

# Page Seventeen Short Story and Poetry Competition 2005 Results

## Short Story Section

1st prize: Mikolai's Gift by Lisa Nankervis  
2nd prize: The Jesus of Ants by Amanda le Bas de Plumetot

Commended: Kosciusko's in my Heart by Shirley Hotchkiss  
Commended: The Exotic Other by Rosemary Abbott  
Commended: Small Hands by Lisa Nankervis

## Poetry section

1st prize: Beslan School #1 Sept 2004 by Marian Spires  
2nd prize: HMAS Dechaineux 2003 by Nana Ollerenshaw

Commended: Chef by Larissa Davisson Farrell  
Commended: Seizure by Nana Ollerenshaw

## Page Seventeen/A Photo Affair cover art competition

1st prize: Abstract on a Rainy Day by Graeme Edwards

## Judges' Report

Page Seventeen's first competition attracted an impressive 254 entries of which 133 were short stories and 121 were poems. All entrants were required to sign a declaration that their entries were original, unpublished and had not won a prize elsewhere. Despite this, one short story entrant was disqualified as one of the stories included in their entry was found to have been published in a Western Australian magazine.

In the poetry category, we read and re-read the entries in a process of gradual reduction until we each had a shortlist of twelve poems. Then we met one Saturday morning at the Queen of Tarts Café in Belgrave, steeled to fight our way down to a winner. However we were both pleasantly surprised to find we had similar lists.

Once we had settled on a final shortlist of ten, there were two very powerful poems that stood out from the rest. Interestingly, both begin with news incidents, one a tragedy, the other a close call. Both poems explore the tension of the uncertain times we live in.

Nana Ollerenshaw's *HMAS Dechaineux 2003* evocatively yet concisely recalls the incident when the Australian Navy Collins class submarine almost sank following the failure of a seawater hose at its maximum diving depth. The tone, pace and imagery of the poem demonstrates a strong empathy for the crew, whose fate drew chillingly close to that of the Russian submarine *Kursk*, which sank in 2001 with all hands lost.

Marian Spires's *Beslan School #1 Sept 2004*, utilises highly original imagery to create an intensely moving account of a mother's grief at the loss of her child in the Beslan school siege. What begins as a child's dream of cups ends with a mother's grief and longing for a child who will never again come home from school. The poem's superb use of a two-part structure highlights the dual worlds of any parent who has lost a child; the worlds of before and after their child's death. This poem was our clear winner.

In the short story category, our lists were very different. There were the inevitable arguments and disagreements. Eventually we had a shortlist of the five strongest stories, each of them entirely different. Each was a possible winner.

At this point we called upon a third judge to make an independent assessment of each of the stories on the shortlist. In the end it came down to two very different stories, both immensely readable. Amanda le Bas de Plumetot's *The Jesus of Ants* is a highly original take on the application of Christianity to all living things. Lisa Nankervis's exquisitely written winning story, *Mikolai's Gift*, explores a young boy's struggle to retain his sense of self when faced with the cruel confines of situation and family.

We congratulate the winners and thank all the entrants for making our first competition a success.

May you enjoy reading the stories and poems as much as we did.