



The Rotary Club of Richmond

presents

The Slade Literary Award

Sponsored by Mark Slade
in memory of his uncle, Rotarian Henry Slade

Winning Entries 2011

Winning Entry: "**Grandpa's Shoes**"

by Alice Widdowson, Melbourne Girls' College

Runner-up: "**Siblings**"

by Amelia Wasniewski, Balwyn High School

ESL Winning Entry: "**Sunshine After The Rain**"

by Pawitchaya Chuenchitra, Melbourne Girls' College

Welcome to the Slade Literary Awards 2011

The Slade Awards are named in honour of the late Henry Slade who founded the competition in 1993 and sponsored it until his death in 2005. These awards aim to encourage the literary skills and offer the opportunity to showcase the creative talents of students in Years 9 and 10 within the City of Yarra and neighbouring municipalities.

All participants are required to submit a piece of original prose or poetry up to 1000 words on a topic of their choice. This work is then read and evaluated by a panel of judges who are looking for creativity, originality, fluency, enthusiasm and appeal.

This year the calibre of entries has been exceptional and all the participants are to be congratulated on their efforts. Additionally, the judges have included for the first time a prize for an "English as a Second Language" (ESL) participant.

The Slade Criteria

We use five main criteria to reach our conclusions. These are:

Creativity - the treatment of the subject in a fresh, lively and interesting way. The subject itself does not need to be novel.

Originality - the novelty of the subject. Is the work about an unusual subject or new idea?

Fluency - how well was the English language handled? How well was the piece structured? A good writer has to have a grasp of grammar and vocabulary that raises the text above the tedious, jumbled and mundane. The author must also have a good grasp of the importance of structure and variety of style.

Conviction - did it sound convincing? Did the author make the reader believe in them? If the author is talking about their emotions, the reader needs to be convinced the emotion is genuine to be swept along.

Appeal - more than an enjoyable experience: did it hook the judges? Did we want to keep reading? We don't mean just a feel-good experience: the writer had to keep us wanting to know what is coming next. This is the most difficult criterion to deal with as it is so subjective for the individual reader

Grandpa's Shoes

By Alice Widdowson

Melbourne Girls' College

Winner

I reached down and opened the latch on the small, rusted iron gate. I followed the uneven brick path toward the front door, looking around at the state of the miserable garden. The grass had turned a golden colour, completely dried out after months of battling alone against the scorching summer sun. A feeling of nostalgia crept through my veins as I walked, much like the way the long, thick weeds had wound themselves around the garden, encompassing it.

I composed myself and rapped loudly three times on the wooden threshold, hoping Nan had remembered to put in her hearing aid this morning. I could see her shadowy figure through the glass as she dragged her feet to the front door. The key turned in the lock and soon we were facing each other.

“Nan!” I greeted her with a warm hug and breathed in her familiar scent. She grasped my hand, her skin cold against mine, and we both took a step back. She smiled.

“Here, Nan. Let me fix that for you,” I said, motioning to the brown lace that had come undone. She was wearing Grandpa's shoes again. They were far too big, but I didn't say a word.

She thanked me and I stood up, closing the door behind me. She made her way to the kitchen; shoulders slouched, as if there was a hefty load pushing down on her. I glanced around. Things had changed; the walls were bare and the couch faced the window, not the television. Grandpa's military photos had been taken down, the only evidence of their existence were the many small hooks lining the cream walls like rows of tiny soldiers ready for battle.

Over dinner, we watched a film and drank red wine. Nan had half a glass. I had three. I thought the alcohol would keep me distracted, but each time I glanced at her, the look in her grey-blue eyes sobered me up. So we drank the wine and we watched the film, then we both agreed it was time for some rest.

* * *

I woke up to the late-morning sunshine making its way through the thin gaps in the blinds. I rubbed my eyes, adjusting to the brightness. Nan's side of the bed was already made - her duvet folded once and pillow propped up neatly against the wooden bed head. I walked into the kitchen to find her sitting by the window, drinking a cup of warm tea. I wondered how long she had been up for. Despite her early night, she looked tired; the kind of tiredness for which sleep is not the answer. I couldn't stand it for much longer.

“Nan,” I said, trying to speak calmly.

She glanced up, a questioning look on her face.

I then said something about finding her a new home amid caring workers, bingo nights and new slippers, but my well-rehearsed speech became a jumble of words as I went on.

She paused and studied me for a moment. We had talked about a nursing home before, but today she was looking at me as if the thought had never even crossed her mind. Then she smiled. I'm not certain as to why, but she did.

“Not today, dear.”

I sighed, and that was the end of that. I supposed I could congratulate myself on trying, but for me, it was just as easy to punish myself for not succeeding.

“Tea? Coffee?” Nan asked, bringing me back to reality.

I nodded, and then shook my head, an awkward movement.

“No, no. I'll do it Nan. You take a seat.”

The afternoon came quickly. Nan slipped on Grandpa's shoes and, despite my resistance, walked with me along the busy street to the tram stop. It was something she hadn't done since I was a child. I slowed my pace to match her now accustomed shuffle, and we talked about the weather. We reached the tram stop, and stood together for a minute watching the oncoming traffic pass through the lights.

"Well. This is goodbye, dear," she said. "I can't spend my life waiting around for a tram!" she laughed.

Her lips, chapped and faded, pressed against my cheek like an old paintbrush, its worn bristles looking to leave their final mark.

I furrowed my brow in a state of confusion. I didn't like the way Nan said the two words 'goodbye' and 'forever'. They sounded too final, like she knew that this could well be the end.

"Bye Nan, I'll see you soon," I replied casually, as if my attitude could will her to believe something different.

She nodded and smiled what seemed to me like a knowing smile, then turned and hobbled away. I watched her back. I watched her disappear into the crowds, people darting around this frail, old woman, busy getting on with their own lives. I squinted my eyes until I couldn't see her at all; the stream of sunlight ahead had enclosed her figure. I put my sunglasses to my face and wiped my cheek.

And then the figure was gone.

Siblings

By Amelia Wasniewski

Balwyn High School

Runner-up

She grabbed her bag and was out the door before the bus had even stopped. Every day she would race her brother home and every day he would win. But not this day. Ella had had enough of losing, always coming second best to her older brother.

She rounded the corner and was coming up the home stretch, using every last bit of energy she could muster. The fresh air filled her lungs and she felt a stitch coming on, but she didn't care, nothing mattered to her except reaching the front door before Jack did. He was barely a few steps ahead of her but that only made her push herself harder. Jack made the mistake of looking behind him to see how far away his little sister was, he stumbled and with that moment of time, Ella took advantage and pushed ahead of her brother. Her smile spread huge over her face as she slammed her hand down onto the door, his shocked gasping breaths were bliss to her ears. She had done it, finally. The snide comments from her brother about cheating were nothing to her. She knew she had done it and he knew it too.

The morning sun shone through her broken blinds, the cobwebs hung loosely over the shutters, unoccupied for years. The soft hum of a magpie breaks out into a musical tune. As she ventured into wakefulness she remembered her dream. Many times has she dreamt that before, the memories of her childhood constantly flooding her mind.

Gently easing her self up out of bed, she notices all of the creaks and new arisen pains of getting old are increasing. The thought of dying does not scare her, as it once would have. Ella sits in the same chair to eat her breakfast as she has for the past 36 years. She often thinks of her family and ponders momentarily of where those days have gone. She takes to her garden and enjoys the solitude of the flowers, bees and sunshine.

The rusty tap creaks on with a gentle shove and murky water washes out of the old pipes and down into the garden. She closes her eyes and is back there. She hears voices and sees three children running through the trees along the creek, it is a sickly hot day, the sun is beating down hard and she remembers how her skin used to burn. There are no animals about as the summer sun is too harsh and they have all gone seeking cooler spots. The children lunge into the water, she remembers the refreshing scent and the coolness of the water against her boiling skin. Ella thrusts herself out of this memory before it can take hold again. The tap is still running and the water has gone clear, she hastily makes her way back inside. Time has seemed to drift away from her, she did not notice the day breaking away, standing in the garden.

Ella's cat stalks up to the lounge and leaps onto her lap, she hugs it to her body, its rumbling purr vibrating along the palm of her hand. Reaching down to grab the album it slips from her fingers and falls open at a photo. Jack. His vibrant animated face radiates against the sunlight, his usually soft brown hair falls around his face, salty and stiff from the surf. Their mother had taken that photo all those years ago at the sea. The wind brought the sand up onto their legs and the sunscreen stung their eyes. They never got used to the cold rush of running into the water and catching that first wave. The smooth sand beneath their feet egged them to go deeper. The feeling of freedom all around them made them never want to leave.

There was never anything left unsaid between them, they understood each other and Jack protected Ella with a fierce brotherly love.

Today was the anniversary. Two years had passed since she last tried to contact him. A foolish bruised ego left her dazed and confused. Missed opportunities, neglected chances for reconciliation. She stretched out her hand and reached out one last time for the phone. This time would be different.

Sunshine After The Rain

By Pawitchaya Chuenchitra

Melbourne Girls' College

ESL Award

Have you ever been exposed to an absolutely new and inspiring environment different to your hometown? Have you ever experienced a change in thought, beliefs or identity confusion upon your arrival in a totally different culture? If the answer is yes, then there is no doubt that we are similar in some ways. I am Dew. I come from Thailand. I'm an international student in Australia. And now you are about to know about my experience studying abroad.

It has been nearly four months since I first arrived in Australia. In my opinion, it's the hardest experience I have ever had in my entire life. When my mother first mentioned to me I had to come to study abroad, I thought she was just joking. But I knew that it's the truth since my dad told me that I needed to prepare for the IELTS test in the next month. Instantly, I told my parents that there was no way that I would change my school because I felt at that time that my school was the best. But to be honest, my school wasn't that good at all. We studied so hard actually too hard. Our school started at 8.00 and finished at 4.30. We had 8 periods a day and we had tons of homework. Most importantly, our teachers were too strict to us. But there was an advantage that makes me not want to leave my school that was 'my friends'. I had 6 best friends and I loved them so much so I didn't want to depart from them. But as always I couldn't change my parents mind by telling them just a silly reason. Then few months later I arrived in Australia.

The first day I came to this school, I didn't understand anything that the teachers and local students said to me. I felt as if I lived in another planet and that everyone didn't speak English but some other fast language. I remembered that when I finished the first week in Melbourne Girls' College, I called my mom and told her that I wanted to go back to study in Thailand because I felt so lonely and depressed. But then I got to talk to my best friend in Thailand who is studying in Brazil 'Arun' through skype. She told me that the first 3 months that she came to Brazil was the worst time in her life. Brazilians cannot speak English and she's not good in either English or Portuguese. She didn't have any friends and she hated bread (Brazilian eat bread 3 meals a day). Surprisingly, her sad story made me feel incredibly better. I felt that there was someone who felt the same way as I did so I did not feel alone. Two months after I came to this new environment, I started to talk more to my friends and asked the teacher when I didn't understand anything. Now I feel that this school is so good even better than my previous school in Thailand. Firstly, we can choose our own subjects that we are interested in which I find it so important for our future. Secondly, the teachers teach us not only to remember the information but also to evaluate and analyse this information. Lastly, I get to meet many new friends from different country for example China, Japan and Vietnam.

Even though, my life is so great right now I sometimes feel so stressed about my future. I'm in Year10 right now but I don't know what I want to be in the future. I know many of you

may think that it's normal because I only 16 and have long way to go. But I had already finished year 10 in Thailand and I will graduate almost a year later than my other friends. I don't even know if I will get a high enough score to get into the universities here or not.

Once I read on the internet that studying abroad is not just about learning out of the book but also learning through experience. I completely agree with this idea. I have only studied here for four months but I have gained so much through good and bad experiences. Now that I have gone through all the bad things, I see the world in a different way. I now believe in the saying 'there's always sunshine after the rain'.

In conclusion, I think my experience studying here is once in a life time thing and if I could go back to change things in my past life, I wouldn't change anything. I'm now looking forward to the new challenge in my life.

SLADES 2011 - 'LITERARY' A GREAT NIGHT!

By Rotarian Annie Wysham

On Monday, 12th September, 2011, over 70 attendees heeded the invitation of the RC Richmond's 2011 Slade Literary Award Committee to 'come along and enjoy this special New Generations evening and be part of a great experience for our keen and budding young authors'. Held at the Amora Hotel Riverwalk, Richmond, the winning entry, *'Grandpa's Shoes'* and the ESL winning entry, *'Sunshine After the Rain'*, received enthusiastic rounds of applause when they were read to an appreciative audience of Principals and Assistant Principals, English Co-ordinators & teachers, student finalists, parents and friends of finalists, Richmond Rotarians, Partners and Friends of Richmond Rotary. Special guests included DGE Dennis Shore and his wife Lynda and Richmond Rotarian, Cr. Alison Clarke, Mayor, City of Yarra.

This literary competition for local State School students from Years 9 and 10 was founded and sponsored by the late Richmond Rotarian Henry Slade in 1993, and is now sponsored by his nephew, Mark Slade, in Henry's memory. It's held annually in September - which is acknowledged as 'New Generations Month' on the Rotary International calendar.

Following the main course, Chair of the night, Rotarian Melissa Carfax-Foster, introduced the 2011 Slade Literary Award guest speaker, author and sculptor, Sarah Saaroni. Sarah then shared the many tragic struggles of her long life, with particular focus on her early childhood years in Lubin, Poland, over the course of the Second World War, and the subsequent loss of her much-loved, entire family. With the opening words: 'I'm a survivor!' Sarah painted vivid word pictures of the horror of life for the Jewish people in the degrading German-run ghettos and her anger with her mother for forcing her to leave to escape the terror of the ghetto. She escaped and posed as a 16 year old Polish Christian girl with a false name and 'history' and tried to make a new life in Hamburg. "So there was no proper goodbye and I never saw my family again", Sarah said. In searching for her family in 1943 she was betrayed by a friend and so was back on the run, pursued relentlessly by the Gestapo.

"I was petrified. Not clever. Like an animal. I did everything instinctively. I wanted to die - but I wanted to live."

Then came a desperate journey of escape for her to the new state of Israel and finally 'reluctantly', resettlement in Australia in the 1950's. It took her 42 years to talk about her story; and when she did, 'it freed me at last', she stated. Though Sarah could never bring herself to share her story of survival with her husband and two children, in 1987, after the death of her husband, she was starkly aware that that if she died her children and grandchildren would never know this story. So she lived thru it all again by painstakingly writing her now heralded book titled, *'Life Goes On Regardless'*. Written despite that fact that English was her second language. Written and published, despite her mild protest that 'I'm not a writer'!

Before announcing the final place-getters, one of the judges, Janet Donahoo, on behalf of her fellow judges, Peggy Cochrane and Richmond Rotarian Kristen Widdop, summarised the entries in general and commented on the high standard of those received this year.



Chair - Melissa Carfax-Foster



Guest Speaker - Sarah Saaroni

Last Weeks's Meeting.....continued

Presentations were then made by the evening's Chair, Melissa Carfax-Foster, DGE Dennis Shore and President Rob Mactier –

2011 Slade Literary Awards

Winner: 'Grandpa's Shoes' by Alice Widdowson, Melbourne Girls' College, Richmond *Cash prize of \$200 & books up to a retail value of \$60*

Runner-Up: 'Siblings' by Amelia Wasniewski, Balwyn High School
Cash prize of \$150 & books up to a retail value of \$60

ESL Winner: 'Sunshine After the Rain' by Pawitchaya Chuenchitra, Melbourne Girls' College, Richmond

Cash prize of \$150 & books up to a retail value of \$60

[Awarded to the best entry (other than the winner and runner-up) from a student who qualifies as a 'English as a Second Language' (ESL) student:]

ESL Runner-Up: 'Love in Melbourne, Live in Change' by Zihe (Helen), Zhou, Melbourne Girls' College, Richmond

Cash prize of \$100 & books up to a retail value of \$60

Certificates of Excellence, Certificates of Merit and Certificates of Encouragement were presented variously amongst the 10 Finalists.

In his closing remarks, President Rob Mactier, thanked the 2011 Slade Committee of Kristen Widdop, Jenny List and Dot Brown, and its dedicated Chair, Janice Kesterton, along with PP Trevor Pang for producing the Slade Booklet distributed on the night.

He thanked the guest speaker, Sara Saaroni, adding, 'You shared with us the powerful, moving story of your life. None of us should ever complain about *our* lives.'

President Rob also thanked the teachers for their support and congratulated and encouraged the students: 'Writing is an important skill. Well done. Thank you for participating and keep up the good work. Through the Slade Literary Awards the Rotary Club of Richmond is proud to offer you this annual vehicle for your writing talents'.

He then thanked Mark Slade, in his absence, for his generosity in sponsoring the Slade Award.

YES! THE SLADES 2011 - 'LITERARY' A GREAT NIGHT!

Chair Janice Kesterton....

I would just like to add my thanks to the committee, Dot Brown, Kristen Widdop, Sue Bolton, Jenny List, Nia Holdenson, Glenys Liddell and to the following Rotarians and FoRR who also helped, Mark Dwyer, John Liddell, Annie Wysham & Michael O'Sullivan.

And especially to Kennii and Annie and their staff at the Amora for ensuring the evening ran so smoothly

