

WINNER (Years 11-13)

Children Who Have Never Known War

By **Victoria Sun**, Epsom Girls Grammar

Inside Auckland War Memorial Museum,
bomber planes are carefully maintained,
war uniforms are never stained, and
the blood in photographs is white and black.

Children who have never heard the sound of murder
play on cannons, loosening screws.

It's hard to be horrified by war
when the Domain is so pretty—
with sight of our glittering bays,
heavy with our rolling grass, our swan ponds.

The lessons on these white marble gates are forgettable.

I do not know anyone on this alphabetically-organised,
gold-gilded list of wounded and killed, but
if all the dead people were piled up here,
there would be no place to stand, and

I would not be able to walk past these marble walls.



Ref: AW-0486

SECOND PLACE (Years 11-13)

In Our Foreign Land

By Anya Christiansen, Takapuna Grammar School

We answered to Tūmataunga's calls when he demanded of us. We are his sons and a son can never refuse a father's call. As we slapped the earth and called '*Ka mate, ka mate? Ka ora, ka ora?*', his restless spirit was thrust from our bones '*Will we die, will we die? Will we live, will we live?*' and blood boiled up like the restless sea beneath our hands, our arms, our faces. We clawed at our skin like ravaging birds of prey as we made our war cry in the sand. We knew Tū would ask for our sacrifice and so we mourned for those left behind in the mist.

Aotearoa, a memory. We had walked off the tip of Te-Ika-a-Maui and begun our journey to Hawai'i, our promised land. Some of us claimed that Egypt must then be purgatory and it seemed that way – the sand stretched on longer than you could walk and like a mirage brought images of beach swimming and pipi hunting that could never be reached.



In our haka, each one of us called with our brothers, in our terrifying unified voice. Brothers we hadn't known before we took our journey. Brothers that the North and South winds had blown together and united in the Maori Battalion: from Ngāpuhi and its many interwoven hapu hōia, from great Arawa and strong Tūhoe; brothers from the tribes in the east and from Ngāti Porou, brothers from Rongowhakaata, the Waikato and Maniapoto.

Brothers from the tribes of Taranaki and Ngāti Kahungunu, from the South Island, from Chatham Islands, Stewart Island – we had disputed, slapped our thighs and spilt blood but in our foreign land all rivalries were forgotten. All rivalries but the heat of the sun, and the chasm where our nightmares slumbered. There was plenty of both as we waited in purgatory for heaven or hell.

In our foreign land, we were only one tribe, one iwi whenua, crying our war cry to one giant enemy.

Ka mate! Ka mate! Ka ora! Ka ora!
Tēnei te tangata pūhuru
Nāna nei i tiki mai whakawhiti te rā
Ā, upane! Ka upane!
Ā, upane, ka upane, whiti te ra!

That was our song, each pūkana slicked with fervour – pouring, slipping. Boys cried our song, fathers too; sons. None of us asked for a funeral dirge, nor an epic story passed down myth-like for generations to come. All we required was to nourish our mana before our final moment, to open our hearts to the demon that called us to battle. We would hurl our taiaha, take one last shot at the enemy, and die a hero's death.

Die a Māori warrior's death.

We knew we would never come home, though a body might – a simple empty vessel of Tūmataunga. This song was ours to sing to the heavens before we descended into hell – it was a prayer, a hymn, a cry for salvation.

Ref: **A-00891-F**

HIGHLY COMMENDED (Years 11-13)

Coincidentally

By Joseph Hisayasu, Lynfield College



In the centre of the North Island lurks the Rangipo Desert. A barren, inhospitable landscape where the freezing wind slices through all but the strongest and the most mad. Meandering through the vicious scenery like a prisoner meandering up to the gallows is the Desert Road, at least when it isn't buried under snowfall like a prisoner buried under snowfall. This story is not set there.....

Sometimes, things just happen. Your GPS drives you not where you wanted to be but where you needed to, or you happen to bump into your old pilot friend while out walking. Coincidences. Normally we only remember the exciting ones, like when a sword just happens to end up in a stone, or some water coincidentally turns into wine. But there are others. By sheer coincidence, in the centre of the South Island, they had a similar desert, but with an "s" left over. Two men squelch knee-deep over ice-cream dunes, granules of hokey-pokey invading their shoes and digging into their feet. Overhead, the waffle vultures screech their saccharine calls, as if prompting the men to yield, to allow the custard lakes to claim them as they had so many others. The two men would soon become no-men in the no-man's land that was the great Rangipo Dessert. It was almost certain, then, that this hell would soon bury them. Weakened, they would be soon be bitten by a sour snake, or trip over and bash their heads on a gumdrop rock.

The wives of the two men, Sharon and Sharyn, stand at the windows of their conservative two-bedroom homes. Their husbands, friends since high school, had by some incredible twist of fate each married a strawberry blonde chocolatier. "I hope you return soon, my love" they murmur. Coincidentally, neither of them mean it.

A Cessna 140 glides over the Rangipo Dessert. While intended to be *en route* from Queenstown to Auckland, a fault in the fuel line means that the plane will have to touch down slightly earlier than expected. The rumbling of the four-cylinder engine reverberates off the jelly tips of the cliffs, reaching the men stranded on the rocky road. Hope flutters in their hearts and both men reach into their pockets for the lighters that light

the cigarettes they both promised their Sharons they would be quitting. The sugary earth caramelises under their signal fire. The plane circles down to land.

Steven Seameal and Stephen Seemeal were never seen again. Sharon Seameal and Sharyn Seemeal both wept, then both held modest memorial services on opposite ends of their local cemetery. By some incredible happenstance, that same day a slightly damaged Cessna 140 dropped off two men, Steve and his newlywed husband Steve, in the Rangipo Desert, where they set up a wilderness survival camp.

Perhaps there is no such thing as coincidence. Perhaps the Rangipo Dessert is all made up. But if the Sharons ever catch up to the Steves, that's not what they'll tell them.

Ref: Eph-E-FOOD-1950s-01

HIGHLY COMMENDED (Years 11-13)

A Child of the Pacific

By **Ella Kirby**, Paraparaumu College



Worlds beneath the rich tapestry
A reflection of what lies above

The soil hosts life in abundance
Mistreated and beaten
Yet gracefully hospitable

Scattered lands
Separate, independent
But woven together
In turquoise thread

Each bead an individual
Carved by rich culture and custom

A gift from the land
Adorning the people
Journeying to rise above
Despite the fall;
Small-minded thinking
Immersed in the movement of the tides

Ref: WA-22164-F

HIGHLY COMMENDED (Years 11-13)

Tangata Ke (Foreigner)

By Julia Lockerd, Wellington Girls College



I am not from here.

I am numb to the waves that carve my likeness from the cliffs.

A face emerges from the limestone. It is not mine.

I am not from here.

The wind howls in a language that time does not speak, howls the names of the children of the children of the children of the land of the long white cloud.

Mine is not one of them.

I am not from here.

I see it in the strain on my parent's faces. The way they talk behind closed doors, of decisions and desertion. They look so tired.

I am not from here. My backpack doesn't look like the others, squared away in a cubby where I hope no one will see. I don't remember where I got it.

Not from here.

Not from anywhere

My peers. They are the magnum opus of the waves and the cliffs, whittled into being over generations; the wind whispers a name passed down from a father to a son as it pushes them gently out into the world.

They belong here.

They are from here.

I don't get the same treatment. I look to my friends and think how can they stand the winter? As wind furrows holes into my flushed cheeks, the waves scrub away at who I once was.

I am not from here, but I am not from there either.

I get sick from the cold and the damp — loneliness clots in my twisted little lungs.

I am not up to the challenge of being from here. I did not earn it.

I can see it the way they look at me and the way they treat my mother. To be from here, to be from Aotearoa, you must have stories. Stories of lamb and potato, fairy bread and broken jandals leading back ten generations.

You must have a family bach out in Waikanae, given to your grandparents as a wedding gift, in a time where land was plentiful, and the world was new.

I did not have that; I did not have any stories.

No gods have followed me here.

Years went by, and the winters seemed less harsh.

I found there were little things to love, small stories to tell about the place that might be home. Slowly, and then all at once. Lines appeared on the cliffs, deep and jagged and fresh.

The sharp ridge of my nose, the arch of my brow, faint beginnings of a smile danced with sunlight across the hollows of my face.

I had not inherited my place looking out over the sea. So, I would beat like the waves until I saw my reflection, crooked and imperfect alongside those of my friends. I would howl my name up at the empty sky until the wind picked up in harmony.

I will never be from here,
But I will make this home.

Ref: AW-2750

HIGHLY COMMENDED (Years 11-13)

The Awkward Poet and Her Girlfriend

By Cumorah Lopati, Kelston Girls College



Although the location is not
Stereotypically romantic,
Although there are no
Falling petals and slow motion shots,
I continue to be enthralled by her.

With her flowing black hair
Being blown in the breeze,
Her pale complexion bright as can be,
Picket signs decorated with glitter and
Flags with rainbows are her backdrop.
She is the most beautiful girl in the
world.

She faces me with a smile,
I peek into the heaven we are denied.
I'm glad, she says with a distinct fondness,
That I can love you with every part of myself.

In that moment I wish I could
String together the most beautiful sentence for her.
I am a poet, yet she makes me tongue-tied.
I curse at her beauty, her kindness and her words.
I want to tell her many words that I could easily write down.

I want to tell her she's the sun, warm and bright;
The pink peeking through petals;
The calm strokes of a paintbrush.
That her usually cold skin I do adore,
For it lets me adorn
Her with warmth where the ice begins.

That she is the storm,
Loud and demanding to be heard.
Yet she is the embrace,
Comforting me on those stormy nights.

And I want to tell her that
She holds many surprises,
An adventure to be explored.
That she is the moon,
Leading me home on lonely nights.

I wish to tell her this.
But instead I whisper
That I am glad as well.
She nods and I can tell
That she knows what I mean.

She speaks of those in the world
That cannot love as we can.
I feel pity. For her love is the most
Magical thing to grace this earth.

I raise my flag of blue, yellow and pink.
She raises hers of purple, pink and blue.
I wish with all my heart,
That those who are denied love
Can love with every part of themselves too.

Ref: PADL-000942

HIGHLY COMMENDED Years 11-13

Hellespont

By Julia Randerson, Wellington High School



Many tongues speak of the narrow strait that cuts Turkey in half,
Forming a metaphorical border
Between Asia and Europe, east and west:
Hellespont, Dardanelles, Canakkale Bōgazi,
The strait has little preference which;
Its name matters less than its significance.

*Out of the darkness streaks a golden blur
It takes the shape of a ram, two teenagers clinging to its back
They run from certain death; the ram is their salvation
One twin, Helle, slips in a sudden up-draught,
White-knuckled fingers grasping desperately at the golden threads,
She falls.*

Hellespont (transl. 'Sea of Helle', from the myth of the golden fleece)

*A battle rages at the mouth of the Hellespont
the Scamander river bleeds into its waters
Stained red with the stolen hope of soldiers
The clanging spears eventually yield,
Leaving behind broken walls, old bones, tears faded to nothing
And tales of glory that will be repeated for eternity.*

The Trojan War (~ 1300 BCE)

*Trading vessels carefully wind their way through the twists and turns of the Hellespont,
Retracing tentatively the paths of warships and armies
That so long ago made an empire
Their cargo changes throughout the centuries: rich fabrics, foods and spices, oil
Many a ship has lain stricken against these shores
Spilling its riches out into the strait.*

Ottoman Empire (14th - 20th centuries)

Anzac men spill over the hills overlooking the Hellespont
Their ships, resting in the Aegean Sea,
Are like the tiny swarms of minnow that dart through its waters;
Or perhaps the fat insects the gulls chase up and down its beaches
Perhaps, cresting the hill, a Kiwi soldier sighs at the sight of the Hellespont,
Perhaps it brings him comfort as he lies awake at night, dreaming of home
Maybe he cools off in its beaches, waves benevolent in the high summer
But not even this can halt the pursuit of glory, not among warmongers;
Conflicts go on, irrespective of beauty.

Eventually, the war ends
The Hellespont weeps
Salt water turns to fog turns to rain,
Kissing the heads of buried soldiers
Caressing their tired old bones
Washing away blood, sweat and mud alike.

The stories of those lost by the Hellespont live on through us
Sometimes in truth,
Sometimes extrapolated into something fantastical, as time tends to do.
The Hellespont too has memories, imprinted into the landscape:
Iron and steel jutting from the seabed;
Spears, gold, helmets, ammunition,
Hunks of clay that once passed for bricks
It will never forget these scars.

One day, another generation will take the Hellespont's memories and put them on display
Create tales from them that sing, dance, flow
And tell of darkness
And war
And grief
Turn the tragedy into something mystical, reverent,
Until the lesson is lost.

Perhaps, if the Hellespont had a head,
It would shake it,
Almost affectionately
Raise a sceptical eyebrow, belied
By the softness in its smile and sadness in its eyes.
The Hellespont has seen it all before.
Humans, they ebb and flow;
Bearing witness, the Hellespont's waves roll on.

Ref: PAColl-0063-06

HIGHLY COMMENDED (Years 11-13)

The Hare

By **Oscar Tobeck**, Kaikorai Valley College

Tama sits quietly by the fence of his uncle's farm.
Heavy breaths escaping pouting lips as he stares
at the hare corpse hanging by its neck.

'Private property - keep out', adorns the sign
next to the furry body swaying gently in the
wind.

Strange. Why leave it there? A warning to other
hares?

Or perhaps it's being left out for dinner later
that night.

His uncle probably shot it while out to tend to
the cows, then left it there to hang till he came
back.

Tama wrinkles his nose. Gross. He never liked
hare.

He was never a country boy.

Out here there are no streetlights.

Pitch black nights where he felt overwhelmed by silence.

Where pinpricks of stars cut out of the black of the sky were the only light he could see.

He could see them, yes, but they refused to break through the night sky and into his
bedroom.

He turns and studies the hare corpse again.

White feet poked through the chain link fence.

So close to the tempting green grass.

Dinner would be sorted for her for days, maybe even weeks.

But no, one step into the field and...

Bang! Right through the neck.

Tama could almost smell the fresh blood that would have seeped through her soft, brown
fur.

His only company.

Away from home, and no friends but a dead animal hanging from a fence.

He scoffs. Turns again. He doesn't have to deal with this.

Like how he doesn't have to deal with the hare. He loathed that hare.

On his uncle Tama's fence. The man he was named after.

Not even his real uncle, just some loser his aunt had married before he was even born.

A real Māori man.

Tattoos galore, but still adorning the standard gumboots, black tank top, bucket hat and
number eight wire.

Then a rustling. Tama looked up in fright.

No, only his uncle.

"Hey little man, what are you up to?"



"Nothin'."

"Nothing? Man there's heaps to do around here, and you're telling me you did nothing?"

"Yeah," Tama sneered, "Get outta here, I don't have to listen to this."

"Hey, hey, don't get snooty with me. I left you alone to cool down, and you're still mad at me?"

"Yeah."

"Why?"

"I dunno, just cause. Why do you care anyway?"

"You miss Auckland?"

Tama glared.

"Hey, I mean it's not that bad down here! We grow our own food that's pretty neat aye?"

Tama *glared*. His uncle huffed and stomped past him.

He grasped the hare he'd hung on the fence and yanked it off. He went to open the gate and turned back when Tama didn't follow.

"You coming?"

"Nah."

"Why not?"

"Don't wanna. Thought I'd sit here for a while you know? Watch the tree-line for boars or whatever."

Tama's uncle snorted, "Alright you do you man, but don't come running to me when your aunty and I eat all the pav."

"You have pavlova?"

"Yeah, but you don't have to have any, if you wanna stay here that's fine." Tama's uncle went to close the gate behind him and started walking up the beaten path of the farm.

"Hey wait up!"

Maybe summer wasn't gonna be too awful.

As long as he didn't have to eat any of that hare.

Ref: AWC-0975-F



The same image on the left,
Ref: AWC-0975-F
was selected by **Helen Peng of Rangitoto College** as the inspiration for her entry below – which won a SPECIAL AWARD,
HIGHLY COMMENDED GRAPHIC ENTRY

See below.

HIGHLY COMMENDED GRAPHIC ENTRY (Years 11-13)

Private Property

By Helen Peng, Rangitoto College

