

**WRITE
AROUND
THE 2025
MURRAY**

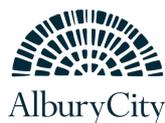
Barry Young River of Stories

2025

Primary School Short Story

Award Recipients

BOOKtique



**Hume
Bank**



**Years 3 & 4 Short Story
Winner
Steven Naing
Myrtleford P-12 College**



Koby the Fly

Rocket in the sky,
Looks like a star,
Flying so high,
Flying so far.

Planets whizzing by,
Colours galore,
Oh me, oh my!
There's so many more.

Down on the moon,
It's not made of cheese?
But I brought my spoon!
Now let's leave with a breeze.

Now onto Mars,
With red hot sand,
Lifting into the stars,
Goodbye land!

A long day in space,
Let's go back to Earth,
Everything in place,
I can see Perth!

I land on the ground,
In the night down below,
I've been all around,
The places I know.

Years 3 & 4 Short Story
Highly Commended
Hayley Agar
The Scots School Albury



Walter's Great Escape

“Click”. The gate closed with a clatter.

“Bye, Walter!” I heard my family shout from the big, red car. I sighed as I watched my humans disappear down the road. The grownups that feed me, and the girls, who play with me. On these days when they all leave, I feel disappointed, and sad. As a Standard Schnauzer, I am very energetic. I love racing around the house, with the three girls not far behind me. “He’s got the zoomies again!” they always shout, squealing with laughter.

I turned away from the tall, black gate. I hung my shaggy, grey head and walked past the old climbing tree, no little girl's legs swinging from its leafy branches. Past the lavender bush, no one picking the purple flowers. Past the empty garage. Ready for another day of loneliness. When would it be my turn to have an adventure beyond the big, black, boring gates?

I trotted up the steps and snuggled into my crate. I tried to sleep but it was too noisy. There were builders working in the storm drain that runs behind our garden. I wandered over to give them a piece of my mind.

“Woof!”

To my surprise the workmen had left a ramp leaning against the

fence. I put my front paws on the top of the fence and as quick as a flash I was over it. I ran up the storm drain and into the park. Wait, the park? The park I always walked past on the way to the bush? Yes! I am sure I know the way to the bush from here.

I ran up the hill. Down the hill. Around the corner. Finally, I was in the bush. The lush, green gum trees, reaching to the sky. I ran deeper into the bush. Suddenly, I saw a kangaroo. I ran after it and off the track. Dust flying up behind me, rocks jumping everywhere. I leapt, but to my surprise, I did not land on firm ground again! I was plummeting down . . . down . . . down . . .

Ouch! I landed on hard rock. What is this horrendous hole doing in the middle of the bush?

“Are you okay?” asked a voice from the darkness.

“Who are you?” I barked.

“I am Mrs Wombat.” came the reply.

“Well I am Walter. What are you doing here?” I asked.

“I live here”

“Well what is this place?” I asked.

“It is a mine shaft.” she replied

“Hey, I have an idea, how about I sniff my way home, and you dig.”

“Good plan!” Mrs Wombat replied.

Sniff, sniff. Shovel, shovel.

“Now dig up” I commanded.

Shovel, shovel.

“Now dig straight!... Dig left!...” Dig up!....Dig right! We’re nearly there!”

Shovel shovel.....

Suddenly we were above ground, sand flying everywhere. “We are in the sandpit!” I shouted. Home at last.

“Click” The gate closed.

“Mrs Wombat, you have to go home before my humans see you. Thank you so much for helping me dig my way back home. Goodbye!”

“It was fun to meet you Walter, we were a great team. I hope I see you again!” called Mrs Wombat, waddling back down the tunnel.

As my humans returned I smiled to myself as I thought about my day. They would never guess the adventures I’ve had.....

Years 3 & 4 Short Story
Highly Commended
Charlie Tuck
Lavington Public School



Leonardo's Kitchen

Most adventures begin in faraway lands. Leonardo's adventure began in a kitchen.

For years, Leonardo had saved up for the kitchen of his dreams so he could open his own restaurant. He didn't want an old, smelly, cheap kitchen. He wanted a new shiny, stainless steel, professional kitchen. But the problem was, those kitchens were too expensive.

So he cut down on coffees. He got a second job at KFC. He even sold his car and travelled everywhere on his bike.

After years of saving, Leonardo found the perfect place for his restaurant, and he could finally afford it! The moment the contract arrived, he was so excited he signed it straight away, without even reading it!

Leonardo was indescribably thrilled. This was it! His dream was coming true.

The restaurant's opening night had arrived. Leonard peeked outside and couldn't believe it. There was a line of people waiting to come in! Just before Leonardo opened the doors, he whispered to himself, "This will go great."

The diners sat down, smiling. Orders were taken. The first meals were served.

And then ... everything went wrong.

As soon as people took their first bites, their smiles vanished. One by one, they pushed their plates away. Someone found a shoelace in their spaghetti. Slowly, disappointed customers stood up and left. Leonardo was devastated and went to bed with a heavy heart. The next morning, he opened his Instagram account to check the reviews. One star. "The worst meal I've ever eaten."

Frustrated, he stomped his foot hard. THUNK. A cabinet door burst open, and everything fell out. As he was picking up cutlery and spilled seasonings, he spotted a dusty old book wedged in the back of a drawer. It didn't look familiar. It looked like it had been sitting there for decades.

He blew the dust off and carefully opened it.

“The Kindness Kitchen. Recipes for Food that Feels.”

On the first page was a note that said, “Please make these recipes with love. That is the secret ingredient.”

Leonardo stayed up all the next night reading the recipe book.

The recipes had names like “Perk me up Pasta”, “Heartwarming Hot Chocolate” and “Life Changing Lamb Stew.” That last one made his stomach grumble.

The next morning, Leonardo got to work. He chopped, stirred, hummed a little tune, and cooked with his heart. The Life Changing Lamb Stew filled the kitchen with the most amazing smell he'd ever known. He tasted one spoonful and slowly sat down. “Whoa” he sighed.

The next weekend, after trialling all the recipes in the book, Leonardo reopened the restaurant, but this time, with a new name... “The Kindness Kitchen.”

Customers returned. People smiled, danced, and even the Mayor cried into his stew. “I don't know why I'm crying,” he said. “It's just ... impeccable!”

Leonardo smiled so wide his face hurt. He thought his adventure had ended in disaster, but by believing in himself, and cooking with love and kindness, his adventure had only just begun.

Years 3 & 4 Short Story
Judge's Commendation
Daphne Gazzard
Victory Lutheran College



Retrieving the Retrievers

One day Emma had to travel far from home to a boarding school in Italy. At school she was greeted with a friendly hello by Miss Gold. Her dorm mates were Carmella, Isabella and Elena.

Isabella and Elena were so mean. But Carmella and Emma quickly became very good friends. Emma had a suspicion that Mr Ronald and Miss Gold were up to something.

Early one morning Emma was walking through the courtyard when she heard barks coming from the science room. She had a quick look inside, but it was nothing. She shrugged and walked away.

Two weeks later Emma was out later than usual. She was about to turn the corner near the science room when she heard Miss Gold and Mr Ronald talking.

“2000 really?” whispered Mr Ronald.

“Yes, Mr Ronald, it’s really 2000. Excellent, isn’t it?” said Miss Gold.

“Yes, indeed Miss, Ralph O’ Donald and Lee will be sending the golden retrievers pups off”. Mr Ronald exclaimed.

“Oh goody, goody”, said Miss Gold. “Let’s go and see the pups, shall we?”

Once Miss Gold and Mr Ronald were safely inside the science room Emma peeked inside making sure not to be seen. A trap door was open in the floor, she gasped and ran! That night she barely slept. The next day Emma told Carmella. Carmella was shocked. It was a horrifying smuggling business.

One night Carmella woke Emma. They run out to the courtyard

and what they saw was horrific to watch. They hid together behind a bush. The big truck was rusty and designed like a cattle truck, but puppy sized and stacked with boxes and boxes of scared whimpering puppies. They had to do something and quickly. Emma thought as quickly as possible. Suddenly she heard talking.

” Let’s get on the road guys” mumbled Ralph.

They piled in to the truck and started the engine. The engine roared to life. There was only one thing left to do. The truck started to move. Carmella and Emma looked at each other. They leapt on the back of the moving truck. Emma nodded at Carmella and together they yanked the back of the truck open. It was strenuous work. Many shoe boxes of puppies tumbled out of the truck. The happy golden puppies barked with joy. The principal rushed out into the courtyard to see what the kerfuffle was. Miss Gold, Mr Ronald, Lee and Ralph also got out which was a mistake because the principal quickly whipped her phone out and called triple Zero. The police were there in a flash, and they put Miss Gold, Mr Ronald, Lee and Ralph in hand cuffs and marched them off to jail. Once Carmella and Emma finished their media interviews, they happily got their very own puppy. As for the rest of the puppies they went to loving families all over Italy and eleven of the puppies stayed on at the boarding school and an extra soft one for sick bay.

Years 3 & 4 Short Story
Judge's Commendation
Alyssa Tyas
Lavington Public School



My Changing Eyes

Beep, beep, beep. Oops—that’s my alarm clock! I have to get up. It’s already 8:25! It was meant to wake me at 7:30! My alarm must be broken. Oh well. But my eyes are stinging so much. I jump out of bed and run to the bathroom. What’s wrong with my eyes?

I look in the mirror. Huh? My eyes are normally blue... but now they look light purple. Could they be changing? Maybe I’m just tired. I race around to get ready.

I just make the school bus in time. The bus driver looks thirsty. I hand her my spare water bottle. “Here you go, Victoria.”

She drinks it and looks surprised. “How did you know I was thirsty? Did you read my mind?”

“Um, I don’t think so,” I say. “Do you think I did?”

“I don’t know. But thanks!”

At school, my eyes still sting. Could they really be changing to purple? I go to my classroom. I’m first in line. I ask, “Ms Berrie, will we have a different teacher today?”

“Yes,” she says. “Did Emma from Year 6 tell you?”

“I don’t even know her.”

Ms Berrie looks confused. “We will have... hmm...”

“Mr Hass?” I ask.

“Yes! How did you know?”

“I just... knew.”

We go inside and mark the roll. This was going to be a long day. I started to realise that I could hear people’s thoughts! Is this really happening or am I just imagining it? All day my eyes were stinging, they seemed to sting more as the day dragged on.

Towards the end of the day, my eyes are burning now. I have to check them. Maybe splash water on them. Could they really be changing to purple? Is that why they hurt?

“Excuse me, Mr Hass, can I go to the toilet?” He nods. I rush to the mirror.

Now they’re turning gold. They’re changing again? I’m feeling panicked. I run out of the toilets.

I know that the home bell is going to ring soon. Just like I seem to know everything today.

Ding, ding, ding! Home bell.

I rush to the bus, I can’t wait to get home.

At home, I started thinking about my day while eating dinner.

My little brother, Otto started thinking something that I can hear. “I just can’t believe that I lost my brand new toothpaste and toothbrush that Hazel gave me for Christmas”.

“What?” I couldn’t resist blurting out to Otto. “Did you lose your toothbrush I gave you?”

Otto’s mouth drops open. “How did you know?” His eyes burst into tears as he ran to his room. Oops, that was rude of me. I should probably check on my eyes before it gets too late.

After dinner, I nervously walk up the stairs to go to the bathroom. I

saw something really surprising. My eyes are light blue again! My goodness, that was a weird, adventurous day. I wonder what's going to happen tomorrow.....

Years 3 & 4 Short Story
Judge's Commendation
Anneliese Finger
Home School



Adventure in the Outback

WOW! What an adventure we have been on this year.

We loaded up the caravan, organised my Nana and Pa to look after all our animals and garden and headed North. We stayed at Narrendra in a free camp near the Murrumbidgee River. There were heaps of campers. The next day we had breakfast and headed off to Bourke.

When we arrived in Bourke there was a big sign saying flood water over the road at the NSW / QLD border, so the road was closed. We decided to camp in a truck stop for the night. My brother and I played ball with our blue heeler dog Zoe and tried to keep moving due to heaps of big mozzies.

In the morning we changed our plans and back tracked to Hebel, Dirranbandi , St George and Moonie and arrived at my Dad's Uncle and Aunty's grazing farm, which is 10,000 acres at the Gums. We have never been there and we had a great time feeding the animals, patting a cow, riding the motorbike and doing the water run with my second cousin D'Arcy. We had a fun packed three days, enjoyed the open space. Our Ma met us there to spend more time with us. She lives in Tambo Queensland which only has 300 people living there. On the Thursday morning we headed off for a 7 hour drive to Tambo as we were spending Easter at Ma's place.

When we drove into Ma's backyard Dad noticed the rear wheel bearing was leaking, we were stuck in Tambo with car trouble. Thank goodness it was not on the side of the road. We enjoyed our

Easter eating lots of chocolate and spending time with Ma. It was a big job to fix the car so it went on a tilt tray to Roma which is four hours away from us. Because of the public holidays the parts took longer to get to Roma. So we made the most of the idle time we helped Ma in the garden and sanding of some wooden chairs. Ma drove us an hour to Blackall to the mineral pool, it was fun playing games in the pool with my family. The water was warm as it comes from the great artesian basin. By the time the car got fixed and we hooked the van up and headed towards home. We took 3 days to get home our first stop was Wyandra at the sportsground near the school and second day we stopped at Mt Hope. We were happy to get home and see our Nana and Pa and our animals. Wonder what adventure we will go on for our next holiday.

Years 3 & 4 Short Story
Judge's Commendation
Georgia Green
St Augustine's Primary School



The Stranded Island

One summer holiday, Bella, Sofia and Annie went to stay at Bella's house.

The girls were best friends and did everything together. They were all eight, but liked different things. Bella loved art, Sofia loved to read, and Annie loved dancing.

The girls had just arrived at Bella's house. "Mum!" Bella said, hugging her mum. "Hi Laura," Sofia and Annie chorused. "Hi girls! Why don't you settle in and unpack your things?" said Bella's mum. "Sure," the girls replied as they disappeared down the hall.

Sofia was ready to go to the beach and was waiting for the others. Bella's mum came out with Bella and Annie. They all wandered to the beach.

Bella, Sofia and Annie were body surfing when a huge wave started to build up. They didn't realise and suddenly heard a loud CRASH! For a few moments, it seemed as if time had stopped. When they opened their eyes, they discovered they were in a rip. Annie tried to swim out of it, but it was too strong. "Stop!" cried Sofia. "I've read a book about rips, and it says to stay calm and float. We'll eventually get out of it," she explained. So, they floated calmly, hoping to get help soon.

Finally, just as Sofia had predicted, they got out of the rip. Bella spied an island. "Land!" she called. Bella, Sofia and Annie swam to the island. It was huge! "Oh no! It's almost night. We'll have to camp here until morning!" exclaimed Bella. "Come on," said Annie. "Let's go!" They found a place to sleep, and leaves to sleep on and under. Bella, Sofia and Annie watched the sun set.

Bella was still awake thinking about their problem. What if we can't get

home? She thought nervously. Eventually, she fell asleep.

The girls had an early morning. They wanted to return as soon as possible. They started searching for food, water, help and a way out. Bella came back with an excellent plan. “Annie, Sofia, come here! I’ve got a great idea,” yelled Bella. Annie and Sofia rushed to Bella. “We should build a raft with logs,” she said. “I know the way back to my house, so we can float back to shore.”

The girls darted around and came back with logs, vines and sticks. “Let’s line the logs up together and tie them with the vines” said Sofia. Annie struggled with the vines. “I think we should tie one end together and loop them around the logs,” she suggested. They made paddles with the sticks. They set the raft on the water and clambered on.

They were halfway to the shore when they felt the raft push forwards. “Yes!” cheered Annie as she realised they were riding the waves back to shore. There was Bella’s mum (who looked extremely frightened) waiting for them. “Mum, we’re here. Can we go home?” shouted Bella excitedly. They went home, had warm hot chocolates and told her all about their big adventure.

Years 5 & 6 Short Story

Winner

Eloise Rogers

The Scots School Albury



Alfie's Accidental Adventure

Alfie was not the sort of boy who went looking for adventure. This eleven-year-old, slightly smaller than most, with rarely brushed brown hair preferred his adventures to be safely contained in the pages of a book. Along with a hot chocolate and his grey schnoodle dog, Fuji, lying lazily beside him. Sometimes, adventure comes looking for you, whether you want it or not.

It all began on a sunny Spring morning. Alfie's mother had asked him to take Fuji for a walk to get some fresh air and exercise. Alfie grumbled, as he was just about to finish his book about fierce warriors taking over the world. Alfie put on his hat, and lead around Fuji's collar, then set off. Fuji the ever-curious schnoodle pulled hard in front and led the way down the driveway.

The street was bustling with the air thick with the smell of cafes, with their freshly brewed coffees and baked muffins. Alfie continued walking Fuji, who all of a sudden darted ahead and broke free from the lead.

"Fuji, come back!" Alfie called, but the dog was already gone, his grey fluffy paws vanishing around the corner.

Alfie hesitated- he was not a risk taker by any means. He knew that he should go straight home, but he loved Fuji and couldn't leave him. With a nervous yet deep sigh, Alfie followed Fuji into an alley, that he had not seen before.

The alley was dark, narrow and winding. It was lined with old brick walls covered in ivy. Alfie hurried after Fuji, who seemed to be chasing a piece of rubbish floating in the breeze. The alley twisted and turned, and soon Alfie realised that he was somewhere far from home. He stopped and looked around. The alley had opened up into a small courtyard with redbrick paths that were in a spiral pattern. The old brick walls were hidden behind overgrown weeds and bluebell creeper flowers. In the centre of the courtyard wall was an old blue wooden door. Fuji started jumping at the door, which groaned as it swung inwards on its rusty hinges. The sound echoed like a reluctant mystical creature that had been rudely awoken from a very long and deep sleep.

“Fuji, I don’t think we should- “But he had already slipped inside.

Alfie took a deep breath. He couldn’t leave his dog. He stepped through the door and found himself walking down a cold metal spiral staircase.

The air grew cooler as he went down and the only sound he could hear was the echo of his footsteps. When he finally got to the bottom, he found himself in a vast underground chamber that was lit with glowing colourful crystals, all embedded throughout the brick walls. Fuji was patiently waiting for him with eyes wide with excitement.

“Where are we?” Alfie whispered.

As if in response, a tiny voice piped up and said, “Welcome traveller”. Alfie spun around and saw standing before him a mouse.

“My name is Mr. Whiskers” the tiny mouse said bowing.

“You’ve found the most ancient hidden kingdom in the whole wide world”.

Alfie blinked in shock “A hidden kingdom?”

Mr. Whiskers nodded. “Yes, an ancient kingdom where mystery and magic are real. It is a world beneath your own. We rarely see humans

down here”.

Fuji sat attentively close to Alfie’s leg, who looked around, taking in the wonders of the chamber. It was like a scene out of his favourite classic book series ‘The Chronicles of Narnia- The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe’. There were mice, rabbits, rats and even ferrets talking, drinking coffee, laughing and playing on iPads. There was no lion or witch, but these animals were behaving like humans.

“ I..I don’t think I should be here,” Alfie nervously stuttered. “I was following my dog.”

Mr. Whiskers smiled and replied, “Sometimes the best adventures are the most unexpected.”

All of a sudden there was a commotion at the far end of the chamber. “The silver magical note that holds the spell that keeps us safe and alive has gone missing!” A rabbit cried. “Without this we all turn back into misunderstood pests in the human world”.

Alfie looked at Fuji and noticed the rubbish that he was chasing in the breeze was a shiny silver colour that had slipped behind his collar. He gently pulled it from Fuji’s neck.

“Is this what you are looking for?” Alfie asked nervously.

“You’ve saved us!” Mr. Whiskers exclaimed.

Alfie handed over the note and the animals cheered. Mr. Whiskers started to read the spell:

‘Wiggle your whiskers,
Tap your toes,
Spin in a circle
And scratch your nose.
Paws into hands
Let animals walk
And Talk throughout the lands!

Ears tall or floppy,
Tails long or short-
Now act like a human-
Of every sort!’

The animals then started to sing and dance in delight.
“It’s time for you to return home” Mr. Whiskers said with his kind sparkly eyes, “always remember an adventure can find you even you’re not looking for one”.

Alfie and Fuji climbed the stairs and made their way up to the courtyard. The sun was still shining, and he could hear the busy street in the distance. Alfie turned around and saw the blue door disappear behind the overgrown blue flowers.

Alfie then hurried home with Fuji trotting beside him. His mother was waiting at the front door looking very worried.

“Where have you been? I didn’t expect you to walk Fuji all morning” she said, relieved to see them.

Alfie smiled and said, “our walk turned into an accidental adventure”.

That night, as Alfie curled up on his favourite couch with Fuji beside him, he started to read a book about ancient worlds. He appreciated the thrill of adventure and wondered if there were other hidden kingdoms with adventures that would find him again.

And from that day on, Alfie kept an eye out for blue doors, just in case!

Years 5 & 6 Short Story
Winner
Angus Fankhauser
St Patrick's Parish School



Battle of the Art and Craft

Battle of the art and craft

The colours of the crayons covering the field slowly become visible in the early morning light. Looking around Bob saw only allies, moments before the enemy front was about to attack. But when they saw Bob using the power of lighting, they retreated with their tails between their legs.

Exhausted from the battle, Bob and the army returned to the rubber empire headquarters and noticed that the gate was open.

“Did we leave the gate open?”

“No”

Bob suddenly felt like he was being watched and rushed to the library. He was looking at the spellbooks and realised that four of them were missing, fire, water, wind and invisibility. Bob realised that the textas had purposely just bought more time for the people who were trying to steal their spell so they could use them against them. At least some of the pencils, the allies of the rubbers, were making more spells. Creak went the trap door and the smell of rusty old metal hung in the air. Bob walked over to the old ruler who was lying on a box. The ruler bent slightly and began to speak..

“You may ask me one question and one question only”

Bob was shaking, his teeth were chattering and yet the ruler just stared at him blankly. “I need guidance, some of the spells have been stolen”.

The ruler scowled.

“This is my guidance for you. Head west and defeat the textas. Climb the great peaks. To overcome the trials you must claim both the sun and moon. There you will make new allies and overrun the textas”.

Bob's head was buzzing with questions like 'what does it mean to claim the moon light' or 'make new allies' . How would he do that if there are no more tribes left?

But there was no time for any of that, he would just have to go with the flow.

“Good luck Bob”!

“I’ll be back soon, I’m going to put an end to the textas”.

Bob’s legs were quivering but he kept going. He started the treacherous rocky climb up to the great peaks.

Along the way, he met many enemies like the non-erasable pens who were out scouting for rubber travellers to capture. Bob never harmed them, it wasn’t the rubber way but instead tied them up and left them under a tree.

Bob continued on his journey and got to the summit of Mount Cardboard where the sacred moonlight spellbook rests, Bob realised what one of the lines in the prophecy meant! Claiming the moonlight meant claiming the spell book of Moonlight!

“Is there some kind of test I have to pass”.

Bob's heart was beating up in his rib cage, what would happen if he failed?

Then a Giant Sharpener appeared!

The Sharpener boomed “Are you the one here for the spell of moonlight?”

Bob was more scared than he had ever been in his life but somehow managed to reply with confidence.

“Yes”

What would the sharpener do? What was the test? All these questions and more were whizzing around in his head and he didn't notice the Giant Sharpener repeatedly asking him if he was ready.

“Are ya ready”

“Y..ee..e..s”

“Okay so all you must do is answer my riddle”.

“What belongs to you, that you never use but other people do.”

Bob had no idea.. Why would you not use something that is yours?

And why would other people use it?

Then it came to him, it was your name! Your name belongs to you, and while you don't use it other people call you by it. Bob responded to the Sharpener “your name, the answer is your name”!

“Correct, you may now claim the book of moonlight”!

Bob walked over to the pedestal where the book of moonlight lay and said the incantation. Suddenly a group of textas appeared and charged him. Bob used the power of the moon and drove them back. They fled and Bob sent a message to headquarters saying he had claimed the book of moonlight. With that he decided not to return to the headquarters but continue on his journey and keep the book with him. This way he would still have one ability to protect himself from harm. Fast as lightning a brilliant idea came to Bob, what if he invited the Giant Sharpener to come with him to help defeat the textas? Bob turned to the Sharpener who was happy to help him.

The Sharpener explained to Bob that without the Sun spell that the Moon spell wouldn't work as well. “We could head for the Woods of Tape where my twin brother guards the Sun spell”. Bob replied “I'll let you lead the way”.

It was dusk when they arrived at the Woods of Tape. The Giant Sharpener led Bob down a short path. At the end stood a pedestal with the Sun spellbook on it.

Out of the shadows came another Sharpener.

“Brother!! What are you doing here?”.

The Giant Sharpener explained what was happening.

Bob asked if he could take the Sun spellbook but the Giant replied

“not until you pass the test!”.

“I have no voice, but tell your tale, I’m sharp and exact, never frail - who am I?”

Bob guessed the answer easily - “A pen!” he shouted.

Bob walked up to the pedestal, grasped the spellbook and tucked it away in his backpack. But then, both the spellbooks began to glow. They flew out of the bag and merged into one! Bob realised the books had turned into the book of eclipse!

Bob decided to invite the other Giant Sharpener to join them in defeating the textas and he agreed immediately.

The next day they reached the Valley of Paper and spotted the texta base. It was huge! How would they get in?!

Bob had an idea, what if the brothers caused a ‘Giant’ distraction? With Bob stationed at the back wall the brothers ran in the entrance leapt onto the textas and tried to sharpen them! Chaos started and Bob was able to sneak in and quietly collect the four stolen spellbooks.

Bob sprinted towards the leader of the textas and using the power of eclipse gave him one chance to surrender and when he refused he knocked the textas lid off!

Bob and the Sharpener brothers returned to the Rubber Empire, victorious! They were welcomed with cheers and applause!

But then, a soldier came running through the crowd,

“Boss! Boss!”

The rebels have returned.....”.

Years 5 & 6 Short Story
Highly Commended
Cooper McNamara
St Patrick's Parish School



Spy on Ubatrrix

On the Planet of Ubatrrix in a distant galaxy, a young spy called James awaits his most dangerous mission yet. After the death of King Jim III, his two sons Tom and John swiftly raised armies and began to wage war, but after 32 years the two sides are still fighting. James works for Tom, whose objective is to destroy John and his army. Most of his army is stationed in the ancient capital of Ubatrrixington, where they are defending a siege. James's job is to infiltrate their base and steal a nearly perfected rocket that could annihilate Tom's whole army. After being deployed on to an airship to drop near the capital, he is given a high-tech radio, a sniper rifle, a plasma blaster, the most advanced blast resistant armour, and other items every spy needs. James loads his sniper, grabs his parachute and jumps out of the airship, disappearing into the pitch black darkness.

Eventually, James lands in the silent, gloomy forest outside Ubatrrixington, and makes his way to the enormous walls that were built centuries ago. He uses a tiny drill to slowly tunnel under the walls and into the sewage system. It takes all night to finally crack the concrete on the outside of the walls and to break into the sewage. Jumping into the sewage makes a sound that echoes through the whole tunnel, startling rats the size of small dogs. Creeping around each corner, James looked up every time he passed a manhole. Most were old, rusty, and grey, but he found a white and pristine one and mumbled under his breath, "That's the one." James tries to lift the manhole, but it refuses to budge. So he decides to grab out his plasma blaster and sets it to 'blade.' After 5 minutes of non-stop work the manhole finally shifts out of the way and James comes out into John's personal driveway. He silently jogs around the towering walls and

eventually finds the ventilation shaft and begins to crawl.

After what felt like hours, James arrived at the end of the shaft, but realises that he has to neutralise the guards at the door. Slowly, he grabs out his sniper rifle, puts in 1-hour tranquilliser darts, and shoots a guard in the neck. The guard said, “Hey Alan, do you feel sl...” and then drifted off. Alan looked around before grabbing his walkie-talkie and was about to start shouting when a tranquilliser dart hit him in the neck. The person on the other end said “Hello Alan... Alan? What happened? Hello? Alright, Jeff, send someone over to check out what happened.” James grabbed his voice manipulator and said “Oh, sorry. I accidentally called you.” “All right, but someone's coming to see you. They'll be there in about 5 minutes. Just tell them to come back to UBI Headquarters.” (Ubatrion Bureau of Investigation) “Alright, seeya.” James realises he has about 5 minutes left to carry out his objective, so he grabs Alan's administration card and quickly jogs to the vault.

Slowly, the vault door unlocks to show where the diabolic weapon is currently held, and he sees the rocket. James heaves it onto his shoulders and is extremely surprised when it only weighs around 25kg. Being startled by the flush of a toilet makes him realise two things. 1. Someone is nearby and 2. The sewers are running below him. So he grabs out his plasma blaster and again sets it to ‘blade’. Trying to put the blade through the ground is unsuccessful because the ground is made out of reinforced Ubatrionium, a metal stronger than titanium. So he sets the plasma blaster to the one setting he didn't want to use, his plasma RPG. Firing at the ground five times makes a large enough hole in the ground to push the rocket into. After jumping into the sewer, he lifts the rocket above his head and breaks into a sprint. Gun shots sound behind him, and he notices the two guards running after him. James dives to the left and realises he has run into a 20m tall waterfall that runs into the deepest and vastest river in all of Ubatrion. He hears a loud beeping and thinks, ‘The guards must be setting off explosives under my feet,’ and then James hears the massive BOOM! James runs as the constant deafening explosions

sound behind him and jumps into the watery abyss.

After diving into the monster of a river, James realises that the UBI will start to send search parties and drones, so he turns off his radio and swims to the edge of the river. A few hours of floating later, he finds a safe place to drag himself out, and another to locate the rocket. Eventually, James finds it in a cluster of reeds, and cautiously carries it out from them. Quickly hauling it on to his back, he begins to jog away from the capital. After a while, James hears a low, whirling that only comes from a UBI search drone, and a bark of a dog, which indicates that there was also a search party. So he looks around and sees a small bog of mud. James sprints to it and quickly rubs it all over himself and his clothes, then he spots a huge tree that he decides to climb. Barking turns into growls, the dogs start looking in all different directions, and out of the corner of his eye James sees the search party members shouting at each other. Out of the 5 search party men, a large, hulking man, who is clearly the leader, said “That rotten spy must’ve covered himself in the mud over there. Alright everyone spread out. He can’t have gone far.” The whole group disperses and begins to search for him, so James nimbly moves through the trees to the previously agreed rendezvous point. Once he reaches it, James gets ready to bolt, knowing once the chopper is low enough he’ll have to get there fast. Deafening roars of a chopper alerts the searchers, and he hears gun shots as he jumps and grabs the ladder, clambering up it. Jumping into the helicopter and finally being able to relax brings him great relief, knowing that his most difficult and gruelling mission yet was finally complete.

Years 5 & 6 Short Story
Highly Commended
Micah Fulton
St Patrick's Parish School



Time to End the War

Robots, Artificial Intelligence, Destruction. A war between humans and robots had erupted. And here I was. Stuck in a bunker. “Ugh. I’m so sick of this!” I yelled to an empty room. What did we do to anger them? It has been 10 years since AI had taken over and 5 years in these bunkers has driven me nuts. Just then, my friends walked in. At least I had them. That's when we ran into Bob, the food supplier. “Hi Bob!” said Emmanuel. “Oh, it's you guys. Hi,” Something doesn't seem right with Bob. He is quivering and looking stressed. “What's wrong Bob?” I asked. “Oh, you guys probably don't need to hear it.” Hmm, suspicious. That's when he hurried off. That was weird. He seemed anxious. I wonder why. “I’m going to practice my swings with my sword, so I will see you guys later.” So I head off to the practice chamber. I grabbed my sword, swung a few times, and took a break. BANG, BANG, BANG! Huh? BANG, BANG, BANG! What was that?! BANG, BANG, BANG! Ok, this is getting repetitive. I need to get out of here. BANG..... It stopped. WIRR! “Stop right there, human,” said a voice. I froze. “W- who are you?” I demanded. “Emmanuel, this isn't funny. Or is that Raph? Whoever it is, stop, I have a sword.” He, she, or it spoke in a blood curdling voice. It made my blood run cold. “Now you will perish,” It said. Not while this guy still moves! I unsheathed my blade, so fast before you could say, “Uh oh,”. I did a backflip, landed behind the robot and stabbed my sword into its wires. BZZZ, BZZZ, BZZZ! That was the end of that. Whew, that was close! I ran back to my bedroom, closed the door, and said seven deadly words. “I need to get out of here.”

Ok, let's think. What do I need to survive? Food. Water. My sword. My friends? Maybe. I don't want to put them in danger, but I want world

peace! As I was packing my bag, I was thinking about my life before the apocalypse. I'm doing this for my family, and my friends, for everyone. No need to be a coward. Just then, a creaking noise filled the bunker with worry. The bunker door had opened! All of the sudden, everything went so quiet, you could hear a pin drop. It was like my heart was trying to fly out of my chest, full of fear. Then, I heard the unmistakable sound of the clank- clanging of the robots. All the hairs on my skin stood up. I was about to scream, but no sound came out. Wirr, Wirr, Wirr, Wirr! "No life- forms detected. Move along. Wirr, Wirr, Wirr, Wirr! Then, I heard a loud CLANG sound. The door closed. I needed to leave. I was just about to head out, when someone called my name. "Micah! Wait up!" What are they doing here? "Ummm....." I was speechless. "Sorry guys. I'm leaving to end this war once and for all." "We figured," said Lukas. "So we are going to come with you." Wait, what? "You're not on your own, you know," said Emmanuel. "Yeah, we're here with you!" prompted Raph. Really? I was thinking I would have to do this on my own. But they are insisting. "Fine, but don't you dare die!" I laughed. Okay, this is it. I am on a journey into the unknown. But I'm not alone. We will end the war.

Creak! Boom! The bunker door groaned as it opened. Sunlight lit up our eyes as if we were staring into a working light bulb. And boy, did it sting! "Wow, our first sunlight in 5 years. Amazing!" I yelled. And it was. I hadn't seen it in ages. The sun was smiling upon us as we continued on. "Wow, look at that! shouted Raph. Woah, It was huge! "Actually, I read about that robot," said Lukas. "It was the biggest, and most destructive robot. And it was also known for its height, but it was powered off 4 years ago." It sat on the top of the mountain, looking like an attentive soldier. I'm glad it's dead. That thing would've killed us. As we were walking along, we came across a hut. There seemed to be a glowing coming from it so we decided to investigate. I crept towards the hut nice and slowly. Whatever it was, I was going to make it fight for its afternoon tea. So I opened the door, revealing... a glitching robot. It looked like it was in bad condition, judging by the wires all over the place, along with sparks of electricity. "It was just

this,” I gestured to the boys. All of the sudden, it beeped to life. Wurr, Wurr, BEEP! “Hello, humans!” It said in a chirpy voice. It was actually kind of creepy. “Who are you?” Emmanuel asked. “I... am... Kevin the Robot, at your service!” It said, So, I guess it's a good robot. “Well Kevin, do you want to come with us?” I asked. It would be good to have a robot on our side. “Okay! Yes! Absolutely!” cheered Kevin.

After days of fighting robots, getting jumpscared in the middle of the night and hiding, we finally made it to the core. Wow, this place was huge! It had bright lights and everything! “This place is so cool.” I breathed. “And even better, we get to blow it up!” said Lukas, strapping his bow. “Oh man, this is going to be a wild time.” said Emmanuel. But I knew this day would come, so I was prepared. I took a deep breath, praying that we won't die. “Let's do this.”

We hurried to the main control room, dodging robots like ninjas. We were barely able to close the door by the time we got there. “This is it.” said Raph. “Lets save the world!” we all yelled. Just then, the door opened. Robots came pouring out, shooting their lasers at us. “Quick Micah, go!” shouted Emmanuel. “We got this!” yelled Lukas. I blinked back a tear. Okay, let's do this! I unsheathed my sword, held it out, and... Slice! BOOM! “Come on guys, we have to leave!” Crash! BOOM! Uh oh, we got to go!

BOOM!!!!!! And, we are out! “HOORAY! We did it!” No more robots! I can't believe it! “Let's go tell the others!” We did it. We stopped the war. We can do anything.

Years 5 & 6 Short Story
Judge's Commendation
Amos McLean
Wagga Wagga Christian School



Broken Wake

The lookout came pounding towards the group of men concealed in the bushes beside the river just as a paddle steamer came chugging round the bend in the Murray River.

“Boat!” the lookout cried, cupping his hands to his mouth as he ran. “Paddle steamer coming ‘round the bend!” The leader of these men, cautiously poking his bearded head from the bush he was hiding in, raised a hand in acknowledgement. The lookout, a young boy of around fifteen, stopped gratefully as he reached the shrubs lining the riverbank, his face slick with sweat from the exertion of running from his lookout post and the forty-degree Australian heat. Several of the men on the riverbank rose from their concealed position, the muskets in their hands shone brightly in the glare as they tried to gain a better view of the boat chugging towards them.

The young boy glanced fearfully to the opposite shore, silently urging the men to hide, for fear that someone would wander down to the riverbank and see them. He had joined this bandit gang for a single job, hoping to gain a little money for his mother, but if they were caught by the police, the magistrate wouldn't listen to such protests in court. The bandit leader seemed to be aware of the danger these standing men were putting them in.

“GET DOWN, YOU GREAT BLITHERING FOOLS!” he roared, spittle flying from his mouth as he shouted. He wasn't quite loud enough to be heard by the boat a kilometre away, but Robin – the lookout – cringed at the noise nonetheless. The shout chastened those standing into concealment. Then he met that furious gaze and cringed again,

but only inside. He knew it wouldn't do to show his leader that. He had learnt that early on, and had been yelled at even more, the men watching laughing cruelly.

"What steamboat was it?" the man asked, the fire in his eyes petrifying the boy in front of him. Robin nervously cleared his throat.

"Got a cold, boy?" the bandit asked, his eyebrows drawing together.

"N-no, sir," he replied. "The paddle steamer headed our way is the P.S. Adelaide, towing a loaded gondola behind and several people who appear to be nice and high in them stirrups." The furious light left the bandit's eyes, replaced by a savage leer.

"Righty then!" he grinned, turning to the men. "Lads, that boat's gonna be here any time now! We'll swim out, sneak aboard then take anything in sight. Shoot anyone who gets in the way," The leader added darkly. Several men growled assent and gripped their guns tighter. Robin was suddenly gripped by a swooping sensation and felt sick. Why had he joined this gang? It would have been much simpler to take a job. There were plenty of farmers back in their village that would take him as an apprentice. But wait, he thought. There's the arrangement I made, and that's sure to put me on my high horse. The nausea passed him, and he turned back to the other criminals, who were preparing for the swim.

Moments later they were powering their way through the Murray's equally powerful current. They had chosen this time to leave, for the people on board had become distracted by something over one side of the boat.

"Silly duffers distracted by a platypus," one man grunted to Robin as he passed him. "Clearly don't know a thing about bush life." The young boy was silent; he was saving his breath for swimming. Soon they were upon the planks of the P.S. Adelaide and began heaving themselves

aboard. They made not a sound, for surprise was their ally. One wrong move and-

“Who the blazes are you?” A man, dressed in a dirty mechanic smock strode towards them, confusion splayed across his face. Confusion changed to alarm as he saw the guns held by those men. He ran towards the people on the opposite side.

“Bandits!” he cried. “Bandits o-” His warning was cut off by his own yelp of pain, which was quickly muffled by a gunshot. One of the men standing by Robin lowered his musket, the barrel smoking lightly. The leader nodded his thanks at the man who had shot him. The fifteen-year-old, however, was looking grimly at the man who was lying face down on the deck, a wound in his side oozing blood. He almost lost his breakfast for the second time in a few minutes as he realised the mechanic was dead. What would his mum say? He had joined killers among men, people who would stop at nothing short of murder to get their way.

He was about to throw his pistol to the ground and turn on his former comrades, but he was forestalled by cries of alarm from the people onboard the Adelaide. The captain, Robin saw fearfully, had armed himself with a heavy rifle, not the peashooters the bandits were using. Other members of the crew were armed too.

The other bandits seemed to notice this too and many of them ducked to take cover. Those who didn't paid for their slowness with their lives. Gunshots rang out and echoed across the water. Those who were shot made no sound but remained ominously still. Smoke from the guns drifted on a light breeze. Other guns fired up in response, but none of them hit anything, either splashing into the water or embedding themselves in the deck.

“Boy, move for the gondola!” the bandit leader, hiding behind a barrel a few metres away from Robin shouted at him. He loosed another

round of ammo, then cursed as the barrel grew too hot under his grip. “Go!” he roared. Blind with fear and tears of fright threatening to spill over, he ran towards the punt being towed by the stationary boat. The captain, seeing the boy running towards his cargo shouted a challenge. When Robin turned to look at him, he started in surprise.

“You!” he accused. The fifteen-year-old silently raised a finger and his eyes slid to the bandits several metres away. The captain of the boat saw his meaning and nodded. Moving away, he shouted orders to drive off the bandits. The lookout wondered if the captain would give his plan away. He had recognised him, but what would he do with the information? Pushing aside the uncertain thoughts, he moved to the stern of the boat and raised his pistol. Firing three shots, Robin then let out a piercing whistle. Another three shots replied from another shooter, followed by a loud roar. Moving quickly and thrashing the water to foam, a police boat, which had been waiting for the boy’s signal rowed quickly towards the boat. The longboat was full of police officers, acting under Robin’s orders.

...

Twenty minutes later, the ruffians had been rounded up and were tied together. The men who had been killed in the shooting had been buried onshore, and there was a little ceremony. Afterwards, however, the captain had questions.

“Why did you do it?” the skipper asked after he had met with the former bandit.

“Those pirates were offering me good pay, but tipping off the police got me more pounds than they could ever have paid me.” Seemingly at the mention of being paid, the leader of the police force who had captured the bandits strode towards Robin, a leather sack in his hand jingling with the promise of money.

“Young Robin!” the officer called, his posh voice sounding out of place among the bandits’ and the captain’s Aussie twang. “Your pay.” The leather sack fell into his hands, the coins inside jingling with a rather nice ring, Robin thought. Loosening the noose, he peered inside. Several threepence and a few pounds gleamed back at him, more money than they earned in a year. Grinning, he turned to the captain.

“Definitely better than joining those pirates,” the captain said, smiling despite his jealousy.

“I’m guessing you’ll be wanting to head home?” he asked abruptly. Robin nodded, a little confused by this sudden turn in conversation. The captain then continued with a proposal that was rather generous.

“I’ll give you a free ride down the river,” he announced, and his tone brooked no argument. The ride was uneventful, but the paddle steamer skipper still took every bend in the river cautiously. When they reached the dock where Robin would get off, he bade his new friend farewell and headed home. His mother, sitting on the porch of their house stood up when she saw him, and ran for him. When she got closer, there were tears in her eyes.

Robin felt a stab of guilt inside his chest, and that stab seemed to hit a nerve, for he too burst into tears.

“Oh, mum,” he sobbed, his voice cracking. “I’m sorry, I’m so sorry.” His mum held him tight, kept her son close, as if to make sure he wouldn’t leave her again. She whispered the same soothing words over and over: “You’re, all right. You’re safe now.” His sobs quickly subsided, but his mother’s tears didn’t.

“Promise me you won’t do it again,” the woman said. She held her son at his forearms, to look deep into his eyes. She saw deep sadness there, borne only by a person who has gone through a terrible ordeal.

“I won’t mum,” Robin promised. His mother gazed into those blue eyes once more, and she liked what she saw.

“Well, come on inside and we’ll have a look at those coins,” his mum said. At her words, Robin knew he had been redeemed. Taking a deep breath, he wiped his eyes. Running after his mother, the fading light of the sun slowly died, and night fell.

Years 5 & 6 Short Story
Judge's Commendation
Audrey Hannaford
St Anne's Albury North



The Door in the Floor

I sneak down stairs as usual, trying to get the last biscuit before Layla or Charlie wake up. I slowly creep over to our messy, filled to the brim with food, kitchen. I make the best effort not to step on any noisy floorboards but it is not a problem because it is etched into my brain from when I was nine, about the same age Charlie and Layla are now. I almost reach the jar when a CREAAAAAK of a floorboard and SHUFFLE SHUFFLE SHUFFLE coming from up stairs make my eyes go wide, but then I also hear a CLICK and POP, a trap door pops right open right in front of me. Not wanting to get caught by Mum, I rush into it.

My eyes don't go as wide as you would expect if you found a secret part of your house, because it was just some cardboard boxes surrounded by grey, concrete walls. I hurry to close the door above me, worrying that I would be in a significant amount of trouble if I got caught sneaking around at 4am.

I thought I might be here for a while so I start to have a dig around to see what I could find, some old baby pictures maybe? Out of the corner of my eye I spot a box labelled "Neave" (my name) so I decide to have a look. What I found shook my whole world in a way I never thought possible.

Laying there, covered in dust, was a manila folder labelled "Adoption papers." Surely this is a joke I thought. I open the folder with shaky hands. There was a birth certificate with Neave Rose written in neat black letters, but it was not my last name there, my last name is Collins, Patterson was written there in bold unmistakable letters.

I sprint over to the trap door, arising into the kitchen, greeted by a sharp shriek from Mum. “What were you doing down there?” Mum asked in a stern tone trying to cover up nerves. Once she spotted the folder, her hands started to shake rapidly. “Is it true?” I asked, tears starting to prick in my ocean blue eyes, when the rest of my family had chocolate pools. “I’m sorry” Mum said in a barely audible voice. “I was going to tell you when you were 18.” I walked straight past her but not before she could slip a piece of paper into my hand. She whimpers slightly when my shoulder brushes against hers.

In my bedroom I look at the slip of paper, it is a phone number, my biological mother’s I presume. The next morning I break tradition and instead of sneaking to get a cookie, I ring the number shown on the paper. It rings three times before a lady abruptly answers. “Hello?” I stay silent for a moment before saying “Can we meet?” “Umm, who are you?” “Ohh umm I’m Neave Rose umm Patterson.” “(gasp) Towers cafe 9am tomorrow.” Then the line went dead.

I asked my Dad to drive me there but obviously I didn’t tell him “Hey Dad can you drive me to meet my biological mother?” because I’m not even sure he knows. I just said I was meeting with a friend who lives out of town. He drops me off out the front, “Be back in an hour kiddo.” I walk in and search the room for a woman that could be my Mum. A woman, around 40 with ocean blue eyes and white blonde hair sitting nervously on a booth catches my eye. I walk over to her, reluctant to sit, in case it is not her. She pats the seat facing her and croaks out “Neave” before bursting into tears.

She says her name is Amy Patterson and that my biological Dad is called Lenny. “You also have a twin sister.” I spit out my water in shock. I didn’t know what I was expecting but this was not it. “Her name is Posey, she has the same blue eyes as you” she says with a slight smile. A tear escaped before I could stop it. “Can I meet her?” “Of course” Amy gushes, relief washing over her face. “You stay here, I will be back in ten” she slips me a \$20 dollar note before slipping out the

door. I order a banana split milkshake and when it comes I take slow long, loud sips. Ten minutes felt like 10 hours but finally they meandered through the door, the 14 year old girl walking slightly behind. When she comes close, it is like looking in a mirror. Same crooked smile, same way I pull on my ear when I am nervous or excited. "I always knew about you but never thought I would actually get to meet you." "I never knew about you" I replied with a slight chuckle.

For the next hour, we all talked, we laughed, we cried. I felt like I was finally healing a piece of me that felt empty for years. Maybe finding the secret basement wasn't a mistake. After talking for what felt like hours a loud horn blares through the parking lot. "My ride is here." I remark with a voice that finally sounds free. I say my goodbyes and exchange phone numbers with Posey. I walk out of the cafe with a swagger in my step. "That friend must have been a good one" Dad says when I get into the car. My smile gets even wider.

Two weeks later, after several exchanged messages with Posey and words of encouragement from her too, I go up to Mum and propose the idea of the whole Patterson family coming to our house. I look at her with eyes full of hope. "You really want this, don't you?" I nod so enthusiastically that I thought my head might just fall off at that very moment. "Fine, but you better clean your room." I jump around, thinking I could have two Mums in my life not knowing that in the next 48 hours I would have to make the biggest decision of my life.

Ding dong, Ding dong, DING DONG!!! "They're here, " I scream from the living room. I sprint to the door so fast I can barely flip the latch. I open the door and can't help but notice Posey's glum expression. "What's wrong?" I say, my smile only faltering for a second. "Nothing" notes Posey, plastering a smile on her face. My Mum stares at us for a minute, trying to process the similarities. Amy and Lenny step forward, formally introducing themselves to my mother. "Amy" I say with hesitation wondering if this is a big mistake, "This is my Mum,

Elizabeth.” “Lovely to meet you Amy, I have heard so much about you.” Mum puts on a brave face but has a slight quiver in her voice. “As have I.” “THE BROWNIES ARE ALMOST READY AND THE CAKE IS IN THE OVEN!” Dad shouts from the kitchen. “And that's my Dad, Benny.”

As Mum leads everyone into the kitchen, I signal to Posey to head up to my bedroom. We both run up the stairs, thumping like elephants the whole way. When we get into my room she tells me about her life, living in the big city in a highrise apartment. Layla and Charlie came barging in looking puffed. “So it is true” Layla remarks to Charlie. “What’s true?” “That you have a twin like us!” Charlie gestures over to Layla. “Lets go back down stairs, Dad’s got his special occasions only cook book out. “CAKE!!!!” “What’s it like having siblings?” Posey says inquisitively, “You have me” I say. Suddenly finding great interest in her shoes “Not for long” Posey whispers, suddenly finding great interest in her shoes. “What?” I say with a confused expression on my face. “Nothing. Let's go downstairs, there's cake.” Suddenly having a burst of energy, she races down stairs. I follow close behind but can’t help but wonder what she meant by that.

When I get down there everyone is sitting glumly at the kitchen counter. “What’s going on?” I say with caution, tilting my head slightly. “Neave, sit down” Mum says. “You're scaring me.” Amy places her hand gently on my shoulder, “Listen darling, we are moving to the other side of the county.” Tears immediately start to fall uncontrollably, big plops that feel as heavy as bricks. As soon as it has sunk in, my head whips around to Posey who's looking at me with sorrow. “So when I finally find a piece of me that I have never had before, everyone can just take that away from me?” “Then come with us!” Posey’s voice cuts through the air, like a knife through paper. Even from meters away I can hear Mum’s breath quicken.

One month later I was packing everything I have ever owned, to move 20 hours away with people who I have only known for 2 months. Mum

hugs me tighter than ever before. Dad has to pull her off as she is screaming for her baby. I never really got to say goodbye to Dad because he was holding back the twins too.

3 months later I am now lying in a penthouse apartment surrounded by my family by blood, wondering if I made the right choice. I look over to Posey and a sharp pain hits my chest. I want to go home, but it is too late now??

Years 5 & 6 Short Story
Judge's Commendation
Lily Jobson
Beechworth Primary School



The Witch of Heart Hollow's Woods

The trees loomed over the small girls. The way the trees stood should have made the girls want to go back-they were ever so intimidating and formidable. The girls had ignored all the warning signs that screamed at them on the trek to the woods; the worried expression of all the villagers when the girls told them where they were going; the fact that their parents wouldn't let them be within a kilometre radius of the woods and all the warnings and lectures they were given prior to this journey. They ignored it all. The girls were aware of the danger that lay ahead, yet it didn't stop them. A girl at their school had told them why everyone was so weary of Heart Hollow's woods.

"There is a Witch in those woods," Matilda Robison, had told the group one day, her eyes gleaming mischievously, "she took her love to the woods, then poisoned him! But, legend has it, that if you go into those woods, you will suffer the same fate as her love." This myth had been passed down by generations of Robinsons, apparently the Witch's 'love' had been Matilda's great great great uncle's friend. The groups of girls listened, captivated by the story. Once it was over, they were bereft. "So that's it," asked Jo, who longed for a better ending, "he was poisoned? No revenge? No resurrection?" Her disappointment was evident. "That's a poorly written story" May remarked, peering up from her book. How she managed to comprehend the words on the page, and listen to the story was both admirable and astonishing. "That story sucked" Mary complained, rolling her eyes. Mary always complained.

With that, we are brought back to the present, where four girls- Mary, Iris, May and Jo- stood out the front of Heart Hollow's woods,

about to embark on a journey to confirm whether there was really a Witch in these woods, or Matilda was pulling on their legs. “Ok, we’re all set” said Iris, after May had Iris check that they had crammed everything in their backpacks for the millionth time. They were all shaking with nerves, but they managed to take those first few steps into the woods. Not once did any of the girls look back. They felt no remorse for lying to their parents that they were all at a sleepover. They all took one deep breath, and braised themselves for the inevitable danger that lay ahead.

Iris walked with intention and meaning through the forest, on the contrary, May walked with her head slumped and quivering with intense fear. She often had an inkling that something was watching her, but everything she would whip her head around, she was met with nothing but odd looks from her 3 friends. The group wove through towering pine trees, and the occasional oak trees which were sprinkled throughout the woods. As the girls walked deeper into the woods, everything started to come off light hearted and welcoming, a stark contrast to what the girls had expected. The moss was luscious and a vibrant green, the trees even looked kinder up close as if they were gentle giants. The girls began to ease, all except May, who was constantly on edge.

“I’m tired!” moaned Mary, the lack of food and the amount of exercise was starting to take a toll on her. “I agree with Mary, let’s have a rest.” Jo agreed, which was surprising because Jo seemed like the type to never get tired.

“Ok, we’ll stop, but can we at least find a proper place to set up camp?” May said, observing her surroundings. They were in a little opening in the woods that was scattered with sticks and rocks, hardly a comfortable place to sleep.

By the time the girls found a suitable place, constellations already began to dust the sky. They found another clearing in the forest, however this one had ground cushioned with moss. They group

pitched their tents, and decided to make a fire. The group had been little acquainted with the out doors, as a result none of them knew how to make a fire, which was mandatory in order to survive in the woods. “ I can’t believe none of us know how to start a fire!” cried Iris. “Oh, how hard can it be?,” said Jo, “ you just need to rub stick together. Anyone can do that.”

“You couldn’t make a fire of the life of you in wilderness studies at school last year!” Though May had said the jokingly, you could still hear a tinge of worry in her voice. “ I’ll go grab so sticks. I know I can do this!” With one flick of her hair, Jo was off into the heart of the woods.

Many minutes had slowly passed by, and May’s sense of dread had gotten more evident. Jo had still not returned. May was pacing up and down, scared of what danger her friend was in. Then there was a scream. A blood curling scream that filled the silent wood. It sounded familiar. The scream elicited more screams from the 3 girls. Jo’s scream hung in the air. The silence said everything the girls were thinking. Though it was only a short minute before Jo came back, it felt like an eternity.

Jo ran back to their set up, still screaming at the top of her voice. Her eyes were wide with intense fear; her face splatted with mud; sticks stabbed through her brown braid. She stood there, on the edge of their set up, breathing rapidly.

“What is is Jo? What happened? Are you OK?” concerned questions came spilling out of May. But Jo didn’t say anything. She couldn’t. She just stared at them with those same wide eyes. She glanced around frantically, as if whatever caused her screamed would jump out of the shadows.

“I want to go!” demanded a hysterical Mary. The girls all agreed, that they needed to leave. “But how?” asked May, who was cradling Jo. Silent tears rolled down Jo’s face and her breaths became rapid. “We have no idea were we are!” concluded Iris. That night, none of the girls got much sleep.

As night became dawn, and the sun ripped through the darkness, the girls continued on their adventure, but their objective had changed. Now, they just wanted to be in the warm embrace of their quaint little town. In lieu of a proper plan, the girls just wandered around in a hope that they would find their way out (despite how much May disagreed). Jo still hadn't uttered a word. Iris' flawless facade hadn't cracked once. She hoped her optimism would become infectious, however all the other girls stayed miserable.

After an eternity of walking the girls stumbled across a shack. It looked like it hadn't seen the light of day in year; it was overgrown with ivy that was slowly taken over and it had a certain sent the the girls had smelt before, perhaps in her classroom. The group decided to investigate the shack, and that inkling that someone was watching them returned to May. "Get out" came an voice, deep and rasping. Simultaneously, the girls whipped around. "Matidla," Jo mutter this so quietly, it was nearly inaudible "that's who I saw in the woods, Matilda."

There was Matilda, however it hardly looked like her. Her bright red hair was the same and her classes, but thats where the similarities stopped. Her skin was a sick green, her nose had doubled in size, she her face was contorted into a wrinkly scowl. "I told you that you will die if you came! How can you all be so brainless?" The girls were stunned. There was a Witch, but it was their classmate. However, they weren't scared on her. It was like seeing a lion up close, but it was behind a cage. Though, all the girls knew that Matilda wasn't behind a cage, she could kill them with whatever magic she could conjure.

Matilda looked scared of them. For once, May did the brave thing. "Matilda-" but Matilda had steam rolled over her sentence with a cry "I said go away!" tears poured down her green face. "I'm not bad." was all Matilda said, she looked down at the ground. "Of course you're not." said Iris reassuringly.

“All Witches are bad.” Muttered Mary, luckily no one heard. “Come on Matilda, let’s go home.” Matilda smiled, but said she couldn’t leave. “I sleep her at night,” explained Matilda “but I’ll show you how to leave”.

The girls all accepted Matilda for who she was (even Mary after some convincing). Jo was always mildly scared of her, but never told the others what she really saw Matilda doing that night. Matilda still came to school, but also lived a secluded life in the woods, which she was quite content with.

So, there was a Witch in Heart Hollow’s Wood, but she wasn’t all that bad.

Years 5 & 6 Short Story
Judge's Commendation
Charlotte Nott
Trinity Anglican College



Mirror

Part 1- Girl

Before I went to sleep, I looked in my mirror like I do every night. But I saw something else — a girl, staring back. I did a double take and then she just watched me, I lifted my arm she lifted it too. It was me, but not. At first, the reflection was perfectly copying my every move, every blink, every. Single. thing. But soon, it started acting... different. Sometimes it would drop a smile when I was still smiling, or tap on the glass when I wasn't watching, like she was trying to get my attention.

One night, the mirror fogged up for no reason, I saw words appear — written in the blurriness: "Help me." My heart raced. Was the girl trying to talk to me, And did she need my help?

Sometimes the reflection would blink in a strange pattern or look like it was trying to speak but couldn't. Almost like it was trying to send a secret message. I couldn't stop staring. What did she want? And why was she trapped behind the glass?

Each night the tapping grew louder until it sounded like the glass was going to crack from the force. Though one night my dream felt more real, more alive. I was in my room, but something just felt off. Then I realized the mirror. It was gone. I turned the doorway, but there was someone there, it was the girl, not doing anything, just looking. Strait. At. Me. Then she moved her lips like she was trying to talk and then a raspy voice filled the room with one word. "Come." I stood frozen, heart thumping in my chest. The girl in the doorway, my reflection but not, didn't move. She just stared, her lips parted as if she were about to speak again. But the room was silent, save for the pounding of my

own heart. "Come," she said. It was just one word, but it echoed in my mind like a command. I took a step forward, then another. My feet felt heavy, it felt as if the floor didn't want me to go. But I couldn't stop, I had to know why she needed me and what she wanted. The air grew hotter. The back of my neck flushed with sweat. She remained motionless, her eyes never leaving mine. I reached out a trembling hand, and she did the same. The moment our fingers touched electricity shot through me. My vision blurred, and I stumbled backward, gasping for breath. The room spun around me, and I felt as though I were falling into the mirror. Then everything stopped.

Part 2- The other world

I jolted upright, gasping for air. My heart raced, and my skin tingled with the feel of the mirror's cold touch. I was back in my room, everything was the same, grounding me. But something was different, though I couldn't put a finger on it. Then I realized the mirror stood against the wall, its surface gleaming innocently. I knew better. The mirror. It was different; it was not just my reflection—it was a doorway, a portal. A portal to another world. As I approached the mirror, a soft glow was cast from inside, making eerie shadows dance across my bedroom. I hesitated, fear pulling at my insides. But curiosity pushed me forward. I reached out, my fingers brushing against the cold glass. Then, the surface rippled like water. Before I could react, I was pulled in again. The world spun, colors and shapes blurring together. I tumbled through an endless void. Then, with a sudden jolt, I landed on solid ground.

The mirror realm was a distorted reflection of my own world, familiar yet different. The air felt heavier, charged with unfamiliar and dark energy. The once-vibrant colors of my home were dull, and the sky above was a swirling a mix of purples, grays and pinks. Even the ground beneath my feet seemed to shift and ripple like it was alive.

As I ventured further into this twisted world, I saw versions of people I knew, friends, family, even strangers—each one slightly off. Their

faces were familiar, but their expressions were vacant, their movements jerky and unnatural. It was as if they were shadows of their real selves, trapped in this distorted realm.

The girl—my reflection— guided me through my town, leading me toward a towering structure at the realm's heart. It was an ancient mirror, its surface rippling with dark energy. She explained that this mirror was the source of the realm's corruption, a reflection of our world and what it could become. To restore balance in both worlds, I had to stop the real world from becoming what this mirror realm is.

With shaking hands, I reached out and touched the cold surface of the mirror. Suddenly, the world around me began to unravel. The ground opened, and long tendrils reached out, pulling me in. I fought hard, each strike breaking a part of the mirror realm. The girl smiled, her form flickering and fading. "Thank you," she whispered, her voice echoing in my mind. As she vanished, I felt a surge of warmth. I was no longer just a reflection; I was whole. But I didn't help, I broke the mirror realm. But the girl what if she wanted bad to come upon the alternate realm.

I awoke in my room, the morning light streaming through the window. The mirror stood against the wall, its surface smooth. But something was different. The mirror, it was charged with unfamiliar energy. But the girl, what if she wanted bad to come upon the alternate realm. I approached the mirror, my reflection staring back at me with a different feel that sent a shiver down my spine. Had I fixed the realm, or had I unleashed something far worse.