



The Rotary Club of Richmond
presents

The Slade Literary Award

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

Winning Entries 2014

Winning Entry

'My Dad has these Shoes'

Harriet Murphy-Hoyle

Year 10 student at Melbourne Girls' College

Runner Up

'The Price of Freedom'

Alexandra Harverson

Year 10 student at Melbourne Girls' College

3rd Prize

'His Wise Words'

Ayisha Alush-Jaggs

Year 11 student at Kew High School

EAL Prize

'Lost Freckle'

Lotta Lu Klann

Year 10 student at Melbourne Girls' College

Certificates of Merit

'Reflections' Charlotte Miles, Year 7 student at Balwyn High School

'The Great Collapse' Madison Oliff, Year 9 student at Collingwood College

'The Puzzle Piece' Kathy Lu, Year 10 student at Melbourne Girls' College

Welcome to the Slade Literary Awards 2014

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 secondary students up to Year 11 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, conviction, enthusiasm and appeal.

Award Prizes

Winner: *A cash prize of \$400*

Runner-Up: *A Cash prize of \$300*

3rd Prize: *Cash prize of \$100*

EAL Winner: *Cash prize of \$150*

[The EAL prize is awarded to the best entry (other than the winner or runner-up) to a student who qualifies as an 'English as an Alternative Language' (EAL) student.]

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

'My Dad has these Shoes'
Harriet Murphy-Hoyle

Year 10 student at Melbourne Girls' College
Winner

My dad has these shoes. Crocs to be exact. Big, horrible, ugly, fire-engine red, crocs. They're apparently the 'perfect shoes for both land and sea' and are made from a durable, waterproof foam, with strategically placed openings, allowing air and water to flow throughout the shoe. That's what he claims anyway. I'm sure they'd be alright, if they didn't manage to resemble both duck feet, and tiny plastic crocodiles. Or if they weren't red. I'm sure they would be passable if they were something more conservative, like a classic brown or black. But no. He decided on the red. The hideous, blinding red.

Dad wears them everywhere, and a holiday would not be complete without his favourite shoes. They're apparently an 'essential', that allow him to truly get the best from a trip. As he constantly reminds me "they're perfect for rock pools, as you can wear them underwater, without the fear of treading on anything unsavoury, like an especially sharp bit of rock, or an aggressive crab." He even tried to force me into getting a pair. Luckily, Mum managed to convince him otherwise. Like me, she's a firm believer that crocs should never see daylight. Despite this, Dad will be in them for the majority of the time we spend by the beach. The only time he takes them off, is when he wants to feel the sand between his toes, and go for a bit of a swim.

This summer, we're staying Shoreham, as we tend to do most years. It's a pretty quiet area. And it's pretty easy to see why. The water's quite rough, nothing like what you'd hope for a beach to be. And on top of this, it's seems to be a dumping ground for the ocean's spare seaweed. Piles build up along the shoreline, some big enough that if you jump in them, you'll be covered from waist down in dry, smelly seaweed. So all in all, it's not the best place to swim. But Dad still loves going there. There are these bush walk type things you can go on, and he loves that sort of thing. And he loves the fact that there's barely anyone else there most of the time. Even if it is because of the seaweed.

So we arrived there, yet again, and immediately headed down to the beach. There's this trail that leads from the back of the house, and continues through the bush right down to the water's edge. We trekked down the path, brushing branches and stray shrubs aside as we went. Dad was in the lead, lighting the way with his crocs, the rest of us close behind. It was a gorgeous day, and for once it was actually tempting to swim in the sea-weedy water. Pip and I madly dashed across the scorching sand, threw our towels down, and bolted towards the water, in the hopes of escaping the hot, summer sun. Dad sniggered smugly, as he calmly strode over, his shoes protecting the soles of his feet from the burning sand below. He wore them right down to where the sand and the water formed a soupy mess, before casually slipping them off. And with that he waded through the choppy, salty, sea, before neatly diving in, as we headed out.

We returned to the shore, maybe an hour later. Pip and I sprinted back up, heading for our towels. We began to dry ourselves off, getting rid of all excess seaweed in the process, when we heard Dad. "Where's my other Croc?" he cried. We looked over to see him with one croc in hand, desperately searching for the other. I shrugged my shoulders, and began to follow the trail back.

I nearly skipped up the path with delight, at the thought of never seeing the crocs again. I would finally be able to leave the house without Dad and those things causing any unwanted embarrassment! I have no idea why he bought them in the first place... Couldn't he just wear thongs like a normal person? I flopped down onto the couch, and watched Dad slowly make his way towards the house. He walked in, barefoot, his head hung low. He dropped the remaining shoe into the bin, before settling in the armchair. He curled up, and slowly closed his eyes. I looked at that one lone croc, nestled in with the wrappers and bits of paper, where it belonged. Dad sighed heavily, and I began to nibble at my lip, before also deciding to rest for a bit.

We drove out to Balnarring the next day, to stock up on food and other essentials. Dad didn't say a word the entire trip. Not even when Pip mentioned the fact that she was starving, which was the perfect opportunity for him to nag her about the fact that she didn't finish her lunch, and that it's her own fault. Which is the sort of thing he really loves to do. He just stared straight ahead. We got out of the car, and I quickly ducked into the pharmacy, in search of sunscreen. And then I saw them. The most horrible crocs to date. Bright blue, with a sunshine yellow base. I smiled, and grabbed them, heading towards the register.

'The Price of Freedom'

Alexandra Harverson

Year 10 student at Melbourne Girls' College

Runner Up

I lay on the hard spring mattress, my eyes fixated on the small hole in the roof, spilling light into the room. My hands lie motionless on the cold, hard metal frame of the bed. I lift my hand to my stomach, expecting it to be swollen and round, only to be met with my sharp hip bones protruding underneath my skin. Sweat lines my forehead and fills the dips around my nose. I shut my eyes for a moment and I'm suddenly transported back to my nightmare. The dark ocean fills the horizon, meeting a dark sky far into the distance. My stomach rolls, as if I'm there again, my body being thrown by the rough seas. My muscles tense with fear, gripping the bed frame, but behind my closed eyes they're gripping the side of a rundown boat. Another wave hits, throwing colossal amounts of salty water onto the boat. My hand slips away from something soft. I turn, my eyes wide with panic, as I see my young girl being thrown by the water. Her body is flung again, weightless, nothing compared to the power of the sea. I scream, but my voice is drowned out by the roar of the ocean. The boat begins to settle and I push my way through the dense crowd of crying, wet, hungry people. I search for her, my eyes scanning every face, but nowhere can I see the amber eyes of my daughter. I run to the side of the boat and look down at the mass of water below. Bodies cover the now calm water. They lie gracefully, slowly swaying with the waves, like angels dozing on cotton clouds. The body of a small girl lies not too far from the rest, face down. She wears a deep red top and a brown skirt, ripped around the hem. Her wet clothes wrap around her thin body and in her small hand she clutches a small grey-blue blanket. Bile rises in my throat. That's her blanket. And that's my baby, with the dark brown hair, tied back in a braid, lying in the sea. There she is, her usually bronze skin tinted blue by the ripples of water washing over her skin. Only a few metres away, a few too many.

I gasp as I open my eyes, forcing the hot thick air into my lungs. My cheeks are wet with tears and my throat winces in pain as I breathe. I want to scream but I'm empty, like any motivation or will has left my body. I look across the room at the miracle sleeping in a small cot. How that boy survived the trip over, I don't know, but now, just as I grieve over the loss of my daughter, I bring another life into this world. Another life which has to endure the broken promise of freedom, the unknown grey future lying ahead.

A nurse enters my room, gently knocking on the door. She comes by every couple hours to check on my baby boy, as if I'm incapable of looking after my own son. She says something, but I don't understand. I stare ahead at the wall, my legs crossed under me, my body unconsciously swaying backwards and forwards. She comes into my vision and I feel the weight of her hand hit my shoulder, like a sack of sand being slumped onto me, sending shocks of pain down my arm. Again she speaks but the words are just noises, meaningless sounds entering my ears. She begins to raise her voice, making eating gestures as she speaks. Food. She's telling me to go get food. Reluctantly, I rise from my bed and leave the room.

Patches of the cold concrete floor shock my feet as I walk, my body subconsciously carrying me towards the dining area. The smell of sweet fruit and stale bread engulfs me as I enter the room and take a plate from the bench. I grab the thing closest to me, a sandwich of some sorts, and sit down at a table beside a window. I pick at the sandwich, my stomach growling but my body too weak to eat. I hear some ladies a few tables away talking. They talk about their family and the newest arrivals here, like me. They continue talking, laughing, as if being locked up like a prisoner isn't a problem; as if they couldn't care less if they are treated like an animal, shut away from society and abandoned in the middle of nowhere. Then I hear them talk about a young girl, five years old, being fast tracked to live in Australia. My body shudders as I think of my daughter, only four when we left for Australia. The women continue talking, saying because this girl was an orphan she was being put into foster care in Australia. This young girl has had her family taken away from her but she is now given the chance to claim her freedom.

The sun sets into the distance, but the darkness doesn't cool the hot room. I sit against the cool brick wall and stare through the bars of the cot at the little bundle of life, slowly rising and falling, deep in sleep, unaware of the world he lives in. I crawl across to the cot and reach my hand through the bars. I softly caress his small head and soft cheeks. I turn away and tear apart the dirty sheet covering my bed. My hands tremble as I hook the sheet over the exposed pipe in the corner of the room. Hot tears run down my face as I stare at my baby peacefully oblivious to the life he's been given. He will have the future I promised him. Without family, yes, but free nonetheless. Cruel, but for him, I have to be cruel to be kind. The moment I stop breathing will be the moment he is free. And he will be free.

'His Wise Words'
Ayisha Alush-Jaggs

Year 11 student at Kew High School

3rd Prize

You can hear the life in spring. The sleepers that were hibernating wake up and the buds hanging from the trees utter their first cries. She holds my hand and as we walk along the crisp, grey pavement, sometimes she'll stop and lift me up by the waist to a blooming eucalyptus that is hanging over the side of its fence. Its satin red drips onto the grey below, turning it all colours. Held like that I can see right inside the gum nut. Then I breathe in and my eyes glide shut and it smells fresh and sweet and musty all at once.

At the park she positions the football in her hands and kicks it my way. There's a satisfying *thud* when her foot meets with the ball and I always try to make mine sound like hers, though I can never get it quite so resounding, quite so perfect. *What are you concentrating on so hard, darling?* she always asks. Once we were at my Auntie Marie's place and while I was playing with the dog, I heard them talking. Auntie said, *I don't know why you bothered learning how to play an entire sport, just for one boy.* Mum said I wasn't just one boy, I was her boy and that she'll be damned if I miss out on even one thing just because of one stupid accident. We don't see Auntie Marie much anymore.

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I curled up on the tired leather armchair and its smell comforted me. After the accident, mum couldn't bear to even look at the chair – she imagined him sitting in it, Foster's stubby in hand, leg thrown carelessly over knee. That chair watched every Saturday game with him, leaned forward when he did, breath suspended in the last five minutes like his. *The refs have always got it in for the Bombers, son,* he would tell me. But when winter rolled around, the fridge was empty of beer and the couch lingered like an old dog waiting for his master, tail wagging slowly, ears cocked, and mum had to put him outside. He started to paw at the door and the pining on Saturdays drove her nuts. Eventually he was let back inside but he had to sit in the sewing room so she could pet him.

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The sweetness of the sunny Boy melted on my tongue and the cool ice sapped some of the heat from me as it radiated off my skin. I sucked on it as I walked to the far end of the quadrangle where some year 11 boys had found refuge under a red gum. The sun's rays carried their voices as well as the heat: *I'll tell you, there's nothing more satisfying than when she lays down and heels*, they were saying. I wandered over to them, hoping to get some tips about the dog in mum's sewing room. *You've got to give them orders, leave no room for error or personal thought*. I went and sat down amongst the other boys that had gathered to hear this boy talk. *Now, the boy continued, my dad always tells me that you've got to remember that their very existence is to serve us. Without us, there is no them so don't be afraid of being too rough with them or hurting their feelings. They should be grateful for every look we give them!* This was met with raucous sounds of approval and vigorous nods of heads from the other boys. The boy who was talking leaned forward, animated by what he was saying, legs spread wide while his elbows rested heavily on his thighs. *Dad reminds me all the time that they don't exist on the same level as us and hardly have the intelligence of a pet. Women are your property and it is your manly duty to make sure they abide by the rules you set down for them.* I was becoming more and more confused. I had a feeling that he was not talking about animals anymore. I wondered if he was ever talking about animals. *Keep them busy and keep them obedient, that's what I say!* Cheers erupted from either side of me and I looked around to find the boys' faces animated and enthused. They had leaned forward the better to hear the wise man, the heat of the day forgotten in their excitement. The eagerness of his peers only encouraged him further. He had started out slowly, water trickling down out of a crevice but with the open minds around him begging to be filled, the water came quickly, words and ideas tumbling over themselves, gushing to get out until his mouth was a polluted waterfall and the boys surrounding him, the welcoming pool below.

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After school she was there; car parked just a little way away from the school gates, she lifted my school bag from my back and placed it on her own, then grabbed my sweaty hand and guided me home. I sat at the dining room table and looked over at her, chopping carrots for dinner. She was humming softly, a song she had probably heard on the radio that day. She was smiling her infectious smile. I think about when she came up to my room with red eyes. *Something terrible has happened*, she said. It didn't stop her though. She got up every day and went to work. She picked me up from school and took me to footy practice, she studied the Grand Final and learnt how to play so that I would have someone to kick to. She became both parents. She never complained, never yelled at me or snapped. She hugged me every day, told me she loved me and talked about the good memories we had of dad. She was my rock when everything around me was falling to pieces and now she's supposed to abide by the rules I lay down for her?

'Lost Freckle'
Lotta Lu Klann

Year 10 student at Melbourne Girls' College
EAL Prize

Sometimes, at 2am the most curious thoughts come into my mind. It is when I'm laying wide awake in my bed with my window open in an attempt to let the cool summer breeze lull me to sleep. The entire house is quiet except for the faint humming sound of the fridge. Every soul is asleep in their bed, dreaming of some place faraway, whilst my head is buzzing with unanswered questions. The time between midnight and 3am is an inescapable limbo I often find myself stuck in.

A flashback flickers before my eyes now. Last week I sat on the bus on my way home from school, thinking about the lives of the people around me. What are their heartbreaks? Their sorrows, their regrets, memories, or joys? What do their laughs sound like and what kind of childhood did they have? Now thinking about it I realise that everyone is different, and what you do no one else on this planet would have experienced. It's that sense of uniqueness that makes everyone so interesting in this world. Which leads me to think of the conversation I had this morning with my friend Lily who had asked me: "If you had a blank canvas in front of you and whatever you painted on it would come to life, what would you paint?" The first thing that popped into my mind at the time, was money. It would fix a lot of problems and there'd be no more worrying about it. Though I also knew that money is simply paper, it holds no essence of life value. In the end I decided to say: "I would paint another galaxy, with a world where we could start anew." After a few moments of silence Lily responded by saying: "But why have another universe if the one we have is amazing, we just need to start treating it that way." That is true and undeniable. If only more people would think like Lily.

I let out a sigh and rolled over in my bed. Today has been miserable and tiresome as school has been stressing me out for a while now. When school comes to a point where one dreads it and is put under so much pressure it couldn't possibly be healthy, right? I appreciate school and am very grateful to be able to have an education, but I find that there is an immense difference in learning and being taught. Students are shown to think the result on their math exam determines their intelligence, and that how well they perform at school shows the quality of their life in the long run. I don't want to live this way. I want to put things into perspective, find what I really want to do and go do it. I don't want to get drawn into the whole brainwash of being moulded into another one of society's puppets. I can hear an owl hooting somewhere in the distance, and it seems to somehow sooth my racing thoughts.

With a groan I slip out of bed and tip-toe down the stairs to grab a drink of water. As I press the glass against the ice-sensor, the ice cubes make the familiar clunking sound and then drop with a splash in the water. I lean against the cold kitchen counter and glance outside the window. The darkness seems terrifying and inviting all at once. First one drop, then two and all of a sudden the pitter-patter of raindrops can be heard on the roof, echoing throughout the silent house.

A sudden urge to run through the rain comes over me and simultaneously I remember the last time I did that. It had been 7pm and at the time I had decided to go out for a run in the park. I could see the street lights which looked faded because of the mist, and my clothes had started to cling to my body as they got drenched with the rain. My bones were aching because of the cold. Yet I loved the stillness of it all, not another soul was out there. I loved how I could feel the raindrops on my lashes, and when I blinked they'd roll down my cheek like tears. It had felt like I was all alone, just running in the rain, frozen but with a smile on my face because the rain had brought me pure happiness.

I tip back my head and press the glass against my lips to swallow the remainder of the half melted ice-cubes. Even during night time I can feel the vexatious presence of the agonizing summer heat. I place the glass down on the counter and take a brief look at the time that is illuminating in blue neon light on the microwave: 02:36. Time seems to be moving ever so slowly. There is a mark left on the counter by the cold glass. I remember reading about the Italian word that describes this, *Calcaccino*. Isn't weird how there are words we cannot translate into another language? Just like there's nothing more irritating than the realisation that there is no real reason the alphabet needs to be in a particular order. Using distinctive sorting of letters, in a variety of ways, form words in order to make a sentence, which in turn creates a story. Basically every story is just a different combination of 26 letters.

Another sigh escapes my lips. These confusing thoughts exhaust me even more, and so I cautiously climb up the stairs again, slide into my room and let myself fall onto my bed. My arms and legs stretched out like a star across the mattress. For a while I continue to aimlessly gaze at the moon until, somehow, dozing off with the thought that we are all made up of stardust, one huge explosion. Compared to the whole universe we are merely a freckle, yet we see ourselves as such important beings.