

YEAR 7-8 CATEGORY

Year 7-8 Winner: Jamieson Hunter [Galen College, Wangaratta]

Title: *Me, Before and After*

I am the Sea.

I hold the deepest secrets.

I'm every shade of blue.

I reach across the world, touching its corners with my hues.

I make the waves that wash ashore,

The ones that rage and lap,

I dance with the storms, sing with the thunder and hear the lightnings' clap.

I'm a stage to the sun,

I turn water to foam,

Under my waves are millions of lives, but most of all, I'm a home.

Then the humans changed it all.

I am the Trees.

I sway in the wind

Roots keeping me earthbound.

I watch as my leaves twirl gracefully to the ground.

I wrap myself in bark,

And reach up high,

Reaching for the sun, my branches scraping against the sky.

I follow the seasons,

I watch my leaves uncurl,

Altering between emerald, gold and red, until to the forest floor they swirl.

Then the humans changed it all.

I am the Sky.

I look over the land,

Hear the wind as it calls,

I see the mountains as they rise and the rain as it falls.

I paint myself blue,

I paint myself grey,

I can change the way I look more than once in a single day.

I watch the clouds cross my path,

Every shade of achromatic,

Together we make storms, on the highest levels of dramatic.

Then the humans changed it all.

Then the humans changed it all.

I am the Sea.

I'm suffocated by plastic,

Death litters my sand,

I feel the burn of chemicals as I climb onto the land.

I am the Trees.

I see the birds fleeing,

I see the machines all around,

I hear saws and shouts as I fall to the ground.

I am the Sky.

I see the factories below,

On the gases I choke,

I'm stained a man – made grey and drown in all the smoke.

The humans changed it all.

Year 7-8 First Runner-Up: Abbey Quinlan [Victory Lutheran College]

Title: *Blue Veins*

The Western Desert,
An eager prospectors dream,
A land of fortune.

A place of beauty,
White trunked trees, clear, deep blue skies,
And blue veined gorges.

A fledgling town grows,
And so Wittenoom was born,
It is a good life.

Everything is blue,
Shrouded, choking in tailings,
Cleaning is endless.

Arduous mining,
Long days spent hunched in the darkness,
Inhaling dust.

But, it's for the kids,
They will live a long life here,
Safe, far from danger.

At least... we thought so,
Until mates stopped breathing,
Their lungs concrete filled.

It's the asbestos,
The stuff the children played in,
The fibres we mined.

We had no idea,
Of mesothelioma,
Or asbestosis.

With bank coffers drained,
Candy man closed the mine,
Returned to sugar.

We were left behind,
To suffer the aftermath,
Of deadly, blue dust.

So war was declared,
The courtroom our battleground,
Us against the lies.

'Ignorance', they claimed.
They were 'unaware' of risks,
Not responsible.

I wonder all day,
As death knocks on nearby doors,
When will my time come?

I was very wrong,
My children were never safe,
Inhaling danger.

And the blue veined gorge,
The cherished heart of our town,
It beats no longer.

Now I sit alone,
Far from the town of blue ghosts,
But they still haunt me.

Nothing's more precious
than a happy shareholder.
...Will it ever change?

Year 7-8 Second Runner-Up: Melena Wallace [Trinity Anglican College]

Title: *Once Upon a Time*

Once upon a time
Not too long ago
Singing birds awoke us
And sparkling rivers flowed

Once upon a time
Leaves shined in dawn's light
And through the bushland rang
The echo of cried delight

One upon a time
Disaster crept up near
When dark clouds hid the sun
All light had fled in fear

Once upon a time
Settled a dark haze
Smoke choked the clean air
The bushes set ablaze

Once upon a time
Flames lit up the floor
Crying out in fear
We raced the angry roar

Once upon a time
Many wept for home
Where's mama and papa and sister?
For we've been left alone

Once upon a time
Soot lay all around
Our home had turned to ash
No green left to be found

Soon will be a time
That heaven's tears will fall
Gone is all we've known
Yet there's hope for one and all

YEAR 9-10 CATEGORY

Year 9-10 Winner: Lylah Ellao [The Scots School]

Title: *Just another everyday over-enthused vendor*

Good evening, good evening, a moment- No wait- I've a miracle product to tender:

A spectrum of colour in your own utopia! Not your everyday, over-enthused vendor.

I'll narrate the experience of using this *thing*- don't roll your eyes! In fact, close them please.

Prepare to sink into deepest desires, hear my voice and set your mind at ease.

Sail astray to sunset anywheres with that poetic paramour thereof-
Moroccan gloaming, cochineal claret
And ruby ring romance, flaunting twelve caret
And sung sanguine strains of the auburn parrot-
For satiny thornless roses reign rough at the touch of your love, your love.

For as many gold stars bespeckle dark night, there's kinds of sensations of joy:
Blonde apple tart in firelit lair,
Autumn's end, fawn leaves fall everywhere,
Summer daisy chains in flaxen hair,
See sunblissed, sunkissed symphonies of ceaseless yellows to enjoy.

Never has life frisked so green entertaining so vivid a verdant volution.
Dewed evergreens lush sigh earthy air,
Harlequin toucans keep the colours they wear.
Reptiles and mammals aren't gulled to some snare,
And springtime mother, ferny faced, smiles, whittled not to her marrow with pollution.

You can see the unsullied, cerulean skies- unclouded with climate change-
More gratifying the restless rested,
The blue-hearted nevermore heavy chested
And a mellow placidity as bluebirds nested
In sorrowed souls stranded over cyan seas, deep and strange. Deep, and strange.

Resurfacing from stagnant waters, tarred like Plath's pale prose-
Shackle-necked slaves, creeping, cotton-eyed,
Amerindian kin, solemn nullified,
Twinset trimmed libbers, named 'powerless' and 'pied'-
Fists lifted like the voices they hadn't, in rows, in rows, in rows.

They spill their sable spindrift, abutting stark-white, salty sands:

A grounded cove of a Caucasian crowd

Some conservative, of convention proud

Some harbouring conscience, equity uncowed.

All collided in consuming protest yet anchored to equal lands.

Open your eyes.

Beautiful isn't it? I bet your everyday over-enthused vendor

Doesn't sell the transcendence of earthly grasp, nor hawk a more spell-binding splendour.

The miracle product? Why, it doesn't exist! 'Tis the very eyes to whom you belong.

Who would've thought what we wanted the most was in front of us all along?

So, dear stranger, I'll say unto you before we forever part:

Perhaps we need not a change of sight, but rather a change of heart.

Year 9-10 First Runner-Up: Will Hogg [Trinity Anglican College]

Title: *Look What We Had*

Oh Murrayfield, Oh Murrayfield, footy boots and mud.

Surrounded by my team and supportive Steamers club.

Groundsmen, canteen ladies supporters and crew.

Everyone around the club is looking out for you.

Oh St Patricks, Oh St Patricks with your cross standing tall.

Such a calming sense of belonging when I pray within your walls.

Reflection, forgiveness, and gratitude abounds.

Smiles, support, and friendship with the parishioners who surround.

Oh Nail Can, Oh Nail Can, rain, hail or shine.
My mates love that hill, on our mountain bikes we climb.
Congregating at TAFE, big jumps, gnarly tracks, a stack here or there.
A friendly wave, hello to the others enjoying the space we love to share.

Oh Jones Street, Oh Jones Street your chips and gravy bring delight.
Karen the cook such a character, keeps us fed until the night.
Weary from our rides, boys sharing a meal, taking turns with the shout.
Joking, laughing, enjoying being around the tables that are out.

Oh Stadium, Oh Stadium with your basketballs pounding loud.
Tight games, team spirit, competitiveness surrounds.
Mums, Dads, Grandparents, people from all over town.
Cheering on the games, support on the court, and all around.

Oh Hume Weir, Oh Hume Weir calm water we crave.
Skiing, sailing, swimming, or a picnic at the end of the day.
Families and friends, larrikins, fisherman, sunshine above.
Sharing the space, everyone together in the place that we love.

Oh neighbourhood, oh neighbourhood. Hanel Street my home.
People coming and going but I never feel alone.
Leafy streets, kids on bikes, neighbours, a puppy at the gate.
My family, my home, my community, and my life is great.

Oh corona, oh corona, look what you've done.
We had sport and recreational activities now we've been left with none.
The winter we love, with boots, sweat, and mud.
Please, go away you are becoming the biggest spud!

Year 9-10 Second Runner-Up: Emily Murphy [Trinity Anglican College]

Title: *Oceans*

I went to stroll along the place where ocean and sand meet
A slight fresh breeze appears to be flowing through the air
And paraphernalia that does not belong, washes to my feet
It is as though one who was before didn't seem to care
This place once filled with life and joy is now somehow no longer
The more that we turn a blind eye, it will keep getting stronger

Abundance of our aftermath was forced into their homes
Like a timid little mouse, they were required to flee
We did not seem to care that we were giving them syndromes
They could no longer roam around, no longer could be free
If we had taken action faster
We could have had a much smaller disaster

But, let's not become lost in what we could have concluded
Let's not go and forget a goal that we should all set
Yes, this beautiful scene is still quite polluted
But we need to keep up together 'til this target is met
We can have a positive influence on this scene
If we keep working as one, as a colossal world team

The turtles, could safely swim through the currents' stream
Dolphins would start to play and whistle in such pleasure
And dugongs on the sea floor would slowly start to beam
The ocean is such an amazing and inspiring treasure
And next time that I stroll along where ocean and sand meet
Only clear crystal ocean water will wash up to my feet.

YEAR 11-12 CATEGORY

Year 11-12 Winner: Rachel Goodwin [Albury High School]

Title: *Where the Coolibahs Grow*

I have a dream to venture into the wilderness, a dream of long ago
To explore Australia's rugged land, to see where the coolibahs grow
I dream of the sunburnt plains, of where the shimmering trees stand
With a gentle spirit, they're the heart's cry of a windswept land

With a kaleidoscope of colours, spectacular gorges and majestic sights
Australia is a land of untamed beauty, solitude and bleak winter nights
Of distant horizons, resplendent hues, a country that is magical to see
I love the endless serenity and isolation, this vast frontier is for me

The mischievous wind whistles and teases, whispering an outback song
The coolibahs sway in the tantalising breeze, their stately boughs strong
I wish to sprawl underneath the trees, gazing into the vast infinite blue
The cotton-ball clouds floating aimlessly above me, a heavenly view

I long for the simplicity and freedom of the plains, without the city routine
For amidst the desolate wilderness, there is much waiting to be seen
I can already envision life among the coolibahs, of the incandescent light
The myriad of warm dusk tones, the smattering of twinkling stars at night

For years, I've imagined seeing the natural beauty of the deserted plains
The unparalleled majesty, its air tinged with the hint of torrential rains
Just how much I love this untrammelled country, no one will ever know
But I'll always dream this dream, I want to see where the coolibahs grow

Year 11-12 First Runner-Up: Lois Beloved [Trinity Anglican College]

Title: *Winter's Artist*

An awesome scene the artist paints, expert and deft his hand.
Brush strokes swift, he draws with ease, a winter wonderland.
Landscape sketched from memory, heavens and land entwine
Rapidly the scene is set, exquisitely divine.

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Pine trees reaching tall and proud, like statues standing still.
There is no wind to speak of, more an icy winter chill.
Strong branches dusted with the snow stretch their fingers high
As if welcoming the blanket bequeathed by the darkened sky.

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Crisp snowflakes twirl like dancers, pirouetting to and fro,
Waltzing to their silent tune toward the ground below.
Pale moonlight showers diamonds, generously all around.
Its treasure glints and sparkles upon the hardened ground.

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Snowfall in shades of silver envelops the land below,
Lighting up the darkness with its soothing, gentle glow.
Mellow in its nature, no preference where it lays
Takes refuge where and when it can, throughout the winter days.

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Though bereft of colour is the scene, prevailing grey and white,
Its awe-inspiring beauty is apparent day and night.
Who nonchalantly paints this scene, for all on earth to share?
His strokes proficient every time, precise and so aware.
Jack Frost paints wondrous pictures with his palette of frozen dew,
Then stands back when his work is done and proudly admires the view.

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

Title: *Our Mother's Struggle*

In.

The golden hue of the lowering sun transforms into a dull red compass, robbed of all rays and warmth, as if readying to leap from a faraway cliff.

Rousing the hunger of our extinction record.

Out.

The ensuing gloom smothers the last breaths of a dwindling population as it encircles, like a lost strand of hair, about the salty estuary below.

Welding the sea and sky seamlessly.

In.

The veil of Mother Nature condenses into a shadowed mist as she broods over the upper fjords.

Enveloping the distant peninsula.

Out.

But we rush like poison through her veins as we are carried out with the tide into the depths of the strait.

Polluting all.

In.

The bruised peaks of our waves fail to re-colonise the rugged headland as we grope desperately at the limestone clefts.

Eroding our last solid refuge.

Out.

Our gnarled hands tighten upon emptiness as we are torn from our forlorn search in the shallows.

Prying us from her embrace.

In.

The muddy clouds churn low upon the horizon as another white blanket of froth crumples upon the sand.

Repressing her last attempt at salvation.

Out.

The melancholy whisper of her lullaby echoes hauntedly about the rocky bluffs as the tide slouches in retreat from the coastline.

Bidding a slow farewell to Mother Earth.

In.

Her deepening shadows close inwards upon the headland as she unburdens herself of the weight upon her chest.

Levelling our deep footprints impressed upon the greying sand.

Out.

