

Page Seventeen Short Story and Poetry Competition 2007

Results

Short Story section

1st prize – Hayley Katzen (NSW) – Not cricket

2nd prize – Ella Holcombe (Vic) – The Slide

Commended – Brooke McReynolds (Qld) – Dead Hearts in Paradise

Commended – Georgina Scillio (Vic) – She looked in vain for fruit that summer

Commended – Laura McIntosh (Vic) – The Favour

Finalist – David Gibb (SA) – The Crumbling of Ash

Finalist – Jennifer Mills (NT) – A Selfish Prayer

Finalist – Jenny Sinclair (Vic) – Put on your dancing shoes

Finalist – Melissa Ferguson (Vic) – Psychic Stoned

Judge's report

Judging a short story competition is both a challenge and a reward. I have been invited into other people's lives, into the minds of wonderful characters, sometimes into whole other universes. For me, the short story is a license to explore the fabulous complexities of human creativity and look at the ways in which we see ourselves, each other, relationships, and the world. The stories in this year's competition were rich and varied in their offerings. If creativity had been my only criterion, I think I'd have gone nuts trying to make a choice, but I was asked to judge, and I had to make judgement. It came down to this: I could probably have recommended publishing about a third of the stories entered into the competition, but the winners had to show an expertise in the craft of writing as well as the art of storytelling.

There are certain basics that every short story needs to have: a beginning, a middle, an end; character, setting, tempo and structure. It surprised me that while many of the stories did well in these areas, they failed in fundamentals – spelling, tense and dialogue. I am constantly disappointed by Australian writers who won't reach for a dictionary and can't be bothered changing the spell check option on their word processor from 'US English' to 'Australian English' or perhaps fail to even realise that there is a difference; and don't even get me started on the whole business of 'ass' and 'arse.' In Australia, one sits on one's arse, unless there is some sort of equine involvement.

Second placed story, The Slide, was written as a stream of consciousness, a little boy suffers at the hands of bullies and we share his hopes as he waits for his mum. We are drawn into his world and realise, as outsiders, the futility of his dreams. The winning story was one I read quite early in the judging. It was poignant and moving and it stayed with me. Not Cricket is a powerful and honest story of a young man's sexual awakening.

Congratulations to the winners, to the Commendeds, to those whose stories were selected for publication and to everybody who entered the competition. It is an act of faith in yourself that you have created a story and that you have sent it out. Keep writing, all of you, keep workshopping and keep sending your work out.

It is through you that the short story is kept alive.

– Amanda le Bas de Plumetot

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Poetry section

1st prize – Carole Poustie (Vic) – The Irises

2nd prize – Nathan Curnow (Vic) – paparazzi on fire/hammer the flowers

Commended – Derek Motion (NSW) – June was first

Commended – Tracy Hughes (Qld) – The Roadrunner

Finalist – Barbara De Franceschi (NSW) – Homage in Cheese

Finalist – David Campbell (Vic) – Rendition

Finalist – Derek Motion (NSW) – a matter of seconds

Finalist – Dorothy Swoope (NSW) – Looking up

Finalist – Jennifer Langley-Kemp (WA) – early morning river

Finalist – Jennifer Mills (NT) – this amber land

Finalist – John Egan (NSW) – Race the Storm

Finalist – Phil Ilton (Vic) – Owed to an Ozzie Ern

Judge's report

There were some wonderful entries in this year's Page Seventeen contest, and I was impressed with the range and invention on display. If I could make one criticism of the works submitted, however, it would be that some entries clearly needed more drafting. Good poetry, just like any of the finer arts, is based on craft and work as much as inspiration.

Some entries were written on good themes and used some fantastically unusual imagery but sometimes cliché and dull language weighed down otherwise great work. Language is a very powerful tool when used delicately, sensitively and cleverly.

First place: *Irises*

This poem really stood out from the rest in that it had a strength of theme that ran all the way through to its excellent ending. There was a clarity in the language and imagery that reflected the subject matter beautifully leaving an immediate emotional impression.

'The house with the magnolia
that reminds me of holidays in Eden
has high fence posts along the front
and palings piled along the drive.
Tomorrow it will be
a private magnolia.'

Second place: *paparazzi on fire/hammer the flowers*

This poem was full of fantastic lines and original images. 'The moon looks as sad as a panda.' It was out of the box and made itself an immediate finalist with its arresting and inventive voice and use of language.

Commended: Roadrunner and June Was First

Roadrunner was a really sparkly poem that had an effective dynamic and some great ideas along with a strong ending that wraps it up like a present. 'The black road rolls out like the tongue of a reptile. I am an insect on its tongue.'

June Was First is also a wonderful piece that compels you to read it again several times. The quietness of the arrangement sends a very loud message – great work.

– Emilie Zoey Baker