



## Smart Alex Competition: Y 11-13

**WINNER**      **CHARLOTTE BOYLE**      **Cashmere High School, Christchurch**

### **Crotchety Crochet**

I pick at the threads of my kilt, slowly undoing the work of an unknown seamstress. The clock tick ticks as my jaw grows tense. I am sick from fatigue and stress and caffeine and more stress, and the stark white paper in front of me makes my head pound; its printed questions waiting inside like the audience at an execution. I manage to tug apart the seam of my hem just as a teacher announces it's time to begin.

2.

I used to wrap my dolls in jerseys made by my grandmother, jerseys my mother wrapped me in, jerseys my mother was wrapped in. We learned to walk and talk and shake a fist to the world in the same knitwear; a do-it-yourself, can-do, she'll-be-right attitude woven into the patched holes of a stubbornly repaired cardigan.

Under a bed in my grandmother's house, I found some remnants of pattern books past; pored over to find designs for my uncles' school jumpers. Later, I sat wearing one sock and a scarf decorated with blue dogs, as it was explained to me what a basting stitch was. My grandmother laughed when I tried to use the wrong end of a sewing needle.

3.

My grandmother knitted hats to keep my family warm through Dunedin winters, and my brother felted a scarf for me to cuddle while we waited for boxes to arrive at our new home in Wellington. And my great great grandmother sewed her daughter's dresses inside one another so they'd have more room in the packs when they made their voyage on the Pakeha. Her daughter never learned how to read and had to leave school when she was only 13, the same age I was when I learned how the periodic table works and how to read Shakespearean verse. The same age my mother was when she first wore a jumper made by an illiterate grandmother who never had to chronicle her life to pass down a legacy.

4.

Fresh-baked chocolate chip cookies are waiting for me when I return home. It doesn't help. I couldn't tell you what I'd written for my answers even if I wanted to talk about it. I have my grandmother's eyes and her earrings and slippers she made for me and I slip them on to settle down by the fire. I pick at the threads fraying at the heel, undoing the work of a well-loved seamstress. I need to tell my mother about the damage I did to my kilt today, so she can pull out her needle and get to work repairing my mistakes until the only reminder of this morning is neatly stitched up, the way she used to make my bruises all better with a kiss. The way she was taught to do by her mother and her mother before, and the way I would like to be able to do myself.



Ref: [1/2-209130-F](#)

**Bác sĩ**

"Bác sĩ ..." my brother says, in a voice less than a whisper. Doctor... The white stranger stares deeply at my little brother. He must see the burns tracking across his skin like trails on an unfinished map. The way they cross over one another, jagged and raw. He must see his eyes, which are dark and desperate. I only see the child I wish I could have helped. The strong, brave boy he once was. Mama always said that he was my responsibility. My second child after my own. I still see the fire that burned in Mama's eyes that day, willing me to save him. But now when I see fire, the twisting convulsions of my brother are all that I feel. The cascade of helpless tears as his skin was melted away. I sigh heavily. Have I failed them both? A whining roar escalates above us and I grip my baby, my Viên, even tighter. "It's friendly," the white man mutters, barely pausing from rummaging through his large bag. That phrase makes me wince. I do not see a friend in a machine which burned my brother and kills our people everyday. We seem so small and inconvenient, trapped amidst this battle for our own country. I was told the machine was called a 'helicopter,' and that they are from America. The patch on this doctor's shoulder says 'New Zealand.' He is still part of this war, but at least he is helping us. I think. The noise of the blades cuts into my mind, grating fear deeper into my conscience. The man places his hand around my brother's upper arm, carefully avoiding the broken skin. He still flinches. Next, the man squeezes a small tube and gently applies a creamy liquid onto the burns. My brother's muscles tighten and form a small knot around his brow, before the blank, emotionless expression returns. That is what hurts me the most. The emptiness which radiates in tides from his small frame, almost like the fear and pain has filled every pore of his body and left behind only a shell of his true self. "Bác sĩ?" I take a deep breath, piecing the English together in my mind. "Can I help you?" My stomach flutters. He continues his work, almost as if he didn't hear me. Then slowly he straightens, staring at me in the same way he did to my brother. I notice that his eyes are blue, unlike ours, and that they are bordered with deep wrinkles. He smiles. "Of course." For the first time in what feels like months, I sense my own lips curve into a small smile. Somewhere inside me a glimmer of warmth begins to glow. Could there be hope?



Ref: [EP-Defence-NZ Army, Vietnam-03](#)

***Mata Kai Kutu***

He kiri kehu, he kiri kōmā me ko te whenua e takatakahia nei. Kua koruruki ōku kamo, me ko te pō e ngau nei. Whakatangatanga ki runga, whakatangatanga ki raro, e ko te puru, kua tāia te moko, hei hoa matenga mōku. He mauri nō āwekoweko e hao mai nei ki tēnei taunga. Nā ngā toroparawae o Tū au i whakapakeke, hei mata kai kutu mō te whenua e kaikai nei e te taniwha kiritea. Tēnei a Te Kohu, he tamaiti nā Hinepūkohurangi, nā Te Maunga.

2 o Hōngongoi, 1864

Kua tutū te pūehu ki te rohe pōtae o te Kīngitanga, ki ngā whenua ātanga o Waikato taniwha rau. I kautere mai ngā kōrero takuahi, ka kakama te tū, ka tāwhaiwhai atu tōku iwi o Tūhoe ki Ōrākau Pā kia hono ai ngā rau awa o te motu, kia noho ai te taniwha kiritea hei kai mā Hinenuitēpō. Rewi Maniapoto, te pūioio rau o te tōtara haemata, nei ngā uri o Te Hapuoneone kua tau mai nei!

Mātai ana ngā kamo i te taiao e karapoti nei. Ngā reo wainene o ngā manu e kore e rangona, kua ngū te wawā o tātarakihi, kua mū te whenua. Ka wawara te hau, ka rongo i te pako o te pū e konihi ana i ngā wai tipua o te awa o Waikato. Ka puta te karanga a Rewi Maniapoto, ka whakarite te iwi ki te pakanga. I a au e noho ana ki te awakari, ka tau mai a Hine Takurua ki taku taha. Ka kīkī aku taringa i te pako o te pū, tērā te tangi o 'wāhine' ka tau mai ki taku aroaro. Pōautinitini ana te Māori, hurō ana a Tauīwi. Kua kohura ōku pongaponga i te tīere o toto e māturuturu ana i te kiri, i te ahurea, i te whenua e muru nei e Tauīwi iroiro, Tauīwi kutukutu, e te taniwha kiritea.

I te tūtakinga o ngā mata, ka mataara tāku tū. Nei te kākā parakiwai ka pakanga atu ki te kākā kura o Tauīwi, kia areare ngā mata! Ka tātari au i ōna kākahu, ka pupū mai te riri. Te mā o te tīhate, te mā o te kiri, te mā kua whakaeke poka noa mai ki ōku whenua. Te whero o te koti, te whero o te toto, te whero e maringi nei ki ōku whenua. Ka pao taku taiaha i tōna ūpoko, ka pako mai tana pū. Kua motu te kiri, tīhaehae ana te kiko, kua tau mai te mamae. Kua tō te rā, ko au me taku kotahi e noho kōrangaranga ana i tēnei wā, ka tīmata a hirikapō te hikohiko mai, engari e kore a tinana e whai. Ka takina ake e au he karakia:

*“E tō e te rā, nau mai ko te pō  
Ko te pō nui*

*Ko te pō  
roa Ko te  
pō e rea*

*Ko te pō e whita*

*o te pō e au ai te moe*

*Ka tūturu e Rangī, ka tūturu e Papa  
Ka whakamaia kia tīna*

*Haumi e, Hui e, Taiki e!”*

I ōku whakaaro e akitō ana, ka takoto au. E kitea ana te marama kōratarata, ko koe rā e Rona. Tiaho mai rā, e tū koe hei māpura i tēnei wā pōuriuri. E tīrama mai ana ngā whetū, ka taimaha ngā kamo, kua māhorahora te mamae, kua tau mai te ngēngē, kua tau anō mai te ngehegehe.

Ao rawa ake, matawai ana a kamo, ka oho a mauri i te kitenga o te taiao hou e karapoti ana i a au.

Ko ngā poupou o te whare he maire, ko te tāhūhū he tākirikau, he takaiapu. Ko ngā tāngata o roto, he kiritea. Uia mai te pātai e te rangatira o tēnei hunga, **“Tēna, he aha ngā rautaki pakanga o tō iwi?”**

E kore au e urupare atu, ka huri te pātai hei tono, e mea ana, **“Whakamārama mai ngā rautaki pakanga o tō iwi!”** I kōnei ka pupū mai te whakaaro me tū au hei pūrahōrua. I koha atu au i ngā kōrero teka ki te iwi, ko tā rātou whakahoki mai ko te whakapono.

Tāria te wā, ko au i tū hei ringa matau ki te rangatira kiritea, engari āku mahi pūrahōrua, tē aro i a ia. He hoiho taku terenga, he kākahu mahana ōku korowai, ko te utu nui o ngā mahi pūrahōrua, ko te nanea a tia. Kāti ake, he rite anō taku noho ki te noho a te kiore. Ko tā te kiore, he whakamomona anō i a ia ki ngā kai a ētahi kē atu. Ko ngā kai e whakamomona nei, ko ngā kōrero e hāngai nei ki ngā rautaki pakanga o te hunga kiritea. Ka noho ngū te kiore nei, ka tatari, ka whanga ki te wā e tika ana, kia pai ai taku tuku i ngā rautaki pakanga ki tōku iwi ake, ki ōku rangatira ake.

Kua tae te wā kia hoki atu ki taku tuakiritanga motuhake. Tatari ana ki te tōnga o te rā kia āhei ai taku kōnihi atu ki tōku iwi ake. I te aranga o te rā, i kitea āku mahi kūpapa e te rangatira. I konei pupū ake te pakanga nui.

Ka wero ngā tao a te Māori, ka pako mai ngā pū a te Pākehā. I koha atu au i a au anō hei raukakai i tēnei pakanga. I te pakonga o te pū i tīmata te kiri te motu, i tīhae mai te kiko, i huri ngā whakaaro ki te toi o ngā rangi. Kua tau au ki tōku taunga mutunga, ki te pō e au ai te moe.

Nā Te Ua Kōnehunehu o te Rangi Tumoana



[MapColl-832.14hkm/1864/Acc.36888](#)

**Scenes from Rotorua**

Ben calls shotgun. That means he gets control of the car stereo, which means I'm gonna be stuck listening to sports radio all the way up to Hamilton. I shouldn't get too bothered by it, it's just background noise I guess, and the back seats better for letting your mind wander. I have a habit, when I get really lost in my thoughts, of mouthing along to some internal monologue like I'm acting out a play, and one time Ben, my brother, caught me in the act and has never let me live it down. Usually, if I sit in the back and stay really quiet Ben and my dad'll get so caught up in whatever sports game the radio's blaring about that they'll forget I'm even there. Then I can mouth along all I want.

We're going to Hamilton for the weekend to see my Nana who lives in a rest home there and we're staying with some of Dad's mates. Hamilton's a lot like Rotorua really, just bigger and cloudier, and the people always seem to look as if they're going someplace important. Life in Rotorua moves at a slower pace, I think. Dad drives past the lake, and it's a clear day so you can see the hills reflected perfectly on the water. We have the lake, still and clear, and Hamilton has the Waikato river, and the current moves so fast you can't even swim in it. Maybe, since the water moves faster, the people do too. I think I remember reading that people are 70% water, or something like that, so maybe the current moves us too. I like that idea, and it's exactly how I feel whenever I go to Hamilton. It feels like I'm a bit of driftwood on the huge Waikato river and it's whisking me away.

It's raining. We're in Hamilton now and the traffic lights slice through the sheets of rain, and the clouds hang heavy and low. I look out the window and try to see through the darkness. There are still people out walking, and they charge through the rain, umbrellas held up like shields, battling against the weather. I wonder what they're doing out at this time anyway. The rain's so heavy it looks like the whole city's been turned to water, liquified. The roads are black and slick like eels and the drains are so full they make waves everytime a car drives past. We pull up in the driveway of my Dads friends house and I hop out of the car, my legs cramped from the drive and my eyes closed against the rain. In this moment I feel a lot more than 70% water, and I wonder if I can be liquified too. As liquid as Lake Rotorua or the Waikato river. Maybe someday the current will take me too, and I'll move fast enough to keep up with everyone else in this city of people, all with someplace important to go.



Ref: [AWM-0237-F](#)

**Shooting party**

*"It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife"*

Clearly this is not a painless endeavour in New Zealand. Should you go about it the wrong way, you may find yourself in the same position as the single man left unpictured by the artist, who felt that the cadaver took away the beauty of what he saw.

Unfortunately for the gentleman, who had been told there were plenty of fish in the sea, he chose to go fishing for a spouse on an island with conditions varying from extremely wet to semi-arid and subtropical. These three women, desensitized to these harsh conditions, were thus unamused by the man's inherited wealth which he hoped would compensate for his lack of alluring qualities.

Hence the man spent the last moments of his comfortable life palpitating – a result of rowing and hauling the boat around for half an hour at the whims of these ladies of course.

All because little did he know that these women would not ride streetcars in the future, they would drive streetcars. In a few years' time these women might be suffragettes or perhaps today they might even be nurses on strike.



Ref: [A-164-046](#)

**Freda Du Faur, Conqueror of Mountains**

*Freda du Faur was the first woman to climb Mt Cook. She was an Australian woman from a rich family and learnt to climb in the Ku-ring-gai National Park, close to her home. She often travelled to New Zealand in the summer. One summer with her father, she travelled to the South Island and became enamoured by Mount Cook. Climbing all throughout the area with Peter Graham as her guide, she conquered Mount Cook by the time she was 28.*

*She found conflict at the Hermitage Lodge at the base of Mt Cook. They criticized her on her choice of outfit and on choosing to travel with just a male guide up the mountain, saying that it would damage her reputation. But the most important part to her was climbing the mountains. She then went to the Dupain Institute of Physical Education, and met Muriel Cadogan. They became life long partners and travelled to England together.*

*When there, they were subject to conversion therapy and Muriel died because of it. Tragically, this pushed Freda to take her own life. Freda is an illustration of how the criticism of people and the way they are can affect their lives. Her whole life she was criticized for being a female and taking climbing as her passion. They then criticised her for who she loved and this criticism drove her to her suicide. This was 83 years ago and the world is still trying to rid the world of these inequalities. These criticisms still occur and people are often restricted and stunted from doing what they truly want by this. But, I think that Freda would be proud of how much change has been made since and how a person like her could do everything she would ever have dreamed in today's society.*

I was young once.

I was young when,

I climbed my first hill.

In the unbearable heat of the Australian summer.

I was young when,

I vacationed in New Zealand.

I was young and frostily,

Bitingly so.

I was young when,

Peter and I would talk,

As we scaled the ice walls.

I felt free then.

We reached the peak.

And the land rolled out like a map.

Peter smiled,

But I was suddenly not as young as I had been.



I was not young when  
 I would catch a person staring at me at the lodge  
 I was a cornered animal that would yap and bite  
 In its last defences  
 So it would not give up.

I was not young when  
 I kept a hard face  
 When they told me  
 Compromise.  
 Compromise.  
 Compromise.

I was young again when  
 I met Muriel.  
 She was a fiery mess,  
 Her laugh made me feel  
 Like I lived on the top of a mountain.  
 She made me feel whole.

I was young once.  
 But you see,  
 You do see.

How much I suffered.

I am a woman.  
 I am homosexual.  
 I am the conqueror of mountains.  
 I am proud.

Ref: B-140-001





**1939: The sea of porridge bubbles...**

1939:

*The sea of porridge bubbles as the hull of the N25 submarine pierces the surface. Its black body slides silently like a seal. Ripples slush against the sides of salt and pepper skyscrapers as multi-lane highways twist through the air like snakes. A helicopter slices through the victory laced air, ruffling my hair. My future-self zips up the side of a mile-high building until I'm on top of the world. The rhythmic pound of the world of tomorrow drives progress. I examine the harmonious beating heart of a city at work below me. The sky is draped in pale blue, blimps keep the clouds at bay. Moto men gather my belongings, guiding me to my lab. Designs for flying cars sprawl over the table, my drinks are served in plastic cups as colour television feeds me with triumphant news of the new millennia.*

Someone places their hand on my shoulder. Grandma.

"Eat your oats James."

The sky fades, skyscrapers sink, helicopters land. I drag my spoon through my breakfast.

"Gran, I need another 20 cards to finish!"

"Well you're going to have to finish all of that porridge before I'm buying you more."

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2000:

I place my hand on Billy's shoulder as he gazes feverishly at his oats.

"Grandad, what did you have for breakfast when you were my age?"

"Porridge, always the best breakfast..."

My mind jogs back to the time I completed my first collection. 1939 it was. "Century of Progress" the pack read, took me twelve boxes of rolled oats to complete. Little did I know back then that the next packs would be would read; "Active Service" and "United We Fight".

"Billy, what do you think of the future?"

"Well, I'm gonna live on Mars and fly a hoverboard to work. Did you know they are real? One of my friends ordered one on Trade Me."

Billy held his spoon in the air, pretending it was a hoverboard.

I glance at the calendar. Feb 2000. The sky is grey, I can hear the neighbour's lawnmower trundling away. I sigh, "You can never predict the future my boy, tomorrow twists and turns in mysterious ways."

Billy digs his spoon into his porridge. I settle on the recliner, plastic cup in hand, to watch the news. Who knows what tomorrow will bring?



Ref: [Eph-B-PICTURE-CARDS-Timaru-1939-01-front](#)

**Studio portrait of unidentified Maori girl wearing white dress with scarf tied at neck**

Cold dress slips onto my body, falling over prickled skin. Soft yet itchy, clinging to body, outlining the shapes of my thighs. I trace the folding fabric with my fingers then quickly retract them, whole body tensing. The one thing the cloth cannot mask is the tenderness of new bruises. I don't want to relive it so I brush my hair, wash my face, try to look like them. For today I have a photo.

I am strong, I am powerful but I'm weak and tired. Tired of having to choose between good and bad. Heaven and hell. My gods or their god. Our ways or their ways. I may wear the clothes they bought but I cannot wear the way in which they hold themselves.

They separate, be it land from whanaus with papers of lies, or the flames which engulf the forest floor, raging fires, burning nature, culture, growing war. The axe to the tree marks another beating of a child, struck by a hand who has lost ties to its past, so a bottle becomes the only escape. An outlet of violence when all else has been silenced. Another post to mark the border of what they claim marks another family who will succumb to this inevitable pain: the mother, the father, the children, generations to come.

I integrate, my footsteps in the manuka bring fantails darting to catch the bugs I stir up.

Each day of school someone feels the burn of a cane for speaking Maori. My future lies within these four walls, a future I don't want to be part of. Educated to become a settlers wife. To have children, to have children, to have children, until we are no longer.

So level is my gaze, cold is my heart. I will not smile. I will not be printed and profited off, sold to your families in England to stare and marvel at the colour of my skin. I will not show how you have tamed and civilized the wild people of Aotearoa, what you pride yourself on. I will not pretend to like you.

As my voice is not loud enough my eyes speak instead. My people, my lands, my gods are not happy with you. The pain you've brought. My lips crack now when I cry as I never smile anymore. It's not just what you've done to us, but look what you've done to me.

The scarf tied around my neck does more than hide my culture. You do not see the bruises around my neck. You don't see the lump in my throat from being silenced until I no longer question what I'm told, till my voice is invisible. This scarf is slowly, surely, strangling.

Ref: [1/2-008440-G](#)

