

ETAQ'S FIFTY AND FABULOUS 50 WORD WRITING COMPETITION

The competition was judged by ETAQ luminaries, Pam Brennan and Mary Swayne. Their reports are provided below, along with copies of the winning entries.

Judges' Report

The *Fifty and Fabulous 50 Word Writing Competition* was held as part of ETAQ's 50th anniversary celebrations. Entries could be in any genre although they had to be exactly fifty words in length. The competition drew a range of responses, including poetry. However, the majority were short stories that, in most cases, hinted at a mystery and ended with an effective surprise or twist. The entries varied in subject and style, ranging from the everyday to the more abstract.

The criterion of fifty words meant that writers had to be both concise and precise; all entries managed this well. The inherent challenge in expressing complexity in few words was addressed in a number of ways including heightened and compressed poetic language. Where there was ambiguity and, in some entries, confusion, judicious use of techniques such as punctuation would have made the meanings clearer.

Thanks to everyone who submitted entries. We found the task of judging most enjoyable.

Third place (\$50 ETAQ book voucher)

Aptly named *The Third Day*, this is a recount of minor but disturbing incidents on two consecutive days, Monday and Tuesday, which leave the male character expecting a similar incident on the Wednesday. When nothing happens, the female character simply dismisses the two events as coincidences but the male character cannot help but wonder if there should have been a third event. The atmosphere of mystery created through repetition and the use of single adjectives develops an expectation in the reader that a threat does exist. We want it to be revealed and we wish for just a few more words but the writer cleverly leaves us in suspense. The ending is an effective cliff-hanger, perhaps the beginning of a successful mystery story.

The Third Day

by Daniel Fallon, Corinda SHS

Monday he'd found a decapitated rat, on their footpath.

Unusual.

Tuesday it'd been a headless scrub turkey.

Ominous.

Wednesday – nothing.

Nothing?

"Told you," she said. "Just a weird coincidence."

"Yeah," he said. "I know."

Still, as he trudged off down the footpath, he couldn't help but feel something was missing.



Second place (\$50 ETAQ book voucher)

The story is untitled. It is the recount of an incident in a classroom. We know that the narrator is the teacher, and one who has taught Shakespeare's *Hamlet* many times before. This time, the teacher begins to read some of the words from the play but, knowing how familiar they are, stops briefly to allow for the expected and inevitable reaction, laughter. There is a nice sense of a moment of shared enjoyment in the smile from one of the students and the teacher continues once more in this "fiftieth time" of *Hamlet* with the words, "We play on again".

Untitled

by Samuel Dudley,
Clairvaux McKillop College

The slide of skin on the creased page.
The tension swallowed in anticipation.
For the fiftieth time the fabled prince will command the attention of my classroom.

"Alas, poor Yorick. I knew him..."

I pronounce then pause.

Sardonic cackles. Silence. Then, in a corner, a smile.

We play on again.

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First place (\$99 individual ETAQ membership and \$50 ETAQ book voucher)

This is a sensitive and poetic piece that describes the action at the end of *Romeo and Juliet* when Juliet, having discovered the body of Romeo and having tried unsuccessfully to rouse him, is convinced, mistakenly of course, that her lover is dead. For her, there is no point in going on. She takes a knife and plunges it into her heart, freeing herself from the misery of the life she sees ahead of her without him. It is a futile death and the end of a passionate love. The writer has described the beauty of the two lovers and captured the tragedy of this moment in simple and evocative words.

Juliet

by Kaja Holzheimer

She huddles
Cold
the blade she holds below her heart.

He will not come awake.
Moonlight smears his tousled, slackened
form. And he is made of stars.

The point beneath her heart—it sings, it
cries—until she, with open, starry eyes,
pushes it home
And signs her own release.



CHOICES, DECISIONS, NETWORKING, NO REGRETS Reflection on 2017 AATE/ALEA National Conference

Narelle McBride
Aquinas College

The 2017 Cutting Edge margin to mainstream Conference held in Hobart last holidays was an amazing experience. The number of sessions available, the international speakers, very talented and knowledgeable local English teachers, ensured that participants affirmed their knowledge and gained new understandings. The opportunity to interact with a large number of people in the area of English and Literacy lead to many engaging and interesting discussions. The Conference also enabled me to, liaise with many “like-minded people, extend my knowledge base and be challenged by some ideologies.

.Word quickly spread amongst the delegates as to who was an amazing speaker. One of the highlights of the conference was listening to Steven Layne. He is such an engaging, interesting and animated speaker who emphasised the importance of reading aloud to students and making it interesting for them. One of the main strategies that I am attempting to implement from the conference is: when students write, the teacher writes the same task. Teachers need to provide authentic opportunities for students to

use their writing skills and publish their work. Some of these are a work in progress.

The challenge ahead is to, check notes taken at the conference, implement some of the strategies, share ideas with peers, remodel some activities and provide different opportunities for students. A huge thank you to ETAQ for the scholarship that paid for the Conference Registration and enabled me to attend this event.



A plasticine model of a Rainbow Serpent produced in one of the publishing workshops – a secondary teacher playing with plasticine – great fun!