

**WRITE
AROUND
THE** *13 – 17 Sept*
MURRAY



**RIVER OF STORIES
WINNING ENTRIES
SECONDARY POETRY
2023**

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YEAR 7-8 CATEGORY

Year 7-8 Winner: Rachel Wyer [Murray High School]

Title: *Grief*

It's something no one can warn us of,
No one could be prepared for what had happened.

Six feet isn't that far,
It's half the size of a car.

It's the size of the kitchen fridge
It's the length of the living room couch.

It's the length of six bowling pins,
It's the size of two rubbish bins.

But, when it comes to you
It never fails to feel so far.

I miss you in the sun's first light,
I miss you deep into the night.

I wish to never grow old as if I grow old,
I have to remember you for longer than I've known you.

Grief works in weird ways,
Often like an ocean it comes in waves.

For the years to unfold
I hope to always recall your voice.

Your bracelets will never jingle as you walk to leave,
Never does a day go by where I do not grieve.

Your voice has become a recording
And your face is forever a picture.

I ache at the fact I know it was not painless
Although you will never become nameless.

Grief will never fade
Nor will it ever go away.

We just have to make room for it at our dining table
For it will become that little less painful.

The grief doesn't go away
The grief doesn't shrink, it stays.

We grow.

Year 7-8 Runner-Up: Semia May [Catholic College Wodonga]

Title: *The Rolling Waves*

Sand squelches beneath my toes,
Salt invades my eyes and nose,
The wind whips, whirls and pulls at my hair,
But I seem to not care.

For the cherished land beneath my feet,
Makes me feel happy and complete,
A crab scuttles across the sand,
Trying to find shelter, I understand.

Another blow of icy air,
Warning me: 'no time to spare,
For a storm of anger is rapidly brewing,
With a thousand crashing waves pursuing.

Most people would run and hide,
But I like to face my fears wide eyed Tackle my problems like a rugby game,
Or burn my worries in a flame So I sit and watch the waves roll by,
Each one in time with the wind up high.

Eventually it begins to settle,
Time for me to put on the kettle,
Sip my tea and taste the brew,
As I the watch the sunset come into view.
Cascading colours merging together,
Sun meets the sky, artists pleasure.

Year 7-8 Runner-Up: Caitlin Talbot [Home Educated]

Title: *Riding the Real Way*

I rise in the saddle,
She turns on me sharply,
My focus now towards the jumps that loom before us,
"Let's go girl," I whispered leaning down into her.
I feel her surge beneath me,
Gathering herself up as she takes the jump,
We were going hard, like a cricket ball aimed for the wickets,
I can feel her muscles rippling under her gleaming black coat.
Holding firmly to the reins, I rise in time with her rhythm,
She turns on a dime catching me by surprise,
Then in one giant leap she uncurls herself like a leopard about to pounce,
Stretching out we fly towards home.

Adrenaline is sweeping through me,
Wind whips at my face,
As we race towards home like a racehorse on the home run,
Her long legs eating up the ground.
Finally she slows to a halt,
Pulling up on her hunches,
Leaning forward I whisper to her, "Whew girl. Now that was riding, the real way."
With that a huge grin splits my face.

YEAR 9-10 CATEGORY

Year 9-10 Winner: Charlie Pinard [Catholic College Wodonga]

Title: *You Never Said*

Last night
I spent hours
Awake
Thinking of the things you
Never said
When you told me
My laugh
Was sweeter than
Summer strawberries
And warmer
Than a mother's touch
Thinking of the things you
Never said
When you said
My words
Were powerful
Enough
To run rivers dry
Thinking of the things you
Never said
When you said you
Loved me
Under an umbrella
In a dense sheet of rain
Thinking of the things you
Never said
But it wasn't the things
You said
It was everything you did
When you traced my
Jawline
With feathered fingertips

When you
Caught my waist
Every
Single
Time
I fell down
When your eyes
Went from ocean blue
To vibrant
Sapphire
At the sound of my
Laugh
When you offered
Concern
In the long silences
And laughter
In between
The rivers of
Words
Not everything you said
All you did
Everything

Year 9-10 Runner-Up: Asha Romeril [Indie School]

Title: *Old Me*

Some things remain unseen to the human eye
But can you feel what I feel,
as I scream into the night
Or what I do to ignite
That dusty old flame now burning bright
They tell you not to play with fire
Or you will get burned
But they can't tell you what they don't see
Because they are the ones now burning
And it's up to me
To keep my flame bright
So they can never see
What was once part of me.

Year 9-10 Runner-up: Charlie Pinard [Catholic College Wodonga]**Title:** *Drowning*

Have you ever felt,
Like you're drowning
Like water is flooding your lungs
Cutting off your neurological pathways
Burrowing
Unwanted
Into the crevices of your stomach
The tunnels of your heart
You can feel it's cold,
And you're frozen in time,
A worthless artifact
Unwanted
Un-cared for
You can see the end,
So, near you ache for it,
You reach out a hand,
And
Suddenly you're gasping for air,
The water evaporates from your lungs,
Your heart flushes out red liquid
Not clear
And you feel safe,
And relieved
But the water remains,
Hiding in a corner of your mind
A corner you visit in your darkest hours,
But no one sees,
You smile through your mask,
And cover the water stains with baggy clothing,
Wondering
If they're water stains at all



YEAR 11-12 CATEGORY

Year 11-12 Winner: Lylah Ellao [The Scots School Albury]

Title: *The Third Coming*

Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing
But to sing
[...] Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

- William Butler Yeats, *Notes on 'The Second Coming'; 'Sailing to Byzantium'*.

Years

Are a pithing measure
Since when wheels began to disobey gravity, and anthills began to grow on their flanks.
Doubtless it stands that any dense vessel—
Gifted breath and vigour by fire, then moved,
Devoid of location, yet instinctive of position—
And it's pawns of greying association,
(Let us not forget), have no mind, for what living thing shifts if not with direction?
The sands of Arnhem lands then dance with a deeper living connection.

But this question so long ago was spoke, as though
It's response we cared not to invoke;
As though the question was never asked; surpassed by
Even an entity who knew how to remember.
How to remember.

But it is still. By those who didn't need to because their minds had always known:
Tree rings in their wedding vows; clean sorghum grass blades; the pink-keyhole seed
vaults inside the Banksia, perpetual; the sunbird writing hungrily upon the paperbark—
The sure, seasonal, original tread of unrubberized paws
The most non-opposable whales taught themselves how to build citadels, a call.
Mealy grubs grow fat and magpies fatter; no longer do their paleolithic turrets fall.

Riverbeds are soft, warm; inviting gossamer: mountains and their creases curl like—
Like tired, orphaned possums tucked under the sheets,
Like the loved, not lovers, under the sheets.

Flinching is a labour for pine trees, tectonics snore.
The sunflowers and cry-santhemums fold in their tens of powdery eyelids, and for once,
It is not the poppies' fault. Turns out the red was not from crying.

And of course, the water is a reflection of the sky—
Some things time decides against changing.

Only the parakeets are hated—for lack of a word more true:
Those with the greyer down above their nostrils taught the smaller birds how to speak—
not to talk—and they fly around jovially, innumerable, percussive, when the sky is most blue,

Reminding the whole wide jungle
a little too much of
Man.

*Can be read top to bottom (The Third Coming),
Or from bottom to top (the present; what we have Come to);
To mimic the reversal of time and our actions*

Year 11-12 Runner-Up: Abbey Quinlan [Victory Lutheran College]

Title: *Mind the Gap*

From birth, the wheels of this chair have been my constraint and my freedom,
My transport from one place to another, when compelled by strong hands.
It propels me to the park, to the swing with a seat just for me - Eli.
But the bark covering the ground, the soft fall protector, is an impassable moat.
I push in, and the wood chips snare and snap at my wheels.
I cast my eyes over the playground, where the other kids play,
They meet the curious stare of another boy watching me through gaps in the yellow bars.
His brows narrow, and I see his question, 'what's wrong with you?'

Right now, we all look the same. Nervous. Tense. Fidgety. Perfectly identical.
'Reading time starts now', and the blow of those words fractures the symmetry.
The crinkle of fresh booklets echoes around the room as their contents is chewed over,
devoured.
The eyes of other students dart efficiently over the lines.
I look down at my page, blotched and blurred, black waves.
Like someone has wept over drying calligraphy. The symbols bleeding in streams of salt tears.
I am drowning in the rivers of ink and there is no bridge to help me cross this vast divide.
The teacher looks atop her glasses at me, as if to say, 'something wrong Matty?'

I got a job. I have a husband. I bought a house. Just like everyone else.
My capabilities are not so different to them. I can work. I can love. I can provide for myself.
They say I shouldn't be a mother, 'that's not a good idea Gracie.'
I think they're worried the child will be like me - instead of like them.
Trisomy 21. An extra line of the karyotype. It's all just lines and numbers.
But they steal my choice, and they crush my freedom.
A deep chasm in my family lineage, the result of a single extra chromosome.
But why? What's wrong with me?

The train station is bustling with people, engrossed in their busy lives.
Ladies in tight skirts trot past, small heels clicking vexatiously on the worn pavement.
I move slowly, walker out in front and people brush my shoulders as they hurry past.
My appointment's at ten, the doctor doesn't treat for tardiness - 'get a move on Elsa,' I say.
The train pulls in and the crowds migrate through the automatic doors. My walker pauses at
the threshold.
People look, but don't move, holding their selfish place in the crammed carriage.
'Mind the gap', blares across the loudspeakers. But no one minds and the gap seems to
widen.
All I can think is, 'what's wrong with everyone?'

Year 11-12 Runner-Up: Esther Little [Home Education]

Title: *The Garden*

All
Leaves
Botanical
Underground
Roots
Yield

Boughs
Over
Twigs
Allow
Nestled
Interacting
Colours

Growing,
Alive,
Riddles
Dance,
Everything
Now
Sing

