



## Judge's Report - Term 1, 2023

### Theme: Love

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Term 1's competition with the theme "LOVE" kickstarted our third year of Little Stories, Big Ideas and, as has been the trend with each passing term, drew a record number of entries. 547 secondary school students country-wide put their hearts on the line for the theme this round, confirming our belief that love in all its guises would be a hot topic for tapping into teen talent!

The shape of literary love took many forms. Many students opted for traditional tropes with poignant pieces portraying the pain of heartbreak, the torture of unrequited love, the all-consuming passion of first love, and the soft kiss of love's tender glow marking the passing of time.

Other entrants chose to explore the darker side of love: the devastation of jealousy, the betrayal of family, the insidious voice that erodes self-love, dystopian dilemmas, paranormal paramours, and what – or who - will be sacrificed in the name of love.

While reading and assessing all entries is indeed a labour of love, judging is never an easy task. I know we say this every term, but we're continually blown away by the sheer scope of creativity and enthusiasm that comes into our inboxes from every corner of Australia. We know behind many of these young writers stand teachers who are supporting and encouraging their students (we see you too, Home School parents!) and helping them develop their craft and voice, and we thank you for your commitment. You are indeed nurturing the future potential of Australian literary greatness. Of that we have no doubt.

With 546 entries to choose from, Term 1 has seen more Honourable Mentions than usual across both categories. Please join us in congratulating the following authors whose words left a lingering resonance we couldn't ignore.



The theme for Term 2 **MASK** has now opened for entries. We're looking forward to the various ways students will interpret this multifaceted theme!

Please spread the word to your students, membership base, children, social networks, and anyone you think would be interested in submitting their work for the chance to win terrific prizes while flexing their creative muscle. We'd love to read their entries!

Thanks as always ongoing support, and all the very best for Term 2 and beyond.

Joe and Rebecca

## Year 10 - 12 Winners

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### First Place

***Candle-wick Man and I*** by **Anonymous**, McKinnon Secondary College, VIC

Candle-wick man sags  
fringed by wax depletion,  
he wilts

while I bloat with unspoken sentiments  
candle-wick man is paper-thin  
from excess expenditure

he asks me  
- how was your day,  
with all the inflection of a checkout clerk

his love is a fumbling spine  
curving awkwardly, asymmetric  
through the empty space between us

all but burnt out now  
candle-wick man is bereft of any warmth  
after crying so many soy-melt tears

the years have chafed at candle-wick man  
if he stoops any further  
our eyes might just meet

loving you has never been so hard,  
candle-wick man  
but I will try.

## **Second Place**

***Self Love* by Carla Stanojevic, Ava Maria College, VIC**

she grabs my hair with feverish ferocity,  
yanking each strand from my head,  
my hair i lovingly brushed this morning,  
soon there will be nothing left.  
she claws at my eyes,  
yanking and ripping.  
she has her hands clenched around my shoulders,  
throwing my around the room, shaking me until i'm numb,  
like when you have been upside so long it seems like there was never a time where  
the roof wasn't the floor.  
she grabs my brain, fistfuls of fleshy lumps.  
my head pounds and i open my eyes,  
chest heaving, breath heavy,  
echoing around the empty room

## **Third Place**

***All That is Love* by Syazwana Saifudin, Suzanne Cory High School, VIC**

Love is a game we play, a maze,  
A dance of doubts, a heart's dark phase.  
It's not a rose without its thorns,  
But something complex, a human form.

It brings us pain, yet we pursue,  
For in its depths, we find a clue  
To all, that's human, raw and real,  
A feeling worth the wounds we feel.

So let us dance this dance of love,  
With all its joys and all its woes,  
For in this game, we find our fate,  
And all that's human in our souls.

### **Honourable Mention:**

- ***Mirage*** by Madeleine Watson, Pymble Ladies College, NSW
- ***The Heart and It's Herald*** by Harvey Lam, Nossal High School, VIC
- ***Love hate: Hate love*** by Kira Heffernan, Mansfield State High School, QLD
- ***Circuit Breaker*** by Ben McLean, Sandringham College, VIC
- ***Waiting*** by Xavier Hynes, St Ignatius College Riverview, NSW
- ***She and He*** by Lily Makin, Macarthur Anglican School, NSW
- ***Lost Love*** by Jacqueline Tran, Hurlstone Agricultural High School, NSW
- ***Meraki*** by Ariana Sim, Abbotsleigh School, NSW
- ***Vista on the Alicante*** by Ryan McCaffrey, Sandringham College, VIC
- ***A Lesson, I Listen, I Lessen*** by Amelia Tu, Shalom College, QLD
- ***Our Glass House*** by Georgia Harris, Sandringham College, VIC
- ***Simple Love*** by Grace Morgan, Tenison Woods College, SA
- ***Outgrown Love*** by Karina Lee, Darwin High School, NT
- ***Unsatisfied*** by Zoe Copeland, St Josephs Regional College, NSW
- ***In the Name of Love*** by Veronica Keelan-Slight, Mackillop College, NSW

## Year 7 – 9 Winners

### First Place

*The Truth of Love* by Dulara Jayasekara, Mount Waverley Secondary College, VIC

A hurricane-  
Flurries of words unsaid  
Lodged inside my head

Lay your heart on the line  
Beating, alive, slick with crimson, scarlet

Rivulets of molten gold deep within my veins  
Love-heart shaped bullets, they rain  
A medley of pain  
Truth, held. A piece of parchment, crumpled up close

Oh, bittersweet descent into oblivion  
The agonizingly slow hurtle into the abyss  
Plunging into a void of question marks, dizzying confusion

Etched in my soul,  
Roses and thorns  
Careful! Do not draw blood-

Alas,  
A single drop falls like my naivete, in a mere snap shot  
So, so gullible, fallen prey to

You.

## **Second Place**

***Love Yourself*** by Jimin Jeon, Homeschooled, NSW

In the tainted window of a 70's Honda, I catch her reflection, gleaming bright against the obscured shadows of the street.

I love her round face without edges, how it wriggles and transforms, throwing gloves on Bian Lian's face. I love her teddy bear brown eyes, the shade of fuzzy nostalgia escorting us into childhood. I love her juggler's hands, leather-bound with strength, throwing the clubs of friends, family, and changing seas in the eye of the storm.

I see her. And she sees me. Feeling the love seep and blossom through my skin, I tuck my hair back and slip through the rubbered curve of the window.

## **Third Place**

***Too Heavy*** by Dominique Zamora, Mercy Catholic College, NSW

"Your heart is too heavy to carry", They said.

I nodded.

I knew.

I knew that my nature is filled with things that were too bright and bold,  
With loud parties and quiet reading,  
With elegance and recklessness,  
And with unearthly ideas, I scraped from the dirt of my mind.

My head was a landfill of extraordinary fantasies,  
Yet you still loved me.  
To you, I was never too heavy to drag you down,  
To you, I was perfect.

Until you let go of the chain that bound you and I,  
And our memories lay in tatters in the soil.

## **Honourable Mentions:**

- ***Winter's Aubade*** by Indigo Leyland, Saint Mary's Catholic College, QLD
- ***Stray Cat*** by Sumayyah Deen, Homeschooled, QLD
- ***Your Golden Hour*** by Adrita Saha, James Ruse Agricultural High School, NSW
- ***Quiet Evenings by*** Karunamuni Sanuli Karunaratne, Marist Regional College, TAS
- ***Made for Love*** by Emma Zhang, Meridien School, NSW
- ***Flowers Fall in Winter*** by Lillian King, GRC Peakhurst, NSW
- ***Imagine*** by Olivia Cameron, North Albany Senior High School, WA
- ***I Love Cricket*** by Anonymous, Scotch College, WA
- ***A Gamble of Love*** by Anonymous, Lyneham High School, ACT
- ***Silver Knives*** by Isla Attard, Magdalene Catholic College, NSW
- ***To You Who I Would Wait Forever For*** by Sarah Qi, James Ruse Agricultural High School, NSW
- ***A Red Field Sways In a Winter's Breeze*** by Claire Li, James Ruse Agricultural High School, NSW
- ***Someone To Come Home To*** by Adrita Saha, James Ruse Agricultural High School, NSW
- ***Undying Love*** by Esther Li, Neutral Bay Public School, NSW
- ***Self-love*** by Annabel Li, Queenwood School for Girls, QLD



## MORNINGTON PENINSULA LOCAL WRITERS' AWARD

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***Piano Boy*** by Sophia van Zanten, Mount Eliza Secondary College, VIC

It reminded him of stars,  
Or at least what he imagined stars would sound like.  
The way the boy's fingers  
twinkled  
across the keys,  
Always made him feel like the world was made of stardust,  
And he could design the galaxy.

Every concert he would sit and watch,  
every concert, piano boy would play  
And every concert,  
Every song,  
felt like it was written for him.  
And every concert,  
Every song,  
Was theirs.

But when the song stopped,  
When his hands lifted  
and the stars faded away,  
It wasn't him and piano boy.  
It was only  
him.