

BALLEA WRITERS NEWS

Award Ceremony For The Junior Winners In Ballea Writers Young Poets Of The Year

Sponsored By Martin Walsh Pharmacy And Maryville Equestrian Centre

The Junior Poetry Award Ceremony took place in the Library of the Carrigaline Community School on the morning of March 31st. Over two hundred parents, teachers and supporters attended. Forty-eight Junior/Ultra Juniors winners received their prizes and recited their poems. Twenty local schools produced over seven hundred entrants in the Junior/Ultra junior categories and while most of the schools produced at least one winner three of the smallest schools, Templebreedy, Ballyheda and Goggins Hill produced a multitude of winners. The Templebreedy success rate was enhanced by a number of excellent entries in Irish language. Irish language constituted about 10% of the entries but won a huge proportion of the prizes. The teachers tell us that some of these students hadn't previously shown themselves to be particularly strong in Irish and it was the application of the language to poetry that brought out their talent. I can understand this because I had little flair for statistics until I needed to use it to analyse my own research data. A further explanation to the success of the Irish language poems is that Irish can be a more precise language: in that it can say in three words what can take many more words to say in English.

Orla Murphy from Gaelscoil Carrig Uí Leighin won 1st prize and €50 in the Ultra Junior category for her poem *Mo Dhaidí Difríuil*. When the poems are published as a book a selection will be professionally illustrated. Many of the Irish Language poems had dark themes and wouldn't give much for our illustrator to work with but Orla's poem about an eccentric Daddy with a Kangaroo and Zebra in his bed is a must for illustration.

Mo Dhaidí Difríuil
T Daidí difríuil agamsa,
Nuair a bhíonn se ina lui,
Chuir me zebra agus kangaroo sa leaba,
Agus thog me amach Mamai.

Nuair a thainig an mhaidin,
Chualas beic an-abr,
Daidí ag leim le zebra agus kangaroo,

Agus ag imirt monopoly ar an mbord.

Nuair a bhí se síos don bhricfeasta,
Thog se amach stol,
D'íth se piog uill,
Agus thosaigh se ago l.

Ta Daidí difríuil agamsa,
Agus ní fhios agam c'en fath,
Ta Daidí deas agatsa,
An ceart e sin a ra?

Orla Murphy
 Age 10

About forty of the poetry entries were on dog themes and many related to the loss of treasured pets but *Longing for Love*, by Rosie O'Keefe, that won third prize, wasn't just the most poetic of the dog theme poems, it looked at something different: the life of a stray dog and the same verses could be read as applying to a homeless person. It was a smart move to have the dog as the narrator because it made his suffering so personal. This poem wouldn't have worked to anything like this effect had it been written from third person viewpoint where the reader would have been distanced from the experience. When we publish these poems as a book we will include critiques because, while the aim of the book is to encourage children to write poetry, the children can learn a lot from understanding why certain poems work so well.

Longing for Love

My home was a cardboard box,
Beside a busy road,
My fur was matted, I was filthy,
And hungry, wet and cold.

I relied on scraps to eat,
But often there were few,
I was kicked and hit by people,
And sneered and laughed at too.

One day, some small boys began,
Throwing stones at me,
I tried to hid, but they would follow,
Laughing joyfully.

I died when I was very young,
Beside that busy road.
I never knew what



Junior award winners, Caitriona Kelly, Orla Murphy and Dominic Walsh with Elaine Rhys Davies and Ber Walsh of Martin Walsh Pharmacy, sponsors, at the Ballea Writers Prize giving ceremony.

kindness was,
T was only cruelty they showed.

Rosie O'Keefe
 Age 11

Most of the poems stayed firmly in reality so the judges were excited when a fantasy poem came up. The fantasy poem, *My Mask*, by Sophie von Mensenkampf won 4th prize and has given the illustrator plenty to work with. We came to the conclusion that age eleven is the prime age for writing poetry because many poems from that age group, such as *My Mask*, look deep into the human condition without becoming morose or getting lost in big words and complex structures. By Secondary School these themes often come across as forced: they become too scholarly and devoid of feeling. As a general rule, the simpler the better when it comes to poetry

My Mask

I have a mask at home,
I rarely take it out,
As alter-ego 'Star-Girl'
I sing and lark about.

Star-Girl gets attention,
She's stunning as can be.
All would want to claim her
Bright personality.

Star-Girl is the Me I love,

She is my inner self.
But still I keep her hidden,
And dream to show her off.

Sophie von Mensenkampf
 Age 11

We had a lot of difficulty placing the poems from 5th down to 10th so we gave them joint fifth. 'When I Grow Old' by Aoife Hagan, in joint 5th place, has a pessimistic ending that I gave 6/6 but some of the judges wanted to drop it out of the colours for its ending. After a lot of

debate we agreed that it's ending is reality and it soared back up the ranks. This poem was always highly valued for its theme.

When I Grow Old

When I grow old
With knobby knees
Will people still be cutting trees?
Maybe we'll watch what we put in the bin
And have dumping ranked as a mortal sin?

When I grow old
With silvery hair

Will others think it wrong to stare
At people who are blind or dumb
Or those of us who've lost a limb?

When I grow old
With a hearing aid
Will those in Africa still be afraid?
Will they still work and slave all day,
Without a fraction of minimum pay?

When I grow old
With a walking cane
Will every colour be looked on the same?
Could we all be happy with our looks?
And Racism thrust to history books?

When I grow old
My life at a halt,
I expect that our world will still have faults.
And by the time we live in a joyful place,
I'll be so long gone I'll have left no trace.

Aoife Hagan
 Aged 12

Eleven-year-old Kate Murphy won two prizes. The following verse, which reached the finals, will go on one of the front sleeves of the book.

Poems

Some poems don't rhyme,
Yet others do
But poems are about
What we're going through.

Kate Murphy
 Age 11



Group of prizewinners at the Ballea Writers prizegiving ceremony on Saturday with organiser Elaine Rhys-Davies and Ber Walsh of Martin Walsh Pharmacy. Included are Rosie O'Keefe, Sophie von Mensenkampf, Morgan Walsh, Caitriona Kelly, Orla Murphy and Dominic Clarke

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Caitriona Kelly, Orla Murphy, Dominic Clarke, Morgan Walsh, Rosie O'Keeffe, Sophie Von Mensenkanpff, Aoife Hogan, Stephen Daunt, Peter Daunt, Michael O'Donovan, Katie Murphy and Anna Harrington prize winners all at the Ballea Writers Award presentation ceremony at Carrigaline.



Aoife Brady and Kate Murphy proud winners of awards at the Ballea Writers Poetry Competition prize giving ceremony.

Some winning entries arose from the collaboration of several authors: as in the case of 'What's in a Poem' by twelve-year-old semi-finalists Louise Mills & Isabelle Nyhan of Scoil Bhride Crosshaven.

dream you believe.
So write what you're thinking,
Just jot it all down
And don't get hung up
On the vowels or nouns.

Louise Mills and Isabelle Nyhan
Aged 12

celebrations over the success of the poetry competition Ballea Writers have just celebrated their first anniversary. In one year we have: won 2nd in the Thirty Two Counties Writers Group of the Year Awards: grown from ten members to almost thirty, have extended from Fiction to cover Poetry, Journalism and non Fiction, have got one of our writers a permanent post as a journalist, had four stories short-listed for literary awards and published in a literary anthology, run a major poetry competition and developed a Youth Division. We had plenty to celebrate at our first Anniversary Dinner. From September our Youth

We will continue to feature winners and their poems for another couple of weeks and then get on with formatting the illustrated poetry book. The winning authors are all invited to submit more poems for consideration for this book and possible subsequent books. As well as the huge

What's in a Poem

A poem doesn't start with A B C
It starts from the heart from the heart of me.

A poem doesn't start with 1 2 3
It starts with a look at where you could be.

A poem doesn't start with 2 plus 3
It starts with a dream, a

Division will be running Creative Writing Workshops in Carrigaline Community School on Wednesday afternoons. Interested parties should e-mail us at the contact below: as should local businesses that may like to sponsor the publishing of the children's poetry book.

CONTACT
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 €38 covers all the disciplines. There is a sub of €5 per workshop for adults and workshops for schools are free of charge.



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