

JUDGE'S COMMENTS

OVERALL SUMMATION OF THE ENTRIES

It was a delight to read such a varied, imaginative selection of poems. The subjects ranged from stuffed animals and jewellery, to musical instruments and sports equipment, to sneakers and pointe shoes, to hearts and shadows—one poet even chose the Earth itself.

I was particularly happy to see so many people not just using poetic devices like imagery, sound, metaphor, perspective, and the shape of the poem on the page, but adapting those devices to suit the stories they were telling.

These poems used objects to talk about a wide variety of feelings: love for grandmothers and fathers and mothers and little brothers, pain and loneliness, excitement at learning new skills, comfort in familiar things.

I thank and congratulate all the poets who shared the stories of their objects. I congratulate the winners and commended poets, who showed exceptional skill in storytelling, observation, imagination, and poetic language.

- Rachael Briggs,
The Poetry Object 2013 Judge



PRIMARY SCHOOL WINNER: 'THE NITRO CAR'

Using multiple senses; metaphors filled with excitement, light, and speed; and words that echo the sounds of an engine, this poem captures the personality of its object. It begins with rockets, fire, and blinding light, then builds a series of ever more varied and surprising images, until this wonderful finale: “You have an engine in your head/ and wheels in your shoes”. Not only is this an invitation to imagine the car as a person; you can read it as an invitation to imagine yourself as a car. Being a car would be amazingly powerful and fun.

HIGH SCHOOL WINNER: 'MY BOOK'

This poem has many layers. On the surface, it is bright with assonance, consonance, alliteration, and an assortment of striking visual images. Underneath the surface, it tells the story of a book that lets the narrator see through walls, television sets, and dresser drawers. Instead of clearly telling the reader what to think, it creates a mysterious atmosphere using hints and repeated images, and allows the reader to draw his or her own conclusions. Every time I reread this poem, I find something new and exciting inside it.



TEACHER POEM WINNER: 'MAGNOLIA'

In a short poem, it's especially important for every word to pull its weight. The eighteen words in “Magnolia” do some impressive heavy lifting: they paint a picture that engages the senses of sight, smell and touch; they evoke a feeling of joy; and they connect magnolia trees to a long history of living things, going all the way back to the dinosaurs. It is a joy to read a poem that takes such a small number of words and images, and makes every one of them sing.



HIGHLY

COMMENDED:

I wanted to commend each of these poems for something, because each of them had a particular virtue that made it stand out to me.

FOR IMAGERY:

'SPARKLES OF LOVE IS STRONG',

'A NECKLACE TO REMEMBER',

'MY NECKLACE'

All three of these poems go beyond mere observation. They use multiple senses, choose images that are perfectly suited to the personalities of their objects, and connect their objects to family relationships.

"Sparkles of Love" compares a sparkly necklace to popping candy, and points out that it makes "a clinky squeaky scratchy sound" when dropped.

"Necklace to Remember" gets philosophical about very quiet things: "The jade is cold, silent and gentle/ as if there was no jade at all." "My Necklace" describes a smooth blue necklace that "tastes like jelly" and feels "as cold as a fairy penguin sliding into it's [sic] mother's coat".



FOR SOPHISTICATED USE OF PERSPECTIVE:

'MAGICAL LETTER'

This poem uses a letter to dramatise the difference between younger children, who believe in Santa, and an older child, who doesn't. The poem begins with the narrator's excitement at receiving a letter from Santa (conveyed with capital letters and exclamation points), adopts a calmer, more questioning tone in the middle, and then turns to the narrator's younger brother, who still believes. What a lovely dramatic arc.

'POINTE SHOES'

This narrator takes a critical look at her object, which used to represent her daydreams of being a dancer, but now represent the pain of frustrated ambition. The story is dramatically interesting, and it fits the symbol of a scuffed pair of pointe shoes perfectly.



FOR METAPHOR:
'SKATEBOARD'

The opening line had me hooked: "It's as purple as grape juice stains." The poem sustained my interest with its imaginative metaphors, and the author's decision to show the skateboard's flaws (scuffs and rust) alongside its virtues (smooth wheels) as features that make it loveable and unique.

FOR DRAMA:
'PIGMENTS OF LIFE'

This poem uses its object, a wooden carving made by a beloved older relative, to illustrate the narrator's connection to her family. By focusing on the relative's hands as well as the object being carved, and by the repeated use of words like "enfold", "engrave", and "embed", the poet endows the object with a tremendous amount of warmth and love.





FOR CREATIVE CHOICE OF PERSONA:
'MY SHADOW'

A shadow is a puzzling kind of object—an absence of light that can't directly touch or affect anything, and is entirely dependent of the object that casts it. This poem adopts the point of view of a shadow, using negative clauses to capture the paradoxical idea of a shadow as an absence. The character of the shadow can be either appreciated in its own right, or seen as a metaphor for loneliness.

FOR MUSICAL LANGUAGE:
'GIFT OF THE PRESENT'

This poem surprised me with its use of meter, its enjambment that emphasised the link between turtles and turtle doves, and its skilful assonance, consonance, and alliteration.



FOR BEST PHILOSOPHICAL PUZZLE:
'RING'

Here's a difficult question: Are you always the best judge of your feelings, or can other people know them before you do?

This poem illustrates the puzzle using a mood ring—an object that's meant to foresee the narrator's moods. Different feelings are rendered in different colours, making this a poem that consistently uses an extended metaphor.

FOR CREATIVE USE OF LAYOUT:
'BOUND'

This poem tells two stories in parallel: one about a beloved book, and another about a ship. The two stories are interleaved—one on the left side of the page; the other on the right—and the events in one story echo the happenings in the other. The result is visually beautiful and meaningful; the form of the poem matches its content.



FOR EXTENDED METAPHOR:
'SOLE MATE'

This poem depicts a pair of hiking boots as an old companion, weatherbeaten and wrinkled, but still beloved. The poem is full of beautiful images of places the narrator and the shoes have been together (my favourite: “emerald lakes/ where the earth is warm enough to melt chocolate”). But there is also a deeper point here about the value of independence, and being a good companion to oneself.

