

Cervantes Art Festival, 2012

Written Poetry Results and Judges Comments

A huge thank you to everyone who entered our competition, and my apologies for taking so long to get the full results/judges comments out to you.

This year, due to our regular judge being off overseas, we introduced a new judge for the competition. He is one of WA's most well-known bush poets, who has won both written and performance competitions over the many years he has been involved in bush poetry.

However, due to a large workload, he was unable to offer comments on individual poems – he has just given me the winning places as judged.

As normal, all poems were sent to him with no identification, so all remained anonymous to him. (You will understand why I re-enforce this when you read the results!)

Junior Competition

Winner: A Miscellany of Blue – Hannah Nugent – Toowoomba. QLD

2nd Place – Camping – Elizabeth Lotfall, Tiwi. NT

3rd Place – My Country – William Matheson. Humula NSW

OPEN COMPETITION

1st Place – The Pub At Cripple Creek – Terry Piggott, Canning Vale. WA

2nd Place – A Bloke Called Basil – Terry Piggott, Canning Vale WA

3rd Place – When You and I Were Boys, Old Friend – Terry Piggott, Canning Vale WA

4th Place – The Wanderer – Terry Piggott, Canning Vale WA

JUDGES COMMENTS

In the Adult section, obviously there are some gifted writers amongst the entrants. I feel inadequate to separate them, & sure that others would choose differently, but that's the nature of any type of art.

I took into consideration that the competition rules had set a limit of 40 lines, so those that went over were marked down a bit, even though they might have been otherwise very good.

I'd encourage writers to try various rhyming patterns (see "The Pub At Cripple Creek") because this can add interest and a good flow to the verse.

In general, I thought the standard was very high. There are obviously plenty of thoughtful and capable bush poets out there, which is great to realise. It was a real pleasure to read every entry. (Or maybe it was the bottle of wine I sipped from during the late night reading.) No, in the cold light of day, they still looked good, so congratulations to all those writers who took the trouble to enter the competition. You're all worth your weight in bungarra dags! (As they say.)

A few more thoughts:

As you know, the main things I was looking for were good rhyme, consistent rhythm & an Australian theme.

When putting together the poem, it's not a bad idea for writers to think about the theme. What is the poem about? What story are they telling or what picture do they wish to paint? This can be emphasised through the poem & especially at the end. So the reader doesn't lose track of what the writer is talking about, or describing. Some of the poems tended to drift along from one subject to another. That might work, but often it's more enjoyable for the reader if the theme is very clear, or "punchy". In my opinion, many of the poems would benefit by being shorter but more focussed.

In the same way, I prefer to see the rhythm very consistent, like a dance. But not everyone agrees with this.

There are so many options in the construction, or rhythm of a poem, but most entries were "stock standard" AABB. As a tip for writers who like to enter competitions, if this is the case, a different rhyming pattern will obviously attract the judge's attention & give him or her the pleasure of variety. For example, why not use AABccB? The poem I chose as "first" had a good, not common, but consistent structure. As such, it immediately drew my attention & held my interest. Other poems might have been equally good in every other aspect, but the variety drew me to enjoy this poem.

I wasn't attracted to poems that were critical of alleged historical injustices, because in every case, they didn't allow any other possible side to the story. In my opinion, there are 6 sides to every story.