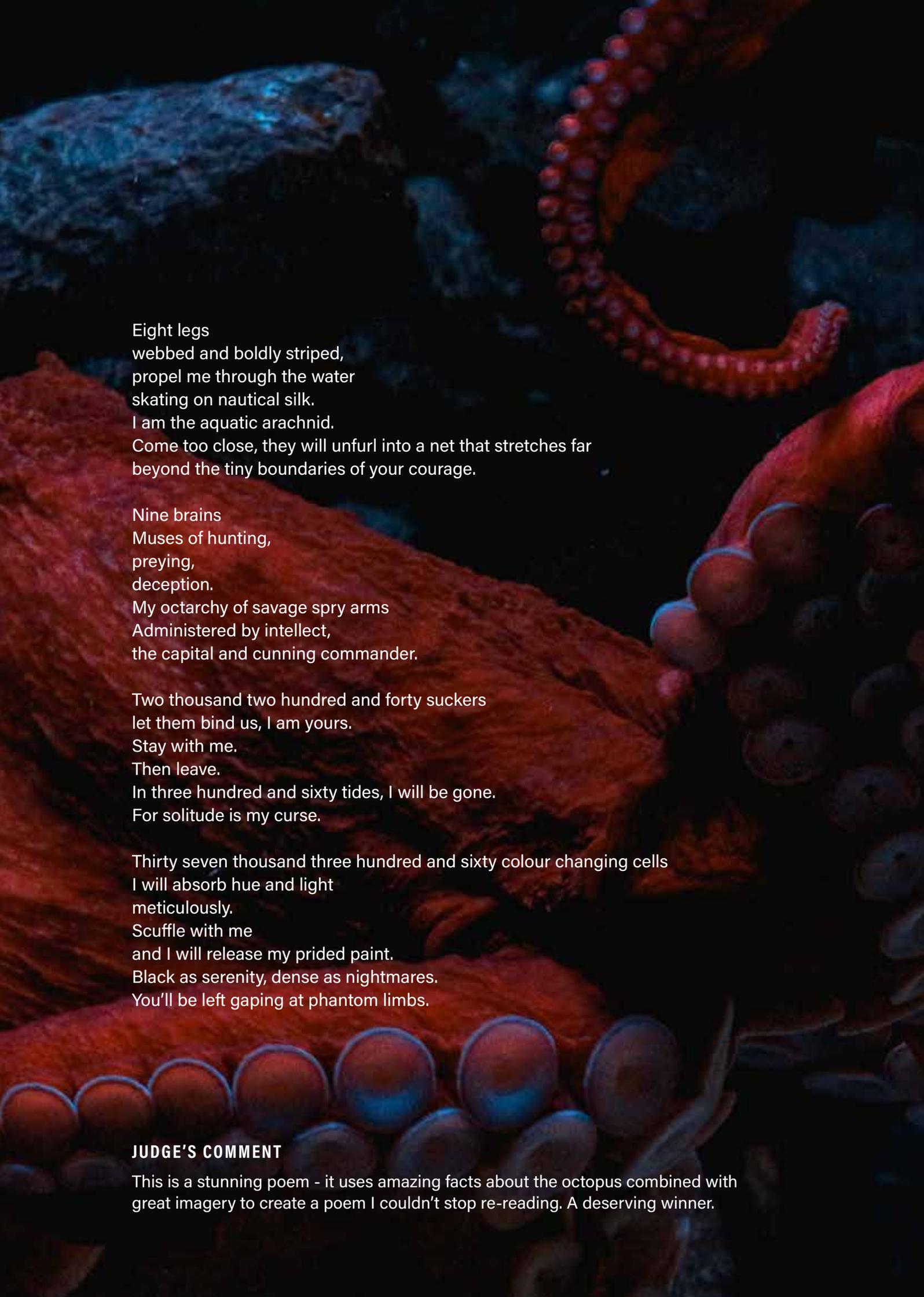
Two eyes

large as fear.
My camera lens iris, a silken slit of slate.
The Hadal Zone,
when you can't tell which way is up.
Look closely, you will unearth my timorous guise.
The diminutive reincarnation of my fabled forefather.

Three hearts

Briny blue blood oozes through my veins,
a smouldering fire searing amongst
frozen constellations of seafarers' souls.
Singing like sirens,
it is siphoned by a triad of tidal pulses.
The brittle balance that keeps me suspended.





Eight legs
webbed and boldly striped,
propel me through the water
skating on nautical silk.
I am the aquatic arachnid.
Come too close, they will unfurl into a net that stretches far
beyond the tiny boundaries of your courage.

Nine brains
Muses of hunting,
preying,
deception.
My octarchy of savage spry arms
Administered by intellect,
the capital and cunning commander.

Two thousand two hundred and forty suckers
let them bind us, I am yours.
Stay with me.
Then leave.
In three hundred and sixty tides, I will be gone.
For solitude is my curse.

Thirty seven thousand three hundred and sixty colour changing cells
I will absorb hue and light
meticulously.
Scuffle with me
and I will release my prided paint.
Black as serenity, dense as nightmares.
You'll be left gaping at phantom limbs.

JUDGE'S COMMENT

This is a stunning poem - it uses amazing facts about the octopus combined with great imagery to create a poem I couldn't stop re-reading. A deserving winner.

runner up

SENIOR SECONDARY

Saskia Fleming, 16. Presbyterian Ladies' College, Peppermint Grove WA

Grandfarmers

skin

plastic wrap on lemon curd
flesh so sinewy passionate
egg yolk curdle curdle
pinchcrinklestick
paper - lucid bruised
watercolour tableaux
the dog bit him, he bled
red red red

eyes

thin lacquer of sky
dewy as morning syrup
glacé in the sun

mind

thoughts are all flyblown
wild radish in the hippocampus
lovegrass the prefrontal cortex
a mass of forgotten husks
and dying sheep
a fire ravaged place
a tumultuous black tree
yet tender: touch and crush.
he used to be the header
sharp and green and ruthless
now the chaser bin
still catching up

JUDGE'S COMMENT

A wonderful use of images and metaphor that creates a poem which rewards re-reading. So much to imagine and think about.





winner

LEARNING ASSISTANCE - SECONDARY

Steven Estephen and Matthew Al-Chakty, 16. Maronite College of the Holy Family,
Harris Park NSW

Rich and Rare

The eastern greys and reds are in the grasslands at sunset
way up high in the eucalyptus trees koalas are rich and rare
And the lyre birds that mimic and mock, chitter and chatter, squawk and walk
Screaming cockatoos with shiny golden crests
Colourful rosellas of rich greens and reds
Beware, beware the brown snake slithers through the silky sand,
through the dreaming of no mans land
Down in the billabongs and creeks the platypus shows off his shiny beak
Across this vast land, mountains like monsters and deserts of sand
The tall, ghostly, snow gums
The bristle, bottle brush
Dingoes of all sorts howling at the moon waiting until sunrise

JUDGE'S COMMENT

Although this poem describes familiar animals and flora of Australia, it does so in a way that brings the country alive - lovely descriptions and choices of words that create a sense of rhythm and delight.

runner up

LEARNING ASSISTANCE - SECONDARY

Nikolas Nissan, 16. Redeemer Baptist School, North Parramatta NSW

The Wonder of the Three Sisters

The breath of the sisters,
Whispering in each ear;
Cold breath clenching the fists of any who pass,
The cries of their three trapped souls filling the air around.

Stories and song,
Past down generation to generation,
Sharing the legend of the three,
Passing down the little magic that made them be.

Meehni, Wimlah and Gunnedoo
These three enchanted sisters live in the hearts of many,
Once, and still, members of the Katoomba Tribe.

JUDGE'S COMMENT

A great sense of story telling and descriptive words combined.

winner

KURRUMBEDE AWARD - SECONDARY

Holly Munday, 14. Gunnedah High School, Gunnedah NSW

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Killers of the Night

I see dead, dark, damp, dogs,
Some of us cry in cold, cramped, corners
Birds are bright in bear cages with wet wings
My family rot in front of me.

We lay in the dark night
Dead, I was right,
They killed them while we were sleeping
They killed so they could keep warm

But the humans are too strong for us
Some human killers go to jail, some do not.
The human killers roam free
And kill us for meat

The ghosts of killed barn animals
Haunt the dark, cold, scary, night.
Humans think that this is right for them
To live longer and stronger.



JUDGE'S COMMENT

This is a skilfully written poem that turns us around and shows us an unexpected and bleak point of view.



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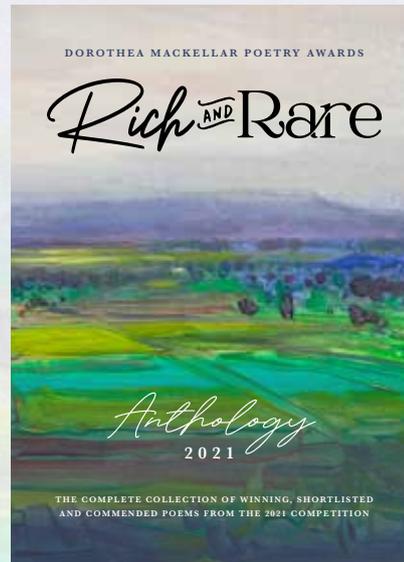
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