

BALLEA WRITERS NEWS

Publication and One Thousand Euro Worth of Prizes To be awarded in Ballea Writers Young Poets of the Year Competition

- Sponsored by Martin Walsh and Maryville Equestrian Centre -

The poetry awards will be held in the Library of Carrigaline Community School from 10am to 4pm on Saturday March 31st. The winners and their schools will be notified as soon as possible.

We have read most of the primary school poems by now. The quality of primary school entries has surpassed all our expectations so rather than restrict the book to the inclusion of the top twenty entries, as planned, we may include others. It's possible that we could go even further and publish an entire book of top quality primary school entries and commission our lead poets to submit some more.

I confess to have wept through some of the readings; where, for example, poets have written about the death of loved ones both human and animal. The children use imagery that transports the reader directly into these tragedies. One child, who was in a car that ran over her dog, said that the car went 'wiggly'. We have had many poems on loss.

Bullying is a recurring theme. It is heartbreaking to read the agony of children who have been bullied. Some children told parents who made light of the bullying and/or even told them to fight back! Some go through the reasons why they can't tell their parents: because they're frightened that the parents will tell the school and the school will mishandle the information and make it even worse for them. Some say how they befriend the bullies as a protection and develop into bullies themselves. Some children say that they never felt safe to tell anyone until, through poetry, they told Ballea Writers. They thank us for giving them a voice.

On a more hopeful theme, the children are deeply concerned about all sorts of issues be they racism, global warming, the protection of the rain forests, pollution or the protection of animals. There weren't too many fantasy poems but those we did get were exceptionally good whereas we got a multitude of sports poems that were notably weak.

Everyone keeps asking if we have a favourite poem. We have more to read but there are quite a few jumping out at us as very superior so I'll feature two of them here. Clever Cuckoo, by ten-year old Morgan Walsh of Shanbally School, got our attention because it has undertones and isn't really written about a Cuckoo versus a Puma. Morgan, in metaphor, is actually writing about vulnerable people who use their brains to outsmart those, including bullies, who threaten them. It's a brain wins over brawn theme that applies to many 'wild' locations including the school playground. Morgan makes every word count and his understated style enhances the potency of his message. Unlike many young poets who employ rhyme, Morgan doesn't sacrifice the meaning for the

sake of rhyme. The subtle rhyme that he uses is appropriate and doesn't grate on the reader. That the ending brings us back to the beginning is good. Morgan's poem is easily visualised and perfectly set for the illustrator to work with. I can almost imagine it as a scene in a Disneyland movie. And the title is pure brilliant. We told the children to give careful consideration to titles because we want to find a title for the book. Clever Cuckoo would be a superb title because it would apply to all our young poets. If there were one word that I would consider editing it would be to write 'Poor young thing' in the fourth verse where Morgan wrote 'poor poor thing'. The word 'young' would read better but it would reduce the impact and narrow the poem to being about young vulnerable people instead of all vulnerable people. On balance I wouldn't edit this poem at all.

CLEVER CUCKOO

Hungry Puma
In the wild
Little Cuckoo
Meek and mild

Puma looks
Perfect chance
Cuckoo perched
Upon a branch

Getting ready
About to spring
Little Cuckoo
Poor poor thing

Puma jumps
Cuckoo flies
Little Cuckoo
Very wise

Hungry Puma
In the wild
Little Cuckoo
Meek and mild

Morgan Walsh
Age 10

We were impressed to find that 28 out of the 140 poems that made it onto the Primary School Longlist were submitted in Irish Language. We were astounded to find that 17 of these came from Templebreedy, Crosshaven, about the smallest school in the competition. It may be that poetry gives children added connection with the language. The Irish language poem that we are featuring this week is An Buachaill Dana by eleven-year old Michael O'Donovan of Templebreedy School. This poem was selected firstly because of its theme. Michael had seen in the newspapers that Tommy Hilfiger was making coats from dogs and that Naomi Campbell was modelling them. We want the poems selected for the book to be ones that won't date easily and while we may hope that the Tommy Hilfiger brand will vanish in the wake of this outrage we would expect the outrage over the use of dogs to continue to the end of time. As judges we loved that Michael called him a naughty



Minister Michael Martin TD pictured with Elaine Rhys Davies with Kate Sheehy of the Ballea Writers Group in Carrigaline recently. (pic Howard Crowdy)

boy. An adult would have called him something more vulgar and lost the innocent strength of the final line. From the mouths of babes and all that!

An Buachaill Dana

'Chuir stop le Tommy Hilfiger,
Arsa an nuachtan,
Ta said ag deanamh cotai,
O grauig na madrai.

'Chuir stop le Tommy Hilfiger,
Arsa an buachaill nuair,
A chuala se an nucht,
O an siopadoir.

'Anois Tommy Hilfiger,
Na teigh i bhfolach,
Ta fhios agat a Tommy,
Is buachaill dana tu!

Michael O'Sullivan,
age 11, Templebreedy National School

The two poems that we featured will continue through to the Shortlist but the rest of the shortlist will take another few days. What we can give you at the moment is the bulk of the Longlist.

Primary School

By 104 authors of 140 poems

Kristian Kiely
Daniel Barry
Shane Corcoran
Laurie Purkiss
Sophie von Mense
Aoife Ryan
Lauren Andrews
Rachel O'Shea
Caoimhe Hoey
Jason Kiely
Robert Mallon
Aoife Brady (5)
Chloe Kessell
Caoimhe Fidgeon (4)
Stephanie Harwood (2)
Eleanor Cronin (2)
Caitlyn Lewis (2)
Joshua Malachy M
Peter Daunt (3)
Rosie O'Keefe (3)
Emilie Millicent Ma
Emilie Mackeown (3)
Jordan Murphy
Michael O'Donovan (2)
Seán Conaty (2)
Martha O'Brien (2)
Ben Buttmer (2)

June Stone (2)
Ben Murphy
Stephen Daunt (3)
Sórcha ní Mathúna
Ciara Boyle
Rebecca Pratt (2)
Máiréad Twohig
Aoife O'Brien
Seán Whelan
Alison Brady
Andy Fitzgerald
Laura Kibane
Ryan O'Sullivan
Morgan Walsh
Dominic Clarke
Gavin Murphy
Zoe Walsh
Siobhan Simpson (2)
Anna O'Keefe
Sophie Charlotte P
Naimh Cotter
Dónal O'Regan
Laoise Byrne-Ring
Orla Murphy
Aoife Hogan (4)
Orla Coghlan
Niamh Brennan
Amy Cullinane
Anna Harrington
Sinead Crowley
Mary Mc Guane
Ciara Buckley
Amanda Palmer
Corie Butler
Caitriona Kelly
Kate Cullinane
Eoghan Callanan
Kelly Walsh
Ciara O'Brien
Ciara O'Leary
Tara McGuire
Rachel Lawlor
Edwina Gavin
Aoife Lyons
Ellen Ryan
Conor O'Brien
Jennifer Kiely
Erika Sheehan (3)
Declan Taylor
Erin Harrington
Noirín Kiely
Kate Murphy (5)
Catherine Hurley
Clóidhna Kennedy
Aisling Power
Jayne Pennefather
Kealan Daly
Brian Fitzpatrick
Fionn Murphy
Joshua McMahon
Meghan Lewis
Casper Barkman
Sarah O'Sullivan
Simon Barkman
Charlie M Stone

Samantha Torley
Ellen Morrissey
Eimear Maverley
Isabelle Nyhan (2)
Louise Mills
Anna O'Callaghan
Clodagh Walsh
Amy Healy
Katy Shanahan
Birds: St Johns Sch
Diarmuid Cronin
Brian Allen
Michelle Farrissey

There have been numerous requests for this book to become a school text. If that happened I would be keen that the leading poems in Irish Language were included alongside those in English: as one could enhance the appreciation of the other. We have had two entries in Swedish and need the services of a poet who is fluent in both English and Swedish. Such a person should ring us on 086 174 1137. Work experience for fourth years, pre Junior Cert and pre Leaving Cert all impacted on the reduced volume of entries from secondary schools. While the environment and death still featured highly in the teenage poetry there was a shift to teenage themes such as trying to define principals and beliefs and breaking up with boyfriends. Notably there was only one male in the Secondary School Longlist yet most top poets are male. We hope that our near void represents a stage rather than a trend.

Secondary School

By 18 Authors
Of 22 Poems

Erica Lester (2)
Lisa Dore
Lauren DeCoursey
Lorna Tate
Evelyn Murphy

Diarmuid Hickey
Naomi Rhys-Davies (2)
Chelsea Wiley (2)
Clodagh Harrington
Sarah O'Brien
Kate Vernon
Deborah Bouse
Sarah Walsh

Kim Spivey
Ciara O'Donovan
Máire McInerney
Shoaban Essa (2)
Hannah Ofterdinger

PRIZES

Sponsored by Maryville Equestrian Centre and Martin Walsh Pharmacy. All the finalists will be given a goody bag from Martin Walsh Pharmacy, get photographed for the Carrigaloun newspaper, get a certificate and a rosette and have their poetry published in a book. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd placed entrants and the Highly Commended will get additional publications and public recitals of their poetry at the awards ceremony on March 31st and again at the launch of the book. The cash prizes are: €75 for firsts, €50 for seconds, €25 for thirds and €10 for Highly Commendeds. The 1st prize winners will also get a €25, lesson in show jumping at Maryville, the new Equestrian Centre of Carrigaline. The book of sixty poems will be named by the title of the winning poem i.e. the submission from the overall winner: 'Ballea Writers Young Poet of the Year' and a selection of the poems in the book will be illustrated by a professional. The overall winner will be the person whose quality of poetry is most ahead for their age.

CONTACT

This poetry competition closed on March 16th but Ballea Writers, who meet in the Ballea Suite of the Carrigaline Court Hotel from 7.30-9.30 most Mondays, can be contacted at balleawriters@gmail.com. Ballea Writers have adult sessions for fiction, poetry and journalism each month and children's sessions, throughout the year, in schools. The annual membership fee of Euro 38 covers all the disciplines. There is a sub of Euro 5 per workshop for adults and workshops for schools are free of charge.

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Meek and mild.

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Cuckoo,
Perched upon a branch.

Getting ready,
About to spring,
Little cuckoo,
Poor, poor thing.

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