

2023 My Brother Jack Awards

Primary Poetry Award

When I first applied to be a judge of the My Brother Jack Awards, I never thought that I would still be doing it 10 years later! This annual experience has been such a privilege and it has brought me great joy. I particularly appreciated the grounding presence of the Awards while I was working or travelling around the world. Indeed, the poems have often encouraged me to reflect upon my own life and consider things from a child's perspective.

It has been interesting to note the changing themes over the years, particularly ones that emerged in response to key local, national and global events. There has been a steady increase in awareness of what is happening in the world around them. Each year I see new topics and new language as the children try to make sense of things. There has always been a playful experimentation of words but certain issues have emerged and the children can now articulate these.

This year there were a lot of poems on sport (soccer and world cup, footy), space (travel, our solar system) and the environment (climate change, landscapes). Some children wrote poems in which they described a direct experience, while others wrote poems as observers of a moment. The poems took place in the past, present, future, alternative worlds or dreams. They often moved between different contexts or incorporated some sort of twist. I was constantly impressed by the creativity and imagination, and hope that these are nurtured and encouraged in the future.

Despite the changes over the last 10 years, there are still some themes that remain the same. Friendship, families, seasons, school, celebrations, holidays, animals and pets are always popular topics and reflect the children's immediate environment. These poems are written with familiarity, and sometimes excitement or love. They remind us of the value of these simple but important things.

Well done to all the children that submitted a poem! There were 114 entries this year and I thoroughly enjoyed reading every single one of them. Please keep writing and I look forward to more of your poems next year.

***Footy* - Early Primary Encouragement Award**

Reading this poem makes you feel like you are right there playing footy. Well balanced sentences and excellent descriptions of all the physical and emotional sensations.

***Holiday* - Highly Commended**

What starts out as a simple summertime experience ends with a cheeky wink and impressions of a wonderful day. Great use of rhyme and poetic structure.

***Sky High* - Highly Commended**

While observing the change from day to night, we reflect on what it is to be so small and far away. Thoughtful and hopeful, very well written.

***Fire* – First Place**

The poem initially appears to be quite mysterious but then we realise we are building up to something bigger. The language is spare but effective in its rhythm, and the balance between short and long lines adds to the music. Carefully chosen words transport the reader to the fire and you can almost feel and smell it burning. A beautiful and evocative poem!