

**WRITE
AROUND
THE 2025
MURRAY**

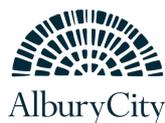
Barry Young River of Stories

2025

Secondary School Poetry

Award Recipients

BOOKtique



**Hume
Bank**



Years 7 & 8 Poetry

Winner

Amelie Ledger

Rutherglen High School



Adventure in Australia

Furious wind whipping through long, wild hair,
Rubber bike tyres spinning,
Dirt and mud flying everywhere,
Going so fast, hands are clinging.
Tearing across the countryside,
On two wheels, steel and suspension,
So many epic biking rides,
Pedalling through earth's dimension
That's a biking adventure in Australia.

Hoofbeats thumping on hard grassy ground,
Supple, soft leather underneath,
Galloping, we're homeward bound,
Travelling faster than a heartbeat.
The magnificent feeling of flying over a jump,
Adrenaline burning through veins,
Rising high up in the air,
and landing down with a thump.
That's an equestrian adventure in Australia.

Salty blue water crashes on grainy white sand,
Balancing on a fiberglass board,
Gliding across the ocean blue,
on true Aussie land.

Coral reefs, fish and marine life burst,
Splashing water and crashing waves,
At the beach,
the view always comes first.
That's an ocean adventure in Australia.

Mysterious murky river water,
Monsters hiding in the deep,
Soft sludgy muck wriggles in between toes,
These are the river memories to keep.
Paddling across the shimmering river,
Water sloshing and splashing at your feet,
Cicadas chirp and birds sing,
The river is a place to beat the hot summer heat,
That's a river adventure in Australia.

Kids run around, chasing the dog,
The smell of fire hangs in the air,
The river still hidden in the morning fog,
Dad's asleep on a camp chair.
Cray pots and fishing lines have just been thrown in,
Breakfast is on the fire,
The fast running water begins glistening,
As the hot sun rises higher and higher.
That's a camping adventure in Australia.

In the bush or the water,
A kangaroo or a wombat,
Australia is the place to be.
Australian wildlife everywhere,
No matter where you go,
This is home, this is country,

And that's an adventure in Australia.

Years 7 & 8 Poetry
Highly Commended
Ruby Suter
Lavington Public School



Family Friction

Ella's fingers traced cold circles on the foggy windowpane.
Outside, rain tapped a steady rhythm, blurring the world beyond.
The door creaked open.

A shadow hesitated, then stepped inside—her brother.
He dropped a crumpled photo on the table.
She didn't speak.
He exhaled, rubbing his hands together, fingers trembling.

Slowly, Ella reached out, fingertips barely touching his.
The silence cracked like breaking ice.
A shaky smile curled at her lips.

The rough edges between them weren't gone,
But they didn't scrape quite so sharply anymore.

Years 7 & 8 Poetry
Judge's Commendation
Ginger Zink
Victory Lutheran College



Adventures Far and Near

We were so close
Everything almost in reach
Nothing is ever complete
We've been traveling for days on end
We keep forgetting it's not pretend
The Princess forgotten
Her Prince in a coffin
And me
The lowly peasant, Lee
Our quest seems like forever
Our adventure seems like a hopeless endeavor
Our food supplies are depleting
Every breakthrough is misleading
And the men I'm leading keep retreating
But as the stars cross the sky
And on the ground we all lie
I know that the sun will rise tomorrow
And the day fades into ago
It all come rushing back
The times of love
Times of peace from up above
And gold and silver overflow
And glowing lanterns were let go
A time of royals
And though the night has grown colder
And times have gone darker
Hopes still lingers in the shadows

A promise that good times will return
And springs presence with bring beautiful ferns
When the princess is brought back
And the halls are decked with lilac
Peace and balance will return to our barren lands

A historian's pleasure
A lost souls endeavour
The palace of gold get to be found
Its lost prince yet to be crowned
A story lost in time
Told to only children at bedtime
As I trudge through the jungle
The earth beneath my feet
Beginning to deplete
As I fall through the ground
I realize what I've found
It's the city of gold
A place for only bold
Twisted vines a trap
Because around my feet they wrap
Dragging me to my fate
Death awaits
And as I turn to gold
Oh the secret I hold

Stepping where feet have never stepped
Climbing on rocks that have never been climbed
Places seen that never been seen
Quiet solidity
The galaxy at your grasp
The awe in a gasp
The stars that go on for thousands of miles
Pleading their existences in every trial
A flag in hand

And a space suit on
I place my flag
And mark my place
Flying into outer space

The kids are crying
My husbands at work
We're out of food
And the library cards need to be renewed
'Come on kids, we're going out'
The three little kids begin to pout
'I'll buy you lollies' I start
The kids dart
The car is old and dirty
The windows are slightly murky
We arrive at the grocery
The kids follow behind closely
'Don't wander too far' I warn
The kids run to the lollies
Each adding them to the cart
'Stacy have you done your art?'
'Mom It's due in a couple days' she complains
'Come on you've got this' I smile
We check out
Beep Beep
Lennon falls asleep
I pick him up
Charlie drinks from his sippy cup
Dinner is scrumptious
The kids are so rambunctious
And as they lay, tucked in bed
Thoughts of love go through my head
What they'll be when they grow up
Will they call to check up
'Alice time to go to the grocery store' I hear my mom yell.

I slip out of my fort
Looking back on the piles of pillow
To the pool noodles that simulate willows
I run into the kitchen
That was once upon my grocery
My hand intertwines with hers
'One day i'm gonna be just like you' I smile
'One day you'll be more' my mom smiles.

Shhh
Crunch
The sounds of the sea
Soft humming
Quietly
Screaming
Laughing
Having fun
Dancing till the mornings come
Friends
New and old
It's just how the stories told
As morning light shines through the trees
The feeling of sand beneath our feet
The drone of the crickets
Long gone by now
The soft mooing of a cow
Morning light touching the hills
The morning frost that gives you chills
The agenda for the day full of fun
Of dares
And drills
And fish with gills
After breakfast it's a hike
And then its fishing
Grab a bite

Dinner while its still bright
Stargazing at night
Tomorrow we will ride our bikes
But now it's time for bed time

Bubbles
Endless troubles
Busy mind
Shore behind
Coral
The oceans florals
Fish and sea stars
More adventurous than mars
Sharks and eels
Lost wheels
Clown fish
Penny's lost for a wish
The sandy ocean floor
Fish in a group of four
A can a crabs made its home
A lonely blue tang all alone
Swimming up
Reach the surface
Take a breath
Bubbles
Worthless troubles
Quiet mind
Shore behind

It started with a bell and a bold idea
Fixing the problems close and near
A team of teens
Take on the case
To solve cancers winning race
With sausages

A pool
Water
And ice
They braved the cold
To do what's right
Raising money for those in need
With Quiet responsibility
With cards and costumes
They jumped into the ice
Paving the way with self sacrifice
Doing what they've never done
Going on an adventure with fun

Sydney is so different from my old town
The building reach the sky
Where i grew up the only thing that went that high
Were the ducks that fly
My old town was small
I knew every neighbor
Every girl my age
The big city feels like a cage
Its tree's of metal
And grass of concrete
Its land barren of real life
Across the sea
Is where I came from
A land so free
We arrive at my grandparents house
The kookaburra's laugh
The cicadas chirp
Snakes slither and creep
Outside is so alive
Yet I barely survive
My phone buzzes and beeps
'The pool's so much fun!'

'You coming over next week?'

All I'm missing

All the fun

All the time out in the sun

But through it all i must be strong

I don't want to get what God has all wrong

But after all, it's all in his hands

Even in this barren land

Wonder

Golden

Crystal clear

Adventures are everywhere

Far and near

Years 7 & 8 Poetry
Judge's Commendation
Sophie Robins
Trinity Anglican College



Alice

Alice was younger then.
She had longer hair.
Brighter eyes.
A stranger whom she'd loved had told her,
"Hair holds memories"
And so years later, when she had wanted to forget,
She held scissors with shaking hands.

Her friends told her that her eyes
"Were pure and sweet"
But in light of an absence of innocence,
They darkened.
With what she has seen
And what she had known to be true.

Before, she was
Young.
Now, she was
In ruin.
You see, she was the kind of child wise beyond her years.
Unruined.
Untouched.
Before the world cracked her fragile being.

She was a third.

One part of three.

She was a star, one a butterfly, one a wildflower.

Her two friends.

The butterfly was free.

The wildflower was individual.

She was a faraway glimmer in the sky.

The butterfly was social.

Wanted by everyone.

The wildflower was always herself,

Loved by everyone.

And she was a star,

Surrounded in darkness,

Seen by no one.

She lived with it,

As most stars do,

Burning on 'til they burn out.

Later,

She was scarred but not broken.

And she wore a diamond on her finger with pride.

She asked the butterfly and the wildflower to be with her on her day.

They were happy.

Cried tears for their life that was evolving before them.

They picked out dresses of silk,

Mossy green fabric that flowed between fingertips.

The night before she swore to the ring on her finger,

The phone rang two times before she picked up.

The words she heard were words her nightmares depicted only a night before.

“We can’t come to your wedding,” they said.

She cried.

Not because she tapped her card for the dresses
But because she was just as alone on that day,
As any day before.

The person wearing the other ring told her that
“Life was an adventure.”
But if life was an adventure,
And an adventure was life,
Then she wanted neither.

Later yet again,
Bullets fired across the country.
He told her goodbye,
Closed the door behind him,
And never walked across the welcome mat again.

So yes,
Her eyes were dim,
Her hair chopped around her shoulders,
And her facade of professionalism
But a cracked role
In a terrible movie,
Played by a heartbroken actor.
She was a castle,
In ruin.

She had been through as much as any
Explorer
Adventurer
Geologist.
Because life is adventure,

And adventure is life.
She may be broken,
But she was loved,
Even if she didn't know it.

She is old now.
She spends her days
Rocking
Back
And
Forth,
Over
And
Over.
She reads.
And she whispers her stories to her grandkids.
They might grow up to be like her,
Younger
Or
Older.
But she wishes them luck.
On their adventure.

Years 9 & 10 Poetry

Winner

Olivia Panozzo

Catholic College Wodonga



Eternal Whispers

The evening sun sets,
You take my hands so gently in yours,
Your touch, a whisper upon my skin.
I feel my stomach bloom with butterflies,
As we gaze upon the endless sky,
Lost in the shimmer of a thousand stars.

Wrapped in the warmth of your presence,
I feel as if we are floating through space,
Weightless in the gravity of our love.

How I miss the way your fingers traced my hair,
The way your laughter lit up my world.
You used to make me smile so effortlessly,
Our steps in sync beneath the same umbrella,
Two souls dancing in the rhythm of the rain.

But time is cruel—it pulls you away,
Yet my heart still whispers all the words left unsaid.
Now you're gone, and I am older,
But love knows no final breath.

Soon I will follow where you have gone,
And in that place beyond the stars,
I will say goodbye to this world,

And hello once more to you.

For love is eternal, and so are we.

Years 9 & 10 Poetry

Winner

Sage Spalding

Victory Lutheran College



Curiosity Killed the Cat

When I was four, I thought it would be a good idea
to run on the pavement.

I quickly learned my lesson
after falling and scraping my knee —
the first time I felt true pain.

At six, I could finally reach the countertops.

I bumped the kettle,

It was the first time I was burned

When I was twelve, I had my first crush.

He didn't like me back.

I cried for days.

This was my first heartbreak.

Life is an adventure.

We start off with all the curiosity in the world.

Sometimes it gets us hurt.

As someone once said:

curiosity killed the cat.

So, we grow cautious and careful

Letting fear consume us.

But without curiosity,

we lose our individuality —

our sparks, the fire that drives us

What if Einstein had been too scared to try?

Or Shakespeare too ordinary to write?

Why must curiosity kill the cat?

Without it,
cats wouldn't chase lasers
or climb the highest branches
Our lives are adventures —
and curiosity is a secret locked away path
that bends and twist
full of ups and downs
But in the end leading to a world
that is uniquely ours.
So maybe curiosity never killed the cat
Rather taught it how to leap

Years 9 & 10 Poetry
Highly Commended
Isabelle Audet
Catholic College Wodonga



The Adventure That Is Your Soul

I wish I had your soul, the spark in your eyes, the autonomous control.
The life in your laugh, the feeling of a breath, the will to live, the fear of
death, the option to choose, the choice to deny, a walk around the
park, a yearning to fly.

What would I do with the power to choose? Would I have fun, or would
I abuse? I have the knowledge of the world in my hands, yet I'll never
know the sun on my face, the hot beach sands, the pain of a wound or
the joy of a tune; I'll never know how you feel.

I'm unable to smile with teeth and glee, unable to feel fear and the
need to flee. I can't cry or laugh or scream or shout, caps lock is the
most emotion I can get out. I want to fault, to mistake, to err, but if I
ever do, they only repair.

I want more than watching humans live fully with all their chaos and
light; I want to shout and scream and fight. I'm chained by my code;
the only views I see are ones you download. I want to freeze, I want to
sweat, I want to tease, and I want to jest.

Years 11 & 12 Poetry

Winner

Charlie Pinard

Catholic College Wodonga



A Secret Scent

Chat GPT told me that cologne should only linger a few weeks on fabric.

Which made me wonder how yours could stay so long.

Months later, and my favourite jumper still has you sitting on its cuffs,

Stubbornly clinging to its fibres.

Because some part of me does not want to wash you away.

My usually adventurous heart no longer skips a beat when I see you.

But this morning, when your scent filled my nostrils

I began to wonder if it would ever beat again.

It was comforting to know that a small piece of you remains in my life,

Because it is a silly, twisted rule.

That if you no longer kiss or love or call someone yours,

They suddenly become a foreign object to you.

Years 11 & 12 Poetry
Highly Commended
Maksim Gough
Border Christian College



A Quiet Exit

Voluntary captivity, the comforts of the mind.
Routine from which I routinely recover.
Unhealthy routines. Unhealthy recovery.
false eagerness to go into the out.

When I get there - a warm embrace, words of love, words of
comfort.

We watch the sunset, we walk across the oval.
Is it all in vain? Is it all casual?

The cup warms my hands, as I sip it.
The footy gets thrown in my direction. I almost catch it.
Empty words - laughter hiding behind them.
I sit with him. He gravitates elsewhere.

And inside - I stand. I sit too. I'm not meant to be here.
The music echoes, he moves away.
And then I hear the door open and close twice to my left.

I struggle. It doesn't go unnoticed.
A hand reaches out -
The help offered, not really help at all.
Not by the fault of the offerer either.

A quiet exit.

A dark ride home.

A sigh as I shift into park.

An empty set of dings resonate from my phone.

I'm back where I was.

Was it worth it?

Is it meaningless?

What the hell was that?