



Primary School Short Story Category

Judge's Report – Eliza Henry-Jones

There were 66 entries into this section. The stories were complex, beautiful and imaginative. They dealt with dark themes with a profound level of subtlety and maturity, for those so young. Over and over, the themes of kindness, of compassion and forgiveness emerged from the pages.

These stories had such heart. There were stories set in warzones. Stories about loss and bullying and what it means to be alone. There were stories about bushfires and witches and hero mothers. There were also stories set on the moon and in libraries; stories of adventure and animal rescue.

I read all of the stories through twice. The first read through was to see if I enjoyed it; the second read through was with things in mind like originality, readability and form. I tried to keep the different ages of the writers in mind as I judged – the section was open for students in grade 1 – grade 6, which is incredibly broad. The stories that made it into my shortlist were the ones that made me feel hopeful or sad or made me laugh.

Thank you to all the wonderful writers out there who trusted me with their stories.

Primary School Short Story – *First Prize*

The Wooden Elephant

by Tali Bloch

We wanted to stay, to be together. We didn't want to go. Our parents disagreed but we always won. It wasn't until the sixth bombing that they insisted. "You must go" said mother, tears streaming down her face. Father looked like he had something to say but as another house caught fire he only had time to say "Be brave" before running out to help. Mother put all our food in a small bag. "Come, Zia," said mother and pulled me into one last hug. As I pulled away she pressed a small wooden elephant into my hand. "Remember me Zia" she said. I grabbed my four year old sister Asal's hand and headed outside. Another bomb struck and I heard my parents' frantic cries. I turned and ran with the image of my burning house fresh in my mind.

Each night I took out my elephant and whispered "Goodnight mama, goodnight papa". Each day we had less and less food. Our walking became stumbling; our feet hot and sore like the cracked ground. Finally, half-starved, we stumbled across a refugee camp. We ate naan and stayed a few days until the camp leader, Khalil, said "Someone is taking us away by boat. Come with us if you want". I thought long and hard. It would be a better life but I'd be leaving my parents behind forever. I remembered my father saying "Be brave" and thought of the elephant and it gave me strength to decide. "We will go" I said.

The terrifying day finally came. Asal looked at me with her brown eyes. "We'll be ok, won't we Zia?" I nodded but wasn't so sure. We stood in a long line for a long time. Finally a cruel-looking man stuck his grubby hand out and grunted "Payment". Payment? All I had was the elephant but I couldn't give it, I couldn't forget my parents. I stepped back but then a strong hand gripped my elbow. "I've paid," a man said. "These are my daughters". It was too good to be true, I thought as we stepped aboard. "I am Azar" the kind man whispered. "Thank you Azar" I said with a small smile.

We were at sea for around four weeks. The rain washed away our food as well as our hopes and dreams. Asal and I clung to each other, drifting in and out of consciousness. Sometimes I would see my mother standing beside me. "Mother" I would call but then the harsh, real world would crash down around me and whisper the truth in my ears.

It was a miracle when we crashed ashore. Azar exited the boat, turned and asked “Are you coming Zia?” I nodded and stood on my wobbly legs. Asal and I stumbled across the deck. In front of us was future and behind us was past. As I walked into the future with Asal clutched tightly in one hand and the wooden elephant in the other I knew we’d be okay.

Primary School Short Story – *Commended*

The Prince's Hair

by Evelyn Ellett

There was once a prince who had a beautiful mane of hair. One day he forgot to rinse and he paid the price, oh yeah! It was the night before his wedding to the princess La Clair, as he lay down on the bedding he felt for his hair. IT WASN'T THERE!! He thought it was a dream. Who could plan such a scheme? He was as bald as a baby, bald with no hair, he couldn't see it ANYWHERE!

He ordered all the wig stores in town to surrender their wigs. With a fling and a twist in his step, he found the right wig (It could just fit his head). The problem was this wig was red! Oh no, he wrung his hands as he said so. 'My wedding day is tomorrow. I'm getting married to Princess La Clair, and you know she loves my beautiful hair'. The townspeople nodded, they knew she was picky, so they picked up some paint (it was sticky!). They spray painted that wig til'no red showed through and the bald prince shouted 'Well done you!' Little did they know the spray paint dried BLUE!

As the day of the wedding dawned, the prince woke up and yawned; he grabbed his wig, put on his best suit and dashed out of the room with his flute. Everyone was preparing for the wedding: a HUGE day the cooks had been dreading. On the table stood a glamorous cake, four stories high it took 12 days to make! The guests pranced in, a-one and a-two and a rin-tin-tin. They put down their gifts as they looked for him. Meanwhile the prince was behind the arch, looking out. He had realised his wig had turned blue, what was he to do?

Finally, the wedding started. In, all the food was carted. As the bride came up to kiss the groom, something shocked the entire room. The Prince's hair was a bright, bright blue. Princess La Clair said 'that's not fair. I thought my groom had very brown hair. Not blue?'. 'Oh no, Oh my' cried the poor prince in despair 'I've got to tell you.....I have no hair'.

The guests gasped in horror. They couldn't believe it. The bride, it seemed like she couldn't receive it. In fact, her hair was now falling out too. She was going bald as well. The crowd gasped as if under a spell. The Priest snapped 'Are you getting married or not?'. The bride said 'sure' to cheers galore. But wait, the groom was itching his head like it was very sore. Suddenly some hair

appeared, then more and more. It grew into a wavy mane that didn't look particularly tame. The Prince looked at the princess, she didn't look the same, but they got married anyway!

Now things in the castle are back to normal. The princess' hair is now returned and formal. If you wanted to know the prince's name it's this.....KEEWYREVE TUOSLLAFRIAHYM. Interesting name? Try reading it backwards!

Primary School Short Story – *Commended*

The Boy Who Lived In The Library

by Rafaella Chait

One frosty morning in the middle of winter Ms. Pages the librarian was putting away some books. Ms. Pages was the most famous librarian in New York, she worked at the Fiddlepick's Library and loved everything about books. Whenever she was near any type of book she would sing "books, books, books you can read them in crannies you can read them in nooks oh lovely fantastic books". Her boss was Mr. Bossypants and he ordered everyone around so that the library was so amazing that it became the most common place ever been to.

One morning a few weeks later Ms. Pages and Mr. Bossypants noticed something was different. They were missing several of their best books including: Mr. Nickle Has the Pickle, Johnny and Wilbur, A Tale of Dreams, Somebody Eats Peas, ABC's With Willy Nilly, Papa Bean and Demi and her Dolly. Then they found some strange footprints that went out of the library. "Library, library, library!" Pardon me said Ms. Pages, oh sorry grumbled Mr. Bossypants "I still want library to be the most popular place ever been". "Let's go, and of they went following the trail through the park, Mr. Dribbles garden and The Mulberry Circus. Finally the trail stopped at a garden shed next to a rose bush. Slowly Ms. Pages opened the door and spotted the books but not only that a boy sat next to the books reading them. "Poor boy" exclaimed Ms. Pages as a tear rolled down her old wrinkled cheek, "bad boy!" yelled Mr. Bossypants with his face going red and steam puffing out of his ears. "Oh" murmured the boy "I'm sorry I took the books it's just I'm homeless and I always wonder around looking for entertainment, when I found the library I fell in love with it and tried to borrow some books". "Oh not so bad boy" Mr. Bossypants whispered. "I have an idea, why don't you come live at the library we will provide you with food, water and some blankets and you can read whenever you like" said Ms. Pages. "Okay" agreed the boy. So they went back to the library. Now every night you can hear "books, books, books you can read them in crannies you can read them in nooks oh lovely fantastic books" as she sings the boy to sleep.

So that's a lesson for Mr. Bossypants the library may not be the most famous place ever but you have something better, you have done what's right.

The End