

2022 My Brother Jack Awards

Primary Poetry Award

In 2022 there were a large number of primary poetry entries, 58 in fact! It was with great pleasure that I looked forward to reading them all and learning what the children had to say.

Each year there are a few key themes that reflect a collective mood or experience. These have ranged from positive and uplifting to quite dark and disturbing. Last year I noticed some very heavy and heartbreaking poems and so I was a bit apprehensive about the entries for this year. Even though we live in a post-pandemic world, the impact of COVID-19 can still be felt in everything around us. I was really sad to see these painful themes emerge again in 2022, and I wondered if the children had developed language around grief, isolation and mental health in response to being consistently and increasingly exposed to such things. This actually made the judging process really difficult because I wanted to be able to ensure that every single child's voice was heard and acknowledged. Regardless of whether they were trying to tell a story or simply express themselves, I thought that they all deserved to be commended for their efforts. Everyone who submitted an entry should continue to write poetry so that they can always have a creative outlet for their feelings as they try to process the world around them.

This competition reminded me that children are resilient and they frequently experience profound joy. Their excitement and curiosity can be seen in the poems about nature, seasons, pets, excursions, friends, family and holidays. The children write using a variety of poetic techniques and it is clear that they are playing with words or just mixing up language to see what happens. From metaphors and similes to haiku and limericks, they write long or short poems that sometimes rhyme and sometimes take on interesting shapes. I was very impressed with the quality and range, and I loved reading about the things that the children were doing or thinking about. They always write in their own unique voice about their observations or direct experiences. Such perspectives are refreshing, thought-provoking and often moving.

Thank you to everyone that submitted an entry this year, it was an absolute privilege reading your poems.

First Prize

The Monster Under My Bed

This poem begins by creating a dark and terrifying atmosphere that makes the reader worry about what is going to happen next. The rhythm and careful language then builds escalating suspense until the last unexpected line. The relief of safety and the monster's beautiful vulnerability is a lovely surprise. The *Monster Under My Bed* reminds you that things are often not as bad as they seem, and there is always hope, even for monsters!

Highly Commended

Depression

An incredibly accurate representation of depression and the many different ways it can affect a person. Beautiful, evocative and very well written.

Head in the Clouds

A sweet and creative poem about what it is like to daydream while life continues on. This wholesome moment was wonderfully captured.

Basketball

The joy of playing a game with teammates is described with minimal yet descriptive language in this fun and clever poem.

- **Ozlem Baro**