

Ozlem Baro – Judge of Primary School Poetry Award

Winners

1. The Tree
2. How Many Poppies?
3. Winter

Commended

1. Gossip
2. Ocean
3. Freedom

Judge's Bio

Ozlem Baro is a poet and photographer who enjoys combining the two mediums to create new works of art. She loves to travel and earlier this year she returned from a few weeks in Central America. While in Antigua, Guatemala, Ozlem performed one of her poems at an open mic night.

Judge's Report

Having judged the My Brother Jack Primary School Poetry Awards for the last two years, I looked forward to the process again this year. Indeed, I was curious to see how the styles and subjects would change. Poems written by young children are refreshing because they explore themes and forms in interesting ways. To do justice to their unique perspective, I need to approach each poem with a sensitivity that is different to how I read adult poems. Mindfulness of their level of understanding is also important. All, however, were a pleasure to read and I greatly enjoyed judging them.

In 2015 there were numerous war poems. This year there were also a few that dealt with subjects such as battles, poppies, remembrance and the Anzacs. It was fascinating to read the children's interpretations of what the red poppy meant to them or might represent to others. I wondered if this was the first time that they had experienced symbolism but was nonetheless impressed with their strong grasp of the concept.

I was pleasantly surprised to see many acrostic poems this year. I remembered doing these in primary school as an introduction to poetry. Acrostic poems are a great way to encourage children to think about structure and language. Some were quite well developed and made up of full sentences while others were simpler and composed of only a few words.

As in previous years, many of the poems were very sensory and had wonderful descriptions of things you could see, hear, touch, taste and smell. Most of the poems explored experiences and events from the immediate world of the writer (friends, family, seasons and nature) but some delved into more external subjects (Australia, freedom, fantasy worlds and creatures). Almost all were overwhelmingly positive or ended in good outcomes.

'The Tree' is a beautiful and evocative poem that uses language exceptionally well. Not only was the tree itself wonderfully described but I also got a strong sense of what it represented to the writer. The poem had a simple but effective structure and the rhythm allowed it to flow easily. It was a very moving read.