

Junior Secondary Short Story

Judge's Report – Annette Trevitt

Thank you for your stories. It's always a pleasure to read so many entries and especially this year. The overall tone of the stories was heavier than in previous years, yet only a few stories mentioned the pandemic and Melbourne's lockdown.

The art of story-telling is to maintain tension so the reader will want to read on to see what will happen next.

Stories that grab my attention have:

- a point
- set up a character's dilemma or goal straight away
- a strong structure
- a consistent tone
- short and clear sentences
- scenes I can picture
- a crisis that forces the character to change
- a satisfying resolution linked to the beginning

When you think of a character, think of what the character wants and what gets in the way to make it hard for the character. The character can want anything: a friend, to escape danger, to play in a team, to make sense of a confrontation, to pat a cow, to be free of others' expectations.

By the end of a story, the character has changed. A crisis, which is pivotal to a story, is when the character hits their lowest point. The crisis forces the character to act and 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.

The point of fiction is to connect with an audience rather than to showcase a vocabulary.

Strong nouns and verbs bring life to a story. 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 editing device to pick up 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 and trust your thoughts on what goes on around you. It's rewarding to find a way to express them in fiction.

Congratulations on writing a short story during such a difficult time.

Highly Commended

The Three Little Pigs and the Homeless Wolf

The Three Little Pigs and the Homeless Wolf is a story about an unlikely friendship between a pig and a wolf. It's an original twist on the well-known fable/fairytale. Its simple message of generosity and acceptance is heartwarming.

Highly Commended

When 'It' Came to Stay

When 'It' Came to Stay is about a young character coping with the invisible but very real beast/monster of depression. As it gets closer, and the character feels no hope, something happens and things change. The story's representation of depression shows imagination.

First place

The Quiet Kid

The story is a quiet story about a kid coping with being bullied. The character is thoughtful, likeable and easy to care about. He is pushed to a point, a crisis, where things take a different turn. The prose is clear and the story has a strong voice. Its point is important.

Junior Secondary Short Story– *First Prize*

The Quiet Kid

by Imogen Gibson

I've always been the quiet kid. The kid that nobody ever talks to. The kid that scores average test marks. The kid with no friends. I don't mind being the quiet kid - it sounds worse than it feels. It's hard to feel like you're missing something when you don't even know what it is that you're missing.

I get laughed at sometimes for being so silent and unremarkable. But that's okay, I usually don't mind. They're laughing because they think that I'm weird. Anyway, I think they're the weird ones. Surrounded by people all the time, being the first person approached for everything. It sounds stressful and overwhelming. The difference between them and me, is I don't laugh. If I laughed at them, I'd become like them. Mean.

Being mean is worse than being lonely. Not that I'm very lonely though. I have my thoughts and ideas to keep me company and that's more than I need. That does sound lonely. Then again, teasing someone smaller than you sounds like it would give you a bad reputation, but it makes you more popular.

Sometimes I wonder if it's worth even showing up at school. Nobody would notice if I wasn't there. Yesterday I tried not going to school. The school didn't phone my parents to ask about me. Not a single student realised someone was missing. Today, I attended class, at least school gives me something to do. One of those weird kids approached me during lunchbreak. I should have stayed home.

The mockery and the scoffing. It made me mad, beyond mad. I was a ticking bomb and every word drew me closer to exploding. My stomach was twisting and bubbling. My eyes were watering. Ordinarily, I don't get this angry. But their words, their nasty smile. Made me indignant. My mind was blurry, all I could see was the raging fury burning up inside of me, taking over. It's not fair! The bomb timer was up, I was about to blow. So I did. It's not like anyone had high expectations about me anyway. So why should I have to always do the right thing. I couldn't take it anymore. I was done with the teasing.

I reached for the bully's arm and twisted it. They tried to tug away but I wouldn't let go. It felt so satisfying and equalising to be in control. Like they finally felt the way they made me feel. Then, a girl jumped towards us and tugged me away from the bully. I had never noticed the girl before. She was quiet and unremarkable, just like me. The girl shot a sour look at the bully. I followed her to her

desk, where she told me to take a deep breath. I gathered my thoughts. I couldn't believe how angry I was, I let my frustration swallow me. I smiled at the girl, she smiled back.

Junior Secondary Short Story– *Highly Commended*

When 'It' Came to Stay

by Abbie McLeish

I stared at the thing at the end of my bed, not taking my eyes off it. It came every night from 8-9pm. But this time it wasn't going away. I got out of bed, not daring to blink.

'It will go away soon' I thought.

But it didn't. I went to the kitchen, praying that it wouldn't follow. It did.

It stayed behind me whenever I moved. After a few hours, I started to get hysterical. I dodged and ran, but it was like a magnet. I started to feel hopeless, sad. I crawled into bed, not sleeping a wink. As the night went on, I felt more depressed and terrible.

When I woke, I had no energy. No reason to get up. Mum came in, told me to get ready for school. I mumbled something about not feeling well. I settled back into bed, and just as mum was leaving my room, I clutched her arm so hard it made her squeal.

"Mum, get it out!" I said, looking at her desperately.

She stared at me with concern looking around the room. Her eyes swept straight over it, like it wasn't there.

"What?!"

I stared at her, then back at 'It'. I took a sharp intake of breath.

"You can't see it." I said, sighing hopelessly, my insides balling up in frustration.

She frowned, looking anxious, thinking I'd gone mad at this point. I didn't blame her.

"It's nothing," I said, crawling back in bed, squeezing my eyes shut.

She gave me one more concerned look, then left the room. I opened my eyes and they widened in horror. It had gotten bigger. Much, much bigger.

Days went by.

It grew and grew.

And the weight on my chest got heavier and heavier. My mum came in and laid food on my desk. I didn't eat anything. I had no energy, no happiness.

It's like it had been drained out of me.

After two weeks of lying in bed, I was very close to letting It take me. It had gotten bigger and closer as the days went by. It was just an inch from my face, and I stared at it, pleading for it to take me. To make it stop. That was the moment when my mum came in. This wasn't unusual. She came in every few hours to bring me food or just sit with me.

"Honey, Jessie's come to see you."

I looked up and there was Jessie, my best friend, my savior. She came in and sat down like nothing was wrong. We talked and she made me laugh. I hadn't laughed in so long. When she left, I was smiling and happy. It had shrunk to the size of a feather. I was happy. And It didn't like that. So, I laughed and laughed until it disappeared. The weight on my chest was finally lifted. And I was finally happy once again.

Junior Secondary Short Story– *Highly Commended*

Three Little Pigs and the Homeless Wolf

by Nathan Loyer

There was a homeless wolf named Anton. One day, Anton was wandering around town when he saw an astonishingly well-built house made of twigs and sticks.

Living inside was a pig. Anton asked if he could stay the night but the pig politely declined. Anton wasn't very happy so he huffed, and he puffed, and he blew the house down.

Anton continued his search and came across another house that looked quite pleasant, this house was made from straw. Anton knocked on the door. Finally, a pig answered, but he wasn't very civil, not even a single word. When he saw the wolf, the pig did not appear afraid. With no empathy for Anton in his disheveled appearance, the pig rudely slammed the door shut and went about his business. So the wolf huffed, and puffed and blew the house down.

Finally, Anton found a third house made of bricks. By this stage, Anton was filled with rage at not having found a suitable house to stay in. However, he hid his anger and frustration, and decided to yell “Is anybody home?”

The resident living inside was a pig, who quickly rushed to open the door.

“My name is Anton, I am looking for a place to stay.”

The pig noticed how well-mannered Anton was and invited him inside.

During dinner, Anton announced “You have a very nice house Mr Piggy,”

“Thank you Anton, but please, call me George.”

George and Anton ate dinner together, peacefully.

George watched Anton eat his food like a proud parent. Anton really enjoyed the feast!

After dinner they spoke until all hours of the night about Anton’s life as a homeless person; sleeping rough on a bench, in the wintery cold wind. Not having enough food to eat, and being treated undeservedly. George exclaimed “You will stay in my guest room until you earn some good money,”.

Anton couldn’t believe his eyes. The room had a double bed, a cupboard and even his own television, and it was all his. “Thank you George, thank you.”

The next morning...

The rooster squealed “Cock-a-doodledoo.” “Well that’s my alarm, I better get out of bed,” yawned George.

Anton was already up and sitting quietly on the couch drinking a cup of coffee.

“Good Morning George,” said Anton.

“Good morning Anton, did you sleep well?” asked George.

“I did, thank you,” Anton replied.

They had a wonderful day going to the beach, eating a nice chicken salad for lunch and playing chess in the afternoon.

10 months had passed and Anton finally got a job working at an Animal Insurance Company. Once he had enough money, Anton bought the land right next door to George's house. Together, they started building the comfortable home Anton always dreamed of having.

6 months later, the house was complete.

"Wow, thank you George. I couldn't have done it without you," said Anton gratefully.

"No problem. I love helping people," George replied.

Over time, both of them had come a long way.