



mosman
**Youth
awards**
in literature
2019

Winning Entries

A collection of award winning short stories and poems from the 2019 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

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

2019 Judges

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

2019 Sponsors

Lions Club of Mosman, Rotary Club of Mosman, Mosman Zu Café, Northern Beaches & Mosman College and Oracle Books Mosman

This contest is organised by Mosman Library Service.



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**NORTHERN
BEACHES
& MOSMAN
COLLEGE**





Winning Entries

A collection of award winning
short stories from the 2019 Mosman
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A Written Monologue

Georgia Slack
Winner – First Prize
Primary Prose

Some might think my life curious. Some might think my life dull. I like it. Let me tell you why.

I'm old, but, I am still the of the chameleon of the geology world. I'm very famous.

People come from all over the world to see me. To some I am just a giant rock; barren, desolate, bleak. However, to many, I am a vast beauty; unique and mysterious.

For many years I did not know my name. I then became known as Ayers Rock. Now I am known as Uluru. Apparently, this is what the Aborigines used to call me. I like the sound of Uluru. It suits me; bold and strong.

My life is not always easy. In the scorching heat of summer, as the temperatures soar, I can feel, with great intensity, the beating rays from the sun hitting my rock face. I wait for the sun to sink. It is during the night, when my cracks and crevasses receive some relief from the searing temperatures. It is at this time when the desert awakens. The desert suddenly becomes a cacophony of scurrying and scuttling. The wildlife, unable to survive the desert sun, scurry under the star speckled sky. It is also during the night that I look to the ebony sky and see the millions of stars. Some are sparking, some are shooting, some stand apart from the others.

As the sun rises, the seemingly endless red landscape once again becomes visible. The colour red is only halted by the horizon when the brilliant azure sky appears to meet the dust in perfect harmony. When the sun rises and falls, the colour of my rock changes. There are purplish tones, orange tinges and even green hues that speckle in my rock shafts.

For the first ten thousand years of my existence I had very few human visitors. I now know that my early visitors were the Aborigines. They would seek shelter in my caves. They would paint drawings with ochre onto my rock faces. I know I was special to them as they did dances and built their humpies near me. I know they respect me.

In more recent times there have been many more people visiting me. For many years, they climbed me. With every step they took I would feel a little of my surface being rubbed away. Even though I am very big, I was worried I was going to turn into a pebble! I was very pleased when I saw some official looking people arrive one day and place a big sign asking people to consider not climbing all over me. Some people do still climb me but most people have respected the sign.

I think my homeland is the most special in the world. On the rare occasions when the sky blackens and ominous clouds cover the sky bringing rain, the landscape around me transforms itself into a sea of green. It is at this time that I feel like a little island in the middle of the desert.

When rain does fall, the desert oaks that are scattered in the area around me awaken from their desert hibernation. The spinifex grass and desert flowers carpet the red dirt. Bird life suddenly surrounds me in abundance. The gushing water cascades from my rock shafts. The noises are different now. They are peaceful but there is an urgency to them, as all of us know that this won't last long.

Then it is gone. As quickly as it came. The beating, unforgiving sun returns. The green fades into hues of brown and red. I don't experience seasons. Sometimes I wish I could see snow, or the dirt covered in leaves. Then I look around at all the surrounds me and I am grateful that I live right here. Sometimes, in the distance I can see the salt rising as the wind whips it into a flurry of white clouds. At other times, I can see another collection of rocks. This is the Olgas or Kata Tjuta as the Aborigines call them.

Sometimes people get me mixed up with another rock that is similar to me. But, that is Mount Conner. I don't know how people get us mixed up. We have totally different silhouettes. Also, Mount Conner stands on private land so most people can't get close and touch her.

I live amongst a kaleidoscope of colour. I survive some of the harshest conditions in the world. I am a tough old girl. I will continue to stand and watch the desert life and the generations of people admiring me. I am Uluru.

Coming Home

Jimin Lee

Winner – Second Prize

Primary Prose

Home.

A distant, faint memory forced to the corner of the mind.

A longing for the sanctuary and peace of home keeps them going.

The rest of the mind filled with sorrow and guilt, eating away at the fabric of reality.

Never to be the same again, the heart infected with undying pain.

The cure for trauma is a small dying hope.

This is for their family, their country, their home.

This is a soldier's solemn duty. Nothing will change the way it works.

Yet emotions are strong especially emotions of grief, causing a cascade of events on a path of terrible conflict.

Memories of happy smiles and laughter all fogged like a dream.

Families await holding on to fate.

Reading letters with teary eyes they wonder what their lives will be like if this tragic war ever ends.

Gunshots and explosions fill their ears, drowning out every ounce of safety.

The salty taste of blood and dust numbing their tongues.

The smell of smoke making them choke and splutter.

The sight of soldiers falling on the field of blood clogging their eyesight leaving them only wishing they were dead.

Home is all they want.

The tragedies of war has left them hollow inside.

Images of dead bodies dripping with blood fill their heads nauseating them as if they were sick.

The longing for home is so strong.

Their home is their protection, their life, their home.

They want to run from war but this is the life of a soldier, this is what war is, this is why they are the people that can end this war.

Unfortunately.

Soldiers fighting for their country hoping this war would end, families pushing past the rough times, nurses healing wounded soldiers.

Faces determined, blank and smoked with dust like a dirty chimney.

As the war rages on, they wonder if they will survive another day in their lives not knowing their life force is slowly being drained out.

They want to thrive not just survive.

Would dying be better for them? Or should they keep going for the sake of their home?

Crouching in the trenches trembling with anxiety and dread.

Reloading at the beginning of a battle and unloading at the end.

Limping back to bases and crumpling on the ground.

A day for a soldier is a tiresome day.

A few hours later, only to start again.

The deafening sounds of fire alarms, gunshots and explosions ringing in their ears as they march day and night.

Climbing into army planes and maneuvering through the air as the war goes on and on.

The sky blotted with dust, planes and smoke.

This everlasting war filled with turmoil has caused distress to all animals and humans alike.

There is pandemonium in the battlefield.

The world is divided and has no unity.

This nefarious war has killed all sympathy and joy in every soldier, the enemy fighting like a bloodthirsty dog.

To us they are the villains but to them we are.

In the end we all are the villains but that depends on how you look at it.

People have different sides and stories to this war but there is one thing in common.

This war is full of calamity and has created a disunity among the countries of the world.

Finally, on the eleventh month of the eleventh day of the eleventh hour, this war finally ended.

Two minutes' silence for the dead.

The sound of the Last Post soothing their mind, their heart and soul.

The acts of remembrance and the memorial funerals have pacified them and most importantly they can go home.

The clamour and commotion is all gone and the mind is cleansed and is refilled with happiness.

Finally we are going home their faces bright and the frowns wiped off as if it was a mask that hid their true emotions this whole time.

The thought of coming home into the arms of celebrating family makes them giddy with excitement.

The whirlwind of colourful emotion explodes in their hearts.

Throwing their caps into the air with joyous cries they dance and cheer with delight.

The sacrifice has saved the world.

The respect for them is overflowing.

As they walk towards their childhood home a warm feeling coats them like a blanket on a cold day.

Now they have earned the one thing they wanted all throughout the war.

Home; was once distant but now home is with them.

The End

Message in a Book

Iolathe Green
Winner – Highly Commended
Primary Prose

The stifling heat of the classroom sapped me of thought. The fans whirred pushing my listless state towards sleep. The teacher's monotone voice became muffled, fuzzing with the buzzing of the flies, trying hard to escape the prison of the classroom windows.

I glumly stared down at the words in the book that lay on the desk in front of me. The artificial breeze of the fans caused the pages to slowly flip to the front of the book. The teacher and students babbled on, discussing tedious reflections of the book. I took no interest.

Splinters skidded into my skin as I rubbed my arm against the wooden desk. I felt no pain. The heat, the teacher, the buzzing insects. It was all too much. My elbows gave way, my whirring head slammed hard into the pages of the book.

Something strange took hold. My limbs felt tangled, contorted. My lips tingled and my hair wrinkled, fighting against the styling mousse I had applied to it that morning. My eyes twitched but remained open.

Confusion swept over me. I was being tugged into the pages of the book, my body mixing with the alphabet, travelling through the chapters. But how was that possible. The book's cover slapped shut, trapping me inside.

Suddenly, my world fell still. Time past. I awoke to a visual paradise of soft grass blanketed my sights and holding a book. In the distance I made out a rundown cottage. I moved towards it.

The cottage had vines wrapping around its circumference, strangling the pillars of the verandah. Weeds sprouted cut of the cracks in the pavement. The door had a large crack, like an open wound, running down its core.

As I approached the cottage, the front door swung open. Peering in, a frail woman, wrinkles pinched at her skin, sat in a rocking chair. A long purple dress swayed at her shins. A necklace of crooked beads hung heavily around her neck, the beads closely resembled the shape of her aging teeth.

"Jex, you are the chosen one," croaked the Old woman.

"I picked you for this job. You are special. I am Mrs Gladison. Jex, you are trapped in a book and the only way to return to your life is to write your way out of it. The story in this book before you is unfinished and a girl's life hangs in the balance. You must save the girl."

Mrs Gladison continued on...

"Here are three gifts to help you on your quest. A riddle. A map to guide you and also, a pen. The pen holds the power. Now go and write. Go learn. Go save a life."

"You have not much time and neither does the girl, so here take these things" implored Mrs Gladison.

I read the riddle: "You are what you do. Your actions define you." The map just created more confusion. The pen vibrated excitedly with delight in my hand. The book had grown sweaty and wet. Holding a pen, a book, a map, a riddle and a baffled brain. What had I become involved in?

I sat on a grassy knoll contemplating the way forward and the objects in my possession. A chill past over my skin, time past. My thinking finally sharpened to a purpose. I had to follow the map and it would lead me to my challenge, to the girl needing help, needing my help.

I used the map. The weary undulating sag of the hills, the peaks of the mountains, the empty fields and never-ending forests made up this country. I used my rest time to fill the pages of the unfinished book with my own story, making notes of where I had been, the country I had traversed and importantly what I had learnt and the man I was becoming.

I kept my mindset positive. I came upon a gloomy cave where the screams of bats echoed from the walls. Terror seeped from within the cave but I kept my cool head and continued on, towards my destiny. Across sandy beaches, through deserted spooky villages and treacherous mountain terrain. As I travelled, I kept writing... writing the story of my life and my destiny. I became strong, focused, full of potential.

The travel had taken its toll. I was plummeted into an ocean of tiredness but it was now I needed all my strength as I glanced down the hill. Red angry flames engulfing a tiny timber shack. The fire roared and screeched. Smoke mingled with the air, strangling the oxygen and creating a whirlpool of fumes. I struggled to breath, my throat desperate for oxygen, wrinkled, dried up. The edges of the book's paper wrinkled, adapting to the harsh temperature.

A shrill scream of despair echoed from the house. Wind hustled the canopy of the trees, tearing through the bush and scrub.

My hands trembled as I hurried to write in the book, writing the story which had to be told. The purpose of my writing, to save a life. I was the only one to save the girl. I concluded my writing. THE END. I dashed towards the inferno.

Wallpaper peeled off the walls as flames licked the timber frame of the home. My eyes scanned the smoky internals. There was no sign of the trapped girl. A petrified feeling rose to my head. My lip quivered. I moved inside knocking down a door and there lay an unconscious girl.

I wrestled with her frame, dragging her from the inferno. When clear of the chaos, I felt for her pulse. But my fingers didn't find a beat. I hovered my hand over her mouth, but no breath blew. I squeezed her shoulders but my call for movement received no response.

A pool of utter despair pulled at my organs. A horrified sharpness scolded my body. My heart, beating hard in my mouth. My body incapable of stillness.

Was I too late?

Finding Happiness

Samara Foulds
Winner – First Prize
Junior Secondary Prose

The rain pattered against the windowsill softly. Rose imagined that it sounded like footsteps. Her nurse's footsteps didn't sound like that. Her footsteps were adult footsteps; loud and angry, and they always made Rose's heart thunder. Because Nurse meant needles. Needles meant pain. No, the rain like a toddler's footsteps, unsteady and intermittent, hesitant.

Rose shook her head, clearing the thoughts. She breathed in, breathed She pulled the threadbare blanket over her knees with icy hands. Her hair was lank and clumped together from her shower. She imagined her dark hair as flowing, her pallid skin as flawless and tanned. The walls were staring at her. They haunted her. Like the people here who all blurred together – the doctors and nursing staff too. They said that her thoughts ran in circles. They promised they would help her.

She couldn't tell what was real anymore. The floor sometimes spun and often she saw monsters with wide maws, saliva dripping from their canines. She named them, but their faces changed constantly; sometimes they were even beautiful, with the flowing hair she wished for. Sadness filled her as her brokenness was reaffirmed with every test the doctors performed to fix her, because Rose was a shattered mirror: broken glass - sharp, unpredictable and almost certainly unfixable.

Rose got up from her cot, with its unfeeling metal rods and its undefining grey sheets. Her bare feet wandered across the floor, exploring the coarse and gaudily colourful carpet underfoot. She scrunched her nose up, scrutinising the floor. This was real. She padded towards the window, slid it open and sat on the ledge. She paused for breath, her chest heaving with exertion. Her arms were weak; the muscles had long ago atrophied. A feeling of helplessness sank into her heart. Inching forward cautiously, she stuck her head further and took a deep breath in. Cold air filled her lungs and snow caught on her eyelashes. It was liberating. She leaned out even further and breathed in again. A large snowflake drifted out in the wind. It looked beautiful. Rose liked beautiful. She reached out to grab it with both hands.

Her legs gave and she tumbled out of the window. She hadn't meant to fall. Her flimsy hospital gown fluttered around her as her bitten nails grappled for purchase along the ledge. There was nothing to find. Then a burning sensation washed over her. It started in her toes, comfortably warm at first, but became a raging fire and she imagined that she was burning like wood in a fireplace.

Abruptly, she found herself in a forest. Her feet explored the slippery moss of the glade. She swiveled around. The mutant was there, dripping maw and all. Its beady eyes were focused on her.

Fur covered its body and horns perched menacingly on its temples. This was the monster she'd named Pain. It leapt. Its claws were outstretched, talons razor sharp. This time, she didn't run, didn't scream, didn't cry. This time, she stood there. This time, she had a sword. She raised the sword and the monster speared itself onto the blade. It vanished into ash and drifted away on a zephyr. Then the snow was back and her eyes took in the ground which loomed ever closer.

Suddenly, the burning started again and the forest disappeared. A beach lay before her now and she was sitting in a deck chair. She dangled her hand over the side and lazily sifted the sand through her fingers. She looked around her, taking in the panoramic scene. Another girl was on a second chair beside her. She was a sharp contrast to the beautiful setting they were in. Her eyes were red-rimmed from crying. This was the girl Rose had named Sorrow. She got up, surprised to find her legs strong. She crouched beside Sorrow, "Why are you crying, girl? There is nothing to be sad about." Sorrow smiled in response and exploded into a cloud of autumn leaves. They fluttered across the sand and towards the sea. The beach disappeared.

Rose saw the ground rising up towards her and the burning started again, but then, like a vacuum, she was sucked out of the cold wind and found herself in a graveyard. Row upon row, the marble gravestones stood, in army formation. They had been forgotten by time. She turned around and saw a procession of people, all dressed in black and grey, marching down the rows of gravestones, an open coffin between them. Their faces carried sunken eyes and yellow-tinged skin. In front of Rose, they stopped. She itched to move, to run. The mass converged, slowly surrounding her. She peered into the coffin and there was the boy she had named Death. His dark hair was splayed delicately across the satin quilting. His eyes were closed. She blew onto his face. Slowly, his eyes opened and he rose as if from a deep sleep. The people looked up from their feet and smiled happily. Their eyes lit up and their skin took on colour. They away from Rose and disintegrated into dust on the wind. All that was left was an empty coffin and a girl standing in a field.

She opened her eyes. The ground rushed up to meet her. The wind whipped against her skin and she felt a scream build in her throat, but it stuck there. Snow exploded in flurries around her and pain ricocheted throughout her body. Her vision went red, then black. The burning started and didn't fade. Then, her eyes closed. She breathed in, she breathed out. She scrutinised the peaceful darkness surrounding her. This was real. A warm tear slipped from her eye, but a powerfully reassuring hand reached forward to wipe it away. There was no crying.

A smile formed on her lips for the first time in what seemed like years and Rose felt an unidentifiable feeling course through her. She named it Happiness.

Caramel Apples

Sarah Cassidy

Winner – Second Prize

Junior Secondary Prose

The cornflower blue sky was spotted with fairy floss clouds, they wilted against the powerful rays of sunshine that beamed down upon the country fair. People wandered from store to store tasting mulled wine and skewered meat whilst scoops of ice-cream wobbled perilously atop wafer cones held in the grubby fists of children. Weaving through the packed crowds was a small boy with tearstained cheeks. He had been holding their place in line for the ferris wheel when Heidi had gone to buy caramel apples. That was three hours ago; now Jorge was utterly lost and Heidi was nowhere in sight. His stomach turned at the thought of Mrs. Peters' reaction to him returning to the parking lot without Heidi. Moko Jumbies danced on stilts and juggled fiery knives. Towering above Jorge, they made him feel minuscule in comparison. Fruitlessly, he craned his neck to scan the crowd, searching for that pair of bright red pigtails.

Heidi snaked her way through the crowd towards the caramel apple stall. The balmy summer's day had become unpleasantly hot as the afternoon progressed, her freckled cheeks were now rosy red from splashes of sunlight. She walked by a yard of barn animals and wrinkled her nose at the stench of pig slops and cow dung, a magician stood atop a bundle of hay and waved about his wand. "Little girl" the magician's oily voice resonated through the crowd and they all turned to face Heidi. He beckoned for her to come forward, Heidi nervously weaved her way towards the magician. Pigs snorted and wriggled against her shins as he reached down and extended a gloved hand. Heidi took it and stepped up onto the haystack. Feeling tall standing beside the stubby magician who barely reached her shoulders, he looked up at her with glinting black eyes and a sly grin. Heidi felt her eyes drawn to the badge on his tuxedo which read "Salvador" The magician chuckled and proudly stated "that's me, Magician Salvador, master of mirage"

Salvador's thinning swirl of dark hair was revealed as he whipped off his top hat. He gestured towards Heidi and she gave a quaint smile, trying to ignore the many eyes of the crowd that bore into her eagerly awaiting the magic trick. Heidi tentatively reached inside, at first feeling nothing more than a regular hat. Then a cry of shock escaped her lips as her fingertips scathed the surface of an icy cold liquid. Heidi reached further and further into the hat, the crowd murmured in confusion at Heidi's bewildered expressions. She sloshed about, feeling seaweed tangle around her fingers and salty scent wafted from the hat, With the overwhelming smell of ocean, her vision began to distort, the rhythmic crashing of waves drowned out the snorting of the pigs and she felt herself drifting out of consciousness...

A dim light lanced Heidi's heavy eyelids as she struggled to open them. She choked on the dust that filled her lungs, rolling onto her side she felt the rough flooring scratch against her ear. Something felt so dreadfully wrong. "Heidi" she thought to herself "Heidi" the word echoed around her head. It definitely meant something important, she just didn't know what. The dreary grey room spun in loops as she crawled into a sitting position. "Rye?" A somewhat familiar oily voice resounded from a shadowy figure hunched in the corner. "Rye?" The word felt cold and alien, yet it was her name. Rye nodded in response. Stepping into the white light of a flickering bulb, a stubby man extended his hand. Rye took it and rose to her feet, her head throbbing. "You can call me Salvador. I'm a magician, a master of mirage."

Salvador led her up a creaking ladder towards 'The dressing room' where other moko jumbies were training. Deep down Rye knew that she wasn't one of them but Salvador thoroughly explained that she was in fact a part of the circus but had been concussed after falling from her stilts. Salvador passed Rye a pair of tall wooden stilts. She was off balance at first but within a few minutes the height felt natural. The magician clapped his hands with glee, "I think you're ready for the fair!" A blonde acrobat dolled Rye up, applying bright makeup, a black wig and a blue suit.

Jorge nervously heaved himself towards the car park, a hollow pit of dread gnawing at his stomach as he desperately tried to pull himself together. Blinking back tears he approached the black van where Mrs. Peters sat in the drivers seat. Upon seeing Jorge, she beamed and then frowned at Heidi's absence. She clicked open the door and marched towards him. "Where's Heidi?" Jorge's lower lip trembled and he couldn't save his thumb from fluttering into his mouth, an old habit he could never seem to break. "I-I-I'm sorry-y" The dread in Jorge's stomach expanded and rushed through his whole being "I can't find her, she's lost" that was when Jorge crumpled, melting into the gravel like an unfortunate ice cream cone. "What do you mean she's lost?" Mrs. Peters snapped at the sobbing boy curled in a ball at her feet.

The sun lost its battle to the moon and slipped below the horizon, leaving the sky enveloped in an ashy blackness that resembled an oven-baked tray of burnt fries. Mrs. Peters held a painfully tight grip of Jorge's sweaty fist as she dragged him back into the nightmarish fair. Most stalls were beginning to pack up and the majority of the crowd had dispersed. "Heidi?!" Mrs. Peterson and Jorge yelled in desperate unity as they frantically asked around for a ten year old girl with tomato red pigtailed. In their haste and Jorge's clumsiness, the young boy ran squarely into a pair of stilts. Flustered and fazed, Jorge's eyes worked their way up the moko jumbie's lanky figure until their eyes locked. Struggling to regain her balance, Rye noticed the anxious contortion of his facial features and wondered how anyone could be sad at a place such as a fair "Cheer up little boy". Rye reached into her pocket and revealed a sticky fruit "Caramel apple?"

My Imaginary Friend

Holly Hurst
Winner – Highly Commended
Junior Secondary Prose

Diary entry, March 31st

It was basically my job, I knew exactly what I wanted and how to give it to myself. Well. Not myself, younger me. I don't know how I got there; all I know is that I was the imaginary friend of little 9 year old me. It freaked me out at first, but overtime I learnt to deal with it because there was nothing else, I could do. It's quite simple though, I just play my favourite games, tell bedtime stories, make up little dance routines and sing along to the wiggles. I knew I was imaginary because the rest of the family would refer to me as the 'imaginary friend'. I was meant to be living my teenage years and it was like I was re watching my 9-year-old self. When little me was asleep I tried to remember anything I could. All I could remember is that I was meant to be 14 and that I was meant to be in 2019, March 29th to be exact.

I remember time passing more and more and little me was Thirteen. It had already been four years and little me still loved to do things with me. She would hide me from the family though, I think she was embarrassed to still have an imaginary friend at thirteen. She stopped saving seats for me at restaurants and on the sofa when we were all watching telly but I understood; she was embarrassed. I couldn't help but wonder when it reaches 29th March, what would happen. I thought maybe she would go back in time like I did on that date, or things would just keep going and I would be her imaginary friend forever. I was so scared. Maybe I would just disappear? The options were endless. It got to March the 28th, the day before, and I told little me how much I love her. I wish I explained everything, so she was prepared. I wish I told her everything I knew before it was too late. I wish now, I could go back in time and explain, but after this experience I guess I don't even know what time is.

March 29th came and I woke up. She was still there I was still there. Everything just went on as normal! Her mum said to mini me that they were going for a bike ride, of course I came along. Mum and dad sat on the picnic table by the side of the road and mini me cycled along the path on the other side of them, I didn't like this. There was just something about this. I had been here before... well of course I have because that is me, but I hadn't remembered anything else, it was like having déjà vu for a really long time. It was an eerie feeling. I knew I needed to do something and I needed to stop something, but I didn't. I was so curious what was going to happen because I had been here before.

All of a sudden I knew that my younger self was going to lose control of the bike, and roll onto the road and get run over. I don't know how I knew this, I just did. I still don't know why I didn't do anything, I guess I wanted to see it happen because this was the first thing I remembered. It happened just as I had predicted

and I watched her get run over by the truck. The last thing that I remember was seeing her in a coma, in the hospital.

My job was to be my own imaginary friend and save myself. When I was hit by the truck, I was in a coma to be sent back to change this, or time can't continue. That younger self has now gone back again in time and this loop will keep continuing until I build up the courage to save myself.

The 4784 Incident

Isaiah Woods
Winner – First Prize
Senior Secondary Prose

Wake.

Where am I? Not home. New place. Is it home? Four white, padded walls. White floor. Everything white. The only colour is coming from my orange jumpsuit. I'm lying down. A dull, throbbing pain appears in the back of my head. Why am I here? What do I remember? Nothing. Who am I? Nothing.

Get up. Walk around. I try to look for a discernible feature in this room. Dim swinging light. Large door in front of me. Get out. No handle. Push. The door is locked. Knock on door. Bang on door. Scream at door. Nothing. Why can't I remember anything? Am I even human? Hands. Feet. Legs. Arms. I must be human.

I throw myself against the door that must lead to freedom. Do I want to leave? Did I choose to be here? Door doesn't move a single centimeter. Try again. Not a single centimeter. As I prepare the battering ram of flesh and bone, the door opens. Sliding door.

Man walks in. Tall, while, masculine man walks in. Suited. Holding chair in one hand, notebook in other. Chair gets planted on floor. Man plants himself chair. He speaks.

"State your identification number."

Identification number?

"Please."

I don't know my identifica-

I do know it. Why do I know if?

"Um... 4784?" I blurt out a seemingly useless yet meaningful number. I knew that number. He speaks again.

"Ok, 4784, I am Dr. Relnease. I'll be asking you a couple of questions and ask you to do a couple of tasks. Do you understand?"

"I...uh...yes. Yes, I understand. Why though?"

Dr. Relnease smiles.

"That's not important right now. Just answer the questions and do I say and we'll get along just great. Understand?"

"Yes"

I don't. I want to know why I am here. I want to know who I am. I'm not some random 4—digit number. I am a person. Yet, I stay quiet.

"Great." he smiles still, "Let's start with some questions."

continues on next page

Dr. Relnease flicks through his notebook until he lands on a page. It must be full of questions.

"One, what do you remember before waking up?"

I hesitate, "I don't remember anything before waking up. My memory is completely blank."

Dr. Relnease has an analysing gaze, still maintaining a smile

"Ok, next one. Would you consider yourself human? If not, please explain why."

Of course I'm human, what's a dumb question.

I still hesitate.

"Yes. I am human."

His glare makes me think I answered wrong. The smile fades away. He looks at the notebook again then back at me.

"How many people have you slaughtered?"

Excuse me. Did I hear that correctly? Did he just ask how many people have I killed? Or is he accusing me? I wouldn't kill anyone, I'm a good person. I think.

"I-I'm sorry doctor, could you repeat the question?"

"How many people have you slaughtered, 4784?"

"..."

Why do I have an answer to question? I can't remember my own name yet I know how many people I've killed. Why? Why?

"4784. I need an answer."

Don't answer. Do not answer.

"Now, 4784. I don't have all day." His voice cuts through me like butter.

"I...have killed..."

Hard swallow. Sweaty hands. Rapid blinking. I must be psychotic.

"...4,784,620 people."

Did I really? Or is that what he wants me to say? Why do I have no recollection of the supposed killings? He's in my head.

His smile returns. He looks at his notebook. He looks at me.

"Great. Now, for this next task, I am going to say statement and just want you say how you feel and your thoughts about the statement. Understand?"

"Yes."

"Fantastic. First statement. 'I was broken, but now I am together again, as I should have been all this time.' How do you feel about that, 4784?"

I feel chills up and down my spine. He knows something. Something I don't.

"It's pretty cryptic, I guess. Eerie, maybe. But I...I...I felt like knew that. I've never heard it, yet I feel like I have"

What am I saying? I don't know what that was. What am I feeling? Looks at notebook. Smiles at me.

"You're doing great. Next. 'Who am I to believe in a thing that casted me aside?' Thoughts?"

Why have I heard this as well? I even knew what he was going to say before he said it. Like it's something I've said before...

"4784, are you ok? You need to answer."

I need to answer.

"Lonely and lost. Something missing."

"Are you missing something?"

"N-no. I...I don't know."

"Ok. Last statement."

Please. I just want this to be over.

"I am God. Look upon me not with marvel but with fear, I come to cast judgment."

I know where this is from.

"I said this, didn't I doctor?"

He sighs. I failed his test. I don't know how I failed. I just know I did.

"Yes, 4784. You did. Just as you went on a mass killing spree. Do you remember that?"

It's coming back to me now. The acts of terror I've done. The fear I've caused. How could I?

continues on next page

"I do."

He stands. Picks up chair. Notebook in one hand. Chair in other. He keeps eye contact with me.

"We tried to make you forget it. To avoid you doing it again. I guess it just didn't work this time."

The door opens. Men rush in. Armoured men rush in. Rush to me.

"Please! I won't do it again! Whatever I did, that wasn't me!"

The men force me to the ground. One on each limb. Pinned. The doctor walks over to me. I struggle.

"I'm sorry 4784. We'll have to try again."

"PLEASE! I'M A GOOD PERSON!"

He pulls out a syringe. Sharp pain in my neck. Black.

Wake.

Where am I? Not home.

When the Rain Came Down

Kynan Fiaola
Winner – Second Prize
Senior Secondary Prose

9/5/20

Dear Sam

It's been pretty lonely without you, hope you can get back from your little business trip soon, it's been pretty lonesome without you here.

This new apartment is pretty cramped, and the neighbours are damn loud, but at least they're not rude, I met our neighbor, Susie, the one who gave us that cake when we moved here, she's pretty nice, and we're gonna go out for a coffee sometime.

On the bright side at least all this alone time gives me the chance to try the various things I've always been meaning to do, like that painting I started ages ago. Almost forgot about that old thing. Anyways I hope you get back sooner rather than later, hope you enjoy your trip!

12/5/20

Something weird happened today.

It was raining, but this wasn't like any rain I've ever seen before.

It was red, dark red, and the smell, god it smelt bad.

I had to skip work as well, the parking lot has been completely flooded, like, it's at least waist deep, and it smells horrendous.

God it smells like a body down there.

And the rain doesn't show any signs of stopping anytime soon.

Is the same thing happening with you?

13/5/20

Some bastard decided to knock and run at 5 in the bloody morning, don't know who did it, but now I'm just tired and annoyed.

The rain is still going on.

I wonder if it'll ever end at this point.

Please come home soon.

There's been a lot of banging coming from the neighbours on the lower floors, it's not normal either, its a constant dull thudding.

Ps. Have you been getting my emails? You haven't been responding to my calls either.

continues on next page

19/5/20

The phone lines have gone down, the banging from downstairs has stopped and I'm wondering what it was. There's also been a lot of gunshots in the distance.

I can barely see a meter outside without it being covered by a dense, red mist.

Update: Holy shit.

There was banging at the door, and when I looked through the peephole to see who, or what it was, I just saw this, fleshy, disgusting abomination of skin and eyes looking back at me.

I feel like I'm going insane.

The smell is becoming sickening.

The neighbours have gone quiet.

I've managed to barricade any entrances to the house, all except for one window, that's only open so I can see if the rain has stopped. Which it hasn't.

I'm scared. And I miss you, I hope.

25/5/20

A deafening screech woke me up this morning, but I couldn't find what caused it. I hate this. It's like the world wants to make me go mad.

Food is running low, I think I might be forced to go out there to get food. It's still raining, of course, you'd think the soft drum of the rain would be soothing, but it's only aiding my panic.

That thing at the door is just waiting there, not doing anything, it's like a robot with nothing to do, is it waiting for me? I'm not sure, I hope it isn't.

...

That thing finally decided to leave after forever, the hallway outside is a mess of blood and gore, I managed to steal some food from one of the neighbours, I regret it slightly, but I don't think they're alive anymore, the door was busted in and there was a trail of blood leading to the bedroom, I didn't go any closer though, something was in there.

Anyway, the food should last me a good while.

The TV decided to turn itself on, it was just dead air for a solid hour before playing some warning message, apparently stuff like this is happening all over the world, the same thing is on the radio as well. I hope you're safe.

Please be safe.

23/6/20

Oh my god.

The rain finally stopped.

I'm going to check on the neighbours.

...

That was a mistake.

I don't think any of them are alive.

All of their doors were either wide open, or busted down, the ground was slick with blood in all of the apartment block, as if a mop drenched in paint was dragged along the ground

I think I saw Susie trying to escape this morning, desperately running for her car, but those things were waiting for her.

There were also three soldiers, at least that's the only way I can describe them, running down the street as well, but before I could signal them for help, they were attacked by those... things.

The screams. Oh god the screams.

They melted like wax.

...

Their bodies started moving again, after 5 hours I think, but it was like they had no bones, or they were made out of slime. Creepy shit.

I think this might be some sort of zombie apocalypse, like in the movies.

11/6/20

I've been passing the time by just reading the hundreds of books you've bought for me that I've never gotten around to reading, and writing these emails to you is probably the only thing that is keeping me sane.

I miss you.

continues on next page

25/6/20

I need to get out of here.

I don't want to die.

I'm going to try escaping.

Wish me luck.

...

Dammit.

One of those things managed to cut me along arm as I was running.

The damn bastard alerted more of them and now I'm forced back into the apartment.

It hurts so much.

4/7/20

Those things might be infectious, my head's been spinning, and I can't eat anything without feeling sick instantly. I think the floor is melting from underneath my feet.

I've been leaping in and out of consciousness, I think my skin is getting paler, I don't know.

I'm scared. Where are you?

I don't want to die.

9/9/20

Rachel?

Rachel is everything okay?

Drought

Amelie Kenney
Winner – Highly Commended
Senior Secondary Prose

Weldmere was a small, tight-knit, lonely sort of town. It was the kind of town that was hot enough for a wet pair of socks to dry by ten o'clock in the morning. As the sun scorched the balding spot on his head, Arthur Johnson shut the door of his florist shop, securing not only the mortise lock, but the deadbolt and padlock too. Arthur believed wholeheartedly that modest towns such as this the most lawless of the bunch. People trapped in such a stifling, suffocating town tended to act like prisoners stuck in a cage. It was just the truth of things. He breathed shallowly as hot air filled his lungs. It wasn't just stuffy, the heat was invasive, and it had been for the past 5 years. Drowned in drought, both he and the flowers were wilting.

The sky was blue; the kind of blue you only ever see in paintings and fairy tales; the kind of fictional, artificial blue that doesn't quite feel real, the kind of hazy, monotonous blue that seems it'll never be invaded by a cloud, or a wind, or a drop of rain. Arthur hated that ungodly blue sky. It made illusions of water appear on the road, and blurred the line between the dirt and the atmosphere. Arthur had tolerance for such imposturous scams. He walked through the lonely street dodging from each rare patch of shade to the next. A meagre eucalyptus tree didn't provide much sanctuary from the oppressive heat, but it was enough. Save for the abrasive sounds of his boat shoes on the burgundy dirt, the road was mute. The silence was even more piercing on such a sparse street, in a quiet town like Weldmere. Arthur's late wife (God rest her soul) loved the absolute absence of all sound. She said it made her more alive, that it whispered things to her she could never hear with the clutter of movement and noise. Arthur was of the opinion that silence should be confined to two stages of life: those peaceful moments before birth, and the merciless release of death. A silent town was no place for the living. No place for him when she wasn't there to fill those silences, and here alone it just made him feel closer to death.

As he hobbled to his car he rolled from either side of the pavement. An old weak hip, a recurring injury, gave him a tremulous gait, but he moved with a deliberate air nonetheless. As he reached his Toyota he paused to catch his breath and caught his reflection in the dusty car window. His dark, wrinkled face had the appearance of worn leather, and the longer he stared, the more his face betrayed him. Dark circles carved crevices above his cheeks. His eyes were the emptiest he'd ever known them to be, dull and colourless, hinting at the blindness that had begun to invade. He needed her spontaneity, her impulse to balance his rigour and focus, and now owning his little flower shop seemed a cold and cruel irony without her. A sad old man presiding like a conductor over an orchestra of plants, but without the music or baton to be able to properly lead them. And so they wilted, but did not die and he watered them and pitied them. They were doomed to live the remainder of their days soaked in lukewarm water, kept in plastic buckets, trapped in a stuffy storefront, cornered in a small, tired town in the middle of the Australian desert. It was almost mocking that he was trapped by the heat in this little town when he was surrounded by nothing but vast space.

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It'd be different if she were still here. They'd go home and have coffee and teacakes on the front porch and she'd interrupt that godawful silence with her musings about the day and he'd just listen. Just listen to her croaky, cigarette stained voice, and he'd fall in love with every word. But now there'd be no teacakes and no croak.

He felt as if he were floating on a vast, profound ocean in a small dinghy, anchored only by a thin rope. Remaining in this town for a disease or an accident to unite him with his late wife was like waiting for god's invisible hand to sever the cord that tied him to the mortal plane. He wouldn't die in this town. He wouldn't die in this smothering, stifling suffocating silence. It wasn't death he feared, it was that loneliness of lingering here, disconnected from the world around him. Without her, he felt lost. He needed to cut that tether, leave it all behind, lest it pull him below the veil of the sea.

His head bowed as if in prayer to his sandy old Toyota as he felt a drop of wetness. A second, and then a third. As he looked to the sky he no longer saw that dull, uninspiring baby blue, but black, white and every possible shade of every colour in between rolled together, like some heavenly mouth opening and releasing the captured water from all those years before.

It did not rain; it poured. It hit the ground like a skydiver without a parachute. It assaulted the pavement and invaded the silence like a thousand horses running to battle. That ghastly silence was banished, and a myriad noises filled his ears. The dirt road dissolved like sherbet on a child's tongue. It bubbled and melted and splashed and turned the deep shade of ochre; its dry matte visage was lost and it glistened and shone with every drop that joined it. As the sky rumbled and roared Arthur's dry lips cracked a smile so jubilant it looked as though his face would break in two, and slowly, almost without him noticing it his legs began to walk, to hobble towards the south. He was no longer the silent conductor of a mute orchestra, but the sole audience member of god's symphony. A million timpani's rolled in anticipation as he hobbled towards the darkness, towards that void in the sky, because he didn't like waiting anymore.



Winning Entries

A collection of award winning
poems from the 2019 Mosman
Youth Awards in Literature

On Nostalgia

Christine Park
Winner – First Prize
Junior Secondary Poetry

Through the frosted window, she sees
Pure white snow

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Slowly like falling, rust leaves in Autumn,
Slowly like melting ice-cream in Summer,
Slowly like floating flower petals in Spring.
From her hospital bed, she feebly looks towards the grandfather clock.

Tick. Beep. Tock, Beep.
Seconds tick by,
Heart beeps along...

Quiet laughter of a 40-year old woman fills the silence.
She watches her children frolicking in the snow,
Chilly sting of breezes and crispness of bitter air,
Oh! How the still trees yearn to dance
And play. Just like the children.

Tick... Beep... Tock... Beep...
Digging deeper and deeper,
Into the attic of memory.

A 20-year old lady is mesmerized by fiery reds, burnt oranges, sunny yellows,
Crunching leaves, crackling bonfires, clutching coffee cups,
Sunrays gently caress her skin, soft, cool breezes brush past,
She shivers.
The perfume of pumpkin pies and cinnamon seep into woolen sweaters,

Tick... Beep...
Tock... Beep...
Digging deeper and deeper,
Into the attic of memory.

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A 10-year old girl squeals as she bites into the cold, cold ice-cream,
Sweet vanilla melting in her mouth, dribbling down her chin,
Listening to symphonies of crashing waves and calling gulls,
Broad-beamed hats block the sun's glare,
Radiating off scintillating seas.

Tick...

Tock...

Beep...

Digging deeper and deeper,
Into the attic of memory.

Vivid flowers surround a 5-year old child, aroma of lilacs wafting,
Children fly kites, parents look on and laugh,
Songs of mewling newborn birds,
Harmonise with giggling girls,
A drizzle of light rain leaves glistening rainbows.

Tick.

Snow falls,
Leaves crunch,

Beep.

Waves crash,
Flowers bloom,
Time passes.

Tock.

Standing in the Light too Bright

Sabrina Blasco

Winner – Second Prize

Junior Secondary Poetry

Slouching in the deep too dark
Tears that flow and blind
Cold rays of pity chill the skin
Pensive as the depths consume
Slouching in the deep too dark

Slouching in the deep too dark
Air like ink that clouds and billows
Blackness that hangs to your bones
Lost in your own imprisoned mind
Slouching in the deep too dark

Slouching in the deep too dark
Wandering mazes of fear
A prickling sensation you start to feel
It brightens so you turn away
Slouching in the deep

Slouching in the deep
Your eyes flutter as the light creeps
You bow down for only dark reigns
Lifting your head felt with a warm touch
Standing in the light

Standing in the light
Warmth kissing your skin
Hope halting your bones from whirling
Fear backs away into no shadows
Standing in the light too bright

Standing in the light too bright
Shame and cowardice fleeing away
Mending the bones that terror has broken
You crumble blinded by brightness
But you stand in the light too bright

The Brumbies

Hannah Merlin
Winner – Highly Commended
Junior Secondary Poetry

Hooves strike the ground;
Clap, Clap, Clap,
Beating up the settled dust.

Manes fly back, a tangle:
Streaks of white and grey,
Auburn, silver, ebony.

Bruises,
Cuts,
Deep brown eyes.

Wild freedom, raw emotion;
Joy found in simplicity.

A sea of neighs and whinnies,
Gallop, gallop,
Alone.

A burst of life to the long-dead ground.

A monster growls;
Diesel engine,
Grey shell,
Angry driver.

Ammunition loaded,
Position set,
Bang, Bang, Bang.
A sea of thuds.

Final whinnies,
Settled manes,
Closed brown eyes.

A monster growling into the distance,
Then,
Silence.

Hooves lay still on the hot, cracked ground.

Here in Colombo

Sydney McQuillan
Winner – First Prize
Senior Secondary Poetry

here in Colombo:
burnt caramel roads as a trail,
for in sri lanka nature must prevail,
they snake around the open fields of the wild,
like the coppery veins of a new born child,
peacocks wander like freed spirits,
with deer huddled up amongst the thickets,
a sleepy water buffalo claims the pond as his home,
whilst another one roams alone,
bird chirps are the orchestra of sound,
whilst formations of dirt are made into a mound,
a lake stretches as far as the eye can see,
with the centrepiece being a great willow tree,
stilled water the colour of mud,
fills once vacant holes via a flood,
lush and thick grass is scattered around the plain,
while scores of tourists follow the burnt cinnamon lane,
a native sits behind the wheel,
protecting his passengers from becoming a meal,
all the sudden the world goes still,
as the graceful jaguar goes in for the kill,
a caw is heard and nothing more,
for the jaguar is part of a lore,
and the majestic beast slinks off into the bush,
with its tail flicking “woosh woosh woosh”
that mere glimpse is all you see,
before the spots of copper disappear up a tree,
but there’s more creatures to encounter,
ugh as the worshipped elephant whose weapons are blunter,
with its stunning twin hooks of ivory.
the humans have started a rivalry,
for there is room for only one king,
and that must be the species with the technological things,
phones, computers and cameras sink their claws into the human mind,
while animals remain untouched and kind,

here in colombo,
immersed in the jungle,
you begin to forget of all the modern day additions,
and go back to your roots down in the lichen,
with no signal your phone is mere glass,
and you can begin to notice sights you would normally pass,

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here in colombo,
your eyes are opened wider,
not just from alcohol and cider,
little details become big,
such as a new construction dig,
it used to not concern you,
but now you can wonder what's this going to be made into,
questions like this make all the difference,
for care is much better ignorance,

here in colombo,
strangers are family,
friends are family,
family is family,
people here care about each other,
and that,
that is a truly beautiful quality that is usually expected from only a mother,
but if the world took a page from colombo's book,
and it's okay if you take a second look,
smiles would paint the faces of every individual,
with sheer rudeness being left residual,
and the world would be a better place,
if it adapted the sri lankan trait,
of care, family, love and technology as of late,
so come,
come here,
here in colombo,
where dogs run free,
and there are many of the famed mango tree,
because life is good and fun and friendly,
and there is even the occasional bentley,
so smile more,
give it a chance ben when the rain begins to pour,
just like here in colombo,
where everyone and thing can be who they are,
even distant relatives living near or far,
here in colombo.

Calling:

Inez Currò
Winner – Second Prize
Senior Secondary Poetry

The phone sits on the table
The chord hangs down toward the floor
It's tempting to the dial
But even if it were plugged in, I'd have no one to call

There are scissors in the drawer
And numbers in my brain
I cut the chord the same way I cut ties
0466 you're running out of time to hear your message

The phone's in the sink
Water running into all its cracks
Sometimes the chord sparks
But it dies out like the conversations had on it

I've been busy for months
I've been just leaving the house
I sit on the phone for hours now
But there's no one on the other side

The shower feels cold now
Partly because I used up the hot water
Partly because nothing is warm anymore
The tiles are just as uncaring as the red phone in the sink

The red dust outside blows up against, the old windows
Before being dampened by heavy rain
We need the rain the tank is almost empty
Maybe I can blame the silence on poor connection

I pull the phone out of the sink
Tip it on its side
Water spilling out
All over the wooden floor

I sit on the counter phone in hand
Chord dangling over my shoulder
It fits in hand so perfectly
But there's nobody left to call

Tides of Antiquity

Ella Van Wensveen
Winner – Highly Commended
Senior Secondary Poetry

Where is the rest of history?
Kept secret in that inky vault,
In the silence of the sea.
Locked behind bold bars of salt.
Time follows its rhythmic pulse,
As it's dictated by celestial thought,
And anchoring greed sinks those the swell wishes to engulf.
Adaptation to this force is instinctive and not taught,
For the seething maw of the water turns pages blank,
In search of lives past.
The duality of the ocean; it rages,
And threatens with its icy grasp,
While its plentiful bounty nourishes.
It is a perpetual waltz of death and desecration,
And the life that flourishes,
That creates and hinders each nation.
And of that life housed by the current,
Is an art; mosaics regaling momentous tales preserved in time.
The windows to these worlds are often not transparent,
And so remains unwitnessed this museum; so sublime.
Though there is an expression of fury within the waves,
Below them there is sleep.
There is little the swell saves,
But wearied spirits remain tethered to the deep.
Yet the ocean holds guilt, the water takes care,
Restless are its graves,
But peaceful distortion is ever there.
Plagued is each soul by haunting solipsism at the nadir,
While the water's crest lengthens all time in its immersion,
And all calamity is dispersed with fear.
The vanishing light and crashing white crowns cast no aspersion,
Beneath the numinous blue tides.
The vivid apertures in each curling wave bring liberation.
The swirling blood of this living earth confides,
And the gently rocking sea meets the sun in jubilation.
Such an intense cycle can favour none,
Any echo of these stolen memories is forbidden.
The inevitability of the tides cannot be outrun.
Each lost antiquity is truly hidden.

Jacaranda

Avalon Howe
Winner – Commended
Senior Secondary Poetry

My body sunk flat,
Cushioned within the velvet ground.
The tame sleeping fallen violets,
Rest amongst the green,
In a peaceful carpet of life.

I long for the shack,
With rotted garage doors.
A four cub cave,
With two big bears,
Protecting their fort.

A purple tree,
Everywhere found,
With ropes checked thrice,
Hanging softly from.
Where we would swing, four as one.

Boards in the branches,
Building a box,
In which we hid.
Stuffed with treats
And wild thoughts.

The petals melt through my toes,
Turning brown with lack of nurture.
The purple is gone,
Replaced with a wasted mesh,
As the sky leaks it's tears.

The air is cold, wet
The past is distant.
The cave is no longer,
The cubs are all grown,
The world is black and brown.

