

King Of The Ranges 2021 Written Poetry Competition Results

Serious

1. Where the Curlews Nest Helen Harvey, Coonamble, NSW
 2. Freddy K Tom McIlveen, Port Macquarie, NSW
 3. The Master Helen Harvey
- HC The Ballad of Billy Mateer Tony Hammill, Qld.
- C Henry David Judge

Humorous

1. The Weebo Sailing Club Peter O'Shaughnessy, W.A.
 2. Revenge of the Chooks Catherine Lee, (Indonesia)/ Mona Vale, NSW
 3. Dear Sir Helen Harvey
- HC The Bandywallop Ball Tony Hammill
- C How Bill Cured his Stutter Helen Harvey

King of the Ranges 2021 Written Bush Poetry Competition

Judge's Report

Although the actual King of the Ranges Horseman's Challenge and Bush Festival itself (rescheduled this time for 24, 25 September) again had to be cancelled, it was tremendous that a great number of poets – from just about everywhere – supported the Written Bush Poetry competition. A huge thank you to you all.

It was very pleasing also, that a general initiative of mine from many years ago, namely 'The Critique', was also well supported. I hate to discard a poem without giving any justification or offering any advice to the authors. Many of these pieces have great potential and may well lead to future success for writers, had they been willing to hear suggestions.

There are so many things to take into consideration when judging. Not only does the story need to be assessed but as this is a literary competition, there are specific requirements to consider regarding technical aspects.

Meter is always a challenge and perhaps the most difficult component to master. Only the most experienced of writers have an 'ear' for little errors and competitors who truly want to be successful, need to mark EVERY single beat of every word with either a heavy / beat or a light beat, according to the way the word is NORMALLY pronounced (not the way you may want it to fit). If this is done judiciously, the correctness (or otherwise) of the pattern can readily be seen.

The same diligence needs to be applied to the rhyming pattern. Try reading ONLY the rhyming words and see if they match as PERFECT rhyme. A Rhyming dictionary (Chamber's Rhyming Dictionary for preference) is essential. Near enough is not good enough.

Punctuation seems to pose an insurmountable problem to many. It's not just about putting dots and dashes in certain places. Writing means recognizing and understanding sentence construction. It's necessary to go back to what we learned at school (or should have) about how to know when a sentence is complete. Then it's about how to 'join' the extra bits, rather than just ramble on (*whoops am I doing that now*). p.s. A hyphen is not a substitute for a dash.

There seems to be some controversy as to the preference of judges for either a) the traditional style of starting each line of poetry with a capital letter or b) the more modern 'around the corner' style of only using a capital letter at the start of a sentence. BOTH formats are acceptable, and marking should not reflect a preference. However, consistency throughout the poem is essential and as sometimes occurs when using the traditional style, a capital letter at the beginning of the new line is not a substitute for correct punctuation.

Regarding overall literary merit, it is worth mentioning that a diving judge knows that it's easy to be faultless in a simple swallow dive but not necessarily so with a one-and-a-half-backwards-triple-spin-with-pike (or whatever). I feel we must encourage a high standard of writing and reward where

possible, a cleverly written, eloquent piece (serious OR humorous) in keeping with the theme of the poem.

A trend that seems to be creeping into the written competition arena is the poem with asterisks or numbers in the margin indicating an explanation or glossary to follow. This is not a thesis or dissertation. It is an art form and I (along with two other credentialled judges consulted) feel it is distracting, even somewhat patronizing to do this and could be considered to contravene the guidelines on anonymity which dictates an 'absence of identifying marks'. In a performance competition, lapses of memory spoil the flow and 'break the spell woven by the storyteller'. Similarly, asterisks or numbers can have the same effect in a written poem. It was indeed a shame that some otherwise beautifully crafted poems were impinged upon by (in one case over fifty) marks in the margins.

While on the subject of anonymity, large or fancy fonts should not be used for the title of the poem.

Finally, a lot of work goes into successful writing – no, REWRITING! It's wise to draft for each of the above, plus grammar, tense, person, spelling, conciseness, language, credibility, impact etc. etc. Please don't give up. The rewards are expansive and sometimes surprising.

The award for the winning humorous poem went to Peter O'Shaughnessy of W.A. with his quirky and very Australian poem 'The Weebo Sailing Club.'

The winning serious poem was well written, successfully implementing an unusual pattern that sat well with the poignancy of the poem. Both judges gave accolades to Helen Harvey of Coonamble, NSW, who placed in both categories with each of the four poems she entered – no mean feat! Her poem 'Where the Curlews Nest' took out the Overall Championship and Helen's name will be engraved on the bronze statue of the King of the Ranges Stockman.

It was certainly an honour and pleasure to judge and critique this competition and again, thank you for your support.

Carol Heuchan

Cooranbong, NSW