

# Primary Short Story

## Judge's Report – Eliza Henry-Jones

What a joy it is, to have the opportunity to read such wonderful stories. This year has been pretty awful – particularly if you're a child. Thank you to everyone who entered. These stories didn't swerve away from the darker sides of life. Many of the stories dealt with death, loneliness, fear, isolation and anger with subtlety and nuance that would be impressive in an adult, let alone writers in primary school.

There were 71 entries in this section. Overwhelmingly, the stories were vivid and wonderful – some made me cry, some gave me the shivers and some made me laugh out loud (and scare my dog). Stories set in out of space, in fantasy worlds with unicorns, stories with monsters and ghosts and beautiful stories of the everyday.

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. Like last year, 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 something. I struggled so much to pick a winner that, for the second year running, I brought my teacher-librarian mother out of retirement to read the shortlist and help me pick.

Thank you to all the wonderful writers out there who trusted me with their stories. Every single one of you has created an engaging story that was a joy to read – and that's a huge achievement and something to be really proud of.

**Highly Commended – The Old Man: A short story**

This story about a grumpy old man who accidentally turns his house into a park is well paced and very warm with an important message about embracing happiness during difficult times.

**Highly Commended – Flight**

This sweet and mature story charts the travels of a lost balloon – all the while gently contemplating very complex issues such as as loneliness, the importance of travel and death.

**Highly Commended – The Connection Bridge**

This story is highly imaginative with a lovely arc – set on an island during a world in havoc, it's about the power of human connection.

**1<sup>st</sup> Place – The Camping Horror Day**

This story is structured into a rhyming verse. I found it to be highly entertaining with a strong voice and an astute eye for the small moments that make up family life. It made me laugh out loud when I was reading it.

## Primary Short Story– *First Prize*

### **The Camping Horror Day**

by Isabella Schneider

If you think of a family, six people in size,  
packed in a car, would you believe your eyes?

But yes, dear reader, yes this is true, and the story of the Andersons is one quite  
blue.

It all started with a packed car, children getting ready, normal so far.

It took a long time but finally they were all in,

And dad shouted out “let our adventures begin!”

I was sitting in the back, with the luggage in the boot, I

wasn’t very comfortable in this overcrowded ute.

But my tail began to wag as I thought of the seas,

The gorgeous campsite and the warm summer breeze.

The journey was quiet and everyone got on...

Actually no, it was boring and long.

“Mum, Max keeps hurting me,” halfway there Ellie moaned,

“I’m tired and hungry, can we just go home?”

“I’m not doing anything!” Max declared,

He smiled meanly at Ellie, to which she just glared.

“Oh both of you stop,” the eldest, Jess said

“We’re going on holiday, be happy instead.” Ellie and

Max the identical twins,

They hated each other, but both of them grinned.

I started to sleep, the family were quiet, when all of a sudden there was a large riot.

“I need a wee!” 2 year old Thomas cried.

The parents drove faster like a carnival ride.

We got to a service station, and everyone got out, Taking  
me too, what a good turnout.

I ran around the carpark, this was fun,  
Dad was right, our adventures had just begun. “Hey  
Barney,” Ellie muttered, patting my head, I climbed  
into the car, in slow motion tread.

I woofed happily, and we set off again,  
And arrived at the campsite, when it started to... rain!

“How will we pitch the tent now?” Max sobbed,

“Oh what bad weather, we’ve really been robbed.”

“It’s not all bad,” Mum said with a smile,  
But everyone looked down, was this really worth while?

We worked together on pitching the tent,  
But it wouldn’t stay up, following our intent.

Once we got it to stay it was time for food,  
But all the shops were closed, adding to our bad mood.

“I’m hungry!” the four children cried,

“We’ll find some food soon,” mum and dad lied.

Hungry kids equals noise and fights,  
It was hard to sleep on this really annoying night.

The next morning we woke up, and to our dismay, All our

belongings had floated away.

The river had overflowed and many things were wet, this was

not a good holiday, the worst one yet.

“Barney come here!” the family cried,

They put me in the car, trapped back inside.

We were leaving, so soon, this wasn't fair,

I could feel everyone's sadness filling the air.

Our ten day holiday had turned into one,

I guess I had a bit of fun?

Our horrible holiday went down with dread,

Now I'm the dog who stays in bed.

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## **Primary Short Story– *Highly Commended***

### **The Old Man: A Short Story**

by Archie Austin

This is a story about an old man, who was grumpy all the time. He was grumpy at the kids who ran around his neighbourhood. He was grumpy at his TV, that just wouldn't turn on and he was grumpy at his plants, that just wouldn't grow.

One day the grumpy old man woke up exceptionally grumpy. He didn't know why but he had a feeling that he needed to go outside. It was a foggy day and his eyesight wasn't great but he could see that there were no kids around. No-one to be grumpy at.

Disappointed, he decided to pursue another of his favourite grumpy activities: trying to fix his TV. "I actually feel quite good about seeing no kids outside today," he thought to himself, as he tried turning on the TV (knowing it wouldn't work.) But to his surprise, it did. It flickered on to the news and he saw a report on COVID 19 and the lockdown. The picture flickered on and off and the TV broke again. He could see his grumpy reflection on the black screen.

At first he was very grumpy about this news. He was grumpy about not being able to yell at the kids. He was grumpy at his TV because, strangely, it didn't make him grumpy anymore. And he was so grumpy at his plants, that he gave up on them.

After a few weeks into lockdown, he found himself not wanting or needing to feel grumpy. Instead he was feeling very bored. He looked around for something to do and saw his plants. They were dying, they were dry and they were in need of water, so he reluctantly started to water them. He watered them every day, watching eagerly as they slowly began to grow. The bigger they grew the bigger his smile became.

At the end of Covid 19 and lockdown his home was no longer a home. It was a park. There were no walls, instead plants filled the space. There was still furniture, of sorts, but now his tall lamp was sprouting lovely yellow-and-red leaves from its shade. His TV was smashed and a green fern plant was now growing inside. The old man's couch was now an oak tree-trunk that was good for sitting in. Where his front door used to be, there was instead, a huge old gumtree tree, with outstretched branches that welcomed him in. The kids from his neighbourhood also started to come in to run around, climb the trees and throw balls around, but he didn't mind. He enjoyed watching the kids playing. He enjoyed watching his plants grow, instead of trying to watch his always broken TV. He realised that not being grumpy had a magical, fantastic effect.

## Primary Short Story– *Highly Commended*

### **The Connection Bridge**

by Evelyn (Evie) Ellett

The world was in havoc; the land had sunk into the sea, leaving only islands of stranded people, buildings, and trees. Yet the people of today had lived with it like that for as long as they could remember. Only grandparents told tales of huge cities and flying metal birds called aeroplanes to wide-eyed grandchildren as they sat, enchanted, beside roaring fires.

The islands were very far apart and no boat could brave the Volcanian seas, fearsome orange oceans of lava. So Messenger Pigeons, with their leather collars and beaks full of pink card, travelled the world to deliver mail.

A worldwide club, Lettering for the slightly Experienced, had therefore been created by a lady called Samantha.P.Birdsong, who matched willing candidate to willing candidate, young and old alike.

Now two people, a young boy called Joe and an old lady called Sheila-Anne, were matched. Joe's first letter to Sheila-Anne went like this: 'Dear Sheila-Anne, I am Joe. I have heard about the Old World and want to know more. You may be old and I young but together we can connect and discover the world through one another's eyes.'

And that is exactly what they did.

Messenger Pigeons collected their letters and bravely delivered them high above the Volcanian Seas-high enough to keep the lava from burning their wings and sizzling their feathers.

Now in this new world ,after the letters had been delivered and read, the Pigeons dropped the rosy pink cards into the sea, where they would burn to a fine pink ash that blew with the wind past the islands, reminding the people that their hopes and dreams had been delivered into the unknown. But with Joe and Sheila-Anne's letters, a curious thing happened. The letters stuck motionless in the sea, unburned. It seemed they had a greater purpose than just correspondence in mind.

Time went by and, through their letters, Joe inspired Sheila-Anne with his determination for a better world, and Sheila-Anne told Joe tales of old and her lifetime of wisdom. They longed to meet as one had never seen the other.

One day, the Messenger Pigeons refused to deliver any letters. The people of the islands gathered at the shores to search for a reason. Before their very eyes, a huge, pink bridge rose out of the seas, created from a lifetime of letters, reuniting the people with the people and the people with their

dreams of a world connected. When Sheila-Anne and Joe saw what they had unknowingly created, they didn't need to say anything.

So they just gave each other a long-awaited hug instead.

## **Primary Short Story– *Highly Commended***

### **Flight**

by Natalie Grant

The string slowly starts to slip out of the boy's small hand. Then, whoosh, a strong gush of wind comes and takes the balloon with it. The boy cries and runs after it but the balloon belongs to the wind now. As the wind blows it higher and higher everyone looks up, but as soon as their eyes reach the sky the balloon is already gone.

The wind takes the balloon over the sea, the jungle, the desert. It has gone all over the world. Where can you go next if you have already seen the world? Maybe check if you have missed something, but what if you haven't?

The balloon flies with the wind everywhere and nowhere. The wind has taken the balloon far and wide and never left its side. Is it good to have a friend that never leaves you? Is it good to have someone around all the time? Or is it better to be alone? How many friends should you have? One true best friend or many friends? When are you truly alone?

As the wind blows the balloon to the desert again it sees the cactuses. If he gets too close then he will go "puff", but what happens when you go "puff"? Will you see darkness forever? Will you be reborn? As the balloon flies over a little city, the wind starts to slow down and then it is gone.

The balloon doesn't know what to do now. If you have a friend for that long, what do you do when he is gone? The balloon slowly floats up to a window. It knocks. A boy opens the window and cries with joy. It was the boy whose balloon had gone missing. The boy lets the balloon in, and it finally feels as though it has a home.