



The Rotary Club of Richmond

presents

The Slade Literary Award

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

Winning Entries 2015

Winning Entry

"A Promise"

Kathy Lu

Year 11 student at Melbourne Girls' College

Runner Up

"The Candy Bombers"

Catherine Butchart

Year 11 student at Melbourne Girls' College

3rd Prize

"Notes of Legacy"

Arielle Cowton

Year 9 student at Camberwell High School

EAL Prize

"The Valuable Gift from God"

Yuet Yee (Tiffany) Tang

Year 11 student at Balwyn High School

Certificate of Merit

"An Eternal Gift", Ella Casdorff, Year 9 student at Camberwell High School

EAL Certificate of Merit

"A Gift of Memories", Yutong Sun, Year 11 student at Melbourne Girls' College

Certificates of Encouragement

"Heirloom", Benjamin Parker, Year 9 student at Camberwell High School

"The Gifts of our World", Flynn Bailey, Year 9 student at Collingwood College

Welcome to the Slade Literary Awards 2015

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 from Year 9 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 the topic "A Gift". 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

‘A Promise’

Kathy Lu

Year 11 student at Melbourne Girls' College
Winner

Music was still playing downstairs and it was loud enough to thankfully cover up the sound of the thunderstorm outside. I wondered how long it would take my friends to realise that I was gone. They could listen to Uptown Funk as much as they wanted, but I'd had enough.

Slowly, I leant my head back on the cold bathroom wall tiles and closed my eyes, letting my other senses explore the surroundings. The bathtub that I was sitting in was cold underneath my bare feet, and the chilly breeze blowing through the open window didn't help. I felt numb, but it wasn't from the cold. I could hear the sound of the tap dripping ever so slightly.

Thing is, I wanted to be happy, I really, really did. She'd promised that she would be here for my eighteenth birthday, but like the last seven years, she was missing.

“Please don't tell me you're about to cry,” a voice said. “Big boys don't cry.”

My eyes flew open. It couldn't be. But that was her voice. The voice I hadn't heard in seven years. And sure enough, there she was, grinning slightly. Sitting directly opposite to me in the bathtub.

“Ash?” I croaked, quickly blinking away my tears.

“The one and only,” she replied. She sounded so cheerful, so happy.

I looked at her, she would be twenty-one now, but she hadn't changed. Everything about her was still the same as seven years ago. The same lopsided grin, the same warm brown eyes and the same wildly, curly hair pulled haphazardly back into a ponytail. Even her clothes were the ones she'd left the house in that night. I scanned her face, remembering every little detail just in case when I blink, she would be gone again.

But she stayed. The two of us simply sat there in silence, the only sounds were Uptown Funk playing yet again on the stereo downstairs and the steady dripping of the tap. We simply looked at each other, remembering each other.

Finally, I found my voice again.

“What are you doing here? Is this real?” I whispered.

“If you want this to be real then it is.”

Even if I wondered why she was suddenly so philosophical I didn't question it, partially because I was still in awe that she was actually here. Another wintry gust of wind blew into the bathroom again, making my hair stand on end, reminding me of the windy night.

“You're not cold?” I asked.

Ash shook her head.

“I don't feel the cold anymore,” she answered in a tiny voice. I could only manage a little ‘oh’ before looking down at my hands awkwardly. “You've changed Tommy.”

“Don't call me Tommy,” I cringed. “Please.”

That made her laugh. Hearing her laugh ringing in my ears made me chuckle too. Suddenly, I no longer felt numb.

“When I... left, you were only eleven”. It was an obvious statement, and yet, it was still so ground-breaking.

I nodded and when I reopened my mouth, I was telling her everything. I told her everything that had happened the last seven years. From the worst primary school graduation ever, to the incredibly momentous moment to when I was picked to train in the National Soccer team. (It was a big deal for boys). Ash smiled and nodded at everything I told her.

It was all fine until I realised that while her smile was genuine, there was still immense sadness in her eyes. Abruptly, I stopped mid-sentence in my story about the disastrous year twelve formal. And then I realised how inconsiderate I was being by telling her all these stories. She could feel happy for me, sure, but she would never be able to have another happy memory with me, or my brother Mike, or mum, or dad, ever again.

Unexpectedly, the image of a ten-year-old boy and a fifteen-year-old girl popped into my head. It was me on my tenth birthday and a fifteen-year-old Ash. No one had showed up to my birthday party and I was feeling particularly down, but Ash had told me to forget about everyone else, I didn't need them anyway. That was the moment when she'd promised me she would be at every single one of my birthday parties.

"Especially your eighteenth. The big number, the one that really counts," she had said.

"I miss you," I murmured sadly.

Ash smiled sadly.

I will never ever be able to forget that sound of the screeching tyres and the dripping of the oil tank. I was only eleven years old at the time but the memory still played in my head over and over again like a dodgy television set. The red Toyota losing control in the thunderstorm, and skidding down the street. The rain poured down on my head as I ran out to the car, my father following closely behind me and my mother called out our names. I remember dad pulling me away from the car, but not quickly enough for me to see the unforgettable image through the crack of the misshaped door. And that image alone would haunt me for the rest of my life.

I woke up abruptly to the sound of the loud knock on the door. I didn't know when I had fallen asleep.

"Tom! I know you're in there," Mike's voice called. "Come downstairs, we need you to cut the cake."

I ignored him. It had been a dream. Of course it was. Ash was gone. Forever. She couldn't have come back.

Clumsily, I clambered out the tub, but heard a crumple. I reached my right hand into my hoodie pocket and my hand closed around a piece of paper. I pulled it out. On top were a few quickly scribbled words.

I promised I would be at every single one of your birthday parties, and I never left. Happy birthday little brother, enjoy the big day!

And this time when I smiled, it was true.

'The Candy Bombers'

Catherine Butchart

Year 11 student at Melbourne Girls' College
Runner Up

Friday Night

Grandpa's flat sits at the end of a quiet street. His lawn is always clipped short and the veranda – which he takes his afternoon tea on – is cobweb free.

He is what you would call 'house proud.'

In his tidy lounge he has a display of model planes. As a kid I'd always imagined myself soaring in the Hawker Demon plane. I used to try to reach for it, but my dad's gaze would quickly move from the footy game on telly, and he'd make me sit down next to him. After my dad died I didn't attempt to reach for any of them, I had outgrown the game. Instead I sit with Grandpa to watch our team, the Bombers. It is our ritual. Every time they play we sit in his lounge – that smells faintly of tobacco – and watch the game. I eat a pie and he snacks on what he calls 'candy.'

Apparently they remind him of his childhood, even though he grew up in Germany. Grandpa's love for American candy and planes has always fascinated and confused me.

"Would you like one?" He asks, his accent turning the 'W' into a subtle 'v'. He holds out a dish where the wrapped confectionary sits. I look back at the screen and cheer, 'you beauty', as the Bombers kick a goal, but he remains silent.

"What's wrong?"

He shakes his head and mutters something incoherent under his breath. I turn to him; his face is gaunt and has darkened considerably.

I frown. "I'm going to get a drink."

I stand and look back at him as I walk toward the kitchen. He is staring at the ground looking utterly lost. Without realising it, I walk straight into the shelves that house the planes that Grandpa takes so much time and effort in making. Before I can stop it, the shelf tumbles and for a second the planes hover, as though trying to take off to avoid being crushed under the weight of the wooden shelving.

I have just enough time to get out of the way.

Grandpa stands up and clutches his chest, a look of pain crossing his face, and he whispers vulnerably, "Jacob."

He begins to fall. I feel as though I am frozen in place, as though time has stilled. And yet, at the same time it feels as though someone has pressed fast forward, like we are in a film. I run toward him and it's like one of those horrible dreams, where no matter how fast I am I just cannot possibly reach him in time.

His head hits the edge of the coffee table as he collapses, and he lands with his arm twisted under his body. Blood seeps into the grey carpet from his head wound.

I call the ambulance. As they come I look at the damage caused by my stupidity, and cannot even bring myself to look back at Grandpa. Knots form in my stomach and breathing becomes hard. I go outside and wait for them to arrive. Within minutes Grandpa is loaded onto a stretcher and the siren wails as they pull away from the house.

Tuesday Night

Over the course of the last few days I've recounted what happened to Grandpa to mum at least a dozen times. While I'm finishing my maths homework, trying my best not to think about Grandpa, she knocks on my door.

"The hospital rang, he's stabilised" She tells me, my face lights up. "I think you're old enough that I tell you something about Grandpa." My face falls. "It's nothing bad. I just wanted to explain why he reacted the way he did."

"As you know, Jacob, Grandpa was born in 1940 in Germany during the war. His childhood was different to the one you've had. Soon after the war the Berlin Blockade was erected."

I interrupt. "I know, we learnt this at school, West Berlin only had six weeks of supplies."

She nods. "But did Grandpa ever tell you that he was there when this happened?" I shake my head. "The United Kingdom and United States had to fly supplies into Tempelhof Airport, every three minutes. Your Grandpa once told me that he used to watch the planes, and a man they lovingly called "Onkel Wackelflügel" – German for "Uncle Wiggly Wings" – began dropping chocolate bars and other candies down to the children attached to parachutes made from bits of cloth."

Realisation hits me. "That's why American candy reminds him of his childhood". It all makes sense to me and when she leaves my guilt doubles. Suddenly I have a 'eureka' moment and know how I can repair the damage I made.

Next Tuesday Afternoon

Mum drives Grandpa home, while I mow his lawn and remove the cobwebs from the veranda. The lounge room has since been cleared, a few things we were able to salvage but otherwise his collection has diminished greatly.

The door opens and Grandpa walks in.

"Jacob?"

He walks slowly toward me and opens out his arms. I hold a parcel out to him. He opens up the box, and I will always remember the way his face lit up. Inside is a model plane of the plane that Onkel Wackelflügel flew during the Berlin Blockade.

Tears well up in his eyes and he says, "It's a C-54 cargo aircraft, isn't it?"

I nod. "I'm sorry Grandpa; I never meant to destroy your collection. I know that this doesn't make up for it all, but would you forgive me?"

"I already have" He says pulling me into his warm embrace.

'Notes of Legacy'

Arielle Cowton

Year 9 student at Camberwell High School
3rd Prize

Everyone had tears making their eyes shine
But there was quiet in the nave
No more sobbing no more crying
A silence which reminded me of when I played for her
She would never interrupt
She would also have shining eyes
She would never let anyone interrupt
The happiness would spread across her face, uncontained
The more I played the more she smiled
She had had a difficult life
Most of her pleasures had left her long ago
She was unassuming and old now
But '*L'Harmonie Des Anges*' brought life to her frailness
Happiness to her face
Transported her to a world long before our friendship
Transcended all her failing health
She listened as I played
I played somehow more beautifully for her audience
When she arrived she would tap on the window
She was like an angel who never judged
She listened, she applauded
She just was
As I just played
It was my privilege to have her listen
And I never could have imagined what my performance would be for
It was difficult to play through
The tears streaming down my face
I wish now she would interrupt
My '*Harmony of the Angels*' apt in every way
Now being played for strangers
Who didn't know me
But knew her
This gift from me to her

A gift she could now not hear
It had turned into a gift far beyond
One hundred family and friends
Not one much cultured in this style of music
Now listened to me play
They realised another side of their friend and mother and sister and aunt
Something she had enjoyed with me
None had shared this love of hers
And now it seemed by me playing
It was her final gift, through me to every one of them
Burgmüller composed what she so enjoyed
It seemed this piece she chose
And once she knew I had it done
She too was done
The gift to me was to share it
The gift from her, her inspired idea was to leave this request for me to play
Not one of her dear friends were enlightened like her
And she knew
That once all gathered and sad and weary would open their hearts to my ... her song
And listen while a child would rise to play a special part
She gave my playing as a gift to those in attendance who could not leave as it was the service of
her finality
I played beautifully that day
She gave me the gift of the ability in front of a large audience to play
This changed and defined my life as hers was over
The gift of confidence to me
The gift to embrace things differently
The shiny eyes of mourners
Who remembered nothing more of that day
As I received great praise
I realised the gift I gave
For her enjoyment so many of those past days
She returned to me, not wrapped or able to be held
Her memory will not ever fade
Every time each one of those there that day listen to a piano play
As when I play my fingers move across the keys as though she smiled each time the piano
played
As do I

'The Valuable Gift from God'

Yuet Yee (Tiffany) Tang

Year 11 student at Balwyn High School
EAL Prize

It has been four years. No matter how time flies, whenever this gift comes into sight, my heart tightens and I start missing her, Bonnie. Bonnie and I have not known each other for long, for only one and a half year at the time she gave me the gift, but we have become intimates that share our deepest hidden souls and show our truest self. We feel awkward when people call us “best friends” because we know we are not one of those girls who call each other “BFF” in front and stab each other in the back. We are way closer than just “best friends”; we are sisters, we are soul mates.

Four years ago, I left Belconnen and moved to another city. In front of the coach station, she hugged me. She told me to take care of myself and wished me good luck with my future. I could not help crying, even though she tried to act calm. She gave me a booklet and told me to read it after I got on the coach. I hugged her again. Tears would not stop shedding, but time would not freeze. I still had to say goodbye and leave.

The booklet is made of an ordinary notebook, like one of those which we used in school. However what is inside is not ordinary. The booklet contains our memories, with pictures of us, of the places we have been together, and of the food we have had together. Gazing at the pictures, I start recalling the unforgettable memories we have created together.

Page one, “2009”. It is the year we first met each other. Looking at our strange and outdated hairstyles, I cannot repress smirking.

“I still remember so clearly how you screamed so much and I realised you’re actually not that quiet” she wrote next to the photo of us going on the roller coaster during the school activity day.

I used to be very shy and quiet, but I opened up to her because of her trustworthiness. We eventually warmed up to each other because of our similar background and interests, and more importantly our resembling way of thinking and values of life.

On page three, she left me some messages before jumping to some other photos.

“Im gonna feel so empty without you.”

“Im so thankful you were always here for me. You were the greatest person I could ever talk to. I really, really appreciate it.”

The sincerity of the words almost takes my breath away. All the difficult times we have gone through together come into view again – we used to speak to each other about our problems and express our deepest feeling in heart that no one else would understand. In the meanwhile I am very glad and thankful that I have played such an important role in someone’s life. I have never met anyone else who appreciates my existence to this extent.

Page 5, “2010”. There are different stories behind each picture. The picture with her hand on her face was taken on the day she got a pimple on her face, which she was trying to hide; the one of the ice cream is actually about the day we went to the dessert café instead of library even though we had an exam the next day, since we were craving for dessert; the one I look particularly pallid in recalls the day I felt painfully sick, however meeting up with Bonnie just magically healed me and made me recovered. It sounds bizarre, but this is what an extraordinary friend she is.

Looking at our innocent and young faces, I realise that time has hastily travelled to this point where we no longer are high schoolers, and we are no longer able to see each other in our everyday life. Although it has been four years, everything feels like it was just yesterday.

“Remember that no matter where you are, you can always tell me everything. Please don’t keep it to yourself and always share your problems because I will always be ready to listen and help.”

“And I will do the same too. I trust you to the fullest.”

Even until today, every time I open this gift, my heart aches. The one and a half years that we have known each other was short but it was long enough for me to realise what a special person Bonnie is. It is true that “photographs are the only things that remain”. We cannot go back in time, but we can look back to our pictures and retrospect our past. Every time when I close the booklet, I have to re-adapt my daily life without her.

I raise my head and look up to my cupboard - all the classy Pandora jewelries and Chanel perfumes I have received from friends over the years; but I know none of them is worth more than this 50 cent notebook. This memory book excels all the other luxuries.

All of a sudden, I realise, the gift I have received that is greater than this memory book, is the person who brought me all those precious memories – that person who would always stand by me and support me all the time; who would understand me without saying anything; whom I can show my truest-self and trusting she would never judge me. She is the most valuable gift I received from God - Bonnie, my sister, my soul mate.