

# **2022 My Brother Jack Awards**

## **Junior Secondary School Short Story Award**

### **Judge's Report**

Thank you for your stories. I love to see so many entries. I read all the stories and made a shortlist of 17. I re-read the stories and made a shortlist of five.

This year, the stories included a diversity of characters from mystical creatures, troubled sons and daughters, characters facing their shortcomings and characters facing darkness whether it be a stranger, a familiar bully, a giant wave or the disappearance of the sun.

All the stories showed imagination. I find your ability to write your thoughts and feelings heartening.

When I read a story, I look for a clear structure of beginning, middle and end – not necessarily in that order. The stories that grabbed my attention had:

- a point that matters
- set up a character's dilemma or what the character wants straight away
- a strong structure
- a consistent tone
- short and clear sentences
- scenes with action I can picture
- a crisis that forces the character to act and to change
- a satisfying ending linked to the beginning

When you think of a character, think of what the character wants and what obstacles get in the way to make it hard for the character. The character can want anything: a friend, to escape danger, to play PlayStation, a pet, to come clean, to have courage, to make sense of conflict, or to be free of others' expectations.

By the end of a story, the character has changed or the readers have been changed. A crisis, which is pivotal to a story, is when the character hits their lowest emotional point. This breaking point forces the character to act or to realise something new about themselves or their situation.

To write as closely as you can to the way you talk is better than to write how you think a writer should write. You want the readers to connect with your characters and have another 'true' point of view of the world.

Verbs bring life to a story. Too many adjectives and adverbs can pull attention away from an otherwise good story.

I recommend to all writers to read your sentences out loud. It's a great way to find typos and repetition. If you say it differently from what you have on the page, change it to what you say. It will be true to your voice.

When writing a story, have fun, be observant and trust your thoughts on what goes on around you. It's rewarding to find a way to express them in fiction. All your stories had something worth writing about.

Thank you for letting me read your stories.

### **Commended**

#### *The baggy green in my dreams*

A story of a long-held dream, of hope and possibility brought to life against the odds. The story bowls along at a good pace. The love of the game is felt in every sentence. The story lifts your spirits.

### **Commended**

#### *Words don't hurt*

Words don't hurt is a story of a student coping with the consequences of her troubled home life. The writing shows natural story-telling skills. It started in present-time action goes into backstory and then ends with the present-day action. The story alters the reader's initial perception of the character. No mean feat.

### **First place**

#### *The kingdom of the night*

The story is a quiet story. It is a tender and evocative story of longing—of two characters wanting a connection. The story is visual and this makes it memorable. The details, emotions and tone are handled with subtlety. The varied sentence structure shows a sophisticated writing style.

- **Annette Trevitt**