

My Brother Jack Awards 2024

Junior Secondary, Senior Secondary and Open Poetry Awards

It has been a great pleasure and delight to be part of the poetry judging for the My Brother Jack Awards over the last four years. It is a testament to the immensely talented writers that submissions have been of a consistently high standard. It is always difficult to pick winners when many poems rise to the top. How do you pick any poem over another? The breadth of subjects covered a plethora of emotions: wars, nature, libraries, snowy winters, mental health, board games, Matryoshka dolls, monsoons, sports, pets, love, poets and the desperate wish to herald peace. I thank you for trusting me with your valuable and insightful words.

As always, congratulations to all the poets who entered the My Brother Jack Awards this year and high praise to those incredible writers who won.

Junior Secondary Poetry

***When Sadness Comes* – First Place**

This poem was visceral and thoughtful. The piece speaks from the point of view of the reader, the 'everyone' in all of us and lets us feel the sorrow of the moment. A beautifully crafted poem that leads us to hope.

***Diwali Festivities* – Highly Commended**

A joyous poem allowing the reader to immerse themselves in celebration.

***Chatterbox* – Highly Commended**

A wise piece about those who love to express themselves and should be proud of that skill and empathy.

***Honey* – Highly Commended**

An effervescent haiku about one of nature's tasteful treasures.

Senior Secondary Poetry

***Age's Touch* – First Place**

This winning poem delves into the epic and rich life of the author's grandmother who stands upright with us while we read. The vivid imagery and ephemeral nature of the story is enchanting and captivating. Many memorable lines radiate from this poem.

***The Uncertainty* – Highly Commended**

A poetic suite of a 'choose your own' adventure in the game of the universal existence. A compelling poem full of texture, wonder and fierceness.

***Thank you, for loving me* – Highly Commended**

A short prose poem about expressing and thriving in unconditional love. It is also a love-letter to home, both physical and spiritual.

***Mycelium* – Highly Commended**

This is a powerful narrative about the importance of doing the right thing, helping and protecting others and causing no harm. A deft and ruminative piece of writing.

Open Poetry

This has been the most difficult year to judge the open section. So many poems were more than worthy. Many were heart-breaking intimate portraits of abuse, death, and longing. Others were about the exultation of living and the joy of the world around us as well. Know that if your poem was not in this shortlist, it does not mean it is not worthy of so much more. Keep writing and keep submitting. Congratulations to all those who won or placed or were highly commended!

***Fig in the Night* – First Place**

Fig in the Night: At first glance this winning poem is in reverence to Sylvia Plath and plays around with Plath's metaphors, life and inner dialogue. But is also a poem

about how we want to be remembered, how we think we might be perceived and also how we guess at knowing an author inside and out (and what they mean to us). A sublime poem with a multi-layered framework.

An Intern Vet Nurse Privy to Granulation – Second Place

An Intern Vet Nurse Privy to Granulation: This poem is an evocative and sinuous story of a young Boxer visiting the vet and about how we heal.

The Eucalyptus Tree I Saw While Waiting for the 9pm Bus Home – Third Place

The Eucalyptus Tree I Saw While Waiting for the 9pm Bus Home: An instinctive and penetrating observation of not only of the author's surrounds but of the emotional universe they inhabit.

Rising with the Fog – Highly Commended

This poem from the last words of Emily Dickinson is razor sharp and impactful.

Untitled Grief – Highly Commended

A poem I kept revisiting for its simple gut punch about how it's difficult to name loss and aging and our inevitable end.