



2016/17

Hong Kong

Budding Poets (English) Award

Anthology



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The Department of English at Hang Seng Management College whose staff have taken on much of the burden of adjudicating for the award, as well as running workshops and coordinating the award.

The Gifted Education Section, Education Bureau who has supported the award.

The various volunteers from the education sector who offered their valuable time to assist in adjudicating for the award.

All participating primary and secondary schools across Hong Kong who supported the award in their classrooms and encouraged students to submit their entries.

Finally, the participants themselves without whom the award would serve little purpose. Your work is thought-provoking, inspiring and immensely creative. We hope the readers of this anthology will thoroughly appreciate your efforts.

PREFACE

The 2016/17 Hong Kong Budding Poets Award, organised by The Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education and supported by Gifted Education Section, Education Bureau, culminated in the Prize-giving ceremony on 26 May 2017 with awards going to 51 finalists out of 1035 entries. My hearty congratulations go to all participants and the finalists. A note of thanks is also given to all adjudicators and especially to HSMC colleagues who took part in the event by holding 6 workshops, adjudicating and providing logistics support, etc. Their involvement is a clear vindication of HSMC's engagement with our community needs.

Poetry writing, be it Chinese or English, should be promoted early in our schools, as it is not only an intellectual exercise but also a device for tapping our students' imaginative potential, helping develop their literate and literary mind at school. Confucius held poetry in high regard, as he considered poetry to be imaginative, observant, sociable and expressive. These are all important attributes to our students at school and in society. He once said that without learning poetry, one could not become articulate. Writing poetry involves not just the ability to use language well and the ability to imagine in a school setting as well as outside of it; it also involves reading and writing skills as well as insights in relation to future life. Equipped with a literate/literary mind through poetry writing, students can carve out their 'dragons' in the quest for new horizons of possibilities.

I cannot iterate more the importance of inculcating this training in our schools, and I look forward to the 2017/18 Hong Kong Budding Poets Award, and that HSMC's colleagues of the English Department will be a part of it.

Professor Thomas Y. T. Luk
Head of Department of English and
Dean of School of Humanities and Social Science
Hang Seng Management College

SPEECHES

Welcome Speech by Dr. Paul K. Y. Fung

Associate Professor, English Department, Hang Seng Management College

Mr Wong, Professor Ng, guests, teachers and students, on behalf of the English department, I would like to welcome you to Hang Seng Management College. I would also like to say thank you to HKAGE for giving us the opportunity to adjudicate the poem entries. They represent brilliant moments of creativity and more importantly, the desire for artistic expression.

Our team, consisting of scholars who specialise in linguistics, literature and language teaching, adjudicated over 1000 poem entries in the past 2 months. The entries were double marked and the first 20 entries in each section were selected to be the finalists.

As an adjudicator, I saw vividly the world that you all tried to create with the English language. I had a strong sense that your poetic work wants to communicate, to connect. Sometimes, the connections work, but sometimes they don't. But that's not the point – what matters is that you have all made a wonderful effort in connecting your world with the reader's world.

I am very pleased to have been allowed to read your work because I feel much younger now.

Any criticism of a poem is bound to be deficient, as long as the reader has no access to the poem's history. Who or what inspired you to write this poem? What does this poem tell us about your life? How much do you love your poem? We have no answers for these questions. But you have. Once you start to answer these questions, you begin a journey in understanding your inner self. Do not look at the outside, says the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke. The most authentic ideas are always already stored in your childhood, your memories and impressions.

Here are 4 suggestions if you want to write authentically. 1) Only use words that you truly love. Do not use them just because they rhyme. 2) Avoid adjectives. They are often too broad to capture distinct moods and feelings. For instance, 'Chinese New Year is a great festival'. If the festival is great, how great is it? Is there any image, sound, or smell that creates an impression of that greatness? 3) Many entries were written in the form of a story. But poems are not novels. No rush to foreclose a poem by giving it a definite ending. You can work on particular feelings and brief moments in life. They are closer to the essence of the everyday life. 4) Use similes or metaphors only when you have strong feelings about them. 'Friendship', as one of the entries goes, 'is a bottle of wine'. This may be true, but the use of 'wine' as the metaphor hardly convinces me that this is an authentic observation from such a young author.

To me, poetry is far from just a language game. It is a journey of introspection, through which you, a budding poet, become a better and greater person.

Dear students, congratulations. I hope your passion for poetry will continue to grow. And I look forward to reading your new work in years to come. Thank you.

Welcome Speech by Prof. Ng Tai Kai

Executive Director, The Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education

Teachers, Parents and Students, thank you for joining the 2016/17 Hong Kong Budding Poets (English) Award prize-giving ceremony, in particular our collaborators, Gifted Education Section of the Education Bureau and Department of English of Hang Seng Management College. Most importantly, the judges' efforts in spending a huge amount of time reviewing all the poems are highly appreciated.

Let me begin by saying that, I do not know much about poetry as I am a scientist and a physicist. My whole life, I have devoted all my energy to the study of science and at this stage to the promotion of STEM education – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics education. Of course, I have friends who are non-scientists. They always remind me that science is only part of, or maybe less than half of the world and I totally agree with them. That explains why we have the new term 'STEAM' to integrate Art and Design into STEM education. Art and Design are poised to transform our economy in the 21st century just as science and technology did in the last century.

I must add that as a scientist, I also appreciate art. This year HKAGE has launched a Signature Event: 'How a Gifted Mind Starts' to offer gifted students a precious opportunity to showcase their traits of originality and creativity by sharing their childhood work collections. Among those works, some of them are heartwarming writings and poetry that depict their dreams and fantasies. I believe these can help to nourish their life and make them happy and fulfilled individuals.

This year is the 12th year since the Hong Kong Budding Poets Award first launched in 2005. This is the 3rd year that The Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education has organised the competition. I am very pleased to learn that 121 primary and secondary schools have participated in this competition, and we have got over 1000 entries, so many students are interested in pursuing creative poetry writing. The Hong Kong Budding Poets Award provides students with a valuable opportunity to strive for excellence in the use of language and literature, and also to enhance their creativity.

Today, I would like to ask all our students here a question – anyone who is also interested in Science or Mathematics? I think that, in our future society, we need to have people who are not only specialised in one field, but people with multidisciplinary knowledge and skills. This is why we keep reminding our students of the importance of a good balance of life, and the ability to appreciate the beauty of Science and Art. As a global citizen, they should be able to know how to communicate with people from all walks of life. If they can solely communicate with people in their own field, they certainly will miss something. They will not be able to collaborate with people of different temperament.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for joining this competition. I hope that, in the future, we can organise more competitions and important events in the fields of the humanities and social sciences in Hong Kong. I would like to thank all the budding poets for your participation, your love for poetry, and congratulate all of you on your outstanding performances. I wish you all every success in your studies, and good luck with your poetry writing in the future. Thank you.

Welcome Speech by Mr. Wong Chung Po
Senior Curriculum Development Officer (Gifted Education)
Curriculum Development Institute, Education Bureau

Good afternoon everybody. I am profoundly delighted to welcome you to this ceremony for the 2016/17 Hong Kong Budding Poets (English) Award.

We established this award 12 years ago and this is the 11th birthday of the Award. We were glad to have more than 120 schools, including local and international primary and secondary schools participating in the competition this year. More than 1,000 entries were received from our budding poets! This was indeed a great deal of work for our judges.

In fact, the entries this year covered a wide range of themes. Some of them are related to personal growth, such as friendship. Some of them are about reaching out to the community such as the underprivileged. Our young poets chose to demonstrate their talents through different themes to express their perspectives. They may not be prolific writers, but our poets are surely the keenest explorers of different aspects of the world.

The 21st century is an era of diversity, in which people have many choices for their career, study, or even ways to spend their leisure time. As a result, each of us will have to face a lot of changes. As educators, we hope to help our young people navigate through the ways and the changes of time, so that they can gain different experiences and precious memories. Through the Hong Kong Budding Poets (English) Award, we hope that all our young people will learn about the entrepreneurial spirit, take initiatives and responsibilities with resilience, live and collaborate with people with an open mind, acceptance and humility.

I would like to extend my gratitude to my colleagues of The Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education, as well as the colleagues from the Hang Seng Management College. They have been putting in great effort to make this award a success this year. Special thanks go to the judges who have spent a lot of time reading all the poems, one by one, several times, to help us select the most outstanding ones for today's award. I also congratulate all teachers, who have provided advice to our students, and parents, who have encouraged your kids to take part in this competition. Above all, our budding poets, who did their best to showcase their creativity and talents in poetry writing, should be the ones who are now rewarded for the efforts they made during the process.

I wish you all the best in the future and I think, in the coming month, most students are going to have their examinations, so I wish you all good luck, thank you.

THE HONG KONG BUDDING POETS (ENGLISH) AWARD INTRODUCTION

The Award

The Hong Kong Budding Poets (English) Award is a territory-wide competition open to local primary, secondary, international and ESF schools. It was organised by The Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education and supported by Gifted Education Section of the Education Bureau. Hang Seng Management College was commissioned to hold the competition, adjudication and related training workshops. The competition aims to provide a platform for more able students of English to extend their imagination and passion for writing, and engage them in further training in poetry writing. It also serves as a channel for teachers to recognise and identify students gifted in English learning.

Workshops

To better equip participants with some key skills that would assist them in their writing, several workshops were held by the academic staff of Hang Seng Management College. Primary students could participate in *Poetry Through Dramatic Performance*, which aimed to enhance their ability to recognise the real-life stories that may be hidden within poems. Secondary students were offered *Thinking Through Poetry*, which focused on how the medium of poetry should address challenges in nature and technology.

Adjudication

Entries were assessed on originality, use of language, artistic quality, expression of the theme and construction. After 2 rounds of preliminary and final adjudication by frontline English language teachers, poets, writers and/or academics in the field of poetry and creative writing, at most 20 entries from the Primary, Secondary and Open Sections were recommended for awards.

To assist in differentiating the various finalists, a final round of judging involved an improvised writing session and an interview with a member of the academic staff of HSMC. The best piece of improvised writing was to be the winner of a separate award (Best Improvisor of the Year Award), while the interview provided an opportunity for students to share their views and feelings on the writing process and demonstrate the originality of their work.

Award Ceremony

On 26 May 2017, an award ceremony was held to crown the winners and commemorate the work of all the finalists. This ceremony was attended by students, parents, representatives from the Education Bureau and The Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education, as well as staff from Hang Seng Management College. The speeches from the previous section were taken from this event.

ADJUDICATORS

Preliminary Round

Dr. Alfred Samuel Bown
Mr. Benjamin Chadwick
Ms. Ching-yee (Jinny) Chok
Dr. Clara Cheng
Dr. Holly Chung
Mr. Bryan Dowie
Dr. Paul Fung
Dr. Amy Kong
Ms. Joyce Lee
Ms. Dorothy Li
Ms. Christine Ng
Dr. Rebecca Ong
Ms. Hattie Tsoi
Mrs. Anora Wong
Ms. Nina Yau

Final Round

Dr. Alfred Samuel Bown
Dr. Gavin Bui
Mr. Benjamin Chadwick
Dr. Paul Fung
Dr. Donovan Grose
Dr. Charles Lam
Dr. Maggie Ma
Dr. Jay Parker
Dr. Joel Swann
Dr. Catherine Wong



PRIMARY SECTION

Champion (Primary Section)

Theme: Travelling

Horizons

Hui Ka Ying Claudia
Marymount Primary School

The sun casts a rosy glow,
to the frosty north the river flows.
Walking along the sunlight-lit road,
forward ahead I confidently strode.

Around the world I fly and I fly,
going to places low and high.
Experiencing every amazing place,
dragging along my trusty suitcase.

First off the checklist was sunny Visalia,
now in 'down-under' exotic Australia.
Milan is a cool place, so is Taiwan,
but the best place to go is definitely San Juan.

Learning new things every time,
tasting wacky new species of lime.
Looking at different lovely cultures,
admiring beautiful agricultures.

A trip to Los Angeles will brighten my day,
so will the famous 'Bollywood' Bombay.
Went to the cold Japan for a week,
but the cloudless Sudan is what I seek.

Where I really wish to go is Hong Kong,
I haven't been there for oh, so long.
My hometown, where it all started,
where my family and I first parted.

Adjudicators' Comment:

This is a good poem which responds directly to the theme of longing. For this poem's reader, the poem's brilliance is in showing how we often long for another place, only to long for the place we have left later on. The poem's title connects nicely to this idea, provoking reflection on why and how we always desire that which is beyond us. The poem reflects a psychoanalytic model of desire, probably without the author's intention given their young age.

I like the use of imagery together with a very good sense of musicality. This is a really thoughtful piece.

1st Runner Up (Primary Section)

Theme: Pets

Birdie

Ng Bak Yin Joshua
La Salle Primary School

How're you doing in heaven, I wonder?
You came to my life out of the blue.
Any chirps I hear, real or imagined,
Would bring me back to the day I found you.

Putting you back to your nest proved futile,
I must take you in as my pet.
That helpless look in your eyes,
Isn't something I would ever forget.

Limping and struggling out of my reach,
You refused to be brought into the net.
Gently I took you into my hands,
And into my home where you were kept.

A man at the shop said you might die,
From the fall off the nest that you survived.
I was beginning to worry,
How long could you stay alive?

Toys, feed, and a cage we bought,
With those you were having a good time.
Bathing, eating, singing, and playing,
At that moment you seemed just fine.

Day two you were looking tired,
Not eating much and slept through the day.
But I hoped you would become stronger,
Until you were able to fly away.

By night you looked sickly,
And I knew death was in sight.
I said goodnight and went to bed, thinking,
Are you going to be alright?

The next morning I found you dead,
Lying still you could have been sleeping,
Like a baby, cute and cuddly.
Looking at you, I felt like weeping.

I buried your body and said goodbye,
Fighting back tears and hurting inside.
Cleaning the cage seemed pointless,
Knowing well it wouldn't be occupied.

But I was happy to have saved you,
For on that day you would have died.
Oh, Birdie, take with you our happy memories,
Oh, Birdie, to heaven, off you fly!

Adjudicators' Comment:

A smart choice made by the poet in using a ballad to present the persona's mixed feelings succinctly. While credit needs to be given for the regular rhythmic pattern of this poem, the poet could also consider introducing some change in the rhythm to foreground the unfortunate turn of events in the poem.

The poem gives a detailed observation of the relationship between the I and the birdie. It makes use of the temporal change, from present to past, and from past to present. The poem also uses the question form to intensify the connection with the pet. The last stanza says the I is happy because she once saved the birdie and made it live longer. That seems to contrast the sadness in the previous stanza. How does the poet resolve this contradiction? Is it a mixed emotion that is intended to be presented here?

2nd Runner Up (Primary Section)

Theme: Classrooms/School

Confessions of an Overworked Student

Chan Ming Wai Summer
Diocesan Girls' Junior School

Oh! How can I show how stressed I am!
Oh! How I wish there was no exam!
English plus math and science and all,
There's no time at all for basketball!
I crave for chats with my old friends,
yet I'm still on my six times tens.
So heavy are my books and bags,
so painful is my poor sore back.
If only, if only, I had an extra hour,
for me to charge my depleted power.
Where's the time for picturesque sights?
When will I get to go fly kites?
My homework's piling up, I must confess,
how I wish for some Chinese chess!
I feel so pressured, my heart keeps pounding.
I feel so tired, my eyelids are drooping.
Revision, dictation, projects and more,
I keep on writing till my hands are sore.
My forehead is boiling hot,
still, there're many more tests to be fought.
Mother asks if I am fine,
how can I be, if I can't shine?
Tick tock, tick tock, time is up,
time for me to go buck up.
I can't stand it anymore,
I'm like a balloon about to pop,
It's really hard to stay on top!

Adjudicators' Comment:

No fancy words, no particular forms, no allusion to big names, the work is a wake-up call for primary schools! The message conveyed in the poem is more than clear: please give kids a happy childhood. The poem contrasts daily activities (basketball, Chinese chess vs tests and projects) but creates a great warning to adults – children's psychological wellbeing must get prioritised over their academic performance. This powerful message overrides some of the other criteria of the poetry contest.

The poem is a powerful polemic on an exam-oriented system. The attention is mostly given to the rhythm and rhyme. Some of them work, but some of them give the impression that they are forcefully created, e.g. sight-kites. Having said that, every word in the poem is carefully devised. The last line provides an important piece of information that the poet is probably a high scorer in exams. A deeper struggle could be the poet himself wants to stay on top. The pressure comes not only from the parents and system but the poet himself too. Confession has something to do with guilt. The poem should address that too.

3rd Runner Up (Primary Section)

Theme: Classrooms/School

My Classroom

Chiu Chun Yin Nicholas

La Salle Primary School

My classroom is a war zone
Pencils and erasers get thrown
Students become warriors
Battling without order.

My teachers are lions
Shouting like police sirens
Bellowing with anger
Sounding like a tambour.

My classmates are mindless
Silly, stupid and reckless
Chasing one another
Till the day after.

As time goes by
It's time to say goodbye
After six years of disorder
I feel no more horror.

My classroom is my shelter
My teacher is my anchor
My classmates are my allies
I love my classroom –
Whenever,
Wherever,
Whatever,
Forever.

Adjudicators' Comment:

An impressive piece of work. The analogy between the classroom and a war zone as well as a shelter is indeed insightful. The poet can consider highlighting how time changes (a comparison of the past and present) affect his/her feelings and create this sharp contrast that his/her war zone is now also the shelter.

A nicely written and memorable poem, with a strong and compelling voice. Although some of the metaphors are slightly clichéd, the shifting tone and ironic inversions make for an interesting and entertaining piece.

Merit (Primary Section)

Theme: Pets

My Pet Friends

Linus Choy

Diocesan Boys' School

I live with a passel of pets,
They are always on my mind.
Some are really cute and lovable,
Some are just not so kind

One listless lazy dog,
Walking him is such a pain.
It's too hot for him in summer,
It's too wet for him in spring

Two muddy mossy turtles,
Sticking together in a tiny tank.
One likes biting down the coral,
One likes gulping up the sand

Three jolly jokey kittens,
Running around all day.
There's no way to stop them,
There's nothing they won't play.

Four cheeky chatty parrots,
Repeating whatever I say.
Two by two they greet me "Sir",
Two by two they cheer "good day!"

Five splashy sparkly goldfish,
Never have they made any sound.
They love blowing bubbles,
They love swimming up and down.

Six cuddly chubby hamsters,
Chewing up things after things;
The feeding tube, the bar, the cage,
The wheel, the ball, and mom's wedding ring.

If you ask "which one is your favorite?"
It's really hard for me to choose.
Because they are all special in their own ways,
Because they are my dear friends, whom I don't want to lose.

Adjudicators' Comment:

Achieves a pleasant diction that captures the cadence of speech without appearing artificial. Verse structure is too formulaic, however, particularly the alliterated adjectives in the first line of each stanza.

The poem is simple and straightforward. There is little explanation as to why the pets are matched with certain numbers, and why there is a need to choose the favourite ones. The use of alliteration is commendable. The objects mentioned in the poem are deliberately chosen, e.g. wheel, ball and wedding ring. It's a carefully devised piece of work. The drawback is the last stanza, where the emotion becomes too explicitly told.

Merit (Primary Section)

Theme: Travelling

Along the Path of History

Tang Lok Yee

Diocesan Girls' Junior School

Let me take you around Europe
Along the path of history.
From places great and mighty,
To locations remote and tiny.

Glancing across oceans in the cold, British rain,
Sits the powerful nautical queen.
She has birthed many heroes between
The many glorious ages she has seen.

Dreaming in the wondrous castle of Neuschwanstein,
Strolling along the path of medieval Rothenberg.
Disciplined, diligent and determined, the Deutscher männer sits,
Laughing and celebrating wealth and good health.

Praying under the roof of the divine Sistine,
Worshipping the passion of the Renaissance,
Hallucinating fanatic cries of the Colosseum,
The setting sun shadows the ruins of Roma.

Immaculate peaks soaring above the clouds,
Glassy lakes shining turquoise in their serenity.
The gallant lion of calamity now resides
In the peace of heavenly Switzerland.

Come along with me
To admire Europe's finest culture
And its long path of history.

Adjudicators' Comment:

This is a very decent poem which demonstrates strong English language skills and an awareness of some of the major poetic conventions. It deals with the beauty of the world – which is a typical theme for traditional poetry – but it could perhaps be more experimental in reflecting on this, rather than simply conforming to the traditions of poetry. The writer's excellent vocabulary is the strongest aspect of the work.

A nice way of relating history and places. One criticism would be that some of the references (e.g. 'Deutscher manner') are simply stereotypes.

Merit (Primary Section)

Theme: Pets

Goodbye, Snowy

Chan Hoi Tung Daphne

Good Hope Primary School cum Kindergarten (Primary Section)

I'll always remember your wagging tail,
The lustrous sheen of your bright eyes,
Your pelt the hue of fresh winter hail,
White fur-ends knotted into ties.

A fragrant flower which trembles and wilts,
An incense that's passed its time.
Your death to us was a torrent of guilt,
Like we'd committed an undone crime.

We took you home five years ago,
Your gaze full of depleted dreams and hope.
We fed you and cared for you, truly loved you so,
Scrubbed fragile you down with soap.

Throughout summertime we'd go to the park,
The jingle of your collar in my ear.
Although you're gone I still anticipate your barks,
The sound of your affection I'll always hear.

In winter you'd jump and leap,
Among the barren fields of snow.
You scared away the neighbor's flock of sheep,
With your fluffy white fur on show!

Springtime was the season of loss.
You fell into an endless whirlpool of disease.
Our sleep became turned and tossed,
Knowing that your agony we couldn't ease.

The beeps and purrs of hospital machines,
Did no use to you at all.
And like a dramatic movie scene,
You turned away, that red-leaved fall.

On that fateful moon-shone night,
You left us for a better place,
where the dark is reigned over by the light,
And fairies glide around in grace.

There's now no white tufts around the apartment,
No welcoming bark to echo,
Only the sepia photos of sentiment,
That make my tears flow.

The joy you brought us got us through,
The welcome of your smile in my mind.
You were up there guarding us, that we knew
With the bliss you gave us we were fine.

Snowy, you've sprung to the sky,
But the light of your heart glimmers on.
May your paws sprint swiftly and fly
And your heart, an immortal song.

Adjudicators' Comment:

The poem describes in detail the life and death of the pet Snowy. The use of rhyme is commendable. Powerful imagery, such as 'torrent of guilt' and 'photo of sentiment'. When read out loud, each line reads a little bit too long. The stanzas can be distinguished better by a variation of space or time. This will create a better sense of movement to the whole piece.

This is clearly a deeply-felt topic, and the poet does well to tell the story in varied and interesting language. The rhythm can tend to be a little predictable, although I like some of the effects of rhyme: 'glimmers on/immortal song' in the final stanza is a very nice way to finish.

Merit (Primary Section)

Theme: Pets

My Cute Turtle Sonnet

Tiffany Kwok

*Hong Kong Baptist University Affiliated School
Wong Kam Fai Secondary and Primary School
(Primary Section)*

Turtle, shall I compare you to a cheerful man?
Making me happy all the time.
Trying to cheer me up if you can.
Even if my face looks like a lime.

Shall I compare you to a snail?
Walking slowly, no hurry.
You are sluggish but a precious mail.
Relaxed like me when I am eating scrumptious curry.

But turtle, you are an ordinary machine.
You don't speak or talk.
You are odd like a bean.
I never know your feeling because you only eat or walk.

Still, you are my one and only.
I will treat you right and not let you be lonely.

Adjudicators' Comment:

The use of rhyme has pushed the candidate to use some interesting and unpredictable metaphors and similes, which I really like! I also like the way this poem recalls the Shakespeare sonnet, both in its form (in rhyme scheme and in terms of octave-sestet division), and in the way it is asking the questions.

A cute little poem, but there are a few elements that are a bit confusing. Why are beans odd? What is a precious mail? There are some elements where the author transfers their own emotions to the turtle (the turtle trying to cheer up the pet owner, the turtle being lonely etc.). I like this because it captures something special about how we feel about our pets, even those that are not obviously emotional like reptiles and fish.

Merit (Primary Section)

Theme: Pets

The Abandoned Puppies

Leung Yuen Kiu
Kowloon Tong School

A litter of puppies were abandoned on the street.
They had no family, no food and no one to greet.
On a cold winter night,
The pups shivered in fright.
There was no light,
and nothing in sight.

The puppies' weak howls pierced the silence of the night.
Their yelping revealed their frightening plight.
The poor little puppies whimpered in fear.
A picture so sad it can bring you to tears.
The sad little puppies bent their heads in sorrow,
but luckily for them, there was a new tomorrow.

The RSPCA saved them in the dark.
They're waiting for you to take them from Adoption Park.
I hope the puppies will find a new home,
and they will never ever be alone.

Adjudicators' Comment:

I really like the metrical variation in the first stanza – 2 long lines, then 4 short lines – which (perhaps) matches a movement of thought, from the puppies situation to their feelings. This helps communicate the idea clearly and precisely. However, as we go on I think some of that precision is lost, even though the overall story is a nice one.

There is a clear message communicated with clear images that even people who are not dog lovers can relate to.

Merit (Primary Section)

Theme: Festivals

Chinese New Year

Siu Wai Yin

Tsuen Wan Catholic Primary School

Chinese New Year is coming.
Everyone is busy decorating.
Cherry blossoms are bought.
Fine clothes are happily sought.

Red packets are given to girls and boys.
Mahjong and greetings make joyful noise.
Sweets, chocolates and melon seeds,
Candy trays are what every child needs.

We visit our relatives and wish them well.
'Kung Hei Fat Choi,' children yell.
Hearty blessings are heard everywhere.
Having sumptuous feasts is not rare.

Chinese New Year is a great festival.
Happy atmosphere is like a carnival.
I really love this blissful occasion.
Gathering is more meaningful than celebration.

Adjudicators' Comment:

The poem moves smoothly from general to specific and from specific to general. It ends with the poet's view on the festival, saying that gathering is more important than the celebration. This is a new perspective in the poem, and it needs elaborating. Pity that it comes so late in the piece. Adjectives and adverbs like 'really', 'happy' and 'joyful' are not necessary.

It is truly a joyful poem. It can be turned into a song to be sung at the CNY. I like this little piece of work though the 'artistic quality', so to speak, is not really very high. Nothing particularly new is said but the whole work is very motivating.

Commendation (Primary Section)

Theme: Friendship

My Friends

Tara Budhrani

Canossa School (Hong Kong)

My friend is called Yannie,
her birthday is in January.
I play with her happily.
She looks like a fairy.
She likes geography and loves eating spaghetti.
She works diligently.
I like her unconditionally.
My other friend is called Rachel.
Her birthday is in April.
She likes Mid-Autumn Festival.
She looks like an angel.
I like her because she is natural.
These friends are important.
We must cherish them.
I hope we can keep our friendship forever.

Adjudicators' Comment:

I love this simple poem, with its very authentic expression of friendship. I think I would love to see the poet do more with their ideas – maybe Rachel deserves a few more lines of poetry – and maybe the final three lines could be extended somehow.

The first part (about Yannie) and the second part (about Rachel) are not really balanced. This gives the sense that Yannie is favoured over Rachel.

The style feels direct and honest in the first two parts, but the third part ends the poem very abruptly. Why are these friendships important? Why must we cherish them? Maybe the third (pink) part could be expanded with a few lines that deal with these issues?

Commendation (Primary Section)

Theme: Friendship

She is Everything

Venus Fung

Baptist (Sha Tin Wai) Lui Ming Choi Primary School

I'm glad that she doesn't come with a price tag.
For if it does, it will be the subject the rich brags.
She is important, no matter when,
Even if you are on a cliff, she suspends.

She is the one who knows me and loves me just the same.
You can never blame her as an aim.
She is like a rose every day,
We don't realize her beauty until she fades away!

She is the sunshine of my life,
That makes my heart fully thrive.
She is a priceless gift that can't be bought or sold,
But to have her understanding is far more worthy than gold.

She always tells me, "You're amazing just the way you are"
You can be her with love and truth so far.
She never gets in my way unless I'm going down.
Together, we are like spirits that spread happiness all around.

She is understanding and precious to me,
As if she is twirling around in the air that I can't see.
A true friend would do what she does, anytime,
To keep you on the right track of time.

A friendship is like an onion, it gives taste to your life, certainly,
If you try to cut a tiny piece of it out, you will get tears only.
In life, love is never planned, it does not happen for a reason.
But if friends give you love, you will cherish it, in whichever season.

The world would be so lonely, in sunny hours or gray,
Without the gift of friendship, to fill us every day.
Walking with a friend, your soul is carefree and light.
Together your hearts will take a wonderful flight.

Friends are like fine wine,
They get sweeter from time to time.
This sweetness you can never imagine.
Unless you sip a little to continue the legend.

Adjudicators' Comment:

The whole poem presents strong feeling towards a friend, with numerous metaphors. It keeps a good ABAB pattern of rhyming which generally fits the purpose of the expression.

The first stanza is fresh to read. It depicts a good friend with good figurative language. The rhymes come naturally too.

On the other hand, the title is a bit too straightforward. Except for the first stanza, the rest of the poetry does not seem to be creatively written. Lines like 'she is the sunshine of my life' is clichéd. Many rhyming words at the end of each line are created for the sake of rhyming only.

This touching poem is a bit of a mix: some of the lines are elegantly simple (for example, the first line of the poem), but others seem quite confused (the second line of the poem, for example). Reaching for rhymes has sometimes had a negative effect on grammar and word-order (for example 'it gives taste to your life, certainly, If you try to cut a tiny piece of it out, you will get tears only'). I like the similes that enter in the last few stanzas – maybe more could be done with these to make it a really effective poem.

Commendation (Primary Section)

Theme: Pets

My Pet

Muskan Deepak Shahani

Delia English Primary School & Kindergarten

I have a white cat.
He does not bite back.
He loves to play the flute
In his little suit.

I cook his favourite dish
Which is always a little fish.
He loves to wear silk,
Just like he loves his milk.

He is really nice
And loves to eat mice.
He loves to practise spelling
While he's yelling.

I think he's really funky,
So I named him Monkey.
I know it's a little funny,
But at least it's not a waste of money.

Adjudicators' Comment:

It seems that this poem is simply structured around an arbitrary collection of rhyming words. It possesses a sense of rhythm, although it is still rather clunky.

This is a sweet and simple poem, but sometimes I feel like the ideas and the rhymes are a bit forced – although they are nice ideas, I'm not sure what it means for the cat to practise spelling or wear silk. I very much like the idea of the poem, but I would love to understand more about the authentic experience the speaker shares with their cat.

Commendation (Primary Section)

Theme: Machines

My Time Machine

Wong Tsz Tsun

Marymount Primary School

I once made a time machine,
I stepped inside and it started to spin.
Whirling, whirling,
swirling, swirling.
It made me feel like I just had a glass of gin.

Suddenly, the air around me stilled,
I stumbled out, and I was thrilled.
Knights in armour glared at me,
men in tunics stared at me.
Their grotesque faces made me feel ill.

I realized that I was in the Middle Ages,
where there were rich kings and peasants with tiny wages.
Suddenly, they all charged at me fiercely,
so, I ran away quickly.
I tripped and fell into a pile of smelly cabbages.

After, when the coast was clear,
I ran up to my machine's rear.
I started up the machine,
and again it started to spin.
Whirling, swirling and twirling, and I disappeared...

Adjudicators' Comment:

This is a very nice, light-hearted story of time travel.

This poem deals with technology and the future, which is an excellent topic breaking from traditional ideas of poetry as focused on nature and love. At times the language and rhyming can be straightforward, but the poem does create a good sense of personal voice and a speaker who the reader can really imagine.

Commendation (Primary Section)

Theme: Machines

The Scientist

Natasha Naomi Uchimoto

Diocesan Girls' Junior School

It was midnight at the scientist's reside,
He was making something as his Master obliged.
A powerful ruler that seemed quite bland,
With its awful texture a bit like sand.
But so mighty it could destroy the world,
With that thought the Murderer's lips curled.
So she stole it at night with a crack of a whip,
Her bag swinging hard at the side of her hip.
She cackled loud and sardonically,
Forcing the citizens to beg on their knees.
The rubble, the terror, the presentiment,
The psychedelic explosions from the pavement!
The scientist's heart was banging like a gong,
How could this have gone so notoriously wrong?

With determination in mind, he set off to plan
Of how to punish this heedless woman.
A little bit of this and an iota of that,
This new invention was in the shape of a bat.
The scientist hollered with the bat in his hand:
"You're done with demands! You'll show penitence to this land!"
As zaps and lights and streaks filled the air,
The Murderer had been magicked into a fluffy hare!
The crowd cheered, to see their city anodyne,
Mayor Laughalot cracked open a bottle of wine.
The scientist? – you ask – He was suffused in pride.
He was as rich as the Mayor. (You see, they walked side by side).
And like every fantasy fairytale ends,
The city was safe, no matter straight paths or bends.

Adjudicators' Comment:

This poem tells an interesting story, and I liked the way it makes use of forms from Hong Kong English – ‘no matter straight paths or bends’, for example, which is more precise and communicative. But sometimes the language use is confusing, and it makes it difficult to follow exactly what the story is: I’m not sure what the magician has created, or who has stolen it. Nonetheless, this is an enjoyable and original piece of work.

This is a very ambitious effort with some excellent language. Some of the rhymes are clever and well-formed. At other times the restrictions of the rhyming structure seem to force the writer to compromise on the imagery.

Commendation (Primary Section)

Theme: Festivals

Totally Christmas-ty!

Matthew Chan

Ying Wa Primary School

Come on, we must celebrate with might,
Christ is born, glittering with sincere light!
Christmas feelings whipped all over the city in bright.

Ho ho ho! Santa would say,
Here are all the presents, hurray!
He will arrive with the stylish sleigh.

Rock 'n' roll, that's cool with the snow,
Ripping all the presents like an unboxing show,
Rapping happily as the big winds blow.

I would be so overwhelmed by the decorations,
Impressed by instrumental insights over the nation,
Interested in all my different observations.

Silently, we waited for our saviour,
Secretly born in a peaceful chamber,
Sweetly sleeping in the hay-crafted carrier.

Towards a better life with him,
'Twas because He saved us all from sin,
The totally holy festival continued with us singing hymns.

Magical night, quietly approaching,
Making the people excited with the partying,
Mass numbers of citizens blown away by celebrating.

A unique day mingled with silence and joy,
Above the skies there sat a holy boy,
And that's the reason of why we enjoy.

So what are you waiting for?
Seasons greetings delivered right to your door,
Saviour of ours is who we adore!

Adjudicators' Comment:

I like the enthusiasm of this poem and the way it engages with the acrostic form. It is interested both in the religious aspects of the festival ('Christ is born') and the more materialistic elements of the time of year ('here are all the presents'), which I found a bit confusing!

I am not sure it was the author's intention, but there is a sharp contrast between the Christian aspect of Christmas and the pagan aspects (Santa Claus). I find this very interesting because both aspects are presented so earnestly, without any sense of the inherent contradictions in this hybrid holiday. I think this accurately reflects how Christian children experience this holiday and the anticipation leading up to it.

There are no clear elements that place this poem in Hong Kong. Since Christmas is celebrated in different ways around the world, I would be interested to see how a uniquely Hong Kong sense of this holiday might be incorporated in this poem.

Commendation (Primary Section)

Theme: Friendship

Our Remarkable Friendship

Lam Tsz Man Haley

Baptist (Sha Tin Wai) Lui Ming Choi Primary School

We have a great friendship that won't end,
Like a crystallizing jewel that is in our hands.
When our passion shines brightly above the jewel,
It will glitter and glitter until it turns blue.
Our promise will never ever break,
But when it does for goodness' sake,
We will be like a broken lock,
That is shut between the blocks.
The golden key to repair the crack,
Is together to get out of the darkness evil back.
Now we know it is worth more than gold,
Hand in hand that we hold won't fold.
Of all the friends that I have met,
You are the special one that I get.
Always chattering by my side,
Opening up my heart inside.
Troubles, troubles in my way,
So you teach me patiently on the hard days.
Sharing unforgettable memories together,
That is the friendship we will share forever.
But when time is ticking fast,
The future comes but not the past.
Most of all I want to say,
Our extraordinary friendship will always stay.

Adjudicators' Comment:

This is quite a good poem by a primary school pupil. The jewel and lock metaphors come naturally in the flow and create a clear image for readers. The author uses a lot of simple words but to good effect. There is strong imagery without resorting to artificial, fancy devices.

The structure may be better improved for a cascade of meanings to unfold.

Try balancing the positive imagery at the beginning of the poem with imagery throughout, especially related to the notions of sharing and support among friends.

Avoid unforgettable memories – it is very cliché in Hong Kong English writing. It's not a memory if it is forgotten, so it is redundant.



SECONDARY SECTION



Champion (Secondary Section)

Theme: Nature

Precipitation

Lui On Hang Anice

Maryknoll Convent School (Secondary Section)

Icy
Chaste
Ethereal
Snow falls when
Noel carol bells sound
O'er the hills, o'er the plains
Winter festivity in every corner
Raindrops descend, crystalline, from
Aloft the clouds, hailing down to the earth
Infiltration, providing moisture, antecedent evaporation
Nourisher of life and spirit, the crib of earthborn civilisations
Snow and rain, the two combined, to form incandescent
Lucent gems, half-melted flakes of silver, frothing
Enchanting all eyes bearing witness to its
Emergence from the heights of heaven
Terra's gift, brave beautiful nature

Adjudicators' Comment:

This poet is alive to the sound of words, creating pleasing alliterative effects (incandescent lucent gems is lovely). It is also refreshing to see a poem with the confidence not to follow a regular rhyming pattern and metrical form whilst still demonstrating a keen awareness of the importance of form. It is let down occasionally by odd choices – the archaism of o'er the hills, o'er the plains for example jars with the Hopkineque sense of rhythm.

A very bold attempt in using typographical and visual devices in advancing the meaning of the poem. The clarity and economy of language give readers both details and a fresh insight into the topic

Champion (Secondary Section)

Theme: Poverty

Shanti Devi

Prasad Aditya

The Hong Kong Management Association David Li Kwok Po College

Today is the funeral,
Of fourteen-year-old Shanti Devi.
As her body is bathed, cheerful
Conversations from the living room become heard.
The guests are arriving for the ceremony
But this behaviour of theirs is quite absurd.

Today is the funeral,
Of fourteen-year-old Shanti Devi.
Her body donned a "beautiful"
Red saree and her hair were braided and flowered.
Makeup is applied on her lifeless face so
The bruises she received last night are covered

Today is the funeral,
Of fourteen-year-old Shanti Devi.
She could have been a doctor, a lawyer or a successful
Businesswoman. But her life was sadly bid farewell
Now she will have a different role
As a slave to work in hell

Today is my funeral,
Shanti Devi's funeral.
Like a doll I am passed to another
Despite my screaming and pleading you did not even bother
To turn because relief had flooded your eyes,
The day your daughter died.

Adjudicators' Comment:

This is a powerful poem. The repetition of the opening lines that are re-formed in the final stanza is extremely effective. The detailed imagery and use of a name make the experience seem real and personal.

This is a smart poem which has a clever reversal in the final stanza in which the speaker changes, surprising the reader. There is a good use of poetic conventions such as repetition and repetition with subtle differences, which gives the poem a nice flow and a rounded structure. The poem attempts to engage the reader on an emotional level and – for a poet of this age – is very successful in doing so.

2nd Runner Up (Secondary Section)

Theme: Growing Up

The Swan in the Pond

Christie Lam

Maryknoll Convent School (Secondary Section)

I am the
Odd one out
With my ugly feathers
Ashen, achromatic and dull
Like a ghastly, pale and lifeless skull
Despised, disdained, they push me out of the pond
Shall I wander lonely all alone
out of their little pond
Or shall I stay and
Endure, named upon
As an ugly little duckling?
Mournfully paddling away, I waddle onto a lawn, dawdling
Their feathers shimmer, gold with glamour, gleaming with glee
I lack confidence, in those yellow ducklings' dominance
Time flies, my cry dries, I turn into a beautiful swan
Gracefully stroking down the silvery sunlit stream
Over the incandescence, over the sparks of dawn
Who chooses how the beauty lines are drawn?
My head haughtily held in high esteem
We are not the same in this pond

Adjudicators' Comment:

This is an elegant poem, which very effectively imagines this ugly duckling – paddling, waddling, dawdling, and admiring the vibrant colours of those other ducklings. The shape of the poem must have made this more challenging to write, but the lines do not feel forced or unnatural. Indeed, the different line lengths seem to actively complement the different stages of the poem – right down to the slightly shorter final line, which is abrupt but effective.

The poem beautifully expresses the perspective of a heterogeneous being, with consistent references to the classic tale of the ugly duckling. The poem makes a twist by giving an ambiguous ending when the duck turns into a swan, hinting that the discovery of the true self is not necessarily a good thing. The shape of the poem looks playful, but the message it brings out is not.

3rd Runner Up (Secondary Section)

Theme: Nature

A Tale of Old

Chan Ethan Siyan

Tsuen Wan Government Secondary School

You are submerged deep in the ocean, mesmerized by the infinite watery ravine;
And yet by an equally endless amount of trash it is constantly filled and clogged.
You are gazing upon the stars in the night sky; silent, peaceful and serene,
And yet they are indistinguishable through the stench of smoke and the screen of smog.
You hear countless trees' heartbeat as you walk through luscious bouquets of green,
And yet the flourishing age-old forest is soon to be razed for its land and logs.
As can be seen, despite the limitless wonders that all of nature holds,
Its beauty will soon become but a distant tale of old.

Adjudicators' Comment:

I like that this poem creates a kind of call and response contrasting the beauty of nature with the impact of human encroachment. The use of the second person to involve the reader in the poem is very effective. The rhyming is subtle and well executed, meaning that the light-heartedness often associated with rhyme is not present here, which would have detracted from the serious message. There is a sense of authentic anger and passion that makes the final warning genuinely potent.

This poem uses an interesting combination of rhythmic features: in the first six lines, the long irregular lines work very well with the insistently repeated rhyme sounds, which conclude the variety of thoughts on this topic. The imagery can be rich and suggestive – the spool of thread is especially provocative. With such a demanding and insistent opening, I felt a little bit disappointed with the ending, which seems to lose the directness and clarity of the opening.

Merit (Secondary Section)

Theme: Nature

She the Sea Speaks

Felix Chow

Hong Kong Tang King Po College

A lady in a gown of green,
deepest blue and aquamarine.
Marked with glimmering waves pearl-white,
reflecting the stars, she shines so bright.

She's got a love-hate relationship with the land;
She cools him, gives him life, is the yin to his yang.
Yet she bites him, with viper-like fangs;
Her cruel crashing waves turn him to sand.

She's home to numerous wondrous creatures;
seahorses, lampreys and large red lobsters,
scores of strange fish with shimmering scales,
sea-jellies, dolphins and killer whales.

She's a woman of many faces,
Be it joy, rage, terror or woe;
Coquettish, playful, she flings sea-spray,
at seafarers on their sailing-boats.

Yet she can act, like a woman angered,
Raising sea-storms with raging rancor.
Many a terror she can rouse from her deeps,
But she can be calm like a babe in its sleep.

I observe from the pier, my precarious perch,
her breath-taking beauty, her vast grandeur.
All I see is the boundless sea;
Surprisingly, she too sees me.

My ears cup the salty wind
that burns my ruddy cheeks.
The sea calls me over,
to listen to her speech.

I wade right in, her tides I greet.
The coarse damp sand engulfs my feet.
And the only sound that fills my ears
Is the voice of the sea as she speaks.

And she sings, she talks, she paints a vision
of ruby red skies, of sunsets crimson;
remnants of the day, foreshadowing the night,
vermillion streaks mar the grey-on-white,
of the rain-drunk clouds, threatening to spill
their tears on earth, on Yggdrasil;

Of seagulls' cries, of sailors' moans
Of the gruesome, ghastly, grating groan
Coming from stranded, stricken sinking ships,
When their once-proud iron hulls were rip'd;

Of Odysseus and his voyage back
To Ithaca, to Penelope fair,
Of pirate-kings as they scoured the seas,
Raiding ships with their gold teeth bared.

Of Columbus, who thought he'd seek,
a new route towards the far east.

Of Jason and the Argonauts,
Sailing in search of the Golden Fleece.

She laments of the perils she's faced,
Her suffering at the hand of my race.
"Oh Humankind, why must you debase
my visage, and cause me such malaise?"

“Your oil spills make me feel so ill;
‘Don’t overfish!’, is my humble wish.
You contaminate, and ruin my straits,
Your plastics choke my fishes’ throats!”

After hearing her passioned speech
I realize that us humans need;
to know the pain caused by our deeds,
to her complaints we should take heed.

Lest we poison her, and hence,
Have a world not graced by her presence.

Adjudicators’ Comment:

I think this is an outstanding piece of work. It does not only describe the sea with personification but also creates a dialogue with it. We hear the author as well as the sea. The word choices are wonderful. The allusion to past literature is unexpected of secondary school students. The poem shows a certain level of sophistication in thoughts as well as organising ability of the author.

In this poem I really enjoyed the abundance of ideas that are connected with the sea – colours, creatures, feelings, and stories throughout the ages, which all contribute to this idea of the sea as a woman of many faces. Although the stanza form is not especially tight, the wide range of language makes up for it. After such a full poem I felt slightly disappointed with the conclusion: of course I agree with the message, but it seems limited in comparison with what came before.

Merit (Secondary Section)

Theme: Poverty

Help!

Ho Pui Ying

The Chinese Foundation Secondary School

It's a dog's life,
In the days of darkness,
Down in the streets of depression,
Shortly to decompose.

Sick, suffering, and feeling shame,
Searching for warmth, only barely surviving.
Shaking, shivering in starvation.
Searching for food as soon as the sun rises?

Crying repeatedly,
On the rough road without riches,
Where onlookers look with revulsion,
And only rats are not repulsed.

This is the portrait of the poor!
Pleading their pathetic position.
Passersby pretending to be blind,
They live without pride and suffer without pause.

Adjudicators' Comments

This is a good poem approaching the topic of depression with an interesting class awareness, recalling, for example, the ideas of the late Mark Fisher. Sometimes the language is simple but the poem is nevertheless evocative.

The poem gives a vivid picture of abject poverty. The feelings of depression, shame and starvation are core to understanding the poor, and yet the poem does not provide enough imagery or description of the situation to illuminate these feelings. The sentence structure is inconsistent. Who is, for example, pleading their pathetic position? The poem can be improved by maintaining a consistent point of view: the poor, the passerby, the rich, or a detached narrator?

Merit (Secondary Section)

Theme: Longing

Little Star

Mendoza Charlene Christine Ramos

Delia Memorial School (Broadway)

Eyes open,
Darkness swallows me,
Eyes closed,
Light fills me –

“Up above the world so high”

– If I could be on air,
I would be one with the hummingbirds,
Conquering the clear blue skies,
Free from boundaries

“Like a diamond in the sky”

If I could unearth soil,
I would dig and find gemstones,
Conquering the elegant pear collections,
Free from boundaries

“When the blazing sun is gone”

If I could play with flames,
I would set all cages ablaze,
Conquering the dark round barrels,
Free from boundaries

“Then you show your little light”

If I could walk on waves,
I would cross the seven seas,
Conquering the deep light waters,
Free from boundaries

“Twinkle twinkle little star”

If I could –
I know I can’t,
Still, I continue to hum,
“How I wonder *where* you are”

Adjudicators’ Comment:

I like the way this poem indulges in fantastic speculations, before finishing with a much more ordinary (but maybe even more impossible) problem. The connection with the nursery rhyme makes it all the more interesting; we all know this familiar song, and we hear it in a new way thanks to the work of this poet. The language is richly expressive but sometimes disjointed – it’s not obvious if this is intended, or a mistake – and one or two phrases confused me (what are ‘elegant pear collections’?).

This is a brave and interesting poem which takes a children’s nursery rhyme and works on the material in experimental and interesting ways. At times the simplicity of the original song prevents this poem from reaching the levels it might, but the idea to use this as the basis for a poem is original and unique. The form is interesting in that it reads like a modern free verse and therefore contrasts with the repetitive flowing of the original song.

Merit (Secondary Section)

Theme: Nature

Tempest

Yu Charmaine Kate

Maryknoll Convent School (Secondary Section)

She felt like an old friend.
Shining, shimmering under the dying sun
Enjoying her last bit of glory.
A streak of gold split the dark blue waters
Waves construct wide walls, spanning across her body, gradually rising
Not too high –
Just enough to tumble and crash into a sea of white foam,
Creating a metronomic rhythm
She whispers
This is my heartbeat.
I let out a small welp, watching the light
Retreat beyond vaporous mist.

Melancholy grey paints her body, until the night sky seeps into her skin.
Wind holds its breath.
What can possibly happen on this tranquil night?
Sky musters its courage
A silvery flash, an electrified branch stretches on the black palette
A warning.
Threatening intrusion pierces through the dark sea
A ghostly white strongly flickers, then it was gone
Reappearing at different spots.
Waves surge from the bottom and yells,
Thunderstorms are harmless!
How can I believe them, for their brilliance is lost.

He starts off as a cackle,
Like schoolboys snickering about.
Then a deep, loud rumble
Laughing as he pulls the emotional heartstrings of the sea,
Causing vibrations, sending waves into a wild party.
Obnoxiously tearing the sky apart
Lightning slips between his roars
Creating steady beats

I smiled from my heart –
I seemed so foolish not realizing that
Nature needs to scream sometimes.
They are indeed harmless.

Adjudicators' Comments

The personification of natural phenomenon offers a new perspective in viewing and reviewing our relationship with our environment.

The poem narrates the moment when a thunderstorm comes. The alternation of long and short lines are effective in creating an uneasy atmosphere, that may be analogous to the storm. The use of italics is encouraged. But here the italicised phrases do not echo each other so effectively. The poem uses multiple pronouns (He, She, I) to complicate the story. Whether they refer to the same individual or separate entities is not clearly indicated in the poem.

Merit (Secondary Section)

Theme: Growing Up

Taboo

Limbu Garima

St. Margaret's Co-Educational English Secondary and Primary School

Mellifluous song pierces,
caresses and embraces.
Watches over motherly,
nurtures the child of nature.

Yellow petals of dahlia,
unaware of the monsters.
Awakens to her music,
they dance until midnight strikes.

The night ferally taints and
then paints its shadows, marking
the flower with its vileness.
Stripping the innocent blush.

Violating her virtue.
Leaving her mangled, broken.
His flames engulfed the flower,
the fiery heat cursing her.

His familiar face haunts
her in dreams and memories.
His actions, distorted and
misinterpreted as love.

Perhaps it was endearment,
perchance her memoirs were flawed.
Doubted herself and denied
to see the wicked grey world.

A bud before the blossom,
vulnerable and fragile.
A happy child growing up,
forced to mature too early.

Adjudicators' Comments

This is a powerful poem – one of the strongest submitted in the competition. It deals with a serious topic in an engaging and emotive way, using poetry to raise awareness of trauma. The vocabulary is impressive and there is good use of poetic conventions and form.

The poem makes a tragic comparison between an abused child growing up and a flower damaged before blossoming. The combination of elegant, beautiful imagery and coarse, harsh imagery is very powerful. This is a poem that will make a lasting impression on the reader.

Merit (Secondary Section)

Theme: Longing

Tainted

Sahni Ritika

St. Paul's Convent School

Upheaval of the present
When nothing goes right,
 Snippets of him
Flash in front of your eyes.

Those unspoken words
Now you wish to scream,
 And his grey, wary orbs
Just won't seem to leave.

Scorching crave for the past
Your heart – a sea of flames,
Hurricane of morbid thoughts
Left with cracked photo frames.

Hidden ancient treasures
Some you don't want to remember,
 Past moments so precious
Yet they haunt you forever.

As longing takes control
It's like a romance with the past,
Or a vintage film in black and white
That's playing way too fast.

Adjudicators' Comment:

This is a very good piece of work! The mixed feeling is almost tangible with the imagery created. Metaphorical language is used appropriately. The beginning and the ending stanzas are stunning. It leaves the reader with some unfinished thoughts though one may try to figure out what it really is.

The poem presents intense imagery, pointing to the transient nature of modern lives. The poem also explores the interesting relationship between present and past, creatively synthesising the image of photography and ancient treasures. The intensity, however, is quite static, which makes the reader feel like the poem is unfinished.

Commendation (Secondary Section)

Theme: Nature

Seasonal Symphony

Wan Ho Nam
Elegantia College

Lushly and luxuriantly did thickets thrive on the landscape
Boisterous hares barging over the prairie
Also seen with squirrels
Fatiguingly clambering onto the naked skin of a blossomed oak tree
Here rose the sun, with the restitution of a touch of vernality!
O spring! O spring! Bloom and burgeon!
O spring! O spring! Rejuvenate and resurgent!
Instil inexhaustible vitality and vibrancy in the land!
Let's commence the revitalization at the daybreak in spring, shan't we?

Faintly did a firefly flutter, flickering with dim light in midsummer
Running amok
Kids avidly embarked on a trail of guts in the forest
Rendezvousing on the summit of a mountain
They witnessed a cosmic scenery
In the firmament there drew a trail of shooting star
Shining, sparkling, shimmering
Glowing, glittering, gleaming
Not only did it illuminate the sky but also ignited the ardour and fervor of summer
Silently, solemnly, serenely they cast a wish upon the sky
Wishes full of passion;
Dreams stuffed with zeal

Barrenly and bleakly
Maple leaves fell and flew in the mid-air
Leaving a wavering trajectory
Heaping into a pile as it landed onto the surface without a parachute
Zephyr gently blowing
A dark silhouette is dancing in the forest
Was that a sylph? Was that an elf?
An adolescent wandering in autumnal forest that was
Briskly walking among the bushes
Trampled, stampeded violently onto the leaves
Here descended a grin on her rigid and stolid-looking face
So blissful was her that never did she find a leaf had strangled her hair

Snowflakes parachuted from the celestial height
Blizzard blowing
Raging with full wrath
A fair lady walking on a track with a parasol
Gazed into the infinite, boundless and bottomless horizons
As if appraising astonishing beauty
Abruptly she raised her hands
Only to touched her cheeks
Smirking in narcissism and frostiness
Triggering tremendous terror
Spinning and spinning
Rotating and rotating
Elegantly her parasol swayed in a graceful manner
How narcissistic, vain yet dignified she was
How charming, charismatic yet apathetic she was
Was she the incarnation of winter?

O Mother Nature! O Mother Nature!
Here I sincerely, cordially, earnestly thank you
For composing and conducting the enchanting, embellishing seasonal symphony
O Mother Nature! O Mother Nature!
Modestly, humbly, honestly I desire to thank you
For showing us the splendour and grandeur of Nature
O Mother Nature! O Mother Nature!
We are seriously indebted in you
For endowing and bestowing this majestic beauty to us
O Mother Nature! O Mother Nature!
We human beings are merely your humble servants and subordinates
Your undying, unbounded, immanent and imperishable love shall be endorsed till the eternity!

Adjudicators' Comments

The poem reminds the reader of the British romantic poets, who, in the format of free verse, express their overflowing emotions regarding the almighty mother nature. The four seasons are creatively imagined, but their imagery can be more clearly distinguished from each other. The last stanza is the most emotionally charged, perhaps too much so. Instead of endlessly glorifying the beauty of nature, the poet may consider how nature makes an impact or transforms the poet himself.

Some of the word-choices seem awkward (especially if read aloud), and for a poem about nature this is actually unnatural. This seems to be a poem about how nature should be respected and appreciated, but I get the sense that it is based on ideas about nature, rather than experiences of nature itself. For example, oak trees do not blossom, at least not enough for their flowers to be generally visible. How could a person hold a parasol in a blizzard?

Why not select a single natural context, like a path in a forest, or even a single tree, and follow that place throughout the seasons?

Commendation (Secondary Section)

Theme: Poverty

Reality of the Rich

Thomas Wong

Bishop Hall Jubilee School

He has got money, he has got game
Tons of parties and never-ending fame
But deep inside is loneliness and blame
Forever-lasting sadness is lame

He is homeless, he is jobless
Tons of sadness and poorness
But deep inside is hope and kindness
Tons of freedom and happiness

Is money important?
No it keeps people distant
Yet the poor keep on begging
They are always persistent

Is money important?
If it can't buy health
Then it is useless wealth
If it can't buy time
Then it is just slime

If you have money, don't be mean
Try to help others who are literally lean
Make everyone have a sense of grace
And this world will be a better place

Adjudicators' Comments

This poem makes a nice contrast between different kinds of poverty; and I like the way the poem repeats the same kind of form to introduce both, which makes the comparison more clear. Although the message it gives is positive, I would love to see that opening idea (i.e. the comparison) developed a bit more – so we can really think about true value through these particular examples.

Within a Hong Kong context, I think this poem resonates with most of the population. The description of an unemployed homeless person as having a lot of freedom and happiness might be a little exaggerated and unrealistic. This would also seem to contradict the final stanza – if such poor people have so much freedom and happiness, then why would they need any help from rich people? Maybe it could be worded as a question. (perhaps with more freedom and happiness?)

Commendation (Secondary Section)

Theme: Longing

The Search of Love

Tang Ka Hei

Christian Alliance S. C. Chan Memorial College

There was light, and there was darkness.
Grace was claimed by the righteousness.
My father shaped me, with a flick of his hand.
Before creation, we seized the land,
until his creations roamed the earth.

The vessel of light was once showered with love,
he left it behind when the flames went up.
Fallen from grace, he writhed in pain,
and dragged his legacy through the void of vain.
On the way to his search of love.

He was down in the pit when his footsteps began,
from the perdition he rose, crawling to reinvent.
Drove by his passion to seek after love,
he leashed his fears, tied it up in chains,
to break free from dust-laden memories.

Humanity never ceased to fascinate me,
as the struggled through the agony.
Longings sailed him through the sea of sorrow,
and fueled him with the strength to overthrow
the beast within him.

Through these years, he's awaiting love,
to knock on his door and stay.
His footsteps quickened, never astray,
as he pursued the warmth of love.
For this was what stamped in his mind.

One day his drive will slip into oblivion,
and he will embrace the inevitable.
He thrived as he caught the scent of love,
that nurtured the bulb of his yearnings.
He longed for the blossom of love.

Tossing the harp, and down I go,
to show him the right path to go.

Adjudicators' Comments

The poem is well organised with a good rhyming system. The word choice is good too. On the whole it is not bad. However, as a reader I had some difficulty disentangling the myths of 'me', 'father', and even God and humanity in general. The author must have a theme on his/her own but it has not been very clearly presented.

The poem creatively presents a father who is undergoing some hardship. The poem says little about the 'I' until the end of the poem. The loaded father-son relationship should be addressed earlier. There are several grammatical mistakes too.

Commendation (Secondary Section)

Theme: Animals

The Hard Life of a Predator

Lam Yeung Ching Jordan

Diocesan Boys' School

Perched atop a rock outcrop,
Watchful eyes scan the savannah,
Acute ears twitch at the faintest sound,
Its eyes lock onto a zebra calf,
Agile limbs carry it swiftly and into the kill.

It takes cover in the thick undergrowth,
Its spotted coat provides excellent camouflage;
As it closes in on the kill,
It treads carefully, padded paws making absolutely no sound,
It moves within range, ready to strike.

It leaps out of the undergrowth with surprising speed,
Braced hind legs spring out, propelling it forward.
The zebras flee in all directions,
Only the weak calf trails behind,
And becomes easy prey.

After suffocating its prey,
It drags it back to the rock outcrop,
Where two hungry cubs await their mother's return.
It calls out to the cubs,
But there is no reply.

Desperate, she searches for her cubs,
Only to find one lying in the shrubs – motionless.
Lions and hyenas often kill cubs,
Not for food,
But to eliminate competitors for their own offspring.

When all hope seems lost,
The other cub emerges from behind a boulder,
Safe and unharmed.
Such is the hard life of the fastest land animal on Earth,
The Cheetah

Adjudicators' Comments

This is a very well-written poem by a poet with fantastic writing skills. The subject matter may lack something political or cultural, as there is no real sense that the poem sparks thought or reflection in its reader. That said, perhaps there is still space for poetry which simply describes the world as it is. There is a brave use of vocabulary and an impeccable style which reads smoothly.

This is a unique poem among those submitted. The voice is very direct and matter-of-fact. It describes events and there is little emotive language. However, the language is precise and we are left with a wonderfully clear image. It is rather refreshing and perhaps more real than many of the other efforts in the competition.

Commendation (Secondary Section)

Theme: Growing Up

The Comet Rain and the Shooting Star

Lam Ho Yeung

Ho Fung College (Sponsored by Sik Sik Yuen)

the comet rain and the shooting star

scratches of light laid upon curtains of night

mending and stitching, the void engulfed the bright

seemingly unending, the tug of war waged on and on

those imbecile saplings aimlessly glide

obedient, they followed the 'wise'

without question nor blink of an eye

pursuing their standard future, faithfully blind

one shattered their social-norm

made up its mind and withdrawn

its compass was then reformed

though the future desolate and far

it keeps on probing for the great perhaps

one pubescent shooting star.

Adjudicators' Comments

Almost pulls off some neat turns of phrase. Likewise, use of rhythm and rhyme is very close to competent, but let down by errors of judgment, e.g. rhyming norm with drawn/reformed is audacious but creates a plodding, unpleasing effect, that whilst possibly the intention still sounds clumsy and overblown. Imagery is effective in establishing a theme but lacking in nuance or subtlety.

There are some very effective moments in this poem – the opening line is very good. I like the imagery announced in the title, which is used especially well in the opening and closing stanzas of the poem; I suppose these metaphors from space and the universe are in contrast with the organic and growing 'imbecile saplings'. Although the lines can be a little disjointed, the overall impression the poem gives is pointed and effective. I'm not sure if the idiosyncratic layout is the author's decision or a technical glitch – but it is a little annoying to have everything spread out so far apart!

Commendation (Secondary Section)

Theme: Longing

I Long for Many Things

Henot Melany

Maryknoll Convent School (Secondary Section)

I long for many things.
I long for the perfect body,
With legs that run like they have wings,
And eyes that tell a story.

I long for perfect grades
To make my mother proud.
I want a tongue as sharp as blades
To move and sway the crowd.

I long for a ship to travel far and wide,
To dive with the sharks and whales.
Or Hermes's sandals to carry me by,
So I can fly above the sailing sails.

Give me an ancient library
With books of golden letters.
Tell me tales written by a faery
Of a land that is far better.

Give me a thousand conversations
With gypsies under the starry night.
I long to see a thousand civilizations,
I long to taste a thousand delights.

Bring me to van Gogh and John Keats,
I want to ask of them their greatest achievement.
Let me walk down Victorian streets,
I want to sing and dance on their pavement.

I long for many things,
But one I want most desperately to attain;
The courage like that of kings
To accept the things I cannot change.

Adjudicators' Comments

I like this poem's exploration of different fantasies and desires, moving from relatively ordinary (perfect grades) to the completely impossible (time travelling to talk with Van Gogh, Keats etc). The language is lively and the movement is rhythmic and swift. But it feels a little bit pessimistic to end in the way that it does – surely it is still very important to hang on to these aspirations?

The poem takes longing as something like one's wishes, listing out the things that the 'I' wishes to possess. Note that all these are material things (except the last one, i.e. courage), which makes the reader feel that the poet is materialistic. Is the poet being critical of that materialistic tendency? What are the things that the 'I' cannot change? Longing has something to do with a lost past. Has the thing that cannot be changed to do with the past? There is no clear interconnection between each fancy, e.g. good grades and worldwide travel.

Commendation (Secondary Section)

Theme: Social Media

(Untitled)

To Ka Chun Magnus
Diocesan Boys' School

Bird
On Internet
Flying for freedom
Chatting, singing, reading, sharing
All in matter of seconds
Lying, slandering, cheating, spying
In a click
Be aware
Fear

Click
And share
Without a thought
Biased and false statement
All in the imaginary world
Creating discomfort among people
Think twice before
You share
Truth

Adjudicators' Comments

A strong warning about the dangers of the internet and the ease of misusing it. The form of the poem is interesting and its conciseness helps to keep the message simple and clear. There is little superfluous language here.

This poem certainly has some nice ideas, and the lozenge (or egg? or wing?) shape is an interesting way of presenting it. I think your use of language is intended to be punchy and direct, which is good, but I just don't think there's enough connecting your lines together – even with the dramatic first and second part of the first stanza.



OPEN SECTION

Champion (Open Section)

Theme: Longing

Greenwich Mean Time

Gloria Wong

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School

Your soul hardened to shield itself,
from the bullets crafted from pure terror.
Your mind delirious in the face of paranoia.
Coursing adrenaline seared through your veins
Chasing the throbbing pulse of your rapid heart pace.
Echoing the swift footfall of your brothers,
Bonded by horror, the substance of war.
The blood of your homeland –
Fused with theirs on the maroon-stained battlefield.
Leaving the vacant void that has become of you,
To be consumed by the jaws of raw shock.

Your consciousness devoured,
Numbed by the fatigue,
Panic was your anesthesia.
Their fangs sank into the depths of you
Flooding every shallow breath you took with waves of crimson
Forcing you to drown in life's motherly substance itself.
Electrocuting the mechanics that composed of you,
Leaving you as an empty rifle, stripped of ammunition.

Your aimless screams –
In dreaded harmony with the yearning cries of your children.
Their pleas for your return muted by the applaud of gunfire;
Foreign seconds of delayed ovation.
Men dropped at their mercy to the cadence of rusted clockwork,
Silenced by their final plea for clemency.
Your last five moments of sanity.

Your final promise;
The last oath you take
To defy the inevitable.
Declaring your immortal devotion,
A mere whisper raised,
You prayed to the starless night sky,
That she would forever feel the warmth of your eternal love,
From the frosted northern graveyard,
Five hours away.

Adjudicators' Comments

The choice of language and the descriptive imagery used in this poem are excellent. The poet shows a keen sense for the impact of their word choices, which create in the reader a feeling of desperation and longing. The use of the second person is also very effective in forcing the reader to involve themselves in the poem. Some of the imagery is very powerful. I really enjoyed reading this poem.

A good sense of musicality. I appreciate that the lines are not all in the same rhythmic patterns. Very well executed.

1st Runner Up (Open Section)

Theme: Growing Up

Summer

Anna Thompson
King George V School

Why must winter come so fast?
In my eyes, summer does not pass.
Why do they tell me to get out my coat
And greet a season cold and remote?

For now, they say that it's alright
To play outside until the night,
They warn me though, it'll get colder
And all of us will be getting older.

I retort, I fear no cold,
to me, there is no getting old.
Weary they sigh and pull on jackets,
I watch as they start to take out blankets.

They tell me summer cannot stay,
And days will soon turn dark and grey,
But I tell them "No, that isn't so,
Our days will be bright, free of woe."

But that many years ago.

Adjudicators' Comments

This poem begins as if for children, before turning to address the issue of ageing in a deeper and more melancholic way. The poem, whilst at times bordering on cliché, has a great strength in being able to evoke feelings of reflection, nostalgia and even regret. The final line is a powerful turn reversing the hope of the poem into a kind of acceptance that time will get us all soon enough. It makes use of a wide range of English language and poetic conventions, and is deserving of its place in the anthology.

Clear effort for rhymes. Interesting analogy between times of the year and age for people – the analogy and the way it's presented are effective in conveying the message/ relating to the theme.

1st Runner Up (Open Section)

Theme: Growing Up

Identity

Wong Tak Yau

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School

Within me lives a three-year-old,
With shining eyes and heart of gold.
Her sweet smile beams like warm sunshine,
Funny to think it once was mine.

Within me is a ten-year-old,
Her tongue too sharp and words too bold.
The screams and scolding one could hear,
Glance in her eyes, you see her fear.

Within me the thirteen-year-old,
Had too many false stories told.
They say she's mad, they're spreading lies,
One to another gossip flies.

Within me the sixteen-year-old,
Whose eyes are dead and heart is cold,
Her demons screaming to be freed,
She opens skin to breathe and bleed.

Adjudicators' Comments

This is a very precisely-written poem, with a consistent metrical pattern throughout, and clear rhymes that complement the ideas of the lines; its development is likewise careful, moving slowly from the different phases of early life, leading up the confession of the present(?) 16 years: the climax, the confession of self-harm. The overall effect is certainly disconcerting: the calm and measured description of a very troubled mental state. Assuming (perhaps wrongly) that the speaker of the poem is closely connected to its author, all I can say is that I hope the poet is managing to find ways to express their feelings, whether that's through writing, or other means.

The poem traces the transformation of consciousness from the year of 3 to 16. The world which the subject enters seems to be sinister and hopeless. The use of pronoun shifts from me to she, which creates some ambiguities when reading. The poem leaves several questions unanswered: what happens next to the I/she? What is the major cause of this deadening self? Has it to do with an event? a person? or friends?

3rd Runner Up (Open Section)

Theme: Social media

Media Trees

Katharine Moy
King George V School

Eras, revolutions, periods
Fly pass like advancing breeze,
Ancient styles and trends
Trot along
With their heads bowed humbly
At the storm which is time
Yet trees deep-rooted,
Hold tight to old, trodden ground
They perish not
Carrying tales of centuries

Glued to brightened screens,
Day and night
Pixel by pixel draws us into their endless
Vortex of stories
We like, follow, subscribe ourselves
To all powerful gods in the tapestry
Of this digitized fantasy.

Planted foliage of this complicated network
Intertwines and supports itself
It attracts followers, thousands at times,
Once one is caught, there is no escape
One cannot go back
Through the endless volley of time.

Although it sounds depressing,
I assure you, it is not.
A community of collected cohorts
In a void
Named internet

Adjudicators' Comments

I like the fact that this poem uses imagery in a way that seems to obscure the subject matter, while perhaps revealing something different about it. It is a brave effort that stands out among the other poems on this topic.

The poet shows profound understanding of the evolving culture within cyber space. The use of a tree in capturing the life span and diversity of media is particularly commendable. One question left unanswered is why the internet should sound depressing, but in reality it is not. The conclusion of the final stanza requires further explanation.

Merit (Open Section)

Theme: Social media

Digital Leviathan

Magno Joaquin
King George V School

Praise be to our new god!
His darkened screens;
powerful and almighty
shines enlightenment upon us.

Coddling His children
every man,
every woman.
Born to a beautiful bourgeois world.
Safety for their troubled souls.

A question remains.
What provides you fulfilment?
Is it purpose?
Is it meaning?

He waits for you with open arms,
enchanted sights,
entranced texts
abound his church,
to avert your gaze from a darkened reality.
His lie
replaces scorched earth
with false harvest.

And the façade falls.

Generations born to believe in lies,
thanks to His security theater.
Minds torched from ashes,
to ashes;
singed by the antisocial media.

Our deceitful world,
where the truth is irrelevant,
and comfort reigns supreme.
Our treacherous creation;
elevated on a pedestal of lies,
we hail Him.

The free-speech
our forefathers fought for,
engulfed by the fascist flames
of political correctness.
And I don't remember their names.

Militant leftists
shower us with words that break,
like gunfire.
A modern day massacre.
All of that is thanks to Him.

Our man-made
god, social media.
The false, blazing beacon of comfort.
Branding untrue hope into a mangled world.
Our sweetest, most beautiful lie.

Adjudicators' Comments

The poem describes the power and hegemony of social media in the digital world. A mix of topics like human nature and politics come into play. Very good wording is found in the work. A certain degree of originality too.

Though meaning is always prioritized over form in poetry, this work can be further improved if the two aspects could achieve a balance.

A very powerful poem – the poet's seeming prayer and praises to the new god definitely heighten the poignancy of the scene.

Merit (Open Section)

Theme: Social Media

Naked Corruption

Gloria Wong

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School

You told me,
How the way your fingertips thrust down
On each steel key of your father's keyboard
Was with such force, yet such precision.

You had always pictured yourself as a pianist,
Performing for his vehement crowd.
One message.
Full of strength and momentum.
Whether conveyed through the power of words,
Or arrays of sweet melodic sounds,
Remains distinct against the credulous ears of the naïve.

You told me,
Literature and music likewise –
Art forms.
Expressionism by type.

By your definition, of course.

The art of deception, I suppose
Shall be more fitting of a name, I propose.
Scratch your claws against the rusted ore.
Strip off the cashmere that you have grown to adore.
Face the reality; you're no longer the queen bee.
Your turn to be the refugee, unaccepted across the seven seas.

Mask yourself from the flashes;
Distributed to the masses.
Hide yourself from the exposure,
A broadcasted disclosure.
No longer subject to manipulation,
A re-deciphered illation.

Recover your inner conscience,
Quit forcing such lies upon us.
Prove the existence of a soul,
Lay concrete down your loophole.
Bring me faith in our humanity,
Lead us to unite against misanthropy.

Adjudicators' Comments

I really like the way this poem started, with its vivid comparison of typing and playing the piano. However, it feels as if you forget about the metaphor, after the third stanza. The final four stanzas are angry but I'm not precisely sure why – directed against the you, who has this power to entice and broadcast their lies. The language is often advanced but detached from everyday language – I had to go to the dictionary for 'illation' but I don't see how it is better than 'conclusion' (for example).

The range of evocative words used in this poem is remarkable and impressive. The poet uses some loose rhyming conventions but also some more experimental half-rhymes. Overall the poem is cohesive and readable, with a nice rhythm that is consistent but deliberately broken at times. The poet deserves further credit for taking a modern subject as the topic for the poem, showing that poetry should not be about the good old themes of love and devotion and instead suggesting that poetry can be a political tool to address contemporary concerns.

Merit (Open Section)

Theme: Poverty

Addict

Gloria Wong

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School

Find me a cure
Find me a cure for defying the inevitable
Let me fill our mouths with vapor
While our thoughts become unintelligible

Let me inhale.
Let me breathe in, and exhale lies
On the last hours of my bail
Leaving my identity for you to vandalize

Blind me.
Let the cigarette smoke blindfold me
Whilst choking out laughs fuelled by artificial glee
Senses stolen – a visionless road unable to foresee

Take it all from me.
Trade it all in for my liquidized euphoria
Afraid to break free, a recaptured escapee
Restrained once again in the getaway mile from dysphoria

Enslave me
Diseased from the scent of brain matter on asphalt
Let the dominance of fear dictate me
My self-inflicted form of paranoia assault

Switch off the ventilator
I chose the crippled dictator

Adjudicators' Comments

The poem depicts a subject who wants to indulge the self into some kind of dystopia. The poem tries to maintain a pattern in every stanza, but the sentence structures are sometimes inconsistent and the content does not echo the previous stanzas. The poem needs a better sense of movement and development. At the moment, without the last two lines, the poem seems like it can go on and on.

I like the way this poem uses a short and punchy line at the start of every stanza: this is an interesting rhythmic feature which usefully emphasises each different idea, before they develop over the lines that follow. This also helps create interesting rhymes in each stanza – although the sound of me gets a bit over-used. Overall this is a dramatically engaging poem, with a slightly obscure but interesting message.

Merit (Open Section)

Theme: Poverty

The Winter Wind

Kim Min Jun
West Island School

I'd like some more money,
He wishes,
Peering into a plastic well.
Hearing pockets jingle,
A merry song of silver coins,
The sound of their care.

I'd like to get a job soon,
He thinks,
Wrapped in tattered clothes.
Eyeing the black suits,
A mere blur amidst grey hues,
Their leather shadows.

I'd like some warmer clothes,
He craves,
Brushing crawling fabric.
Gazing at seamless colours,
Threads snaking with care,
The shields against cold.

I'd like to find some friends,
He yearns,
Embracing scarlet hands.
The bulbs burst into life,
And the peppermint wind kisses,
The concrete jungle.

The winter wind brings chill,
Love drifting away in the sea of gales.
Yet a silky silhouette may stop the current,
And a smile,
A word,
A sentence,
May bring a tempest of warmth.
Oh, be blessed,
Those who love!

Adjudicators' Comments

I really like how this poem uses such a range of imagery and vocabulary to describe each different aspect of poverty – it makes us hear, see, and touch the longing of someone yearning for a better life. The repetitions and rhythmic variety in the first four stanzas are effective: they help to deliver the message of the poem. When we get to the final stanza it is refreshing to hear a different pace to go with the different perspective, introducing this essential idea of love (the very final word of the poem). While I do think this is effective in general, love seems less vivid than the other experiences in the poem – 'it is a tempest of warmth', but maybe the poet could use some more of that interesting imagery to make us pay attention.

This poem has a good rhythmic pattern. The imagery used is affective and vivid.

Merit (Open Section)

Theme: Growing Up

Nine O'clock

Jessie Cho

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School

Yesterday, you said that we would meet at nine.
You promised, you swore, said you were sorry
About how we weren't able to finish it earlier
About how, this time, you wouldn't make me worry
So I set aside my other homework and wait.

It was getting cold, the chilly air then
I dawdled blankly before the blank screen
Hoping, believing, trusting that you would
Leap out and let yourself be seen.
I look at the clock. It was now ten.

I assured myself you'd come.
That you were different
Vexed by the excuses
Of "where I went".

Into writing, I delve
Eyes saw blur
Hands flying
Finished work...
It was twelve.

Online?
Great.
Next time
Wait
At nine.

Adjudicators' Comments

The form of this poem is very interesting and effective in matching the subject matter.

This is an accomplished poem that effectively communicates feelings of longing and rejection, especially in a way that contributes to the theme of growing up. I especially like the rhythmic variety across the poem, which is controlled and connected to the feelings described – the breathless commas of the first stanza for the flurry of excuses; or at the end, the short and pointed lines describing the let down. Although rhyme is not a priority for this poet, its occasional use (sorry/worry, screen/seen, online/time) is very effective.

Merit (Open Section)

Theme: Nature

The Storm

Fiona Shinran Fu

The Independent Schools Foundation Academy

A tiny flower lands on my windowsill.
A dog barks on the streets below.
A dull feather flutters down on the balcony rails.
All is normal.

Suddenly, the wind howls mournfully.
The flower is blown away.
The dog is silenced.
The feather is swept to a bush.

A single drop of water,
Cheekily but innocently,
tumbles from the gray clouds that covered the sun,
And breaks through a lake's glassy surface.

It is not alone,
And tons follow suit,
All steadily drumming on the roof.
"Tip, tap, tip, tap"

Soon, the visible world is enveloped in darkness,
And lightning is our only source of illumination.
It's partner, Thunder, strikes his drums,
And we hear it's sinister and unmelodic music.

Hours pass.
The dark clouds saunter away.
The rain slowly ceases.
A bird sings gaily in the trees.
All is normal.

Adjudicators' Comments

I like the way this poem tells the whole story of the thunderstorm from beginning to end. Maybe this could be enhanced by a bit more rhythmic variation for the different parts of narrative.

A simple accessible nature poem. There is both a sense of almost boredom with the familiar or normal and an attention to detail both before and after and during the rainstorm.

Commendation (Open Section)

Theme: Nature

Winter Whiteness

Jain Aditi
King George V School

Snow swirls and twirls through thick cold air
Fall, feeble frozen butterflies
Sparkling stars spin with elegance and care
Sink through dim winter skies

White frosty layers cake the land
Decorated by small paw tracks
Trees are smothered in silver sand
The heavens surround us in coal black

Tender balls of fluff are fast asleep
Fast till the whiteness leaves
Hidden in burrows dug fairly deep
Light milky-white mist they breathe

The sun strolls through the sky
While winter whiteness bids good bye

Adjudicators' Comments

This is an image based poem which takes the reader to the image of a white winter, perhaps as imagined from far away. The diction is strong and the writer is able to construct a decent rhythm in English. The poem shows imagination and a good sense of feeling, and has some very nice moments. To go further, the poet could consider the political and social value of poetry, rather than just using it to describe reality.

There are some very nice touches here – I love the use of cake as a verb (cake the land), which is very evocative. There is a wide range of language to describe the falling snow, whether as butterflies, or stars, or sand. The sonnet form is an interesting choice and has helped to organise your ideas.

Commendation (Open Section)

Theme: Social media

Offline

Owen Yeung

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School

The expense of spirit in a waste of shame:
Procrastination; thus I feel the must
To craft this writ, perfect it to its fame,
'Fore sundown, lest my efforts turn to dust.

My mistress purrs, "come hither", I submit.
My fingers stroke her face as she glows, bright.
She tells me stories, paints as I see fit:
Of friends and family's sniggers, never fights

She wants my heart, its wholly, I indulge.
My spouse alone, she weeps as I embark.
Our night of passion ends as she convulses;
Her juices gone, I'm plunged into the dark.

No lines survived to warn you to refrain,
Once gone, no pen can salvage lost quatrains.

Adjudicators' Comments

A witty choice to use a sonnet to present this topic of social media: a nice crossover of old and new trends!

Brave attempt at a sonnet. Using a form and language associated with love to describe a relationship with social media is an interesting idea. It could have been done with more subtlety and refinement.

Commendation (Open Section)

Theme: Longing

Beauty Secret

Wong Tak Yau

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School

“Beauty is on the inside”

Tiny little girl,

“Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder”

Perfect pretty girl

So very Perfect.

Skin-sack blows up, twists, distorts

Hurricanes, hurricanes rack her frame.

Rainstorms black and grey, 5 years, break

me. Too imperfect, shapeless now. Thunder rings

“Fit in!”

The girl tries to make her skin-sack perfect.

Cuts away, cuts away, cuts away! – Blooming red tears and yellow bubbles.

Full breasts and smooth hips begone,

Leave scars on my soul.

Memories of painful analgesics.

Bid innocence Farewell,

All candy-lies melting acidic on the tongue.

Scars and screams pushing at the seams

That's what us girls are made of.

“Beauty is on the inside”

Unspoken condition withheld

“Only if your surface-skin is beautiful.”

Adjudicators' Comments

A powerful poem renouncing the contemporary standards of beauty for women. The use of rough, crude language and grotesque images creates a haunting effect and a space for the readers to reflect upon their own definitions of beauty – it is a succinct denunciation of the fact that there is no beauty in this feminine beauty ideal.

Some effective choice of vocabulary in a poem whose diction effectively creates a disillusioned and disgusted voice. I think the poem would have ended powerfully without the final stanza which adds little.

Commendation (Open Section)

Theme: Growing Up

The Lifelong Staircase

Chan Ming Wai Summer
Diocesan Girls' Junior School

Step by step,
higher and stronger.
Up the spiral stair,
gasping and panting for air.
You fight to reach your goal,
with all the passion in your soul.
You pause to catch your breath,
you know it's too soon for your death.
The steps loom over you, dangerous and menacing.
Your pulse beats lightning fast, rapid yet comforting.
Down you may stumble and tumble,
still you remain humble.
Lesson learnt, so pick yourself up;
your bruised pride, you tenderly cup.
Hold your head up high,
There's no time for you to sigh.
Twisting and turning, on you go,
along the stairway of life, you flow.
Thrilling adventures await you so,
exciting experience enhances your glow.
Opportunities lie in wait,
to grab or not, it's up to you, not fate.
Your future is a wondrous sight,
lying beyond the mountain of light.
Hope is always within your reach,
barriers are meant for you to breach.
Step by step,
higher and stronger.

Adjudicators' Comments

This is an enthusiastic and encouraging poem, with a potentially inspiring message. Effort has been made to use rhyming couplets, and this sounds fun, but I don't think it adds much to the meaning of the words – it quickly becomes predictable.

An inspirational poem full of words of encouragement and motivation. The poet should consider enhancing the motif of stair climbing by introducing some structural devices such as a stanza break or cumulative song pattern so as to give readers a sense of progression.

Commendation (Open Section)

Theme: Longing

So the Tortured Thoughts Return

Angela Tsui
King George V School

So the tortured thoughts return
As I set pen to sheet
To christen blank pages with your name.
How lovely to consider,
(not to mention equally absurd)
To imagine you doing the same.
For me to tell you of my longing
Would send you running for refuge
Into the arms of my worst demons.
When you grow tired of them,
You'll slip into silence and shadows again;
I've watched you change for so many a season
Except despair is always where you lead them
(in the end)

Tell me this:
Why are you still here?
I have churned the question through my hands;
Those I ask heats it further
Until it is too hot to touch
I would ask you, but I'm not sure that I can.
The notion of my broken feelings
Has probably bored you into slumber
If that is so, let me be the stuff of dreams.
I will exact revenge, I swear it;
If only you cared as much as you didn't
You might even scruple to spy the state I've been in.

Ever since the treachery of summertime delusion
I have been unwell.
Ever since you danced with that deformed skeleton
I inch closer to a pit named 'hell'.
To replay our last act draws blood from my mouth
(you must know by now that I'd bleed for you):
Words spoken by you, and taking time to figure out
What it is you've done.
Words stolen away by wind
Bustled their way into my eardrums
And let loose chaos behind my eyes
The rest follows suit in coming undone.

So the tortured thoughts return
As I set pen to sheet
To christen blank pages with your name.

Adjudicators' Comments

The opening (and closing) idea is an interesting one: that the act of writing itself summons memories that may otherwise be forgotten. The use of poetic form here emphasises control over the length and rhythm of lines, rather than any strict rhyme pattern, and that has been an effective approach, I think: the division into 12-14 lines stanzas offers a clear structure. The imagery of the poem is often vivid ('demons' and 'that deformed skeleton') and perhaps could be developed more to help communicate the ideas.

I appreciate the word choice: 'tortured thoughts', 'churned the questions'. They are powerful, vivid and lively in describing longing.

Commendation (Open Section)

Theme: Growing up

Father Time

Faustina Yick
King George V School

The man wasn't always shrivelled and old,
He once was a young boy; innocent and bold,
His head cradled in his mother's gentle arms,
Said, "My angel, my son, you are such a charm."

In the blink of an eye, he grew and grew,
Which is what us as humans do,
Until palm to palm reduced to a pinky's touch,
Oblivious that the world was bitter and rough.

Greed came by with papers of evergreen,
Till love came from trunks and not good deeds,
Wrongdoings were made, humanity cried for amends,
Until youth just hung loosely on a tattered thread.

Realization struck as he glanced at his wrinkled hands -
Life ticks by until it's as useless as a grain of sand,
To be forgotten was not what he desired for,
And so plenty was not enough and wanted more

And more
And more
And more

Time

To this day his grayed beard reached his big toe,
Before he could wither in his isolation and sorrow,
All that was lost screamed in a single thought –
Time is too precious to be bought in dimes

And this man is who you call Father Time.

Adjudicators' Comments

Some nice language and imagery. The repeated lines 'and more' and the breaking up of the second from last line are interesting elements of this poem.

This poem is an ambitious attempt to deal with the concept of time. The poem uses some good poetic conventions and has a decent range when it comes to vocabulary. The images it constructs may be considered cliched, but they show an awareness of existing ideas surrounding the concept. The tone of the poem is one of its main strengths, as well as its experimental form. To this reader, the broken form raises the question of tension with the unbroken loop of chronological time.

Commendation (Open Section)

Theme: Growing up

Too Old to Play

Eve Messervy
West Island School

I'm too old to play now, I hang out instead.
I guess we just giggle and do homework on a bed,
It doesn't seem that fun to be but my friends always say
"We're in high school now, so we're too old to play"
I guess the message they try to convey is that our hierarchy has had an upgrade
To a B grade I just received from my science GCSE,
You're quite correct, we're three years ahead,
I had to skip some scenes.

I've grown up a lot since then
Mentally and physically
More or less typically
With happy days and misery and
WHOOOP
We skipped a chunk 'o scenes since now I'm in university
Beyond the sea,
Above the trees,
All on my own and lonely
The fantasies I used to dream 'bout all of this and how it seemed so
Great. Independent. Brilliant and free,
Yet now I'm here
Full of fear
Wishing for a time machine to bring me to my mother's knee
Free of guilt and worries.

I cherish those days with no responsibility in sight
No deadlines
Or bills
Or studying through the night!

See, when I was a child
I saw the world as black and white,
Everything was obvious it was either wrong or right,
Pure and joyous clarity gave me a simple life.
I grew and learned to face the world
Living day by day
But now I feel so unprepared as black and white turned grey.

Now everything is different and nothing is the same
What once was pure is out the door
Society has changed.

The budget I must watch and the dishes piling high,
No one to put a Band-Aid on my open wound of life
How I wish I could rewind the clock and go back all that way,
Where the world to me was black and white
And I was young enough to play.

Adjudicators' Comments

The poem shows clear efforts at crafting which are occasionally successful. It suffers from formulaic or clumsy rhyme and although it attempts to use imagery and figurative language, it doesn't feel particularly fresh. The poet's treatment of the subject, whilst reflecting Hong Kong student culture, is somewhat predictable. Use of rhythm varies in quality – the middle section of the poem is successful in capturing a sense of time passing too quickly, but elsewhere the writing can be stilted.

I would cut out the use of “o” and “bout”. They don't seem to fit with what is otherwise an experience that many adults can directly relate to.

I think bandage would work better than the name-brand Band-Aid, and maybe 'life's open wounds' (ending on wound rather than life) might help to highlight the sense of damage in the same line.

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